

 <p>LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY</p> <p>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</p> <p>27 APRIL 2017 AT 11:00</p>	<p>Agenda Item No:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>Report No:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">E/491/17</p>
---	---

EAST INDIA DOCK BASIN - UPDATE

Presented by the Head of Planning and Strategic Partnerships

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report updates the Committee on officer initiatives to regenerate the East India Dock Basin and seeks the Committee's endorsement of a draft Vision for the site to guide further work with a view to making a formal bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to address its siltation, the state of its listed features and to develop a small scale visitor attraction which complements the wider Park.

RECOMMENDATION

Members Note: (1) the content of this report and the proposed list of future actions included in paragraphs 13-16.

BACKGROUND

- 1 East India Dock Basin ('the Basin') was originally built to serve the East India Company, a seventeenth century trading company which effectively established British rule in India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It has a significant heritage interest including Grade II listed dock walls and a lock to the Thames. The site is important to the history of Britain's sea borne trade with India and the development of its Empire in the east.
- 2 Since the decline of the docks in the 1950s and 1960s the site has lain fallow and has through time become a site of importance for nature conservation (SINC), is designated as Metropolitan Open Land and includes listed dock features. The Basin was closed in 1967 and remained unused as part of the estate of the London Docklands Development Corporation until it was 'gifted' to the Authority in 2001 with a 'sister' site, Bow Creek which lies to the north. It comprises 5.4ha of which 1.7ha is water space.
- 3 The site's intrinsic ecological interest derives from its location on the Lee Valley migration route and that it is the last semi natural area along the Thames, providing habitat for over 80 bird species which inhabit scrub, saltmarsh and reedbeds along the northern shore. The Basin contains Common Tern rafts which are still used by the birds for nesting, however continued use is severely threatened by the changes to the composition of the Dock Basin.

- 4 The Basin's location on the Thames marks the southern end of the Regional Park; a gateway and first step in the length of the 26 mile long Park.

In 2009 the site was identified as part of the Lea River Park, a continuation of the Regional Park extending south from Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park to the Basin itself. The project involves the development of a shared cycle/pedestrian route, the Leaway Path, linking a series of existing and proposed new parkland areas which includes the Basin. Work will be completed by 2017 on the creation of the path.

- 5 The surrounding area is identified as an area of open space deficiency by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. However although the Basin has not changed during the last 40 years the surrounding area has considerably with the development of Canary Wharf to the west and, since 2005, large scale residential development to the north on the Limmo peninsular, Leamouth South and to the east at Hercules, Castle and Union Wharves where 800 new dwellings are under construction. This new context places considerable value on the importance of the site as open space contributing to the needs of the local area through its heritage and biodiversity value.
- 6 The Authority's adopted policies (2015) seek to develop the site in keeping with its historic and ecological interest. These are included in Appendix B to this report.

OUTSTANDING APPLICATIONS

- 7 There are two outstanding applications for planning permission. The first was submitted in July last year and was for the development of builders cabins to support the development of Leamouth South. The intention was that 5no. of the cabins would be retained and re-used as a classroom/community hub for a period of 10 years. The second application is for the re-location of SS Robin at the headland to the Basin. Both these would if granted require separate reports on the nature of the lease agreements.

SPECIFIC AREA ISSUES WHICH REQUIRE ADDRESSING

- 8 **Removing and preventing silt**
The levels of silt deposit undermine the contribution of the Basin to London's ecology and biodiversity. The Authority has in the past commissioned a series of studies which have charted the extent of this problem and the opportunities for improvement. Silt removal would enable the flow of brackish water allowing restoration of more extensive areas of saltmarsh. Whilst Common Terns still nest on the rafts the amount of silt means that their nests can be raided by predators and further their feeding habitat has been diminished over time, meaning that they will have to travel further for feeding making their colony susceptible to predation. Historically other species have used the Basin such as diving ducks and waders but the reduced depth and reduced water flow make this less possible thereby reducing the number of species.
- 9 Improvements to the habitats will contribute to the following local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP):
 - reedbed – London and Lee Valley (LV) BAP;
 - rivers and standing water/rivers and streams – BAPs of London, LV and

- Tower Hamlets;
- Sand Martin (London BAP).

A plan is required which identifies the extent of silt removal but which will retain features that can be used to support a mosaic of habitats and support a functioning ecosystem. The plan will have to be linked to the proposals for the gates to ensure that the problems do not re-occur.

