

Committee(s):	Date(s):	Item no.
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Committee	21 st May 2012	11
Subject: Flood Management and Water Quality Project – Communications Strategy	Public	
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Decision	
<u>Summary</u>		
<p>This report presents a Communication Strategy for managing all communications associated with the Flood Management and Water Quality project.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">That Committee approve the Communications Strategy which details the Vision, Aims and Key Messages for different audiences associated with the implementation of the Flood Management and Water Quality Project.</p>		

Main Report

Background

1. At the Court of Common Council on the 14th July 2011 approval was given to the upgrade of the pond embankments on the Hampstead and Highgate chains, at an estimated cost of £15.12m ± 20%. The works are required to reduce the risk of pond overtopping, embankment erosion and failure, to comply with the Reservoirs Act 1975 together with the emerging Flood and Water Management Act 2010. It will also provide design solutions that ensure that the City also meets its obligations under the Hampstead Heath Act 1871. The project also seeks to improve water quality so that the City meets its obligations under the EU Water Bathing Directive.
2. Given the complexity and risks associated with this project a Communications Strategy has been devised to ensure information about the project is available and understood by Heath users and the wider community.

Current Position

3. One of the key risks identified by this project is the need to communicate and engage with heath users and the wider community during the detailed design stage and beyond. Communicating effectively with all stakeholders is critical to the success of this project. In January 2012 the City appointed

a Water Management Communications Officer to lead on this aspect of the project.

4. The Communications Strategy (see copy appended to this report) is a document which will inform all communications throughout the duration of the project.
5. The Strategy lays out the vision, aims and the key messages. It details the target audiences and then describes the communication tools that will be used to reach these audiences.
6. The overall aims of the Strategy are:
 - Be clear and open about the project, why it is necessary and the scope of the project.
 - Manage communications in the public domain positively and effectively.
7. A two-way flow of information is essential in this project and the Communications Strategy will sit alongside a consultation programme, which is in its development phase.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

8. The works link to the City Together Strategy themes of supporting our communities and protecting, promoting and enhancing our environment. The scheme will improve community facilities, conserve/enhance biodiversity and contribute to a reduction in water pollution. The Communications Strategy will further promote the Heath as a unique and historic open space. There are also links with the Corporate Plan strategic aims of providing excellent services for our communities and valued services for London and the nation as a whole.
9. Creating a Communications Strategy to help deliver the Flood Management and Water Quality Project supports the Heath's Management Plan (Towards a Plan for the Heath 2007 -2017) objective to manage the Heath's ponds and watercourses to enhance their nature conservation value, reduce flood risk and address water quality problems. The work proposed is required to ensure the risk to life is minimised, and comply with the City's existing and expected statutory obligations. The Strategy should help mitigate any risk to the reputation of the City throughout the duration of the project.

Implications

10. As outlined, this Strategy supports all aspects of communication associated with this complex project. It recognises that there are many audiences that require different information about the project, why it is required and the potential benefits that will be derived, not least protection of communities south of the Heath and enhancement of ecological habitats. Implementation of the strategy will be led by the Flood Management Communication Officer whose post is funded as part of the detailed design costs.

Conclusion

11. The Communications Strategy will allow the City to inform and educate stakeholders, residents and Heath users on the need for the project. It will ensure that communications between the city and stakeholders are kept open and the project is positively publicised.

Appendices

Communications Strategy – Hampstead Heath Flood Management and Water Quality Project

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