

Creating a lasting positive social impact in our communities

Social impact strategy 2021





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Introduction

“We want to build a sustainable legacy for our great capital city with positive social impact at its heart, whilst also supporting a thriving economy for London’s future.”

Our purpose is to unlock potential, creating sustainable spaces for London to thrive. After all, when our communities thrive, our business thrives too.

There are huge social, environmental and economic challenges in London, with some of the most disadvantaged communities in the UK located within the central London boroughs in which we are working. The global pandemic further exacerbated these challenges and in 2020, through our COVID-19 Community Fund, we built new relationships with community groups who are working hard to address inequality across London boroughs.

In our Sustainability Statement of Intent, “The Time is Now”, we committed to creating at least £10 million of social value by 2030 and we want this to be long lasting, measurable, positive impact that would not have been created without our direct involvement.

Our stakeholders rightly expect this too. Our borough councils want to know how we are supporting the long-term wellbeing of their residents, our occupiers are increasingly focused on sustainability and our employees want to work for a purpose led, inclusive business.

The real estate sector is understandably being called to account on diversity, equity and inclusion, with the industry needing to better reflect its customers and the communities in which it operates. Through our social impact strategy, we believe we can positively influence this, harnessing our employees and supply chain to help improve accessibility to our industry through apprenticeships, work placements and mentoring. This will also support GPE in creating an even more inclusive business and provide opportunities for our employees to directly create social value.

Within this social impact strategy, we have set out our priorities, how we can make a difference and how a focus on social impact can bring business benefits. To be successful, local engagement will be critical. We know that each of the boroughs in which we work have different issues to contend with and that within boroughs, levels of inequality vary considerably. As a result, a hyper-local approach will be needed.

We have clearly set out the actions we will take and how we will hold ourselves to account. We will be transparent in how we are measuring our social value and report progress annually. Through regular engagement with community groups and our other stakeholders, we will learn and adapt our approach as we make progress towards achieving our vision to “**create a lasting positive impact in our communities**”.

See page 5 for an overview of our strategy

What does social value mean to GPE?

For GPE, creating social value means supporting the people and the communities in which we work to have a better quality of life, through more conscious, targeted decisions aligned to our purpose.

As a property owner and developer with a long history of operating within central London, we have always worked hard to maintain close, positive relationships with our community.

The widening inequality gap has been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. This, coupled with the growing recognition that the climate emergency will disproportionately impact those who are most disadvantaged, has led to an urgent need for businesses to re-evaluate their contribution to, and role within society.

Changes to local planning requirements and updates to the Social Value Act are also driving change, with developers increasingly expected to integrate community needs and social value into their plans.

The UK Green Building Council states that “in the context of the built environment, social value is created when buildings, places and infrastructure support environmental, economic and social wellbeing and in doing so improve the quality of life of people”.

In our Sustainability Statement of Intent, launched in May 2020, we set out our commitment to “create a lasting positive social impact in our communities” and to create at least £10 million of social value by 2030.

To achieve this, we will need to partner with all our stakeholders, using their skills and experience, to make the most of the significant opportunities that exist to create social value throughout the property lifecycle.

To maximise the social value we create, collaboration with our stakeholders is critical. We will:

- engage our **employees** to champion social impact through their roles
- collaborate with our **service partners** to integrate social value within our relationships to amplify our impact
- support our **occupiers** through inclusive, sustainable and responsibly managed spaces
- listen to and learn from **community groups, borough councils** and the **government**
- work with our **investors and lenders** to integrate social and environmental impact within our financing
- engage with our **peers** to share best practice so that together the industry can become more accessible, diverse and inclusive.



What does social value mean to GPE? continued

Strategy creation

To create our strategy, we have undertaken evidence-based research within the boroughs in which we operate to understand the current demographic, socioeconomic and educational trends affecting our communities.

We used national frameworks and mapped our commitments against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to better illustrate our contribution to the global agenda. We also consulted with the GPE team, existing community partners and our supply chain.