- 10 During summer each year as water levels fall large areas of silt are exposed leading to a loss of habitat for diving ducks and waterbirds. Whereas this was a seasonal problem it is increasingly occurring throughout the year. It is estimated that the rate of siltation increases by 3.5cm pa. The lack of tidal movement has allowed the growth of more vigorous vegetation which is in competition with the saltmarsh habitat.
- 11 Studies commissioned by the Authority (ABMer 2010) estimate that the cost of silt removal is dependent on the amount of contamination, but it is estimated this could cost between £480k-£1m to remove. This is likely to be an under-estimate based on today's prices. The variation in price is dependent on the method of disposal, being either into barges moored on the Thames or by lorry. Selection of the means of disposal depends on the amount of contamination in the silt. Further studies (Parsons Brinkerhof 2013) have identified that the level of contaminants to a depth of 3m are minimal. However, it would be difficult to give a more accurate figure for silt removal than the range suggested by ABMer and accounting for inflation and other changes which may have occurred since 2010.
- 12 **Works to the Walls, Gates and Penstocks**
The gates are Grade II listed. Works are required to ensure that once removed siltation does not continue. This would require work being undertaken to repair the main lock gates and the Penstock gates within them. This will require engineering expertise and an understanding of the importance of the listed structures. It is unlikely that the intention would be to have the gates operating as originally designed.

GOING FORWARD

- 13 In January 2016 officers received a response to their Pre Inquiry application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which requested the following:
 - a clear articulation of a vision including with a heritage focus;
 - how the project would make a difference for people and communities;
 - further, this had to be supported by a sustainable business plan and demonstrate value for money.
- 14 In response to this officers have considered a Vision for the site as follows:

East India Dock Basin – A living learning environment for the 21st century

It is considered that if this is pursued it can fully address the nature of the challenges the Basin currently faces and provides a platform to secure the interest of third parties including the HLF to provide funding. Further, a series of unsuccessful approaches were made to their counterparts within the local council, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, on whether there was interest in regenerating the Basin.

- 15 However since the submission of the two applications for planning permission in 2016 by third parties local interest has been generated on the future of the site. A series of meetings have been held with stakeholders who have a significant interest in the development of the local area. The last of these was attended by the Chairman, the Mayor of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and included both officers and Members from the Council including Councillor Denise Jones and David Chesterton, Trinity Buoy Wharf, the Port of London Authority, developers Ballymore and the Grafton Group and officers from the GLA and TfL.
- 16 The group recognised the site's significance as open space given the large numbers of new residents moving into the area and that its potential lay in its 'development' as an access to nature site. The site suffers from relative isolation and there is a need for better wayfinding, interpretation within the site with possibly a café and improved access for pedestrians and cyclists. The Mayor offered the use of an officer as a contact and the Council's planning team agreed to include the Basin in their list of projects which could benefit from monies secured through the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 17 It is considered that the next stages will involve garnering support from this group to shape a bid to the HLF with its members providing support and resources. Because the cost of the proposed works is likely to be considerable it will need commitment to match funding from these stakeholders. Whilst it is hoped that a bid could be made by the end of this financial year this could be frustrated by many factors including:
- the commitment of stakeholders to provide cash for match funding or 'works in kind';
 - the need for London Borough of Tower Hamlets to fully engage either through a commitment to the provision of CIL, but as importantly its understanding of the part the Basin can play to support its education and public health agenda in a heavily developed area;
 - the HLF which can be difficult to secure their commitment given their constraints.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 18 There are no environmental implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 19 The Basin has a revenue cost of £5,000.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 20 There are no human resource implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 21 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 22 There are no risk management implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 23 There are no equality implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

