

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee	Date(s): 15 January 2024
Subject: Assistant Director's update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Executive Director, Environment	For Discussion
Report author: Bill LoSasso, Assistant Director	

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last Hampstead Heath Consultative Meeting on 30 October 2023.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of the report
- Provide feedback as requested in paragraphs 16 and 17

Main Report

Structure of North London Open Spaces and future development

1. A separate report entitled "Current structure of North London Open Spaces" has been submitted with the papers for this Committee.
2. The Corporation is completing development of a new Corporate Plan that will guide it for the next five years from 1 April 2024. In addition, the Natural Environment Division has completed development of high-level strategies to guide the division, with the broad themes of 1) Nature Conservation and Resilience, 2) Access and Recreation, 3) Culture, Heritage and Learning, and 4) Community Engagement.

3. Following this, we will initiate the midterm review to the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy in 2024. We seek to begin this in the spring, and seek to re-initiate the Strategy Working Group. We invite a small subset of Members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee to join the group. Members of the Committee who are interested can register interest by contacting the Superintendent directly.

Projects

4. Ponds Access Project

The City Surveyor's Department has acknowledged the challenges faced during the project. The original practical completion date was 21 August, however, the project has encountered issues such as ground conditions, additional drainage works, structural design issues and fabrication issues relating to the jetty structure and mesh platform. The remaining works are limited to snags at the Ladies Pond, and steel grating installation and sliding door installation at the Mixed and Men's Ponds. The contractors left site on 20 December 2023 and will return in January 2024, with the project completion date anticipated to be mid-February 2024.

A new fence will replace the hedge that was removed by the contractors to gain access to the Mixed Pond, and a new metal security shed to house tools and equipment and the new hoist. A new internal security gate with associated fencing at the Men's Pond to prevent access and anti-social behaviour out of hours will also be installed.

A project on a page summary has been prepared in relation to the Ponds Project (Appendix 1).

5. Athletics track refurbishment

The Parliament Hill athletics track project, which included the resurfacing of 8-lanes, track lining and new LED floodlights (full replacement of the existing lights), was completed in November 2023. Testing and commissioning, which included the lighting, levels and measurement surveys, took place the week commencing 20 November 2023. Once all the reports have been received, certification of the track from TrackMark will be gained.

The final inspection took place on 27 November 2023 with the City of London and contractor. The Operations and Maintenance Manual is now being finalised. The track was opened by our Chair, William Upton, on 12 December 2023 for the Highgate Harriers to use for the first time. Positive feedback was received and Athletics Weekly publicised the new track being open. A world-class facility has been created and the track will hold the 'Night of the 10K Personal Bests' in May 2024, which will host the 10,000m Olympic Trials, enabling personal bests and official times. The track will also offer opportunities for increased youth activity and wider community participation.

6. Heath Extension playground

The City of London Corporation has received funding through the Just Giving campaign, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association, and a private donor for the Heath Extension Playground. The Corporation is very grateful for all the generous donations and now has all the required funding to instruct the contractors to install the two new pieces of playground equipment and a new willow structure. Theories Landscape will be undertaking the work the week commencing 8th January 2024 and the work will take 3 days to complete.

Constabulary

7. A separate report entitled “Hampstead Heath Constabulary Update” has been submitted with the papers for this Committee.

Nature Conservation, Ecology, and Trees

8. The Conservation Team have been carrying out coppicing operations below the Vale of Health Pond. This habitat compartment has its own 2014 management plan, focusing on the cyclical management of the wet woodland and other vegetation that grows along the Fleet Stream between the Vale of Health and the Catch Pit, above the Mixed Pond. Keeping the tree cover controlled encourages a number of species associated with wet woodland, including three species of wetland rove beetles, a number of bird species including wood cocks and water rail, and many mosses and bryophytes. Wet woodland is becoming increasingly rare in the UK and has become a priority habitat. This section of the Fleet River is the only remaining site in London where the famous river can be seen in its semi-natural state before it continues its culverted route down to the Thames.

Playgrounds

9. All the playgrounds across Hampstead Heath have been inspected and reports have been generated with actions that need to be undertaken to ensure compliance. The Head of Operations and Parks has set up a playgrounds subgroup to discuss the inspections, general observations and ensure staff have the appropriate training. A Best Practice Guidance on design, creation, installation and maintenance of playgrounds will then be produced to ensure consistency with playgrounds across the North London Open Spaces.

