

To: Cabinet
Date: 11 December 2024
Report of: Climate and Environment Panel
Title of Report: Eco-moorings Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Emily Kerr, Chair of the Climate and Environment Panel
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Anna Railton, Deputy Leader (Non-Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford
Corporate Priority:	Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2024-28
Recommendation(s): That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to Scrutiny recommendations

Introduction and overview

1. The Climate and Environment Panel met on 20 November 2024 to consider an update on Eco-moorings. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel was grateful to Councillor Anna Railton (Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford) and Pedro Abreu (Principal Air Quality Officer) for attending the meeting to answer questions. The Panel would also like to thank Councillor James Fry, who was invited to attend the meeting in his capacity as ward member and his longstanding work on eco-moorings.

Summary and recommendations

3. Pedro Abreu, Principal Air Quality Officer presented an updated on the Eco-Moorings Project which would be delivered on a particular stretch of the canal in Aristotle Lane, noting that this area had historically received a lot of smoke nuisance

associated with solid and diesel fuel burnings, and causes health implications to local residents and boaters alike.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including clarification on the types of cables to be used and whether they would be compatible with standard equipment. Questions were also raised about the availability of moorings for temporary users, the management of potential overstays, and how rental boat companies are being engaged to address smoke and pollution issues. The Panel sought assurance that cables would not pose a hazard along the towpath and inquired about plans for community engagement to support the project.
5. In particular, the Panel discussed learning from Islington’s similar eco-moorings project, which demonstrated significant increases in usage and reductions in smoke nuisance complaints through a period of active engagement. It was noted that the data and practices from Islington would be reviewed to guide implementation of eco-moorings at Aristotle Lane.
6. The Panel highlighted the need for clear strategies to manage overstays and ensure accessibility.
7. There was also a discussion on the scalability of the project and its potential to secure future funding based on its success. Cllr James Fry, attending in his capacity as ward member, commended the project, citing its potential to improve air quality and its value as a pilot for wider adoption across Oxford’s waterways.
8. The Panel further discussed engagement with different segments of the community, noting that the closure of the towpath had already prompted queries from constituents in Walton Manor and neighbouring wards such as Summertown. It was noted that a communications strategy was in development, including plans for a dedicated webpage to provide boaters with key information on eco-moorings operation, available grants for retrofitting, comparisons of various heating systems, and other relevant resources, as part of the work being undertaken by the newly appointed Sustainability Engagement Officer.

Building on this discussion, the Panel suggested that Council communicates these plans by distributing letters to local residents and boaters, as well as keeping ward councillors informed, to ensure transparency and effective management.

Recommendation 1: That Council communicates with local residents and the boating community by distributing letters outlining the planned developments and work associated with the installation of eco-moorings at Aristotle Lane, including details of the temporary towpath closure; and to ensure relevant Members are kept informed and updated on this work.

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