This work has led to the creation of the four pillars of our strategy (as set out in the following pages), our areas of focus, which will contribute to addressing the needs of the London boroughs in which we are working.

The pillars are set within the wider framework of our Sustainability Statement of Intent, providing a clear link between reducing inequality, mitigating and adapting to climate change and supporting health and wellbeing.

The commitments and actions within our strategy are focused through three lenses:

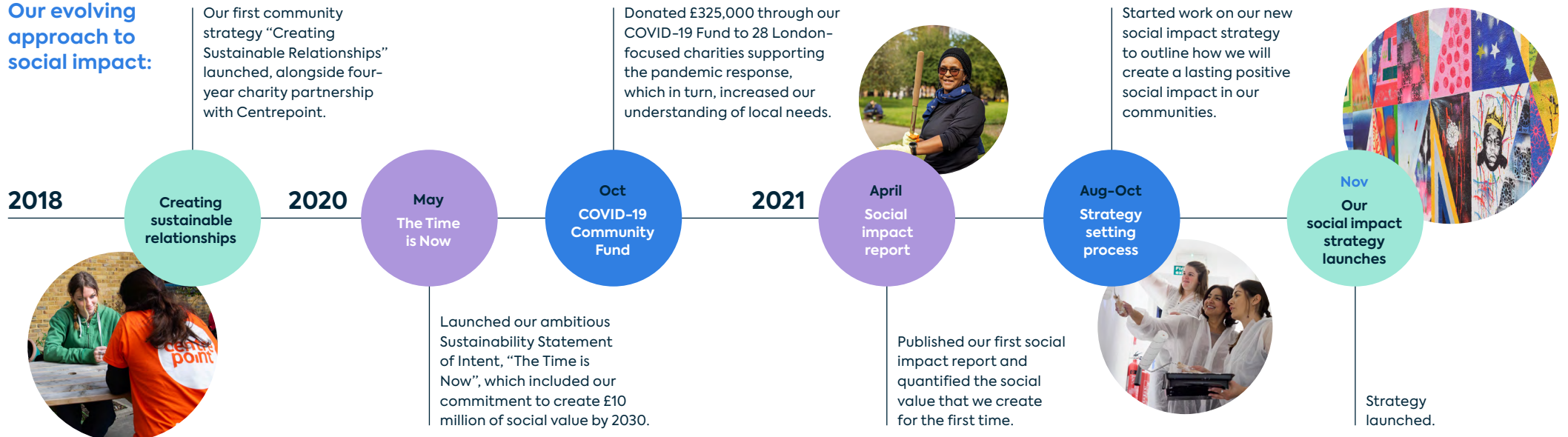
Our people – using their knowledge and experience to create a more inclusive industry.

Our spaces – working with our supply chain partners, occupiers and community groups, we can create shared value throughout all stages of the property lifecycle.

Our lasting impact – to be successful in the long term, we need to build enduring relationships with charities, schools, local businesses and community organisations to support the future of London.

Our tangible commitments, underpinned by measurable actions, will enable us to monitor progress against each pillar and hold ourselves accountable. Whilst there is currently a lack of consistency in the measurement of social value, we will always be transparent in how we measure our progress. In the early stages of our strategy, we will therefore need to create baselines against which we can benchmark our progress towards 2030. As measurement methodologies evolve and we continue to learn, we will update our strategy to reflect best practice.

Our evolving approach to social impact:

