

Committee	Dated:
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee	09 September 2020
Subject: Superintendent's Update	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Decision
Report author: Bob Warnock	

This report provides an update to Members of the Hampstead, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee on management and operational activities across the North London Open Spaces since June 2020.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members agree the preferred long-term option for waste and recycling as set out in para 10.
- Members agree the policy position on Cycling, as outlined in paragraph 14.
- Members agree the Superintendent's proposal to extend the leases for the Parliament Hill Fields café and Parliament Hill Fields Lido café for 12 months to 12 January 2022 as set out in paragraph 24.
- Members agree the Superintendent's proposal to proceed with tendering the leases for the Queen's Park and Highgate Wood cafés as set out in paragraph 25.
- Members agree the Superintendent's proposal to proceed with tendering the lease for the Golders Hill Park café as set out in paragraph 30.
- Members agree the Superintendent's proposal to establish a small temporary Working Group to progress Forest School Licenses and Fitness Training Licenses, as outlined in paragraphs 56 & 57.
- Members agree the preferred option (option 1) for the Lido Wall, as outlined in paragraph 74.

Main Report

Coronavirus Emergency Response and Issues

Staff

1. All Staff have now returned to working their usual shifts and hours and most staff have also been able to return to their usual place of work. A small number of office-based staff are continuing to provide support whilst working from home.
2. The challenge remains across all the Open Spaces with a significant increase in the number of visitors and the public's fatigue with the COVID-19 Guidance especially during the warmer weather we continue to experience.

Communications

3. On 6 July 2020 the City of London Corporation's new website was launched with new pages for Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park. The new layout is eye-catching, and the site is easy to navigate.
4. COVID-19 signage is still in place around the sites reminding visitors to social distance and to be considerate of others. There are further supplies of signs in storage in the event of any change in direction from the Government.
5. The social media feeds are being used to inform visitors of activities taking place and to engage with users over important matters such as litter, the danger of swimming in non-lifeguarded ponds and where cycling is permitted on the Heath. They are occasionally being used as a place to report issues which are then passed onto the Duty Manager.

Car Parks

6. All three Heath Car Parks are open and operational, with payment being accepted by pay-by-phone only. There is an update on the Capital Project to resurface the East Heath Car Park at paragraph 62.

Waste & Recycling

7. To provide additional resilience on weekends during the warmer weather a local contractor has provided ad hoc support servicing the waste bins at East Heath. Veolia have continued with collections from Parliament Hill and Kenwood Nursery Yard and have recently recommenced the food waste collections for the Heath cafés.
8. Since mid-June, a 7.5 tonne waste collection vehicle, based at Kenwood Nursery Yard, has been deployed by the Waste and Recycling Team to empty Euro bins on the body of the Heath.

9. We are particularly grateful to members of the public and local community groups who continue to help with litter picking. Our thanks also to Heath Hands who have been incredibly supportive throughout the lockdown.
10. Longer term options for replacing the waste and recycling infrastructure are attached at appendix 1. Officers propose option 4 is adopted for the long term, as it offers a flexible, preemptive approach to waste management, where bins will be deployed according to demand, and thus reducing the waste infrastructure across the Heath.
11. A programme of work has been implemented to lay grass grids to ensure the bins are positioned on level ground to reduce manual handling risks. Chestnut paling enclosures planted with ivy and honeysuckle will be constructed to soften the visual appearance of the Euro Bins. A trial of chestnut paling was installed outside the Hive earlier in the year.

