

**HIGHGATE WOOD JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, 30 April 2014**

Minutes of the meeting of the Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee held at  
Highgate Wood Offices, Highgate Wood, Muswell Hill Road, N10 3JN on  
Wednesday, 30 April 2014 at 12.00 pm

**Present**

**Members:**

Jeremy Simons (Chairman)  
Virginia Rounding (Deputy Chairman)  
Ann Holmes  
Barbara Newman  
Jan Brooker (Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee)  
Marguerite Clark (Highgate Society)  
Peter Corley (Tree Trust for Haringey)  
Councillor Bob Hare (London Borough of Haringey)  
Lucy Roots (Muswell Hill Friends of the Earth)  
Alison Watson (Friends of Queen's Wood)  
Michael Hammerson (Highgate Society)

**Officers:**

Alistair MacLellan	Committee and Member Services Officer
Jonathan Meares	Highgate Wood & Conservation Manager
Bob Warnock	Superintendent of Hampstead Heath

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Stephanie Beer (Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association) and Councillor Jonathan Bloch (London Borough of Haringey).

The Chairman noted that Dennis Cotgrove's term on the Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee would be concluding shortly and therefore took the opportunity to thank Mr Cotgrove for his service on the Committee.

**2. MEMBERS DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

**3. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2013 were approved as a correct record, subject to 36,000kW being corrected to 6,500kW on page 2 under 'Sustainability'.

## **Matters Arising**

### **Sustainability**

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that the photovoltaic cells had generated 1,700kW of electricity since September 2013, and that it was expected that the cells would generate half of the power needs for the Machine Shed, rather than half the power needs of the whole Wood as stated at the committee meeting in November 2013.

The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath added that Amey had taken over the contract for waste management in the Wood from Enterprise on an interim basis and that a full tender exercise for the contract would take place in due course.

### **LiDar Survey**

The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath informed committee members that the City of London was currently in the process of purchasing a copy of a recent LiDar survey of the Wood.

## **4. HIGHGATE WOOD UPDATE - APRIL 2014**

### *Weather*

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that severe weather since November 2013 had caused significant storm damage as well as flooding to areas both within the Wood and on the sports field. He added that flooded areas had now largely dried out and recovered.

### *Highgate Wood Conservation Management Plan Summary Document*

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that a revised Summary Document had been issued following feedback on the version reviewed by the Committee in November 2013. He added that, whilst the format had been revised, issues over poor image quality remained an issue, and that this would be addressed.

Michael Hammerson felt that the section relating to the history and archaeology of the Wood could make greater reference to its wider geographical setting.

Councillor Bob Hare felt that it was difficult to distinguish the compartment areas on the maps within the document – these should be made clearer and their dates included. Moreover it was not clear from the maps which were existing conservation areas and which were proposed. It was also unclear where footpaths were situated. In response to these comments, the Chairman added that this was a summary document only and that it was important to keep diagrams uncongested and easy to interpret.

Councillor Bob Hare and Ann Holmes suggested that black and white maps be produced that could be easily photocopied.

Michael Hammerson noted that there was an error on the timeline.

In response to a query from Councillor Bob Hare, Lucy Roots replied that, unlike the recently flooded area at Onslow Gate, the flood area in Coldfall Wood had plenty of natural light to encourage its biodiversity.

### *Conservation Management Plan Objectives – Progress*

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that the earthwork had been included in a conservation area and would therefore be protected for 10 years, which was also the length of the Conservation Management Plan. There had also been good progress on the Roman Kiln Project with a specialist contractor commissioned to provide an interpretation plan and support with the Heritage Lottery Fund application. The oak decline survey, a key objective in the Natural Environment Section, will be carried out again this summer.

In response to a question from Alison Watson, the Highgate Wood Manager replied that events in the Wood were publicised via the e-newsletter and Twitter. Michael Hammerson added that events could also be listed in the Ham & High. Alison Watson mentioned that the Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Residents' Association would also be happy to publicise events in their regular newsletter. The Chairman added that events were also listed on the City of London Corporation's website.

In response to a further question from Alison Watson, the Highgate Wood Manager replied that efforts had been made to encourage a Friends of Highgate Wood Group to mirror the Friends of Queen's Wood, but without much success. Therefore efforts were being focused more on encouraging the growing involvement of Heath Hands in the Wood.

Jan Brooker requested that adverts of upcoming events be clearly dated – she noted an example of a recent Saturday event where the advert was undated and therefore it was difficult for interested members of the public to know whether the event had already taken place.

In response to a comment from Michael Hammerson that recent local redevelopments had seen the loss of some veteran trees, the Highgate Wood Manager took the opportunity to comment on tree management more widely, noting that he had provided a presentation on Ancient Woodland Management to the London Tree Officers Association in January 2014. He added that he was hoping to meet with the London Borough of Haringey to provide them with a similar presentation.

In response to a suggestion from Councillor Bob Hare that a mock-up of the earthwork be created immediately adjacent to the site to give visitors an idea of its original appearance, Michael Hammerson replied that this would be difficult given that it was unclear what the original purpose of the earthwork had been – whether it had been as a boundary marker or defensive.