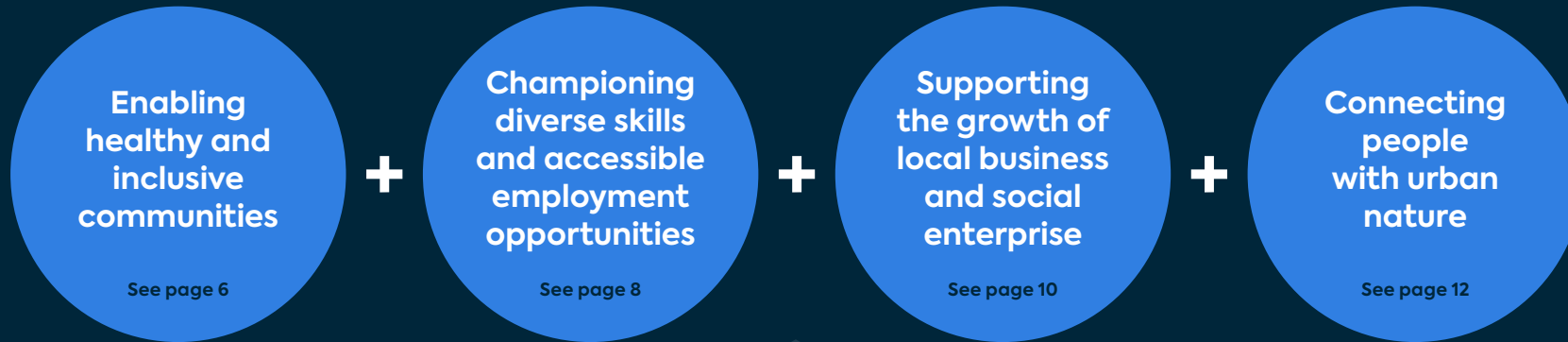




Our strategy

Our vision: To create a lasting positive social impact in our communities

By...



Through...



We unlock potential, creating sustainable space for London to thrive



Alignment to the SDGs

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework for creating a sustainable, inclusive future by 2030.

To understand where we can create the greatest social value, we mapped our targets to the targets and indicators that sit behind the 17 UN SDGs and referenced these throughout this document.

See page 14



Enabling healthy and inclusive communities

All boroughs in which we work have neighbourhoods of very high deprivation (bottom 20%), alongside neighbourhoods of high wealth (top 10%) indicating high levels of local inequality.

Source: Index of multiple deprivation (IMD), 2019 data

Why it matters

The health and happiness of the wider community is key to a thriving and resilient society and therefore a thriving economy. Unlocking the diverse knowledge, skills and creativity of people within our communities is fundamental to tackling inequality and the disproportionate impact of climate change on the most disadvantaged.





Enabling healthy and inclusive communities

UN SDG alignment:



25 GPE colleagues came together to share their property knowledge and expertise with Centrepoint, a youth homelessness charity. The workshop was focused on their programme to create genuinely affordable housing for young people who are in employment or apprenticeships and ready to live independently.

The skills-sharing event contributed 150 hours of volunteering, generating over £70,000 in social value, and provided invaluable support to Centrepoint as it works towards its goal of creating 300 new homes.

Inspiring our people to share their skills



Our people

Commitments

- Increase our understanding of the broad social and cultural diversity within the communities in which we work.
- Inspire our people to help build healthier, more cohesive and resilient communities.

Actions

Organise at least two events annually with external partners to support skills-sharing between our people and community groups to support co-learning.

Provide match funding for 100% of employees to encourage greater employee involvement in charitable activities.

Nurture a creative culture by establishing a programme which connects our people with art, and showcases local emerging artists through our spaces.



Our spaces

- Ensure inclusive, accessible design and placemaking.
- Support the health and wellbeing of our customers, our service partners and our communities through our spaces.

Undertake independent accessibility audits to ensure that services, events and amenities provided in our spaces are inclusive.

Undertake an annual health and wellbeing survey with our occupiers. Use the findings to improve our spaces and develop programmes to support physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Include health & wellbeing metrics within all our community consultations, to better understand local needs.

Undertake regular reviews of our service partners to benchmark and promote ethical labour practices in order to reduce the risk of modern slavery and human trafficking in our supply chain.

Open up our buildings for use by community organisation to help make our spaces more inclusive.



Our lasting impact

- Support charitable and non-profit organisations that challenge inequality, champion diversity and tackle mental ill health.
- Proactively engage and listen to our communities, nurturing a culture of trust and transparency.

Support improved social mobility by creating a long-term relationship with a charitable or non-profit organisation focused on improving the quality of life for disadvantaged Londoners. Give a corporate financial donation and at least 240 hours of GPE employee time each year.

