

National Park City

A proposal to make Greater London the world's first National Park City
Text Only Version

Let's make London the world's first National Park City. A city where people and nature are better connected. A city that is rich with wildlife and every child benefits from exploring, playing and learning outdoors. A city where we all enjoy high-quality green spaces, the air is clean to breathe, it's a pleasure to swim in its rivers and green homes are affordable. Together we can make London a greener, healthier and fairer place to live. Together we can make London a National Park City.

Why not?

Help make it happen

Over the last 18 months, a movement has been growing, drawing together Londoners who want to make our city greener, healthier, fairer and even more beautiful.

Who's involved? All kinds of people – cyclists, scientists, tree climbers, teachers, students, pensioners, unemployed, under-employed, doctors, swimmers, gardeners, artists, walkers, kayakers, activists, wildlife watchers, politicians, children, parents and grandparents.

We are a group of people who believe we have the potential to benefit more from our incredible city and that, in turn, our city has the potential to benefit more from us, too.

Ours is a people's movement, and together we've started something.

In just one year, our initiative has gained support from more than 100 organisations, ranging from small community groups to universities and large companies.

The London Assembly unanimously passed a motion to help us develop our vision. Support has come from Conservative, Green, Liberal Democrats and Labour politicians and four London councils.

This paper follows a major event at Southbank, a public consultation, and has been made possible by a successful crowdfunding campaign backed by 347 individuals and organisations.

What's the aim? For Londoners to declare Greater London the world's first National Park City.

Turning our capital into a National Park City will help:

- Ensure 100% of Londoners have free and easy access to high-quality green space
- Connect 100% of London's children to nature
- Make the majority of London physically green
- Improve London's air and water quality, year on year
- Improve the richness, connectivity and biodiversity of London's habitats
- Inspire the building of affordable green homes
- Inspire new business activities
- Promote London as a Green World City
- Nurture a shared National Park City identity for Londoners

How? The Government is not being asked to designate Greater London as a National Park. By working together to gain the support of at least two thirds of London's London, we believe that we can create something new. A National Park City.

Let's create something new, inspirational and innovative.

National Parks

In the UK, we have 15 unique and inspiring National Parks. These are beautiful and protected areas that include mountains, meadows, moorlands, woods and wetlands, as well as towns and villages. From the meres, tarns and fells of the Lake District, to the tranquility and unpolluted skies of Northumberland, each is valuable and distinctive.

National Parks are dynamic, living landscapes that underpin the local economy and create jobs. They offer opportunities for recreation that improve people's health and wellbeing. National Parks are home to more than 400,000 people and host over 80 million visitors each year. They are extraordinarily important resources, managed for relatively low cost. In 2012 England's National Parks contributed as much to the economy as the UK aerospace sector. Each year they cost each of us just 80p.

The National Park Authorities ensure that our National Parks are valued, enjoyed and protected by working partner organisations, residents and visitors. In England and Wales the Authorities act to:

1. Conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage
2. Promote the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public

When carrying out these purposes, National Park Authorities also have a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities.

Cities

More than 80% of the UK's population live in towns and cities. These urban areas now cover 7% of the UK and 10% of England. Think of urban landscapes and what comes to mind are industrial sites, houses, roads and rail lines. But in reality it is a richly woven tapestry of greens and blues made up of gardens, rivers, parks, woodland, nature reserves, canals, meadows, woodland, allotments, streams and lakes.

Together with our buildings, these green and blue parts of our cities can be made more valuable, wild and diverse than large parts of our countryside. They can be just as outstanding for their outdoor recreation opportunities and are certainly more accessible.

So, why not apply National Park principles to a major city – such as London?

London

London is one of the world's most inspirational, distinctive and iconic cities. Thousands of years of human activity is visible – but London is shaped by its hills, valleys and rivers, too. Boasting four World Heritage Sites, London's urban and built heritage sits alongside its conserved natural landscape. It is home to 8.6 million people as well as more than 8.3 million trees and 13,000 species of wildlife.

Londoners share a very long and proud tradition of protecting and enjoying our natural and cultural heritage. Friends of parks, town planners, the Royal Family, the Corporation of London, the Greater London Authority, conservationists, councils, government departments, developers, builders, charities, campaigners, allotment keepers and generations of millions of gardeners – all continue to contribute to making our capital one of the greenest cities in the world for its size.

London in numbers

1,572 km² in area
47% physically green*
3.8 million gardens
8.6 million people
8.3 million trees
30,000 allotments
3,000 parks
300 farms
50+ canoe clubs
1,000km+ of signed footpaths
850km+ of streams, rivers and canals
13,000 species of wildlife*
2 Special Protection Areas
3 Special Areas of Conservation
4 UNESCO World Heritage Sites
2 National Nature Reserves
37 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
142 Local Nature Reserves
1,400 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

Our natural capital

London's landscape is central to our health and prosperity. The quality of the capital's built and natural environment – its green, blue and open spaces – is what makes it one of the world's most desirable cities in which to live, work and invest.

Parks, gardens, woodlands, rivers, allotments, meadows and trees all have a wide range of benefits, many invisible. From helping to enrich children's education and development, to regulating the microclimate of our streets, to attracting the world's best businesses – such features provide valuable 'ecosystem services' that help to power our lives. Though important, budgets do not adequately account for the valuable services provided by this 'natural capital'.