The Highgate Wood Manager reported that community and recreation objectives were being met, with an increased number of volunteer hours spent in the Wood in 2013/14, and an increase in the number of persons attending walks and talks, from 599 people in 2012/13 to 940 people in 2013/14.

### *Highgate Wood Staff Restructure*

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that City Bridge Trust grant funding arrangements had concluded in March 2014 and the staff restructure was now

fully implemented. He added that the summer period would be particularly challenging under the new staffing arrangements and therefore casual staff would be drafted in to help meet operational demand. He further noted that Hampstead Heath Constabulary had been particularly helpful in providing a presence in the Wood, but that they would face operational pressures of their own during the summer due to the popularity of Hampstead Heath. He concluded by noting that the staff roster would be fully signed off in July 2014.

### *Budget*

The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath outlined the overall budgetary position facing the City of London Corporation, noting that reductions in government grants would lead to a £13m shortfall from 2017/18 onwards. As part of the organisational drive to improve efficiency and reduce costs, the Highgate Wood Management Team were focusing on identifying areas where income could be generated and expenditure reduced, and staff had been asked to put forward suggestions to assist with this task.

A member of the committee noted that the majority of costs at the Wood - £314,000 out of £366,000 – arose from staffing. She added that, given staffing at the Wood had been reduced to the bare minimum, she hoped that the case had been made to those conducting Service Based Reviews that the Wood should not be considered for any further reductions in expenditure.

As an example of efficiency savings identified within the Wood, the Highgate Wood Manager used the example of the forthcoming replacement of the woodchip surface in the playground with a rubberised surface. This would reduce the need for regular maintenance and save £8,000 a year.

In response to a query from Michael Hammerson, the Chairman noted that the overriding aim of the drive for a reduction in expenditure was to ensure the City of London Corporation balanced its books and ran a sustainable service.

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that sports booking fees would be reviewed as well as the potential for more activities to be licensed in the Wood. The potential to introduce weekly bookings for the pitches would potentially be offset by the need for additional maintenance and so any move to additional bookings would have to be done with best practice in mind.

Another area which saw high public demand and required a lot of staff time to cater for was the wide range of community and education activities, and therefore the potential for income generation of these activities would be looked at.

### *Sustainability*

The Highgate Wood Manager noted the waste management contract with Amey and the ongoing issue regarding the proper separation of dog waste from general waste. He added that the Hampstead Heath Constabulary would be focusing on dog control in the coming year and it was hoped that owners would continue to pick up after their dogs and dispose of the waste appropriately.

He added that since the weather had improved in recent months, the photovoltaic cells had increased their output and the annual target of 6,400 kW hours looked achievable. He committed to updating the committee in November 2014.

The Highgate Wood Manager went on to note that further savings had been made through reduction in small fuel use. The Highgate Wood Team were now using an electric trimmer, hedge trimmer and leaf blower, which could all be charged off the solar panels. Moreover, delivery had been taken of 2 new battery powered chainsaws which, with an average battery life of one hour, were quieter, lighter and had little vibration, which had obvious health and safety benefits also. The only issue was that they took a considerable time to recharge.

#### *Tree Management*

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that one consequence of the recent wet weather was that staff had been afforded time to focus exclusively on dealing with storm damage arising from the St Jude's Day Storm in October 2013 and over Christmas 2013 and New Year 2014. Tree inspection had increased dramatically, particularly after each storm event, and the Highgate Wood Team was following the example of the Hampstead Heath Team in prioritising inspection based on areas of risk to the public.

#### *Woodland Management in Queen's Wood and Coldfall Wood*

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that coppicing had been carried out in both woods during January and February 2014 and that traditional horse extraction of the timber arising had been conducted. He noted that he was keen to introduce horse extraction to Highgate Wood when the next conservation area was created in 2017, and that this would have great educational benefit.

#### *Play Area and Recreation*

The Highgate Wood Manager reiterated the proposal to replace the wood chipping surface of the play area with a rubberised surface, to save on maintenance costs. He added that it was hoped to carry out these works in time for the summer holidays but that this was dependent on the City of London Procurement Service.

He added that wet weather and flooding had forced a break in the football season, and that the western edge of the field had been severely flooded causing damage to the edge of the western football pitch. He noted that recent warm and mild weather had allowed the surface to recover.

He noted that analysis of footfall within the Wood suggested that the annual number of visitors was likely closer to 900,000 rather than 600,000 as previously assumed, which had obvious implications on the level of compaction of popular areas within the Wood. In response to a question from Lucy Roots, he replied that footfall was measured using electronic sensors placed at the entrances to the Wood and the entrance to the play area.

#### *Community and Events*

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that the amount of staff time given over to community and education-based activities in 2013/14 was 1,993 hours, which was a decline on 2012/13. He noted that this was largely due to inclement weather in January and February 2014.

It was noted that the Round Pond in Queen's Wood was actually properly known as the Frog Pool.