Cycling

12. The Open Spaces continue to see a huge increase in the number of cyclists unfamiliar with the restrictions on cycling. In particular, the increase in unauthorised off road cycling around Sandy Heath is causing damage to the fragile ecology of this site.
13. Additional 'no cycling' signage has been installed and large sections of timber have been used to block off the paths most affected on Sandy Heath. We are using frequent messaging across social media to ensure visitors are aware that cycling is restricted to the shared use paths. The Constabulary supported by Rangers are undertaking patrols to discourage this activity and engage with visitors. Unfortunately, the 'no cycling' signs are being frequently vandalised or removed.
14. The current position in relation to cycling on the Heath is as follows:
 - a) Pedestrians have priority access on the Heath.
 - b) The City Corporation will engage with Local Authorities and TFL in relation to improving the Public Highway network around the Heath to promote safe walking and cycling routes.
 - c) Cycling to the Heath is encouraged and cycle parking is provided at the car parks.
 - d) Four shared use paths are maintained to provide safe access for walking and cycling.
 - e) Cyclists must always give way to pedestrians, and the maximum speed permitted on the Heath is 12MPH.
 - f) Waymarking of the shared use paths should be clear but unobtrusive.
 - g) Clear signage is in place at appropriate access points where cycling is not permitted.

- h) Information is readily available to cyclists, along with maps on the entrance signs indicating the shared use paths.
 - i) Engagement with Local Authority Partners and Schools to promote sustainable transport to support children walking and cycling to school. This could include initiatives such as “walking buses and cycle bursts”.
 - j) Enforcement action is taken to address breaches of the byelaws, the Constabulary maintain a priority tasking in relation to cyclists. Constables will continue to engage, explain, encourage and enforce the Hampstead Heath byelaws.
 - k) The City Corporation committed to undertaking a review of the cycling provision within the mid-term review of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018 -2028. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic this work will commence ahead of the mid-term review, which will take place in 2024.
15. The London Borough of Camden are currently seeking feedback on the provisions within the Borough with the aim to “make it easier and safer for people to walk and cycle locally, shop on their local high street, reach their local green spaces, schools and NHS sites, all while maintaining physical distancing”. Comments can be made at <https://camdensafetravel.commonplace.is/>
 16. The Chair, Superintendent and the Heath’s Conservation Manager recently met with Officers from the London Borough of Camden, along with Councillor Adam Harrison to discuss the local cycling provision. At the meeting, a request was made to allocate space for dock-less cycle parking at Heath Car Parks, and to support initiatives to improve walking and cycling access across Savernake Bridge and the entrance to the Heath at this location.
 17. The Superintendent seeks Members support for the policy position in paragraph 14 of this report.

Sports and Leisure

18. The Superintendent will provide an on the current facility opening and operating arrangements at the meeting.
19. A report on Swimming is included within the meeting agenda pack.

Cafés

20. On the 23 March 2020 the Government announced that certain businesses, including cafés should close. The City Corporation has worked with its tenants to provide support where possible and Officers have continued to engage with the café tenants individually.
21. The café tenants jointly wrote to the Chair of this Committee on 22 April 2020 to request:

- An extension to our current leases by an additional 5 years in order to provide sufficient time to recoup losses and provide the certainty that would make it practical for us to continue to invest in our businesses.
 - A rent-free period until restrictions are lifted during which no rent will be charged and an agreement that the Corporation will not seek to claim reimbursement for forgone rent once the restrictions end.
22. From 15 May the cafés were able to re-open with a limited service, offering takeaway food and drinks only. Further updates to Working Safely during Coronavirus in early July enabled the cafés to make available tables both inside and outside, following the Government COVID-19 Guidance.
 23. The café leases at Parliament Hill, Parliament Hill Lido and Golders Hill expire on 12 January 2021. Queen's Park and Highgate Wood Café are currently operating on a Tenancy at Will. Due to COVID-19 and the impact on Officer resource, the tenders for the cafés has been delayed.
 24. The Superintendent recommends that the leases for the Parliament Hill Fields café and Parliament Hill Fields Lido café are extended for 12 months to 12 January 2022 enabling a tender process to be undertaken during 2021.
 25. The Superintendent recommends that Officers proceed with tendering the leases for the Queen's Park and Highgate Wood café as soon as is practicable.
 26. The tenant of the Golders Hill Park café has given notification to terminate their lease on 30 November 2020. Since notice of the lease termination was received, Officers have worked with a consultant to undertake a user engagement, to establish the views and opinions of Park visitors in relation to the Golders Hill Park café.
 27. As part of the engagement, the Consultant ran two online focus group meetings, which were attended by 20 participants. An online questionnaire was run between 28 July – 17 August 2020 and received 866 responses. The results of this engagement can be found at appendix 2.
 28. The main observations and feedback from the user engagement were that the café:
 - should be unique and managed in such a way that reflects the character of the local community.
 - should provide a simple, healthy, homemade offer.
 - should cater for all members of the community.
 - should feel inviting and make the most of its space and location in the Park.