Global design, engineering and environmental company AECOM has contributed to this proposal by calculating the value of different elements of London's ecosystems. It is an emerging and complex field of work. AECOM's research has considered 12 individual green spaces in London and, where possible, the city-wide ecosystem service benefits.

AECOM's research estimates that London benefits from:

£6,500 of air filtration services from Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park each year as its trees remove harmful pollution from the air. Across London, 8.3 million trees deliver around £95 million of air filtration services annually. This is in terms of avoided direct health damage costs only. Air pollution costs the UK economy £20 billion a year.

£10 to £45m of benefits provided by Clapham Common each year, based on an estimate from Lambeth Council that the Common receives around six million visitors per year and estimates of the value per visit. These benefits include recreation, aesthetics, physical and mental health, neighbourhood development, noise regulation and air pollution reduction. Nevertheless, some important and essential services such as the impact of urban greenspace on the reduction of downstream flooding risks are not covered. The values presented here should, therefore, be treated as lower bound estimates.

£2,150 of pollination services by bees to crops in nearby allotments are supported each year by Gillespie Park, a nature reserve in Islington.

£140,500 of climate regulating services are received from Tottenham Cemetery each year. Put simply, its vegetation stores and sequesters carbon dioxide, one of the most abundant gases responsible for climate change. London-wide this value could stand at around £1.96 billion per year.

Last financial year London councils spent £136 million on maintaining green spaces. These budgets are consistently under threat. London Councils, which represents London's 32 boroughs and the City of London, has given a stark warning that an increasing number of these vitally important public assets may be privatised, sold off and could become inaccessible to the public.

The measured value can be significantly increased by making more of our landscape – creating a greater number of high-quality, joined-up and better used green spaces. Making London a National Park City is an extraordinary opportunity to bring individuals and organisations together to re-value our natural capital and in doing so, re-think how we can best invest our time, budgets, thinking and energy to protect and improve our city's greatest assets.

AECOM's ecosystem services valuation note can be viewed at [NationalParkCity.London](https://www.nationalparkcity.london).

Creating the world's first National Park City

To become a National Park in England, Natural England (the government's adviser for the natural environment in England) must view a landscape as an 'extensive tract of country'. Designation is granted because of its natural beauty and the opportunities it affords for open-air recreation. Account may be taken of its wildlife, cultural heritage and opportunities to promote the understanding and enjoyment of an area's special qualities by the public.

With its distinctive, urban natural and cultural heritage, historic landscape, and many opportunities for outdoor recreation, London meets many requirements for becoming a National Park. It isn't, however, an 'extensive tract of country', in the spirit of existing legislation, nor would it be respectful to our current National Parks to claim that it should be.

However, cities are significant and incredibly important habitats that are full of potential – not least because we live in them.

So, what if we took inspiration from the successes of our National Parks and were to transform Greater London into a National Park

City, a new kind of National Park that sits outside of current legislation?

We've got everything we need

The foundations for London to become a National Park City are already in place. We not only have extraordinary natural heritage, but a strong culture of caring for and enjoying life in our city. A huge amount of activity – some new and innovative, much of it happening for tens and even hundreds of years – is already happening in the capital.

Millions of individuals and thousands of organisations across London take everyday and extraordinary actions to enjoy, enhance and care for the capital's remarkable natural and cultural heritage. From children creating a school wildlife garden, to the hundreds of Friends' groups protecting their parks and other open spaces, to developers recognising the community benefits of creating high-quality green spaces, the capital is alive and vibrant with people wanting to make the city greener, healthier, fairer and even more beautiful and enjoyable.

London has some of the world's best businesses, museums, institutes, universities

and think tanks, many of which specialise in areas of expertise relevant to a National Park City. There are also numerous forums, networks, hubs, societies, associations and partnerships that work to share best practice, lead research, avoid duplication, join up efforts and bring about positive change.

On a policy level, there are numerous innovative policies and programmes being carried out by the UK's forward thinking public sector to improve our cities. Just one example is the Greater London Authority's inspired and informative work on the All London Green Grid, promoting high-quality green and open spaces and their many uses.

London already has a degree of protection for its natural environment. A mosaic of nature reserves, conservation areas, metropolitan land and green belt all have specific ways of controlling what can and cannot happen within them. These measures aren't always effective at protecting valuable places, but they set out a principle.

Many of the aspects of this proposal are not new. But joining them up as an exciting, inspirational, coherent, connected and landscape-scale Greater London National Park City certainly is.

Making a new partnership

There's an incredible amount happening in London, much of it unsung, some of it isolated. Much more can be achieved.

Part of this proposal is to form a Greater London National Park City Partnership. It will uphold the purposes of the National Park City and work towards realising its true potential. It will not have any formal planning powers, but will seek to influence the everyday decisions that people make. This new organisation will add a new layer of opportunity – not bureaucracy – to the capital.

The draft Charter (page 14) will be consulted on during the period leading up to London becoming a National Park City. Its principles will then be set and the rest of this core document will be updated annually. Individuals and organisations will be invited to sign the Charter and become a member of the National Park City Partnership.