Golders Hill Park

10. Extensive work continues to be carried out across the park, focusing on horticulture, the grounds, sports facilities, the Pergola and Hill Garden with the help of Heath Hands volunteers, and at the zoo.
11. Work has been carried out at the children's playground and the sandpit play area is currently closed to the public whilst the team carry out renovation works to the sleeper edging, which retains the sand. The area will reopen to the public in the spring.

12. Structural engineers have carried out a detailed survey of the Pergola and issued a report highlighting where works need to be carried out. The eastern section of the colonnade at the Pergola remains closed to the public due to safety concerns with the stone columns. A site meeting has been scheduled for early January 2024 with the City Surveyors to update local teams on future work.
13. The cricket nets on the Heath Extension have not yet been relocated. The City of London Corporation are working with the City Surveyors, England and Wales Cricket Board, and the London Borough of Barnet to secure funding and to gain planning permission. There is no exact timeline for delivering this project, as we need to secure the financial support for this proposal first.
14. The zoo licence inspection was passed without any issues. Four red deer were added to the collection this year, which provides a historical link, as red deer were the first animals to be kept in the park in 1905. The Corporation has continued to work with the marketing company on the zoo's identity. A new logo recently went live, and work is underway with the branding to update the interpretation around the zoo. The zoo has recently launched its new social media channels to update supporters and to promote the work carried out (@GoldersHillParkZoo on Instagram, @GoldershillParkZoo on Facebook). A Just Giving page has also been set up to aid donations. The experiences are almost ready to go live. Several trial sessions were run, which were all well received, and very positive feedback was gained, and the booking system is being finalised to ensure a smooth booking experience for visitors.

Events

15. A separate report entitled "Review of the 2023 Events Programme & Provisional Events planned for the 2024 Programme" has been submitted with the papers for this Committee.

Heath Hands

16. The Corporation and Heath Hands - the charity that delivers free activities and events on Hampstead Heath – enjoy a strong and mutually beneficial partnership that has allowed thousands of people to take an active and participatory role in caring for and celebrating Hampstead Heath since Heath Hands was founded in 1999. The Corporation's current partnership agreement with Heath Hands began in 2016, and has been extended by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee through 1 April 2024. Officers are now engaging with the Trustees of Heath Hands to draft a new agreement that will renew and strengthen our partnership. As we begin this process, officers welcome the Committee's views on the role of both volunteers on Hampstead Heath generally, as well as the role of Heath Hands on Hampstead Heath, to help inform the process of renewing the agreement and delivering positive benefits for the Heath.

Fundraising campaigns

17. There are currently four open fundraising campaigns for projects on Hampstead Heath, itemised below. Officers will be further developing and prioritising these campaigns, and welcome Committee support on advertising these campaigns in local

networks and suggestions on how to expand our reach in our fundraising efforts for these campaigns. Details on how the campaigns are further developed will be reported to this Committee once accomplished. We also thank the Committee, all donors, and specifically the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association for their generous support in raising the necessary funds to commence the Heath Extension Playground Project.

[Bird and Mammal Shelters](#)

£2160 of £5000 target.

[Model Boating Pond Bird Sanctuary](#)

£6,498 of £50,000 target.

[Golders Hill Park Zoo](#)

£0 raised (not yet promoted)

[Donate to Hampstead Heath](#)

Open appeal. £166.26 raised.

Financial Implications

18. No implications.

Resource Implications

19. No implications.

Climate Implications

20. Included within the annual plan for 2023/24 are a series of projects which contribute towards achieving the City of London's Climate Action Strategy, which was launched in October 2020. A key part of the strategy is conserving and enhancing biodiversity alongside reducing carbon emissions. The Climate Action Strategy will be embedded into future strategies which are currently being drafted within the Natural Environment Division.

Legal Implications

21. No implications.

Risk Implications

22. Risks are monitored and recorded through the Departmental Risk Register.

Equality Implications

23. No impact.

Security Implications

24. Security implications are monitored and recorded through the Departmental Risk register.

Appendices

1. Ponds project 'Project on a Page'

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