29. The existing café tenants have been contacted to seek expressions of interest for running the café on a Tenancy at Will whilst a tender process is undertaken.
30. The Superintendent recommends that Officers proceed with tendering the leases for the Golders Hill Park café as soon as is practicable.

Public Toilets

31. The public toilets across the Division have reopened in mid-July and additional cleaning regimes are in place.
32. Following a complete refurbishment, the Parliament Hill public toilets reopened in mid-August 2020.

Golders Hill Park

Hill Garden & Pergola

33. Six Wedding Ceremonies, following the COVID secure guidelines, have taken place since the site reopened to the public on 4 July 2020.

Butterfly House

34. This facility remains closed, and the future operating arrangements will be reviewed over the winter.

Accessible Car Park

35. The Superintendent will provide an update at the meeting.

Constabulary

36. Through July and August and in keeping with a relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions the Constabulary have returned to their normal operating arrangements. This has resulted in an increase in the number of enforcement engagements undertaken by Constables. The Constabulary have also resumed their car park enforcement role. The tighter management of late-night parking has helped with reducing the presence of large groups on the Heath late into the evening.
37. The warmer weather in August saw a shift in focus to the issue of bathers entering non swimming ponds and together with a significant increase in signage several patrols per day were undertaken to manage this issue.
38. Due to the COVID-19 prohibition on large gatherings or parties at private homes, there has been a significant increase in such events taking place on the Heath. The Constabulary have been visible throughout the evenings ensuring that any resulting nuisance is kept at the lowest possible level.
39. In addition to the significant issue relating to COVID-19 and extreme warm weather, focus remains on antisocial behaviour, cycling and dog control.

Tree Safety & Oak Processionary Moth

40. The Tree Team have continued with scheduled tree inspections across the Tree Risk Sequencing Area, with 22 of 31 zones completed. All of which were high or medium Risk Zones.
41. Veteran Tree Management is on track. Works have been undertaken on veteran trees at South Meadow, Hampstead Gate, the Heath Extension, West Heath and Golders Hill Park. Surveying of veteran trees is ongoing. A total of 450 trees will be mapped and inspected once the survey is completed this winter.
42. Massaria Management at Queen's Park, South End Green, the Heath Extension and East Heath is ongoing. Where necessary the Team undertake branch removal.
43. A total of 589 nests have been removed from across 345 trees across the sites, Nest picking was undertaken by Contractors and the Tree Team.

Ecology & Conservation

Monitoring

44. Reptile and dragonfly monitoring by volunteers were resumed in July with many sightings of both.
45. A Heath wide breeding bird survey begun in partnership with the Heath and Hampstead Society came to end last month although casual records are still being recorded for later breeding species. Over 3,000 records were taken of over 40 breeding bird species and the data mapped to allow for further analysis.
46. A Hampstead Heath moth survey, due to be completed in May, has been postponed for a year to allow recording of early season moth species. 340 species of moth have so far been recorded.
47. The Heath's Ecologist has been working with the Zoological Society of London and some hedgehog monitoring has been initiated on the Heath fringes such as the Fitzroy Allotments. Initial results indicate that there is a good distribution of hedgehogs in adjacent areas to the east of Hampstead Heath. Highgate School to the north may be surveyed next.

Annual Work Programme

48. Grassland management in the 2020/2021 Annual Work Programme (AWP) has been reduced with some of the early cutting regimes impacted by a redirection of staffing resources to other task linked to the Heath's COVID-19 response. Grassland management cutting maps have been produced for areas of grassland to be cut in August and September with many of these already cut and bailed.