The Charter will focus the National Park City Partnership to further elevate, recognise, connect, signpost, share, celebrate and fund what is already happening in London, while working to identify new opportunities, fill gaps, join up, and provide support and advice to those that need it.

A defining quality of the Greater London National Park City will be to stimulate an atmosphere in which millions of people take everyday actions to improve the quality of their lives and enhance the city itself.

Initial aims of the Greater London National Park City Partnership will be to work with others to:

- Ensure 100% of Londoners have free and easy access to high-quality green space
- Connect 100% of London's children to nature
- Make 51% of London physically green
- Improve London's air and water quality, year on year
- Improve the richness, connectivity and biodiversity of London's habitats
- Inspire the building of affordable green homes
- Inspire new business activities
- Promote London as a Green World City
- Nurture a shared National Park City identity for Londoners

The Partnership will achieve these aims by providing a range of support, including:

The Bank of Good Ideas – Recommended practices for improving our city

City Rangers – To share opportunities, offer advice and connect Partnership members

Citizen Rangers – An umbrella scheme for accessing a wide range of volunteering activities

The National Park City Forum – A meeting place to discuss the future of London's spaces

Communications support – Telling stories, celebrating achievements and offering training

Physical and Online Space – To meet, learn, discuss, share, innovate and be inspired

Funding – For small-scale projects

Campaigns – To encourage actions that improve both Londoners' lives and the city

These proposed activities are outlined in more detail within the proposed Charter (page 14).

The Greater London National Park City Partnership will start as a small organisation and then scale up. With a full complement of staff, including representation in all 32 London councils and the City of London, it is estimated that the organisation is likely to eventually cost £4 million a year to run – about the cost of running a medium-sized secondary school. This will be funded entirely through corporate sponsorship, private giving and the provision of services. It is not proposed that London councils or central Government fund the Greater London National Park City Partnership.

One vision to inspire a million projects

It is a large-scale and long-term vision that is achievable through lots of small and everyday actions. Many of these are already happening, but we have the potential to achieve so much more.

“There is a direct connection between the amount of accessible local green space and improved psychological health, increased physical exercise, social contacts, and personal development. As a National Park City, Londoners would benefit from a network of accessible local green spaces, including community parks and gardens, to enjoy the benefits of nature-based activities such as walking, cycling, wild-swimming and gardening, with the emphasis on improved psychological and physical well-being that naturally follows.”
Joanna Wise, Psychologist, Writer, Walk & Talk Psychotherapist and Horticultural Therapist

“Daubeney Fields Forever is part of a vast patchwork of local groups springing up neighbourhood by neighbourhood. Imagine if a National Park City brought us together to create green corridors through our local communities, like nowhere else on earth.” Gerry Tissier, Daubery Fields Forever

“The Peckham Coal Line aims to transform some disused rail land, enlivening a tired part of the city while maintaining meaningful local engagement. The National Park City would be a catalyst for change on a wider scale; not just the individual patches but transformed spaces that link them, too, creating greener and safer commutes and cleaner air, incorporated into the fabric of the built environment.” Jessica Behar, Peckham Coal Line

“Pollinating insects are in decline and a new partnership has been formed to address a B-Line for London aims to link-up important pollinator hot-spots with new or improved green spaces to better support them. A National Park City would reframe London as a landscape where people and nature live side-by-side.” Nic Willett, Making a B-Line for London

“The National Park City can really start to challenge how people view what a park in a city is – the streets and spaces between buildings in London offer a huge opportunity to deliver more and better experiences, environments, economies and habitats for all of London. Businesses can play a meaningful role in delivering this vision – as we’re demonstrating in Bankside.” Valerie Beirne, Bankside Urban Forest Manager

“The National Park City provides an opportunity for London to lead and build a template for green cities. It would draw businesses, funders and authorities together to support communities in building a common vision of a world leading green, biodiverse city with accessible greenspaces for all.” Dominic Hall, Volunteer

“Obesity costs London £900m a year and one in five of the capital's children are overweight. The cost per year from mental health problems is estimated to be £26bn. We need a London that is liveable and that makes us happier and healthier, but this can only be achieved if we have access to green space. National Park City status would remind councils of the importance of public space and encourage Londoners to enjoy and use them.” Kate Conto, Senior Policy Officer, The Ramblers

“Despite the pressures faced created really exciting sustainability opportunities to develop their curriculum, campus and community. There are, for example, approximately 1000 schools a similar number taking part in the TfL Sustainable Transport Award. The National Park City will give children and adults a ‘big picture’ and focus for their efforts.”
Martin Crabbe, Chair of the London Sustainable Schools Forum

“A National Park City could help raise awareness of the benefits of access to nature both within the city and without. It would increase understanding of the importance of high quality and accessible green spaces locally, while also promoting sustainable access to the UK’s 15 National Parks and a real getaway experience.” Chris Todd, Campaign for Better Transport

“The John Muir Award takes its name from the Scots-born ‘founding father’ of the National Parks movement, helping people connect with, enjoy and care for wild places. So we share many of the aims, aspirations and ambitions for a Greater London National Park City. We’d love to work with more Londoners to achieve them.” Rub Bushby, John Muir Award

Public support

85% of Londoners think that making London a National Park City is a good idea and 84% think that it is something London Councils and the Mayor of London should support.

