

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Highgate Wood Consultative Group	17 October 2018
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee	28 November 2018
<b>Subject:</b> Superintendents Update for October 2018	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Jonathan Meares – Open Spaces & Heritage Department	

### **Summary**

This Report provides an update to Members on management and operational activities in Highgate Wood since April 2018. The report describes progress on income generation, sustainability, conservation and woodland management, infrastructure and facilities. This Report also provides a review of the 2013 Conservation Management Plan and a revised draft of the 2018 Woodland Management Plan for Highgate Wood, which has been updated following Members feedback in Spring 2018.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- Members to provide their views on the updated draft Woodland Management Plan, as detailed in appendix 1.
- Members provide their views and feedback on the Highgate Wood – Part 2 Site Specific Events Policy, and in particular in relation to table 1, as set out in appendix 4.
- That the views of the Highgate Wood Consultative Group be conveyed to the Hampstead Heath Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee at their meeting on 28 November 2018.

### **Main Report**

#### **Roman Kiln Project**

1. The Friends of the Highgate Roman Kiln (FOHRK) have held two meetings at the Pavilion Café to recruit new supporters and scope out potential sources of match funding for the project. The second meeting was held after the recent Community Heritage Day in September, which attracted great interest. The

FOHRK have commissioned an independent HLF Advisor to produce a report providing guidance on assembling the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application. The Highgate Wood Manager met with an Officer from the City Surveyors Department in June to discuss obtaining updated costs for the conversion of the Education building to house the kiln and interpretative material. The City Surveyors Department will manage the project once funding is secured. The revised budget for the project is £150,000.

### **Highgate Wood Conservation Management Plan Review**

2. The Highgate Wood Manager has carried out a review of the 2013 Conservation Management Plan and this is included as appendix 2. The review focuses on the Policies which were centred around Heritage, Natural Environment, Community and Recreation, and Built Environment and looks at what has been achieved since 2013.

### **Sustainability**

3. The Divisional Waste and Recycling Review is now well under way. A number of options are being investigated to improve the current service, both in terms of sustainability and cost effectiveness. Highgate Wood's general waste collection and disposal costs were £5,919 for the 2017/18 period.
4. Highgate Wood, like Hampstead Heath, sends a large volume of contaminated recyclables for disposal as general waste. The Highgate Wood Manager is focusing on methods to prevent contaminants such as dog waste and food waste from entering the recyclable waste stream.

### **Draft Woodland Management Plan**

5. A revised draft is attached with this report as appendix 1. Revisions have been made following Members' comments at the meeting on 18 April 2018. Further comments from Members are sought, following the revisions.

### **Woodland Conservation and Tree Management**

6. We have experienced a particularly dry summer. As a result, a few young trees have died off. In the older trees staff have observed that the leaves began to die early. Some of the shallow rooting tree species such as beech, birch, willow and lime have suffered from the prolonged dry spell, but largely have recovered following cooler wetter conditions in August and September. It is likely to be a couple of years before we will see the worst effects of the drought on the older trees.

### **Storm Closures**

7. Highgate Wood was closed for four hours during the worst phase of storm 'Ali' which arrived in the UK on the 18/19 September 2018, causing significant damage in the northern and western region of the UK. Fortunately, there was very little tree damage and the Wood was able to re-open late afternoon when the wind speeds had subsided.

### **Ecology**

8. A pair of kestrels managed to successfully rear five chicks which we hope will mature into adults. Goldcrests were heard often, and also observed, around the Wood this year. Both the goldcrest and the kestrel are European Conservation Concern (SPEC 3) species, so their presence in a London site is particularly important. There were high numbers of frogs reported in the three ponds in the Wood, and very high numbers of beefsteak fungi have appeared over the summer. Overall, butterfly number appear to be lower this year, perhaps due to the very high temperatures.
9. Research in Seville, Spain, shows that ring-necked parakeets are attacking and evicting greater noctule bats from their roost holes. Unfortunately, the noctule roosts in the Wood have been abandoned over the past two years, this may be linked to rising parakeet numbers. Staff will continue to closely monitor this situation. Fortunately, both noctule and Leisler's bats are roosting in the trees in Queen's Wood, and a number were captured during a recent harp trap session.
10. Staff have noted a reduction in bark stripped from trees by grey squirrels this year. It is believed this is linked to squirrel control measures introduced in May 2017.