49. Conservation and Waste Team have completed the following works from the 2020 AWP:

- Vegetation Management: Invasive regenerating and encroaching (non-bird nesting) bramble has been removed from across the Heath meadows. Invasive tree saplings have been removed Thistles are being manged within meadows. The Heath Team have weeded, cleared and watered gorse, hedgerows and tree plantings across entire the Heath during the dry spring and summer months. Hazel coppices have been extended through planting. The Heath Team have removed and controlled invasive species including Japanese Knotweed, small and large Balsam, Portuguese laurel, Sycamore, Robinia, Turkey oaks and Ivy, where it is compromising veteran tree canopies.
- Landscape Protection: Around the Ponds, gaps in the perimeter planting have been enhanced with thorny species to discourage access. The Heath Team have also blocked off and protected sensitive ecological areas from off road cycling with a focus on Sandy Heath. Erosion has been controlled by cutting alternative desire lines and blocking newly developing footpaths in ecologically sensitive areas.
- Propagation and Seed Sowing: Willow trees from local stock have been propagated for future planting on the Heath. Bare patches in the cross-country route have been restored and seeded with a wildflower mix. The Heath Team have also sowed wildflowers into meadows with low floristic diversity across Parliament Hill Fields. The Heath Team and volunteers have established new, and expanded upon existing, areas of Gorse through planting.
- Grassland Management: Conservation hay and meadow cuts at Parliament Hill Fields and on the Hampstead Heath Extension have been completed. The Heath Team has expanded the areas of grass cutting adjacent to footpaths to facilitate social distancing. In addition, areas of acid grassland has been maintained through cutting and sapling removal.
- Ecological Works: Heath Staff have worked to ensure that Britain's longest running butterfly recording transect was not compromised due to COVID-19 restrictions. Moth surveying with light traps has continued.
- Landscape & Pond Construction & Maintenance: The Heath Team have built and installed a Swan Island on Hampstead number two pond for signets. Pond and dam structures have been maintained to the agreed Panel Engineers' specifications. Weekly Pond Oxygen monitoring has been undertaken to ensure and maintain water quality standards. Staff have repaired and replaced defective fencing and have repaired cycle paths and footpaths across the site.

50. For the three Gardening, Keeper and Ranger Teams management of lockdown and phased safe reopening of facilities has been the major challenge, for example playgrounds, public toilets and reopening the outdoor sports facilities.

The Gardening Team had to also focus on irrigation of the flower borders in Golders Hill Park, the Hill Garden and Pergola and at Keats House.

51. A review of the Annual Work Programme (AWP) will be undertaken at the end of the Summer and presented to Members. The 2021/22 AWP will be prepared and presented to Member for consideration in early 2021.

Ecological impacts

52. An increase in desire lines and erosion has been observed throughout the Heath and off-route cycling has continued. Some work has been undertaken across Sandy Heath to reduce cycling access routes and to attempt to increase the eroded understory. Additional works are required in the autumn and winter to encourage scrub growth.
53. After monitoring a rare spider has been found on the Heath. The adult spider was recorded, along with several webs observed. The area has remained unfenced.

Licenses

Professional Dog Walking Licensing & Code of Conduct

54. A small Working Group has been established, and the group have met virtually to discuss the draft Code of Conduct. A further virtual meeting to discuss the draft license form and Terms & Conditions is scheduled for 15 September 2020. This is to inform the preparation of the code of conduct and licensing process which will be discussed with the HHCC in October 2020.

Forest Schools

55. Forest School activity remain suspended until further Government Guidance is received which lifts the limitations on numbers. It is anticipated that activities will be allowed to resume when schools reopen in September.
56. The Superintendent proposes to set up a small Working Group to assist with the development of proposals, application form and Terms & Conditions for licensing Forest Schools. It is proposed the Working Group would consist of Members of the HHCC and local representatives, who would be approached based on the areas they represent.