Londoners agree that making London a National Park City would make London a better place to live and visit (85%), benefit children (85%), help to protect and promote parks (88%), and improve Londoners' health (83%).

Political support

Making London a National Park City is 100% possible. The proposition is already receiving support from politicians in each of London's main political parties and at all levels, including local councillors, lead councillors, London Assembly Members, Members of Parliament and mayoral candidates.

Civil service

Recognising that this is a community-led project, Natural England have offered to provide "evidence and advice.. in order to help it to achieve the best value for the environment". The initiative itself is being developed within the GeoVation Hub, Ordnance Survey's innovation hub in London.

These results come from an independent and representative poll of 1,005 Londoners that was organised by Professor Edward Truch of Lancaster University Management School and conducted by Opinium.

A new kind of growth

Over hundreds of years, Londoners have had the foresight to plant trees across the capital. Centuries later we are benefitting from the seeds and saplings that they planted.

While we will all be able to benefit from making Greater London a National Park City, the greatest benefits will probably come decades from now. For a child born today, making London a National Park City could have a profound impact on their schooling, what they do with their family and how they value, enjoy and benefit from London's environment. How could growing up within the National Park City inspire our children in 10, 20, 30 or 40 years' time?

Declare London a National Park City

There is no precedent for creating a National Park City. It hasn't been done before. For such a proposition to work, it needs to have the backing of the people who live in and govern the city.

In the UK, electoral wards are our smallest and most local political areas. Councillors are elected to every ward and local government council. Ward councillors are our most grassroots and accessible political representatives. The principle of this campaign, therefore, is to gain the support of at least two-thirds of London's 649 wards, the Mayor of London and the London Assembly. In doing so, this will provide the legitimacy to transform the capital into an official National Park City.

Across the page is the Declaration of the Greater London National Park City. You, your family, group, ward, council or organisation can help to make London a National Park City by doing these three things:

1. Read the Declaration
2. Visit NationalParkCity.London and declare your support
3. Contact your ward councillors and ask them to declare your ward's support for Greater London to become a National Park City

There are a number of ways you can ask your local community and councillors to declare your ward's support. Write them a letter or email; meet with them; or ask for a motion to be put forward at the next ward forum meeting.

For more information, guidance, and to see which wards have already declared their support, visit NationalParkCity.London.

"In recognition of London's extraordinary, inspirational and distinctive living landscape; its ability to give, support, home and bring joy to life, and the will of Londoners to unlock its awesome natural potential, we declare that Greater London should become the world's first National Park City.

World renowned for its cultural heritage and a centre of global commerce, it's also a place where people and wildlife live together. National Park City status celebrates London's significant natural heritage, recognises its value in supporting and improving the lives of residents and visitors, and affirms that a healthy environment is essential to the prosperity of any city.

The Greater London National Park City exists in recognition of all that has been done and will be done to conserve, enhance and benefit our natural, cultural and built heritage, and to inspire us all to build a greener, healthier and fairer city.

This Declaration celebrates the extraordinary diversity and interdependence of London's people, communities, places, wildlife, habitats and ideas. It recognises that all residents and visitors have the potential to positively shape the Greater London National Park City, and that it exists to benefit and be enjoyed by all.

This Declaration calls for a Greater London National Park City Partnership to be established, and challenged to inspire and support individuals, groups and organisations to better enjoy, understand and care for our city; to protect and enhance our natural and cultural heritage, and foster the wellbeing of communities.

In recognition of all this, I give my support for Greater London to be declared a National Park City."

Support the move to make Greater London the world's first National Park City.

Visit www.NationalParkCity.London and back this Declaration.

London can become a National Park City in three steps:

1. Declare Greater London a National Park City

The Government is not being asked to designate London a National Park City. Londoners are invited to turn this vision into a reality. By working together to gain the support of 434 of London's 649 electoral wards (two-thirds) and the Mayor of London, we will have the legitimate democratic support to officially declare the capital a National Park City.

To help make London a National Park City:

- Read the declaration on the previous page
- Declare your support at NationalParkCity.London
- Recruit the support of your electoral ward

2. Create an organisation

A Greater London National Park City Partnership of individuals, families, groups and organisations will work together to care for the National Park City. The Partnership will be independent of government but will work with government.

It will not have any formal planning powers. The Partnership will only formally come into existence after we have legitimately declared London a National Park City.

To help form the Greater London National Park City Partnership:

- Read our draft Charter
- Respond to our open consultation

3. Launch the Greater London National Park City

Once we have secured an official declaration and established an effective organisation, the Greater London National Park City will be officially launched.

Form a partnership to look after the National Park City

At the point at which Greater London is declared a National Park City – when two- thirds of electoral wards and the Mayor of London are in support – a Greater London National Park City Partnership will be founded. It will aim to catalyse all kinds of nature-related actions – sparking individuals, community groups as well as businesses and government to imaginatively and practically move the city towards what life in a National Park City means.

The National Park City Partnership will add value by highlighting, elevating and supporting much of the incredible work that is already being done across London. It will inspire action and share good practice.

