

Queen's Park Consultative Group

Tuesday 7 November 2023, 1:00pm

Rotunda, St Anne's Brondesbury, 125 Salusbury Road, NW6 6RG

Attendees

William Upton KC CC	Chair, Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee
Alethea Silk CC	Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee
Flavia Rittner	Queen's Park Area Residents Association
Robin Sharp	Queen's Park Area Residents Association
Clare Gillan	Queen's Park Area Residents Association
Vicky Zentner	Kensal Rise Residents Association
Virginia Brand	Queen's Park Residents Association

Officers

Bill LoSasso (BL)	Assistant Director (Superintendent), Natural Environment
Jonathan Meares (JM)	Head of Conservation, Highgate Wood
Charlotte Williams CW)	Head of Operations and Parks
Ciaran O'Keefe (CO'K)	Formal Parks Manager
Paul Brown (PB)	Senior Ranger, Queen's Park
Stella Fox (notes)	Support Services Officer, Environment Department

Apologies: Cllr Stephen Crabb, Richard Brindley, Ruby Sayed CC.

Introductions

Action

Following introductions, the new North London Open Spaces structure was explained, detailing roles and responsibilities. BL confirmed that as Senior Ranger for the park, PB is the first point of contact for events and that PB will then liaise internally with our events team.

Minutes of the last meeting

RS pointed out that the request to have a Consultative Group representative on the HH Management Committee was omitted from the previous notes.

BL

There was a need to think about representation and explore member representation for Salusbury School, as Ark Franklin Primary School was no longer the remit for VB. QPCG will also give their further thoughts on this.

**Committee
/BL/QPCG**

Assistant Director's update

- **Sandpit redevelopment**

Work commenced on 16 October 2023 and is expected to last 6-8 weeks, allowing for redesign due to the plane tree implication. A variation of sand levels has been identified and is being addressed. A palisade perimeter fence will be erected to contain the works and protect the tree roots and the entrances have been relocated making a more evenly spaced opening. Additional works are within the risk contingency of the budget.

The London Borough of Brent's Community Grants Fund and private donations has helped fund this project, and thanks go to QPARA for all their endeavours.

The ecology team are evaluating the options to relocate Ivy Bees from the bank by the entrance gate where they have established a nest. They are considering moving the bank or to relocate the bees by the pitch and putt, which should cause no hold up to the sandpit improvements work.

A formal opening of the area in mid-January was considered feasible, subject to the availability of the stakeholders to acknowledge the challenging work of all involved.

CG was thanked for her efforts to support the project.

David Humphries from the tree team to advise on the suitability of the Walnut Tree to be planted in honour of the park's former manager, Terry James, in the playground. **PB**

- **Green Flag**

QP retained their Green Flag and Green Heritage accreditation and won gold at London in Bloom. This is testimony to the effort of everyone involved in ensuring the Park was at the highest standard possible. Thanks to CO'K and PB especially, who in turn thanked their teams.

- **Conservation**

Swift boxes were installed to the rear of the pavilion, and it is hoped by next year there will be an increase in bird numbers.

The relaxed mowing regime has been implemented along the Kingswood Avenue side of the Park, which is deemed successful so far, easing the workload and reducing vehicle emissions. It is planned to cut circles into the long grass areas to allow space for sitting.

As there were certain areas of the Park that couldn't be used owing to nettles and other growth, re-siting relaxed mowing to a different area might be considered. RS said the QP monthly liaison meeting would be a good opportunity to discuss these issues.

PB/JM

The newly created butterfly meadow has been completed with further shrub planting planned at the southern end to encourage the butterflies and to provide food source and nesting for other habitats.

- **Tree Management**

There has been only one small nest of Oak Processionary Moth identified in recent inspection and it is being managed.

Monitoring the decline of Horse Chestnut trees subject to bacterial canker is ongoing and so the team are considering replacement species (such as Sweet Chestnut).

JM said that the hedgerow by the pitch and putt had been cut back to allow light for the butterfly meadow to establish. The hedgerow was still considered a vital element in the cycle. A concern was raised that there had been no consultation with members of QPARA who had expertise in conservation matters.

- **Queens Park Improvement Projects**

The draft of the report on the consultation had only been received in the week before the meeting, and had not yet been fully scrutinised. The officers could only give an initial summary of the headline points. There has been public consultation at two engagement events, and an online survey. This indicated that visitors have a positive experience and valued both the natural environment and recreational facilities offered. The consultation had reached a good number of park visitors, although day to day visitors may not have completed the questionnaire. Dogs off leads was highlighted as a main concern, with improvements to toilet block and adventure play improvements also being identified.

On an initial reading, the report suggested that the paddling pool was underutilised. Members of QPARA felt the children's paddling pool had not been used because of ongoing maintenance issues and subsequent closure. BL agreed to check responses to this question more fully and CW will raise it at the swimming meeting on 10 November and will consult with City Surveyors to establish costs to repair the facility before any consideration was given to a water play replacement.

BL/CW

The Woodland Walk proposal also received a positive response but not to the detriment of 9-hole pitch and putt which would need to be reconfigured. RS felt the pitch and putt should be considered as a community amenity rather than an income stream for the City Corporation.

JM confirmed full support for delivery of the Woodland Walk expansion, and despite some obstacles, was hopeful for an agreed approach working with QPARA. The proposal would be presented to committee once the plans, costings and funding had identified.

RS asked for the consultation report to be shared as soon as possible, and BL agreed it would be circulated. There was still a need to fully review and digest the report, ask the consultants to make any necessary correction, and to consider priorities and next steps. BL agreed that any identified errors in the report would be corrected. Members of QPARA felt it imperative to have sight of the document to move projects forward once the go ahead has been given. The Chair asked that priorities needed to be explored as soon as possible, ideally over the next few weeks. The projects would be discussed more fully at the next meeting of this group. **BL**

Consultants Arkwood Ltd, were thanked for drafting the report in time for today's meeting.

BL agreed to review the QP children's summer entertainment budget which had been withdrawn for 2023. **BL**

- **Café retendering**

A community consultation across users of the five cafes on North London Open Spaces will inform the tender and selection process. BL will enquire as to the status of other consultant reports about the café buildings. QPARA noted their view that the retendering process presented an opportunity of increased income. **BL**

BL to report back on the assumption consultants were appointed in April.

- **Gift Aid donations**

The introduction of Gift Aid will help to promote the charities more, and there are links on the City Corporation website. It has already helped. QPARA were key in securing a substantial donation to allow summer bandstand entertainment and funds for the sandpit improvements. The City Corporation thanked everyone involved as well as the kind donor.

Questions

No further questions arose.

AOB

Members reported Queen's Park Day and the book festival went very well, with positive feedback at these well attended events. Paul Maskell is to meet the Queen's Park Day team in readiness for next year's event.

The Book Festival ran smoothly. A query was raised about the need to hire portaloos, when it had been possible to use the ones owned by the City Corporation (before they were stolen), and this is a point to consider for the next event. PB shared his appreciation for the organisation and delivery of this event.

Ongoing violation of byelaws regarding dogs on leads was raised as a concern, and a request for more support to park staff given the abuse they often encounter. BL to monitor and action as necessary,

BL/PB**Date of next meeting**

To be confirmed