Develop at least one strategic partnership with an organisation working to alleviate fuel poverty and improve climate change resilience within our communities.

Improve the quality of our engagement with local residents, business owners and community groups through the use of technology platforms to reach previously under-represented groups.



Championing diverse skills and accessible employment opportunities

8.9% of residents in Tower Hamlets (one of our key boroughs) have zero qualifications, the highest proportion in London. This is despite London's residents generally having higher than average qualification levels.

Source: Official National Statistics, December 2020



Why it matters

Access to quality education, learning and employment opportunities is key to a fulfilling life. Inequalities begin before primary school and continue to cumulate through education and work, impacting all aspects of life. To promote social mobility, and to address known skills gaps in technology, construction, and career opportunities in a green economy, we need to provide inclusive employment and training opportunities and connect with local education providers.



Championing diverse skills and accessible employment opportunities

UN SDG alignment:



Creating accessible employment

Long shift patterns can be a barrier to employment for people with childcare or other caregiving responsibilities.

By moving our security service partner from 12-hour shifts to a flexible 8-hour shift pattern, we were able to provide access to work for those previously excluded from these opportunities and female representation on the contract has increased from 3% to 12% over a 18-month period as a result.



Our people

Commitments

- Expand our understanding of the current barriers to employment that exist for various under-represented groups and use this to improve the diversity of our employee population.
- Champion new and varied routes into sustainable employment.

Actions

Starting with our Executive Committee, foster a culture of inclusive leadership by developing and delivering two-way mentoring relationships between our senior leadership team and at least six young people from our local communities per year.

Support access to good quality, inclusive employment, spend a minimum of 240 hours per year (targeting at least 25% participation across our business) on mentoring or work placements focused on STEAM¹ activities.

Facilitate two workshops per year with local education providers to improve knowledge and develop the green skills needed to transition to a sustainable economy.

1. Science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics.



Our spaces

- Generate accessible, inclusive and fair employment and training opportunities.
- Advocate and manage responsible business practices to enable our supply chain partners to make a positive social impact.

Work with our service partners to ensure all people working on our behalf at our buildings and developments earn the London Living Wage.

At our developments, generate a Social Impact Plan defining project specific employment, skills and supply chain commitments; this should include 20% of the full-time workforce to be composed of new accessible employment opportunities, 5% to be apprentices and four weeks of employability programmes.

At our buildings, work towards apprentices accounting for 5% of our full-time workforce.

Understand the social value delivered through our supply chain by ensuring that a minimum 80% of our suppliers, by spend, report on their responsible business practices as set out in our Supplier Code of Conduct.



Our lasting impact

- Empower our people to utilise their skills and expertise to support our charitable and non-profit partners and their beneficiaries.
- Facilitate pathways into the built environment sector to encourage a diverse workforce for the future.

Partner with at least three local state educational providers per year to deliver STEAM activities, employability and career workshops and meaningful work experience.

Partner with at least three organisations, and directly support 70 young people to learn, experience and explore careers in the construction, property and real estate sector per year.

Deliver at least two internships through the 10,000 Black Interns programme.



Supporting the growth of local business and social enterprise

All six of the boroughs we currently work in have fewer micro-enterprises than the London average; the City of London has 9.1% and Westminster 6.7% fewer micro-enterprises respectively.

Source: Official National Statistics, December 2020



Why it matters

Diversifying businesses and supply chains at all levels within the built environment is crucial to boosting overall social value creation. Levelling the playing field for small and medium-sized businesses through targeted opportunities during the development and operation of our spaces is critical. Working together with like-minded organisations helps magnify positive impact.



Supporting the growth of local business and social enterprise

UN SDG alignment:



Supporting social enterprises

Groundwork London's 'Rework', is a project that removes white goods from the waste stream and repairs them through a training scheme. The refurbished goods are then donated to social enterprises that sell them on at affordable prices.

During the COVID-19 crisis, we supported the project to provide 119 white goods directly to people in need, training and skills needed to support the green economy.