The purposes of the Greater London National Park City Partnership will be to:

- Encourage residents and visitors to better enjoy, understand and care for our National Park City
- Protect and enhance our urban natural and cultural heritage
- Foster the wellbeing of our communities
- Inspire individuals, groups and organisations to share and act towards these aims

The National Park City Partnership status will be a not-for-profit organisation that is limited by guarantee. To be clear, it will not have or seek any formal planning powers, nor will it add new layers of administration. It will focus on supporting Londoners to make a difference wherever they have influence.

The National Park City Partnership will promote a strong belief in the power of learning, design, dialogue and joy to bring about positive changes. People protect what they value and love. While legal powers can be effective at protecting people and places, the power of motivated people to improve their own lives, communities, organisations and habitats can be even stronger.

The National Park City Partnership will be guided by a Charter of principles and values. Based on a vision for Greater London National Park City, it will include strategy, recommended practices and channels for supporting Londoners. While its founding principles and values will be set, the remainder of the Charter will become a document in motion, consulted upon and updated annually, serving as a tool for collaborative creativity and collective organising.

A relatively small staff unit will be responsible for managing and coordinating specific programmes of work. The vast majority of ideas, initiatives and activities will be delivered by members of the Partnership and an extended network of formally, and informally, active groups and individuals.

The first draft of the Greater London National Park City Partnership Charter is outlined below. The Charter will be open for consultation until London is declared a National Park City.

Draft Charter for a Greater London National Park City Partnership

This draft Charter is based on advice from the Institute for Global Prosperity at University College London and the findings of a public consultation. It has been reviewed by members of the Greater London National Park City Initiative's Steering Group and Advisory Board. This same Steering Group and Advisory Board will oversee the consultation process.

Consultation Opens in July 2015 and will remain open until Greater London is declared a National Park City. Please comment on this draft Charter at NationalParkCity.London.

1. A Vision for Greater London

All Londoners can start to contribute to and benefit from this vision today. It is a timely cultural choice, a commitment to a way of life and a sense of place that sustains nature and people.

We share a vision for a city rich in wildlife and where green homes are affordable. A place in which air is safe to breathe, where rivers are safe to swim in, where life thrives and people live richer, healthier and more prosperous lives.

We want to create a London where people and nature are better connected. A city where all children explore, play and learn outdoors both at home and at school, and everybody understands the true value of our natural heritage.

We share a vision of a liveable city: a fairer London where everyone has access to high- quality green spaces, new commons are created

and innovative use of land is nurtured. A city where a cyclist can navigate in safety and a squirrel can cross the park without touching the ground.

Londoners have the power to unlock our capital's extraordinary natural potential and make the city more sustainable, resilient and rich in life. Shared learning, good decision- making and taking action are key to unlocking our capital's extraordinary natural potential.

London is a dynamic city and should conserve its awesome ability to evolve. With increasing numbers of people in the city and more homes needing to be built, its public, green, blue and open spaces will only become more valuable and valued. Design, dialogue and proactive mediation can be used to mitigate conflict and nurture innovation.

We believe that all Londoners should have the opportunity, power and influence to contribute to positively shaping the future of our National Park City,

2. Aims

The National Park City Partnership will aim to:

- Ensure 100% of Londoners have free and easy access to high-quality green space
- Connect 100% of London's children to nature
- Make the majority of London physically green
- Improve London's air and water quality, year on year
- Improve the richness, connectivity and biodiversity of London's habitats
- Inspire the building of affordable green homes
- Inspire new business activities
- Promote London as a Green World City
- Nurture a shared National Park City identity for Londoners

3. Values

The National Park City Partnership, in the way it operates, will be:

Caring

We actively care for our past, present and future, for our landscape, ourselves and all other life within it. We care for and respect each other, and the physical and mental wellbeing of all that live in our city.

Curious

We value the power of curiosity to help us take notice, learn about and appreciate our world.

Creative

No matter what the scale, creativity and design are at the heart of the positive changes we want to see.

Critical

We use evidence to critically consider challenges and opportunities for improving all our lives.

Connected

Our landscape, our ecosystems, our organisations, our lives and our ideas can all be better when connected together.

4. National Park City definition

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) global standard for a protected area is:

‘A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.’

While cities do not fit the current IUCN definition of a protected area, it would be possible for the IUCN to agree a new category that would be fitting. This has the potential to be called an informal or semi-protected area.

A working definition for a National Park City is:

‘A large urban area that is managed and semi-protected through both formal and informal means to enhance the natural capital of its living landscape. A defining feature is the widespread and significant commitment of residents, visitors and decision-makers to allow natural processes to provide a foundation for a better quality of life for wildlife and people.’

A working definition for a National Park City Partnership is:

‘The organisation responsible for inspiring and supporting people and organisations to deliver this commitment.’

London’s landscape is currently partially protected through legal means. The Greater London National Park City Partnership will primarily focus its attention on ‘other effective means’, by supporting learning and civic action.

5. Formation and structure

The structure of the National Park City Partnership will be based on a flexible network model. It will enable all involved parties, whether existing groups and organisations, volunteers, sponsors or other types of supporters, to work together to make the vision of the National Park City a reality. Set up as a not-for-profit, asset-locked organisation that is Limited by Guarantee, there will be a Board of Trustees supported by a small Executive Team and a network of action-based communities and local organisers. It will be decided through the consultation process whether it should be a charity or not.