Author: Stephen Wilkinson, 01992 709 828, swilkinson@leevalleypark.org.uk

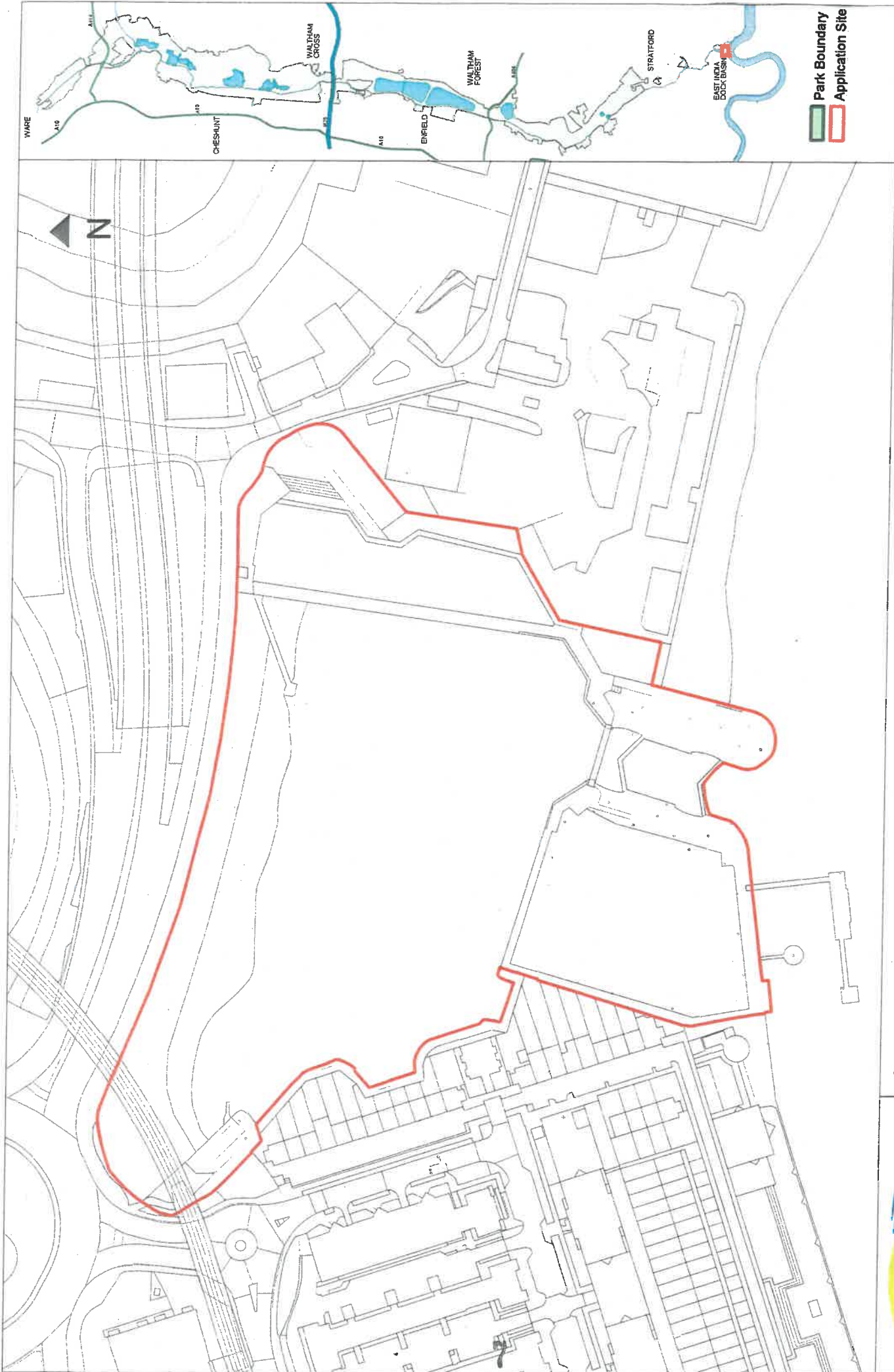
APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix A Site plan
Appendix B Adopted Authority Proposals

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The Basin	East India Dock Basin
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
GLA	Greater London Authority
TfL	Transport for London

This page is blank



Update: East India Dock Basin

1:1750 @ A4
13.04.17

Produced by: Corporate GIS (SA)

File: T:\User Specific Files\Departmental Maps\Planning\East India Dock Basin\Print Templates - Update (SA) 130417-PT

© Crown Copyright and Database rights 2017. Ordnance Survey 100019982



Adopted Authority Proposals

The Authority has under section 14 of the Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966 a duty to prepare plans of its proposals for the development and management of the Park. By virtue of section 14 (2) these proposals are required to be included in the local plans of the riparian boroughs.

Included below are extracts from the adopted plan for the Basin:

- Undertake a feasibility study into the provision of visitor facilities at EIDB, for example seasonal café/pavilion, cycle hire, guided walks, to take advantage of its waterside location adjacent to the Thames and the River Lee and its role as a key destination on the Leaway. This feasibility work will be part of a comprehensive study which also considers the site's biodiversity and heritage value, its landscape potential and the need to manage silt deposits in the Basin as described under the other relevant themed area proposals. Options for funding towards de-silting and improvements for visitors and biodiversity, including contributions via Section 106, will be investigated as part of feasibility work.
- Undertake further feasibility work to identify the enhancement works required to protect, improve and maintain the biodiversity interest and value of East India Dock Basin in accordance with its status as a SINC (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) Grade 1. Feasibility work will need to consider:
 - to enhance the associated heritage and landscape of the site;
 - to protect key habitats - include saltmarsh, reedbed and woodland; and
 - that focus on the partial silt removal and the re-distribution and re-profiling of the remainder across the site to create pools for wading and diving birds.
- Protect EIDB as an Access to Nature site, update existing interpretation and viewing areas, including views out over the Thames, based on the outcome of feasibility study. Feasibility work for EIDB to consider new visitor facilities to accommodate those interested in the wildlife on site and the River Thames.
- Events, exhibitions, performance art, filming and cultural activity to be supported and developed as an integral part of the visitor offer at Three Mills and EIDB, catering for both local and national audiences and making use of existing buildings and the open spaces.
- Undertake a feasibility study for the combined enhancement of the landscape, heritage and biodiversity resources at East India Dock Basin. This will inform its development as a high quality waterside gateway to the Park and the Leaway path and its importance as an Access to Nature site.
- Protect, enhance and improve the interpretation of listed heritage features and structures at East India Dock Basin as an integral part of its development as a visitor attraction/destination and gateway to the Regional Park. Further feasibility work to identify works to improve and preserve the heritage assets.
- Carry out further feasibility work relating to the management, regrading and removal of silt deposits in the Basin at East India Dock. Appraisal and assessment of the works required to inform the future development of the site as a visitor hub and gateway to the Regional Park, and to take full account of its biodiversity and heritage resources.