Our people

Commitments

- Assess and evaluate broader social and environmental impacts in our procurement of products and services.
- Support our people to embrace innovation through research & development-focused collaboration with local businesses.

Actions

Develop and implement a formal scoring process for social and environmental impact in tender processes to increase employee knowledge and amplify our positive impact.

Provide opportunities for local businesses and social enterprises to engage with our people to support our learning and their growth.

Champion our commitment to social impact and sustainability and improve our partnerships, by providing at least four training sessions per year that are accessible to at least forty employees of our service partners.



Our spaces

- Engage, train and mentor our local business community.
- Support the growth of local businesses and social enterprises through project opportunities.

Work towards 25% of our development project budgets to be spent with businesses operating within and residing in the London boroughs where we operate.

Explore and implement opportunities for local charities, businesses and social enterprises to have access to our spaces. Report on and work to improve uptake annually.



Our lasting impact

- Enable local micro, start-up and social enterprise to thrive through the provision of space or other services.
- Use our networks, our collaborations with occupiers and our combined expertise to facilitate the creation of opportunities for local businesses.

Monitor the monetary value of space, discounts and services offered to charities, local micro, start-up and social enterprises. Establish a baseline and make year on year increases.

Measure our financial spend with local businesses and SMEs to establish a baseline and make year on year increases.

Create an annual social value awards event to celebrate the most creative, collaborative partnership between GPE and a service provider.



Connecting people with urban nature

The boroughs in which we work are some of the most green space deprived in England, with the smallest amount of and most limited access to public green space. 21% of households have no garden.

Source: Friends of the Earth (2020) and Fields in Trust

Why it matters

A strong connection with urban nature is essential to support improved climate resilience and the holistic health and wellbeing of our communities. Research shows that disadvantaged groups are least likely to access green spaces; so we aim to design accessible, high-quality green spaces that will help to enhance biodiversity, reduce pollution, improve urban cooling and boost physical and mental health.





Connecting people with urban nature

UN SDG alignment:



Through working with Bankside Open Spaces Trust (BOST), we were able to help keep Southwark's green spaces open during COVID-19 to support the wellbeing of the local community, many of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds and do not have access to private gardens.

BOST is also sharing its expertise with us to inform our landscaping design at two upcoming developments to ensure that we create publicly accessible, high-quality green space that is designed for longevity.

Supporting access to urban nature within our communities



Our people

Commitments

- Provide opportunities for our employees to interact with urban nature.
- Engage with and support organisations dedicated to improving green spaces and access to nature in our communities.

Actions

Ensure that at least two 'Learning Together' sessions are delivered on nature and the benefits of interaction with nature.

Provide opportunities for 100% of our people to support the creation and maintenance of London's green spaces through volunteering with charities and non-profit organisations.

Provide an annual social event for our employees to interact with nature.

1. GPE's sustainability education programme.



Our spaces

- Collaborate with other developers to create accessible and engaging green spaces that enhance biodiversity to enable our communities to engage with nature.
- Provide opportunities for our occupiers to interact with nature.

Maximise external greening across all of our spaces and increase biodiversity net gain by 3% annually across our like-for-like investment portfolio.

Through our sesame app, promote opportunities for our occupiers to connect with nature within our spaces or through local community groups.

Work with two groups focused on collectively improving greening, biodiversity, rewilding and nature-based solutions to support improved climate resilience in London.



Our lasting impact

- Support the climate change resilience of our communities through the use of nature-based solutions.
- Ensure that the green spaces we create are designed with longevity in mind.

Using our biodiversity net gain baseline, create a biodiversity offsetting scheme to support climate resilience.

Support nature restoration by ensuring that all green spaces across the portfolio have a long-term maintenance strategy.

Measuring our impact

We are committed to actively measuring our performance and being open about our progress. This way, we can recognise both our successes and opportunities for improvement.

