

London Rewilding Taskforce: Meeting of 8 November 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 Nick Bruce-White, RSPB, Operations Director – South England Alastair Driver, Rewilding Britain, Director- Mathew Frith, London Wildlife Trust, Director of Research and Policy Ruth Holmes, London Legacy Development Corporation, Head of Landscape [Apologies] 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 [Apologies] John Tweddle, Natural History Museum, Head of Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity
Attendees & Observers:	Yvette Smith, Senior Community Engagement Officer, GLA City Intelligence Katrien Lindemans, Senior Community Engagement Officer, GLA City Intelligence Emily Fox, Youth Programmes Officer, London Wildlife Trust Charlie Nwanodi, Youth Volunteering Coordinator and Former Keeping It Wild Trainee, London Wildlife Trust John Bryden, Head of Improving Rivers, Thames21
GLA Environment Staff:	Abby Crisostomo, Head of Green Infrastructure Sam Davenport, Principal Policy Officer Kristiina Yang, Senior Policy and Programme Officer Catherine Barber, Assistant Director – Environment and Energy Alastair Harper, Senior Advisor to Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy

Background

On 13th December 2021, the Mayor announced that he would establish a London Rewilding Taskforce as a 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 are working 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. The first meeting took place in April 2022, the second in July 2022, and the third in November 2022 is covered by this summary.

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Introduction and Previous Meeting Minutes: Members were welcomed by the Chair to the third meeting of the Taskforce. The minutes from the second meeting of 14 July 2022 and supplementary call were approved. Updates were made including on the second round of the Mayor's Rewild London Fund and the Mayor's £3.1m mass tree planting package announced in

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July 2022. The Rewild London Fund grant prospectus was updated to reflect discussions of the Taskforce by supporting projects at a broader range of spatial scales.

Confirm Principles and Parameters for Urban Rewilding; and Discussion on Large-scale Rewilding Recommendations: The Taskforce approved the principles and parameters of rewilding in London, and it was noted that these would be used to identify and map areas for potential large-scale rewilding. The Taskforce moved into discussion on recommendations to enable and support development and implementation of large-scale rewilding projects, with a particular focus on recommendations around funding and policy. Key points are summarised:

- A strategic group or body is needed to coordinate stakeholders around rewilding projects and to drive the concept forward in London. This must be appropriately resourced and must work as part of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy development process. It should also serve as a central source of information on rewilding in London and work across GLA boundaries. Given that rewilding is a relatively novel approach in urban areas, appropriate monitoring and reporting is required to understand if these projects are delivering intended benefits to people and wildlife.
- Efforts to lobby national government on changes to environmental and planning policies to enable rewilding should focus on both retaining and improving existing policies. Green Belt policy is of particular interest, and there need to be new mechanisms to assess and consider where poor quality land could deliver more benefits as rewilding sites and how this could be funded.
- Access of these sites to Londoners is key and will support in promoting the rewilding approach to local communities, particularly where rewilding may not be widely understood or accepted. Communities must be engaged in the development of the large-scale rewilding sites. Efforts must also be made to engage Londoners through smaller scale projects and actions (discussed further in next section of the meeting).

Presentations on Public Engagement in Rewilding: Three presentations were given to the Taskforce focused on various aspects of public engagement in rewilding already taking place in London. Yvette Smith and Katrien Lindemans (GLA City Intelligence) presented on the outcomes of the Talk London discussion and survey on rewilding. They noted that amongst Talk London members (not representative of all Londoners), most understood the concept, and supported rewilding but were concerned about insufficient locations for rewilding in London. Emily Fox and Charlie Nwanody (London Wildlife Trust) presented on youth engagement being delivered by the London Wildlife Trust, including traineeships, mentoring and volunteering opportunities in the nature conservation sector, and provided tips on engaging youth. John Bryden (Thames21) presented on Thames21 initiatives to engage communities and the public in river restoration action, including volunteering, training, and citizen science. Following the presentations, the Taskforce members asked questions and mentioned some of their own initiatives related to public engagement, including Rewilding Britain's Local Rewilding Networks, the Knepp Estate, and a new Natural History Museum-led project to create education nature parks at schools. A key point was for public engagement recommended by the Taskforce to build on existing initiatives being delivered already and help to promote these.

Discussion on Public Engagement Recommendations: To provide framing for the discussion on public engagement recommendations, Abby Crisostomo (GLA) presented on relevant community engagement activities and programmes being delivered by the GLA Environment team. These included National Park City Festival, London Nature Trails, London Schools Climate Kick-Start, Greener Together, Grow Back Greener Fund and Rewild London Fund. Engagement

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around rewilding must add value to existing initiatives, and connect to themes that Londoners face, while demonstrating social value and building on the work of London's green recovery.

Members then discussed their potential ideas for public engagement recommendations related to rewilding, as summarised:

- Inclusive and accessible terminology to discuss rewilding is needed, particularly to reach youth and underrepresented communities. More effort and resource are needed to reach people where they are, for instance by using social media more effectively, and engaging Londoners through faith groups, friends of parks groups, artists / cultural initiatives, schools, trusted community leaders and champions.
- Rewilding engagement should look to galvanise support for large-scale projects to ensure their longevity and sustainability by giving communities a sense of ownership and stewardship of these projects. But engagement should also aim to get more people on board with rewilding in London to create acceptance and understanding of long-term nature recovery in London (and beyond) where rewilding provides an effective hook or branding that inspires interest and engagement. An opportunity may be to have the public map or identify locations for rewilding in their local areas.
- All engagement needs to make clear firstly, why rewilding as an approach, and secondly, why rewilding as an approach in a particular location. Bottom-up engagement should be encouraged, rather than having Mayor, environmental communities, academics, etc. telling communities why they need rewilding. Give people time and space to consider what they need in their own communities. Messaging around rewilding should be embedded into existing communications and initiatives around access to nature by GLA and partners.

Next Steps and Work Programme: The Chair summarised the actions of the meeting. GLA officers provided an update on the review of the recommendations report and Mayoral engagement in COP15. For COP15, GLA will be highlighting Rewild London Fund round one projects on social media and the Mayor will announce that London will sign on to the Montreal Pledge on Cities United in Action for Biodiversity led by Montreal Mayor Plante, which includes 15 actions that cities will take for biodiversity.

The actions from the meeting are as follows:

- Taskforce members to provide any final comments on principles and parameters (agreed during the meeting), and large-scale recommendations.
- GLA officers to draft further detail of large-scale recommendations and public engagement recommendations based on meeting discussion to be circulated to Taskforce as part of final report.
- GLA officers to follow up with Natural History Museum re. Education Nature Parks.
- GLA officers will share text of Montreal Pledge with Taskforce members. Taskforce members should inform GLA officers if they would like to communicate any of their COP15 activities / messaging.
- GLA officers will share minutes and summary of meeting, presentation slides, and draft of recommendations report with Taskforce members for review.

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

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