### **Volunteer activity**

11. Heath Hands Volunteers have commenced autumn sessions after the summer recess. Attendance numbers are steadily increasing with groups of up to twelve volunteers being recorded.

### **Oak decline and oak regeneration**

12. In April 2018 an arboriculturist, who is currently co-authoring a study on oak decline, visited the Wood. Highgate Wood shares a number of issues that have and still are probably contributing to the premature loss of oak trees. A number of these are factors outside our control such as soil conditions and climate change, oak mildew, and high planting densities.
13. The visit was very informative for the Highgate Wood Team and a number of possible interventions are planned, such as mulching and further reduction of holly growth reducing competition for water and nutrients.

### **Tree disease and biosecurity issues**

14. Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) was found in Highgate Wood on 11 June 2018 and very rapidly, with the assistance of the Hampstead Heath Tree Team, a number of other oaks were surveyed and found to contain nests. Unfortunately, the first nest was discovered outside of the spraying window, so the focus of the Team was monitoring and nest removal. The majority of the nests were located around the field edge and along the Muswell Hill Road. There were a small number of nests located in the woodland
15. A total of 71 nests were identified in 35 oak trees across the site. It is anticipated that the number of nests will increase in 2019.
16. The City of London Corporation are currently seeking confirmation from the Forestry Commission in relation to control measures for 2019. Much will depend on whether the Core Zone (the area of London already heavily effected by OPM) will be extended further. This would mean that Highgate Wood, and

Hampstead Heath, would be allowed to control OPM on a target basis and would not be put on notice to remove all nests located.

### **Sports and Recreation**

17. All the allocated cricket matches were played, and a few extra ones were accommodated. The cricket square held up well in the heat and we only had minor cracking on some playing strips. For the 2019 season there will be a concerted effort to reduce contractor costs and carry out as much of the pitch maintenance internally across the Divisions sport's facilities.
18. The play area has only had minor works undertaken this last year. These included replacing fence posts, repairs to the swings and new steps and hand rails for one of the older units.

### **Pavilion Café update**

19. The Pavilion Café has had a very busy first season under new management. Some of the previous staff have been retained and this has helped with continuity and the bedding in process.
20. A report has been prepared which outlines the proposed tender process which will commence in December this year.

### **Events**

21. 2018 Community Heritage Day was a great success. There was a cloudless sky throughout the day, and many members of the local community attended to support the day.
22. To guide future events at Highgate Wood, a Part 2, Site Specific Events Policy has been prepared, see appendix 4. Members views and feedback are sought in relation to the approval thresholds outlined in table 1 of the draft Policy.
23. It is proposed that this Policy will inform the future usage of the site including Forest School groups. This activity has increased rapidly over the last few years and staff are currently identifying other areas for activity groups to use to enable existing areas to recover.

### **Infrastructure and buildings**

24. A new drain run has been installed serving the women's toilets and changing rooms which replaces a partially collapsed section which caused blockages during busy times of the year.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

25. This Policy contributes towards the achievement of the three aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23. Contribute to a flourishing society (1-4), Support a thriving economy (5) and Shape outstanding environments (9-12).
26. The Policy also meets the three objectives and outcomes set out in the Open Spaces Business Plan 2018-19 (a) Open spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible, (b) Spaces enrich people's lives and (c) Business practices are responsible and sustainable.

## **Financial Implications**

27. The operational requirements highlighted in the report will be met from the Superintendent's Local Risk Budget.

## **Conclusion**

28. The conservation of Highgate Wood for future generations remains a focus for the Team, and the Woodland Management Plan, when approved, will provide clearer guidance and management over the next 10 years. This will be supported by the implementation of a new Site-Specific Events Policy for Highgate Wood, and the site is relatively small in woodland terms and its capacity is limited in terms of a recreational space.

## **Appendices:**

- Appendix 1 – Woodland Management Plan 2018 – 2018 (second draft)
- Appendix 2 – 2013 Conservation Management Plan (5-year review)
- Appendix 3 – Open Spaces Departmental Events Policy, Part 1
- Appendix 4 - Highgate Wood – Site Specific Events Policy, Part 2

## **Jonathan Meares**

Highgate Wood, Conservation, Trees & Sustainability Manager  
E:[jonathan.meares@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.meares@cityoflondon.gov.uk)