As set out in our [Social impact report 2021](#), we will continue to measure our impact in line with the National Social Value Measurement Framework. This Framework is widely used across the industry and by Local Authorities to quantify social value creation. It involves applying a monetary value to the benefit created by a particular measure. Key to social value measurement is the focus on the “additional” or “net” value created, over and above what already exists or would have been generated without any intervention from GPE. For example, when measuring the number of jobs created, it is important to consider who is benefiting from the job. In other words, this means looking beyond the quantity to address the quality of opportunities we create or support.

We encourage all our supply chain partners and customers to engage with us in our work to increase social value, however, our approach to social value measurement captures the direct contribution of our business activities only. We are working to improve the measurement of social value created by our supply chain and our customers as a result of our influence. We will factor in the delivery of social value outcomes through our customers and supply chain when the benefits have been generated due to our interventions, but in those cases, we will apply a minimum attribution rate of 50%, when monetising our impact.

We will review our targets annually to ensure that the proposed metrics remain relevant and ambitious.

Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals (“SDGs”)

The goals address the global challenges we face across a wide range of issues including poverty, inequality and environmental degradation. This strategy positively contributes towards nine of the goals.

SDG



Our contribution

Our focus on health and wellbeing, and active engagement with disadvantaged groups, contributes to physical and mental health.



Educational and training provision for young people and disadvantaged groups promotes inclusive education and lifelong learning.



Accessible employment opportunities and senior leadership mentoring supports equal opportunities and will empower women.



Supporting good quality jobs, the growth of local business and innovation leads to sustainable and ethical employment.



Inclusive employment, learning opportunities and our work with educational and charity organisations, helps to support social mobility.



Consideration of wider social and environmental impacts helps to build a society where cultural and natural heritage is valued.



Embedding sustainable practices throughout our value chain encourages sustainable resource use throughout the property lifecycle.



Efficient buildings and the incorporation of nature-based solutions increases the climate resilience of our wider communities.



Increasing biodiversity through our own developments and strategic partnerships helps to protect and enhance natural habitats.

Glossary

Accessibility

Making a facility usable by people with physical disabilities. Examples of accessibility within physical spaces include self-opening doors, elevators for multiple levels, raised lettering on signs and entry ramps. In digital spaces it can mean including subtitles, audio descriptions, or ensuring colour contrast in graphics for better legibility.

Accessible employment opportunities

Encompass both skilled and unskilled jobs. To be classified as “accessible”, employment opportunities must be open to everyone including candidates from disadvantaged/ under represented groups.

Apprentice

Someone who is directly or indirectly employed, earning a wage and getting holiday pay, gaining job specific skills and allocated at least 20% of their time for training and study towards a formal qualification. An apprentice must be registered on a government approved full framework apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship

Covers both on-site workers and office based employees. Apprentices employed by GPE’s contractors and their sub-contractors will also be counted towards meeting the relevant strategy targets provided that they work full-time on GPE’s developments.

Belonging

We want everyone to feel valued and embraced. In addition to equality, we are ultimately striving for inclusion in our efforts; that people are celebrated for who they are and feel like they present their full selves. Belonging gets to the heart of people feeling psychological safety and an emotional and social connection to those around you.

Biodiversity

Refers to the biological variety and variability of living things. Biodiversity is a measure of variation at the genetic, species, and ecosystem level. Biodiversity is essential for human health and wellbeing.

Diversity

Individual differences between groups based on such things as: ability and disability, age and life experiences, learning styles and neurodiversity, race, ethnicity and nationality, gender, sexual orientation, social class, cultural, political or religious affiliation.

Equality

(in the context of diversity), is defined as ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It means ensuring that everyone has the same opportunities and receives the same treatment and support.

Equity

(in the context of diversity), is about giving people what they need, in order to make things fair. This is not the same as equality or inequality. It is about giving more to those who need it, which is proportionate to their own circumstances, in order to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities. e.g. providing more support to a disadvantaged student so they can reach their full potential.

Fuel poverty

Occurs when a household must spend a high proportion of their income to keep their home at a reasonable temperature. At an adequate temperature their associated costs would leave them with a residual income below the official poverty line. The primary causes of fuel poverty are low incomes, high energy bills and energy inefficient homes.