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that the Hampstead Heath Conservation Team had carried out some Japanese Knotweed control along the Parkland Walk Local Nature Reserve during summer 2013, and that there were indications its spread along the walk was being prevented.

The Committee noted that knotweed was in fact edible and resembled asparagus in taste, and furthermore it was considered to have medicinal properties.

#### *Proposed Changes at Pavilion Café*

The Highgate Wood Manager outlined proposed changes to the Pavilion Cafe including reconfiguration of outdoor seating, installation of a standalone kiosk for takeaway service, and a separate outdoor seating area for dog owners. He added that the City of London Corporation considered the changes to be conducive to efficient running of the café and sympathetic to its setting. Furthermore, it was likely that it would increase income generation for the operator of the café.

In response to a question from Councillor Bob Hare, the Highgate Wood Manager confirmed the new structure would be of timber cladding on a steel frame. The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath noted that the planning permission for the changes, if granted, would be temporary.

The Committee went on to discuss other matters not contained within the written update. In response to a question from Councillor Bob Hare, the Highgate Wood Manager confirmed bees would be reintroduced into the Wood following the failure of the previous hive during the winter.

In response to a question from Alison Watson regarding Oak Processionary Moth (OPM), the Highgate Wood Manager outlined the steps taken to combat OPM during 2013, including spraying of over 150 at-risk sites across London. As a result it appeared to be the case that OPM spread was slowing down and was moving in a south westerly direction away from the capital. Another round of spraying would commence in May / June 2014. Both spraying programmes were jointly funded by the Forestry Commission and central government and were focused on known outbreaks and buffer zones. He noted that particularly effective spraying had been done in Pangbourne in Kent using helicopters. He added that Highgate Wood was fortunate in being located a fair distance from the nearest outbreak in Brent.

In response to a question, the Highgate Wood Manager replied that the spray consisted of a powdered toxin extracted from bacteria which was then added to water and sprayed as a mist into the tree canopy. He added that it remained active for 4 days and, admittedly, harmed other caterpillars as well as OPM.

## **5. TREE MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

### *Background and Tree Stock*

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that the Wood was home to approximately 5,000 trees, and formed a remnant of ancient woodland that belonged to the medieval 1000-acre hunting estate of the Bishop of London.

He went on to note that the Wood would be part of a pan-London survey of trees using new woodland management software called iTREE, which would see vital statistics of each tree. The data gathered in the survey would be

submitted to the developers of iTree in the US and a report generated for publication in 2015.

In response to a question, the Highgate Wood Manager replied that, whilst the survey would not be directly concerned with air quality, the eventual data set would help establish the extent to which trees affected air quality in the capital.

In response to a request from Michael Hammerson, the Highgate Wood Manager agreed to consider providing a presentation on iTree at a future meeting. He added as an aside that over 270 volunteers had come forward to take part in the pan-London survey, which was more than was called for.

#### *Veteran Tree Stock*

In response to a question from Michael Hammerson, the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath replied that the definition of a veteran tree depended not just on its age, but other factors such as its treatment in the past – e.g. experience of storm events, coppicing etc.

#### *Tree Disease*

The Highgate Wood Manger noted that the main issues of disease facing Highgate Wood were OPM and Acute Oak Decline (AOD), and that the proposed response in the event of either being detected was set out within the report. He added that there was some concern over an emerging disease in the Canal de Midi area of France that affected Plane trees – it resembled a canker and appeared to be waterborne.

#### *Storm Damage*

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that tree incidents had increased exponentially from 80 in 2012 to 300 in 2013, largely due to storm damage. This had highlighted the need to ensure the skills base of the Tree Team was maintained by sharing skills across a wider pool of staff and recruiting apprentices.

In response to a question from Michael Hammerson over whether the scale of these incidents could be met simply through efficiency savings alone, the Highgate Wood Manager expressed the hope that another St Jude's Storm event was highly unlikely, and therefore efficiencies in staff resourcing should be sufficient.

## 6. **QUESTIONS**

### **Insurance**

In response to a question from Ann Holmes, the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath replied that, for insurance purposes, damage and injuries arising from storm damage was attributed to an Act of God.

### **Publicity of Budgetary Pressures**

In response to an observation from Michael Hammerson that the pressures facing the management of the City's Open Spaces needed to be publicised as widely as possible, the Highgate Wood Manager noted that the issues were well known across the industry, ranging from the Crown Estate, to the London Borough of Camden, which was facing a £70 million reduction in budgets.

### **Signage and Bins**

In response to concerns from Marguerite Clark, the Highgate Wood Manager agreed to consider improved signage for the Pavilion Café and the appearance of recycling bins outside of the café itself.

### **Highgate Wood Heritage Day**

The Highgate Wood Manager noted that the Highgate Wood Heritage Day would take place on Sunday 31 August 2014.

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no other business.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee will be on 19 November 2014 in the Committee Rooms, West Wing, Guildhall at 11:30am.

**The meeting ended at 1.00 pm**

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Chairman

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