Before its launch, individuals, groups and organisations will be invited to become founding members of the National Park City Partnership and will agree its final Charter and Articles of Association. The first drafts of these documents will both be developed through an open consultation with the public, before final drafts are voted on and agreed by the founding members. The National Park City Partnership will be bound and guided by these documents.

The organisation will be accountable to both a Board of Trustees and its members.

The Board of Trustees will be ultimately responsible for the organisation. It will ensure that the organisation is running well and working towards its purposes. It will be the Trustees’ mission to maintain the integrity of the Greater London National Park City.

The Executive Team will be in charge of day-to-day management decisions and the implementation of the organisation's short- and long-term plans. A National Park City Leader will manager the Staff Unit and act as the key liaison between the Trustees and staff, communities of action and the public.

The Staff Unit will be responsible for the management and delivery of the Partnership and its projects. The Unit will eventually include a full complement of City Rangers, as well as supporting communications and administrative staff.

Staff Volunteers will be an extended team of recognised individuals who are volunteering, are embedded within other organisations or have been seconded into the Partnership.

The Advisory Board will be responsible for maintaining the Charter – this document in motion – and its recommended practices. The Advisory Board will maintain the Charter by working closely with the Partnership's Communities of Practice and Communities of Interest. The Advisory Board's meetings will rotate through the capital's geographical areas.

Communities of Practice will be professional networks, each with their own Steering Group. They will exist to share experience, evidence and expertise, and to propose recommended professional practices to the Charter and Advisory Board. Communities of Practice may include networks for health, education, recreation, housing, art, design and more. Existing forums, networks and groups will be able to join relevant Communities of Practice, as well as crosscutting programmes that overlap with other areas of expertise.

Communities of Interest will be more informal and organised by and for amateurs, enthusiasts and volunteers. Organised to overlap with the Communities of Practice, these groups will also make recommendations to the Charter, but will be focused more on the everyday things that Londoners can all do.

6. The Bank of Good Ideas

This Charter will eventually include a wide variety of recommended practices and standards that will be agreed by the National Park City Partnership's signatory members and maintained within the Bank of Good Ideas.

While many of the standards already exist and will be signposted, others may be proposed and developed by members of the National Park City Partnership. The recommended practices will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. The Charter is therefore iterative.

Individuals and organisations that work to the recommended practices and invest in the Bank of Good Ideas will be recognised for doing so. Organisations that are signatories of the Charter will be able to access awards, networks, influence the Charter itself and – in some cases – unlock funding.

Where possible, the practices will be pegged to appropriate targets that have been set by the Mayor of London, London councils, the NHS, Natural England or other organisations. While these organisations may be working to hit a target from the top down, it is the aspiration that the Greater London National Park City Partnership will be able to encourage action from the bottom up. Increasing tree

cover in the urban forest and replacing concrete drives with sustainable urban drainage systems are just two examples.

Other recommended practices may include parks achieving Green Flag Award Status, schools ensuring all children regularly have quality time outdoors, or residents teaming up to create green corridors where they live.

The recommended practices will act as a guide for individuals and organisations looking for help on how to have a positive influence on the Greater London National Park City.

7. Implementation of the charter

It will be the responsibility of the Greater London National Park City Partnership to uphold the Charter and for the Staff Unit to maintain and implement a management plan for its delivery.

The Greater London National Park City Partnership will implement the Charter by inspiring Londoners through storytelling, campaigns, awards and showcases that celebrate and spread great ideas and achievements. It will help people to learn by giving and signposting advice, sharing current research, linking people to training and creating the space and facilitation for people to learn from each other. Finally, it will help everyone to act by leading on city-wide campaigns, giving funding to projects and piloting a proactive mediation service for communities looking to make better use of their spaces.

The National Park City Partnership will add a new layer of hope and opportunity to the capital.

7.1 Distinctively adding value

The Greater London National Park City is in itself an exciting idea that invites Londoners to dream about what our capital is and what it can become. It opens up an opportunity for a new kind of conversation about what we want our relationship with nature and the environment to be.

It will empower us all by bringing together our many positive but fragmented efforts, enabling each to be more than the sum of its parts. It will build the capacity of bottom-up initiatives and help them to both scale-up and fill in gaps where there is a lack of community action or support.

Over time, the Greater London National Park City Partnership will work to spark imaginations and vastly increase the number of people working to conserve and enjoy our city's remarkable natural and cultural heritage, while also celebrating what is already being done.

7.2 Relationships with other organisations

The Greater London National Park City Partnership will work in collaboration with organisations that share its purposes and aims. It will support, build the capacity of and elevate the effectiveness of groups, organisations and businesses that share its purposes, investing more time in those that need the most support. Wherever possible, the Partnership will use effective knowledge management to join needs, expertise and resources together. Also, it will intentionally bring people from different fields and perspectives together to share, challenge and develop ideas.

The Greater London National Park City Partnership will seek to directly support London councils, the Greater London Authority, the City of London and the Government to achieve targets that are in keeping with its purposes. As an example, the Partnership will seek to support the outstanding work that the Mayor's environment team has done on the All London Green Grid.

