

London Rewilding Taskforce: Meeting of 14 July 2022

Chair:	Shirley Rodrigues, GLA, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy
Vice Chairs:	Nicky Gavron, London Recovery Board, Board Member – Environment; Ben Goldsmith, Menhaden Capital Management LLP, CEO; Defra, Former Non-Executive Board Member
Members:	Pamela Abbott, Citizen Zoo, Non-Executive Director Ian Barnes, TV & Film Director; London Borough of Enfield, Former Deputy Leader of Enfield Council Liz Bonnin, The Wildlife Trusts, President; Natural History & Environmental Broadcaster [Apologies] Nick Bruce-White, RSPB, Operations Director – South England Alastair Driver, Rewilding Britain, Director [Apologies] Mathew Frith, London Wildlife Trust, Director of Research and Policy Ruth Holmes, London Legacy Development Corporation, Head of Landscape Stefania Horne, City of London Corporation, Superintendent for Hampstead Heath and North London Kabir Kaul, Young Conservationist Isabella Tree, Knepp Castle Estate, Conservationist and Author John Tweddle, Natural History Museum, Head of Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity
Attendees & Observers:	Peter Massini, Director, Future Nature Consulting Amanda Ikert, Head of Adaptation Implementation, C40 Ish Campbell, Senior Ecologist, Arup Lily Ginsberg-Keig, Sustainability and Climate Change Consultant, Arup Dave Webb, Chair, London River Restoration Group Elliot Newton, Biodiversity Officer, Royal Borough of Kingston Council Ian Russell, Senior Engineer, London Borough of Enfield Council
GLA Officers	Sam Davenport, Principal Policy Officer, Environment Team Kristiina Yang, Senior Policy and Programme Officer, Environment Team Asha Tomlin-Kent, Senior Policy and Programme Officer, Environment Team

Background

On 13th December 2021, The Mayor announced that he would establish a London Rewilding Taskforce as a short task and finish group to consider opportunities for ambitious, innovative projects to support nature recovery and biodiversity enhancement in London, while also bringing benefits to Londoners and tackling the climate and ecological emergency. This announcement was made in conjunction with the launch of a new £600,000 Rewild London Fund. Taskforce members were appointed in March 2022 and will work together to develop recommendations on opportunities for rewilding in London considered practical, sustainable, and aligned with broader nature conservation objectives. They will also help communicate what rewilding means in London to a broader public audience.

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Introduction and Previous Meeting Minutes: Members were welcomed by the Chair to the second meeting of the Taskforce. The minutes from the first meeting of 20 April 2022 were approved and actions acknowledged as completed. No new declarations were made.

Presentations and Discussion on Principles and Parameters for Urban Rewilding: Amanda Ikert (C40), Ish Campbell and Lily Ginsberg-Keig (Arup) presented the initial findings from research on international urban rewilding case studies and best practice, including a proposed spectrum for rewilding activities in cities. The spectrum ranges from more human-led to more nature-led

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activities with hybrid activities in the middle. Three case studies were shared against this spectrum including the Urban Forest initiative from Sao Paulo, Brazil (human-led); Ribiera das Vinhas waterbed restoration, Portugal (hybrid); and the Zealandia project, Wellington, New Zealand (nature-led). Taskforce members asked provided feedback to the approach and agreed that the underlying principles of urban rewilding in the London and global context should broadly be the same.

Sam Davenport (GLA) presented on the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) process and the GLA's approach which is likely to centre around London's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. The Taskforce will make recommendations around the role of rewilding in London, which will inform the preparation of the LNRS and how it will be delivered.

Members then discussed their views on the principles and parameters for large-scale urban rewilding projects, based on a short paper issued ahead of the meeting. Suggestions were made around the wording of the principles, and the limits of parameters were discussed including the following:

- On Principles – working at a “landscape scale” changed to working at an “appropriate scale”; rewilding should take inspiration from present and future landscapes and ecosystems in addition to past ones; strengthening emphasis on mental health and well-being benefits of rewilding; strengthening importance of the accessibility of sites.
- On Parameters – rewilding works best: at minimum size of 100 ha with minimal physical barriers and at least 50 ha core zones; with willing landowners and at least one public or third sector body in the lead; when opportunity to achieve environmental objectives is maximised. Species reintroductions are an important part of reinstating natural processes at rewilding sites, but must be ecologically appropriate. Planning for rewilding projects must consider longevity and aim to secure benefits for the long-term to leave a positive legacy for future generations.

Presentations and Discussion on Implementing Large-Scale Rewilding Projects – Partnerships, Governance, Policy and Funding: Three presentations were given from the call for evidence respondents on rewilding opportunities and challenges in the London context. Dave Webb (London River Restoration Group) presented on rewilding opportunities related to river restoration activities in London and noted challenges of siloed funding streams, availability of scalable solutions, land-water management partnerships, and effective monitoring. Elliot Newton (Kingston) gave an overview of Kingston's approach to rewilding from small to large-scale projects despite Kingston not being a major landowner. He emphasised the importance of community engagement and ecological baselining and noted the current gap in resources and knowledge-sharing on biodiversity across boroughs and stakeholders (e.g. lack of borough ecologists). Ian Russell (Enfield) presented on the Enfield Chase project as a flooding-led project with rewilding principles embedded, and discussed the enabling factors (e.g. strong political will) and challenges (e.g. funding, landownership) that the project faced.

Members asked clarification questions of the presenters in following, and then moved into a discussion of a second short paper issued ahead of the meeting which raised considerations around partnerships, governance, policy and funding related to large-scale rewilding projects. The discussion covered the complexities of setting up partnerships to start envisioning and then delivering and sustaining rewilding projects, including funding and buy-in from landowners.

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Mechanisms like ELMs and Biodiversity Net Gain need to provide incentives for landowners to consider rewilding as a management approach; however, these mechanisms are not always well suited to urban projects. It was decided that a separate interim meeting on these topics would be arranged for interested members to go into greater detail and that funding will be covered in more depth in the third meeting alongside public engagement.

Next Steps and Work Programme: The Chair summarised the actions of the meeting. GLA officers provided an update on Talk London engagement, noting that the public discussion group and survey would be available until 21 August 2022, after which a summary will be made available. Ideas for further engagement of young and diverse Londoners was discussed briefly. At the third meeting, the Taskforce will discuss funding/financing of rewilding projects, consider how best to engage Londoners, and start formulating recommendations.

The actions from the meeting are as follows:

- C40 and Arup team to share an updated definition of rewilding to ensure alignment with the London Rewilding Taskforce's definition.
- GLA officers to share list of projects being supported by the Rewild London Fund.
- GLA officers to amend the principles and parameters for rewilding projects in London based on feedback from Taskforce members.
- GLA officers to set up an optional separate meeting/call before the third Taskforce meeting to continue discussion on the questions around implementing rewilding projects for interested Taskforce members. Taskforce members to otherwise send additional views on the questions around implementing rewilding projects by e-mail.
- GLA officers to circulate minutes, summary and slides from the meeting.
- Taskforce members to continue promoting Talk London discussion and survey among their networks.
- Taskforce members to provide any ideas or details of contacts who GLA officers can reach out to with Call for Evidence questions or Talk London link - to reach out to organisations/groups that might have different views on rewilding, rather than those who already agree and understand benefits.
- GLA officers to check with GLA youth team on engaging young people (e.g. if there is budget to incentivise participation).

Cleared by: Shirley Rodrigues, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy, GLA

GLA Officer: Kristiina Yang, Senior Policy and Programme Officer, Environment Team