

The Natural Environment Charities Review (NECR) is a pivotal transformation project seeking to make improvements to the governance and management of eight Natural Environment (NE) Charities for which the City of London Corporation is responsible as sole trustee. The City Corporation seeks to ensure that it demonstrates compliance with its various obligations, and that the NE Charities can operate in a more self-determining and financially sustainable way into the future.

This Update reports on the progress of the NECR project as it transitions to the implementation phase. Work is taking place across four areas, and updates on these areas will be provided in future issues:

1. **Assets:** To carry out a comprehensive audit of land assets, both those held by the City Corporation as trustee of the NE Charities, or otherwise by the City Corporation and managed in support the NE Charities.
2. **Grant Funding Model:** giving greater clarity and definition to annual funding contributions and support from the City Corporation's City's Estate, and better empower each NE Charity to raise and manage funds.
3. **Governance:** reviewing and improving decision-making and reporting structures having regard to each NE Charity's governing document, regulatory requirements and recommended charity practice.
4. **Income generation:** assessing appropriate new and enhanced ways for the NE Charities to generate their own revenue, including fundraising from external sources.



Updates at 27 November 2025:

1. Assets:

- i. Following an audit of registered land assets held by the NE Charities, and identification and audit of relevant land assets held by the City Corporation and managed in support of a NE Charity (known as Complementary Land), a land and property consultancy was appointed to carry out a technical complementary land use assessment, based on current utilisation, planned projects and policies, site visits and archive searches. The results of this assessment will help to identify and frame the current benefits and future opportunities for complementary land, both for the associated NE Charities and the Corporation as a whole.
- ii. The Complementary Land Policy Working Group, established under agreed terms of reference, has begun work on drafting a policy which will set out the framework for future management, governance processes and financial treatments for this land and associated built assets.
- iii. In parallel, the Epping Forest charity appointed a conservation and access management adviser, which is developing an integrated visitor management strategy for Epping Forest, using natural capital assessments, updated public usage and transport data.

2. Grant Funding Model:

- i. Taking forward this new funding model in a phased approach, the NECR team, including the City Corporation's finance directorate, have:
 - a) Devised a framework to document the Grant Funding Model principles, once agreed, over the next three years
 - b) Engaged with City Corporation and NE Charity stakeholders on the proposed principles for the Grant Funding Model, including providing a briefing with a Q&A session which was available to all City Corporation Members and other members of the Natural Environment Committees, as well as to the local consultative groups or committees associated with each of the NE Charities.

3. Governance:

The NECR team is continuing a governance review for the NE Charities and considering options to improve governance and realise administrative efficiencies while taking into account their varying governing documents

(including Acts of Parliament), broader regulatory requirements and recommended charity best practice.

4. **Income generation:**

- i. Building on the comprehensive analysis of income generation produced for each NE Charity, fundraising consultants were appointed to explore and prioritise fundraising prospects appropriate for each charity. The fundraising feasibility report completed an assessment of philanthropic fundraising potential of all eight NE Charities in view of recommended changes, resource and realistic outcomes in coming years. Taking into account the needs of each individual NE Charity and on a shared basis, the NECR team is considering recommendations across four areas for focus:
 - Governance and management
 - Brand and identity
 - Systems and updated policies
 - Skills and capacity.
- ii. While work is underway in each of these areas, a bid for transformational support from the City Corporation is being drawn up to build a suitable base for future development.
- iii. Following the report of the Biodiversity Net Gain consultant giving an in-depth analysis of potential habitat improvements that could be funded from planning development, Natural Environment officers are devising a next phase of prioritised opportunity sites across the NE Charities and complementary land holdings.

Developments on the above and the next update are due in spring 2026.