It will aspire to be legitimately recognised as the UK's 16th National Park. It is hoped that, despite its alternative heritage, it will be welcomed into Britain's family of National Parks by Natural England and that it will have a seat at National Parks England and National Parks UK meetings. It will seek to rapidly learn from the vast experience of the UK's current protected areas and its expert employees. The Partnership will also promote and educate people about protected areas, using London as an 'urban gateway' into the UK's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Londoners will always have much to learn from Urban National Parks that already exist in Sweden, Canada and Singapore, as well as experts and organisations around the world. It is vital that the Greater London National Park City Partnership seeks to develop strong international relationships with individuals and organisations if it is to be effective, reflective and respected. It should also be cautiously but optimistically acknowledged that by becoming the world's first National Park City, the approach may spread to other cities and allow the development of a new international network with the aim of improving life in our cities and beyond.

7.3 Channels for inspiration, learning and action

All of the Greater London National Park City Partnership's work will be rooted in inspiring all to learn and take action to better enjoy or improve part of the National Park City.

The greatest changes will take place as a result of millions of additional unrecorded conversations, decisions and actions that would not otherwise take place. This invisible atmosphere of change will be fed through a number of overlapping indirect and direct channels. These plans are ambitious, but the delivery will start small and then expand over a number of years.

Indirect channels of support:

Word of mouth

Everyday conversations in person and on social media will be the strongest channel, as it is the positive, everyday decisions, stories and successes that will bring about the creation of an effective National Park City.

Investment

New kinds of investment will take place in London as hospitality, recreation, technology, environment, financial services and creative industries rethink opportunities in the capital.

Teaching and learning

Teachers at every school in the capital will be supported to teach children about the Greater London National Park City through play and active contributions.

Visitor experiences

A visit to London will be reframed, in order that tourists can begin to think about the capital in new ways. New activities, tours, publications and visitor attractions that celebrate London's natural assets will develop and be promoted.

Media

Being the world's first National Park City will capture the imagination of journalists, artists and filmmakers, inspiring new stories, guides, products and works. Direct channels of support:

Staff - City Rangers Team

City Rangers will be the Partnership's presence on the ground. Primarily, they will be advisors, trainers and facilitators who will have the job of supporting individuals, families, groups and businesses to achieve their National Park City- related goals and actions. City Rangers will organise events and projects that bring people together to enjoy contact with nature, learn, innovate and take action. City Rangers will connect individuals, families, groups and businesses to opportunities, experts and solutions.

The City Ranger team will offer specialist training and advice on related legal matters, fundraising, publicity, standards and accreditation, proactive mediation, evidence-based practice and linking people to opportunities. A pilot 'adoption service' will be trialled, to support people who want to care for and improve neglected private and public spaces.

While some City Rangers will be employees of the National Park City Partnership, many will be volunteers or embedded within partner organisations or local authorities.

Staff – City Forum Team

A conversation about London's future will be facilitated through the City Forum Team. This team will proactively engage local and city-wide communities about National Park City-related issues. It will also pilot a proactive mediation service for communities, businesses and councils negotiating the future of their open and undeveloped spaces.

Staff – Communications and Campaigns Team

Storytelling is a powerful way to bring about change. A dedicated Communications Team will have the responsibility of identifying and communicating relevant challenges, opportunities and success stories that are taking place across the National Park City. It will ensure effective internal communications, while also working to grow and support the 'indirect channels' that will further raise awareness of the National Park City. The Communications Team will also monitor and provide awards for good practice and achievements.

Volunteers – Citizen Rangers

Inspired the success of the London 2012 Games Makers, a Citizen Rangers programme will invite Londoners to be actively involved with (and recognised for) volunteering to make London a greater National Park City. The Citizen Rangers will work with charities and groups that are already taking action across the city, but this programme will grow the number of volunteers invested in the environment, signpost opportunities and celebrate successes.

Space – National Park City Rooms

Permanent, pop-up and mobile spaces ('Rooms') will be created to signpost opportunities, host public events, share best practice, nurture dialogue, offer work and exhibition space to localised initiatives, promote active and sustainable lifestyles and support National Park City projects. The Rooms will also educate people about protected areas across the UK, including nature reserves, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the wider family of National Parks.

It is our aspiration to float a flagship space, The Green House, on the River Thames. Physically green with life, powered by green energy and built using green techniques, The Green House would provide a valuable space to meet while also acting as visitor centre, promoting opportunities across the whole of Greater London and supporting anyone who wants to explore the capital.

The Greater London National Park City is a big place, so the Partnership will aspire to trial mobile green hubs that will be moved around to promote the National Park City. A potential set up could involve purchase of four convertible containers that could be parked in different neighbourhoods and moved on a monthly basis.

Online – National Park City Platform

An online platform will have the responsibility of promoting the National Park City to visitors and connecting Londoners to opportunities, great practice and each other.

Brand, Arts and Signage

A cross-London programme of artwork and performances in collaboration with artist providers across the city will be used to narrate the history of the National Park City and promote it among broader audiences. In a more formal way, organisations will be encouraged to use the National Park City brand on signage and in other physical ways through the urban landscape.