Fitness Trainers

57. The Superintendent proposes to set up a small Working Group to assist with the development of proposals including a Code of Conduct, application form and Terms & Conditions for licensing fitness trainers. It is proposed the Working Group would consist of Members of the HHCC and local representatives, who would be approached based on the areas they represent.

Capital Projects

East Heath Car Park

58. A Gateway Five report is being prepared by the City Surveyors Department to seek permission from the Director of Open Spaces for works to commence in mid - September 2020 for a period of six weeks.

Athletics Track Re-Surfacing

59. A bid for a full resurfacing of the Track surface has been submitted. Possible external funding opportunities are being explored with the support from Highgate Harriers who use the facility on a regular basis.

Swimming - Safety, Access and Security Project

60. The Gateway 1 Project Brief has been signed off the Director of Open Spaces. This formed the basis of a Capital Bid for 2021/22. If the Capital Bid is approved the Superintendent will be authorised to consult on the Gateway 2 - Project Proposal. This will require discussions with the Swimming Associations, Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee and approval by this Committee ahead of being presented to the City of London Corporation Project Sub Committee.

Queen's Park Toilets

61. A Gateway 3 Options Appraisal will be submitted to the Projects Sub Committee as soon as practicable after October 2020.

Children's Playground

62. Planning permission has been granted by the London Borough of Camden for refurbishment at the Vale of Health playground. The planning permissions for the East Heath and Adventure Playgrounds has yet to be granted, as there are outstanding issues in relation to the installation of cycle and scooter parking.

Events

63. The Affordable Art Fair (AAF) have confirmed that due to continued uncertainty around Covid-19, the decision has been taken not to proceed with the proposed Hampstead Winter Art fair event, that was tentatively scheduled for 18-22 November 2020. The AAF are hoping to return to the Heath during May 2021.
64. The Highgate Harriers Night of the 10,000m Personal Bests has been rescheduled to 5 June 2021. The event will host the Team GB Olympic trials and the European Cup, which were initially planned as part of the 2020 event. It is proposed that event set-up will commence on Friday 4 June 2021. The fixture has been agreed with British Athletics and European Athletics and is based on hosting under the assumption of 'normal' non COVID-19 restrictions. It is very likely that should COVID-19 restrictions persist then the event would simply be cancelled or postponed again, as the event is free to attend and relies on audience participation.

65. Zippos Circus have amended their event dates to avoid a clash with works to resurface the East Heath Car Park. The event organisers are keen to return to the Heath and have therefore agreed to reduce the number of performances and the audience size, to fulfil the Governments Guidance. Only 380 tickets will be made available at each performance, with 10 performances planned. This is a marked reduction on the number of tickets and performances compared with previous years. Set up will commence on 7 September, with performances running between 10-15 September 2020. The site will be cleared on 16 September.
66. No Bank Holiday Fairs have taken place during 2020. The Leisure and Events Manager is working with the Showman's Guild in relation to the 2021 schedule.
67. The Leisure and Events Manager is awaiting proposals from England Athletic in relation to the English National Cross-Country Championships. It is very likely that the London Youth Games will not be able to take place, as planned in November 2020.

Planning

Golders Hill Park - Ivy House Monopole

68. The Superintendent will provide an update at the meeting.

Boncara, 35 Templewood

69. A planning representation had been made regarding the basement and its impact on a nearby veteran tree.

Jack Straws Castle

70. A planning representation has submitted by the City Corporation regarding the impact of massing, traffic and parking.

55 Fitzroy Park

71. Consultants instructed by the London Borough of Camden have prepared a technical note having reviewed the drainage submission for a proposed development at 55 Fitzroy Park. On 6 May, the Superintendent and the City's Consultant Hydrologist participated in a virtual meeting to discuss the outstanding drainage issues. The drainage issues identified during the meeting are being collated to enable the developer to respond.

Lido Wall Planning Application

72. Camden Council have provided the City Corporation with a written response. "The fence would be refused, in short we (Camden Council) do not agree with the heritage statement which states that the fence would be barely noticeable. We do also not agree that it is a temporary installation. The lighting is acceptable."
73. A Camden Planning Officer replied that they had visited the site many times and suggest planting some additional spiky bushes in areas where the vegetation is not that thick.