Green economy

An economy that aims for sustainable development without degrading the environment. It works toward reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities, maintaining natural systems that sustain life.

Health and/or Wellbeing

Physical and mental stability (which can be achieved through the five ways to wellbeing: connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give).

Human capital

Skills, knowledge and creativity people have, which can be enhanced through better health, and contribute to productive work and innovation.

Inclusion

We are striving for everyone to feel invited, understood and heard. Instilling inclusion means consciously taking steps to ensure that the people of all communities feel invited to participate in and engage with our organisation. It means making sure that people feel understood and that their voices are heard. Further, it means bringing traditionally excluded individuals into the decision-making process and positions of power and influence.

Local organisations

Organisations which have their registered office address and operate in the electoral wards within GPE’s six London boroughs, namely Camden, City of London, Islington, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Westminster.

Micro-enterprise

A small business employing less than ten people and with less than €2 million turnover.



Glossary continued

Nature-based solutions

Actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural ecosystems, that address societal challenges, whilst simultaneously providing health and biodiversity benefits.

Placemaking

Creating and managing a space which is designed around the people who live, work or spend time in it. By keeping the social and cultural identity of the community at the centre, connections between people and place are strengthened.

Procurement

The process of purchasing goods and services for use by a business.

Property lifecycle

The phases in a property lifecycle include Acquisition, Design, Planning, Demolition, Construction, Operation and Disposal.

Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

The Social Value Act imposes a requirement for those involved in public procurement to evaluate social, environmental and economic benefits in their decision-making process.

Resilient Communities

A resilient community is able to resist, absorb, accommodate, and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and effective manner. Building resilient communities means preserving the 'essence' or 'identity' of the community while adapting the system to withstand future disruption.

Social impact

A positive or negative impact on people or communities in relation to societal challenges, such as health, education and access to opportunities, as a result of policy, or actions by businesses and other organisations.

Social Impact Plan

A list of measurable Key Performance Indicators related to social value outcomes and objectives.

Social mobility

The movement of individuals, families, households, or other groups of people within or between social classes in a society. It refers to a change in their socioeconomic status within society. Improving social mobility means providing meaningful opportunities for people to access work, education and health services in order to improve their socioeconomic position.

Social value

There is no single, one-size-fits all approach to defining and delivering social value. The UK Green Building Council states that in the context of the built environment, social value is created when buildings, places and infrastructure support environmental, economic and social wellbeing, and in doing so improve the quality of life of people. With this Strategy we seek to translate this overarching principle into a set of tangible action areas embodied in our four pillars underpinned by measurable commitments and targets articulated through three lenses indicating our different scope of impact/influence.

Social enterprise

A business which aims to make a profit, but which uses its profits to generate positive social value and impact in line with its Memorandum of Arts. Social Enterprises also have asset locks in place to ensure all assets are used to further their social objectives. This is achieved through, for example, reinvesting profits into the business to fund their own activities or donating to an external partner organisation.

Start-up

A business which has been recently set up and is in the first stages of operation. Typically, less than three years old.

STEAM

Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths; core educational areas from which key skills are developed.

Supplier Code of Conduct

Our code of conduct our suppliers must adhere to. This can be found on our website.

Sustainable employment

Productive employment which provides fair pay and decent working conditions and can be continued in the medium to long term typically expected to last at least 13 weeks within six weeks of finishing a training or support programme.

Tender evaluation

Process of evaluating proposals or bids from contractors to carry out work, to find the 'most economically advantageous proposal', or the best proposal based on a cost/quality ratio.

Urban nature

Any aspects of nature found in cities and urban environments, including for example, parks and gardens, living roofs and walls, street trees, grass verges and vegetation.

Urban cooling

The use of nature-based solutions (trees, green roofs/walls, water bodies etc.) to mitigate the urban heat island affect due to the built-up environment.

For more information:

www.gpe.co.uk

[10,000 Black Interns programme](#)

[National Social Value Measurement Framework](#)

[Real living wage](#)

[Social Impact Report 2021](#)

[UK Green Building Council Framework for Defining Social Value](#)

[United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)

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