Funding

The National Park City Partnership will establish and manage a Natural Capital Fund that is capable of funding or financing projects that share its aims. The Fund will be capitalised with financial philanthropic donations and endowments from the private sector. It will also work as a mechanism to support associational philanthropy, linking initiatives to funders.

8. Programmes of work

The Greater London National Park City will eventually have five cross-cutting thematic programmes of work, each with its own public facing campaign that is inspired by the New Economics Foundation's 'Five Ways to Wellbeing', a set of evidence-based actions that promote people's wellbeing. These will be for people, groups, organisations and places to Connect, Keep learning, Be active, Take notice and Give.

For each theme, the Communities of Practice and Communities of Interest will be asked to identify (and deposit in the Bank of Good Ideas) actions that people can take that will improve their wellbeing and/or the National Park City. Where possible, these will be actions that relate to measurable outcomes and targets.

This work will result in a list of achievable actions that anyone can take and will have relevance to both residents and visitors to London. Often, these will be evidence-based, target-driven actions with outcomes that can be assessed.

In some cases, however, the achievable actions chosen may be based on funding made available by sponsors. For example, an insurance company may wish to reduce flood risk within a certain area and therefore would like a community to improve its sustainable urban drainage. The National Park City Partnership may then work with local organisations, families and businesses to achieve this goal.

The National Park City Partnership will carry out the programmes by coordinating and investing in city-wide and long-term campaigns that heighten public awareness of specific opportunities to improve personal wellbeing or the fabric of the city. These campaigns will be supported by the full range of the Partnership's channels for inspiration, learning and action.

Examples of campaign actions include planting wildflowers to educate children (contributing to pollination corridors), planting a tree in remembrance (improving urban resilience) or walking to work instead of driving for fitness (and improving London's air quality).

9. Growth strategy

The final shape and direction of the Greater London National Park City Partnership will be determined by the contents of the agreed first edition of this Charter. From this Charter the Trustees and Chief Executive Officer will agree a strategy and management for its delivery.

The Greater London National Park City Partnership will start as a small and lean organisation. It is proposed that it focuses at first on nurturing the growth of its community, encouraging intellectual investments in the Bank of Good Ideas, growing its team of City Rangers and ensuring that it has a strong Communications Team. Over time, it will then scale up, bolting on new facilities and programmes of work.

10. Cost

It is estimated that the Greater London National Park City Partnership will eventually cost upwards of £4 million a year to run, which is comparable to grants given to individual UK National Parks by central government. This cost equates to less than 7p per person in the country. To put this into context, this is roughly the cost of running a medium-sized secondary school. In its early years, the Greater London National Park City Partnership will cost approximately £2 million a year, which will be split evenly between staffing and project costs. This is equivalent to 23p per London resident.

11. Income

The Greater London National Park City Partnership will not ask for core funding from central government's general taxation or London council budgets.

The Greater London National Park City Partnership will be funded through private and corporate giving, and selling services including sponsorship and campaign delivery to companies. These will include services that will be of interest to horticulture, recreation, insurance and hospitality companies, all of which have a direct interest in the success of the National Park City. Examples of services include inspiring Londoners to remove paving in front gardens in favour of planting flowers or supporting more tourists to explore beyond central London.

12. Consultation

This Charter is an iterative document that, with the exception of its founding principles, will be perpetually consulted on, improved and updated. It will always be open to improvement, and it will be the responsibility of its consultees, authors and voters to ensure that it is the very best that it can be for London's residents and visitors.

This first Charter will be open for consultation until Greater London is declared a National Park City and will take the form of both an online survey and events.

13. Our pathway

1. Engage London's public – through this paper, social media, events and word of mouth.
2. Campaign with public support for 434 out of 649 wards and the Mayor of London, to declare their support for London to become a National Park City.
3. The Declaration signatory threshold is crossed and London is nearly ready to become National Park City.
4. The first Charter of the Greater London National Park City is published.
5. The Charter is signed by individuals and organisations.
6. The Greater London National Park City Partnership is formed.
7. Trustees are appointed.
8. A Staff Unit is appointed.
9. Launch the Greater London National Park City.
10. Start to make, feel and enjoy the benefits of being a National Park City.

14. Get involved

Individual or organisation, share your intent to become a founding member of the Greater London National Park City Partnership by visiting NationalParkCity.London

We know that this Charter can be improved. Tell us how by responding to the consultation at NationalParkCity.London.

Thank you to everyone who has read, shared and helped to create this proposal.

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UCL Institute for Global Prosperity - Towards Sustainable Prosperity: Making Greater London a National Park City
Prof Henrietta Moore, Dr Konrad Miciukiewicz, Dr Petros Andreadis, Dr Mary Davies, Hannah Sender and Maria Eva Filippi.

AECOM – Valuing London’s Green Space’s
Petrina Rowcroft, Michael Henderson, Lili Peachy, Jennifer Black, Ian Brenkley, Doug McNabb, Mark Fessey, Ryan Burrows, Anna David, Alex White, Christian Bevington and Ben Smith.

Nonon & London College of Communication – Design Principles for a National Park City
Sean Miller and Alison Prendiville.

London College of Communication – Ideas for a National Park City
Sarah Temple and Tara Hanrahan.

Lancaster University Management School – Public opinions
Professor Edward Truch.

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Greater London National Park City Initiative

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