74. The options available are:

- Option 1 - Amend the application to remove the fence and seek approval for the lighting. Taking account of the learning from summer 2020, there is an opportunity to review the Lido operating arrangements that will negate the requirement for a temporary fence. In addition, the Swimming Capital Project will include a review of the Lido boundary. Therefore, the Superintendent recommends option 1.
- Option 2 - Keep the application as it is and wait for the Council's refusal. Once received, the City Corporation could then appeal the decision to the Planning Inspectorate. This option is not proposed.

Heath Hands

75. After carrying out detailed planning related to health, safety and welfare, volunteering began with a phased reintroduction on 22 June. Updated Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work, limited group sizes and enhanced hygiene practices in line with official guidance have enabled the successful restart of the majority of volunteer activities.
76. Sessions restarted at enclosed sites such as the Old Orchard Garden and Whitestone Garden first, and grounds maintenance has since expanded to the Hill Garden, Golders Hill Park and Keats House Garden. Suitable tasks from the AWP have been identified and works carried out on the main body of the Heath. At Highgate Wood volunteers have been assisting the Tree Team to monitor OPM and have also been monitoring grass snakes and dragonflies. Volunteers have also been helping with hedgehog conservation.
77. Much attention has been focused on responding to increased littering, particularly around Parliament Hill, and regular litter picking sessions have run every weekend to assist the Ranger Team. Heath Hands has been helping coordinate and support the numerous local community groups keen to get involved and help keep the Heath clean.
78. Looking forward Heath Staff will continue to work with volunteers when suitable activities are identified, and capacity allows. Youth volunteering will restart in September, alongside support for local community groups and disadvantaged individuals as part of the Community Heath Project. Heath Hands has recently secured grants from Camden Giving, Postcode Local Trust and the Young Camden Foundation to deliver new programmes to support the local community response to the impacts of COVID-19.
79. There has been an unprecedented increase in people wishing to volunteer on our green spaces over the last six months, however, Heath Hands capacity to recruit new volunteers will remain severely restricted.

Highgate Wood

- 80. The toilets reopened on 4 July.
- 81. Cricket matches resumed over the weekend of 25-26 July. In line with current Government Guidance the changing rooms and score hut remain closed. The Cricket season ended on 6 September, and Clubs were able to play between 3-5 out of their usual 10 fixtures at the site.
- 82. The signage at Bridge gate and Archway gate was replaced in August.
- 83. Path repairs have been undertaken, including small sections between Lodge gate and New gate.
- 84. A few of the smaller licensed events have resumed. Storytelling for children aged 2 – 6 years started on Friday 10 July 2020. Children's football coaching resumed with one to one sessions on 15 June. Since July, groups of up to five children are able to train together.

Queen's Park

- 85. The public toilets, playground, Children's Farm and the Pitch and Putt course have now reopened, and social distancing markers and advisory posters remain in place to advise the public.
- 86. Since the Government restrictions on outdoor public gatherings have been eased, Staff have received a number of bookings for children's parties and Weddings at the bandstand. Two Wedding Ceremonies have taken place to date as well as numerous children's parties.
- 87. The Parks civil ceremony/wedding license is being renewed with the London Borough of Brent. The paperwork and public notice period have been completed and Staff are now awaiting confirmation of the new license.
- 88. New toddler swings have been installed in the sandpit area of the playground. These have been well received by the public and have proved to be an extremely popular addition to the area. Funding for the swings came from a donation from the Queen's Park Area Residents Association.
- 89. The Park is currently closing at 8pm, which is earlier than the Park would usually close during the height of the summer. The majority of Park visitors have complied with the earlier closing arrangements. A positive outcome of the earlier closing time is that the staff have had the time to empty bins, litter pick and clean the toilets which allows the staff arriving on the early shift the next day can concentrate on maintenance tasks.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Longer term options for replacing the waste and recycling infrastructure.
- Appendix 2 – Golders Hill Park café engagement outcomes.

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