

| <b>Committee(s):</b>   | <b>Date(s):</b>            | <b>Item no.</b> |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Committee   | 22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2013 |                 |
| <b>Subject:</b><br>Management Work Plan for the Sandy Heath Ride   | <b>Public</b>              |                 |
| <b>Report of:</b><br>Superintendent of Hampstead Heath   | <b>For Decision</b>        |                 |
| <p><b><u>Summary</u></b></p> <p>This report presents a management work plan for the Sandy Heath ride.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>That the Management Committee approves the detailed management work plan for Sandy Heath Ride.</p> |                            |                 |

### **Main Report**

#### **Background and current position**

1. In order to manage the Heath, it is necessary to prepare detailed documents stating how each area will be managed, in line with established policies. Such documents will then feed into the annual work programme. Management work plans are being prepared for key areas of the Heath; they will last for ten years, and will be reviewed thereafter, although alterations may be necessary sooner if unforeseen events arise.
2. Plans for the Upper Vale of Heath, the Viaduct Pond, Seven Sisters ponds, Third Hedge, Springett's Wood, Orchard, South Meadow, Sandy Heath ponds, and Sandy Heath and Flagstaff Gorse areas have previously been presented to the Management and Consultative Committees. This report presents one more plan, for the Sandy Heath ride site.

#### **Proposals**

3. The background to the Sandy Heath Ride Management Work Plan and elements of work prescriptions are set out below:

- Sandy Heath ride consists of a wide path with a band of grassland and scrub graduating to woodland on each side.
  - Rides provide fringe habitat for invertebrate, birds and mammals alike, with flowering plants providing nectar sources and scrub providing foraging for birds and mammals. A greater number of species are thought to inhabit the first 10 metres of woodland or ride edge than inhabit the remainder of the woodland.
  - Sandy Heath ride is located on the western side of Spaniards road towards the west of Hampstead Heath.
  - The Sandy Heath ride currently represents the only actively managed ride area on the Heath. No other such ride sections exist on the Heath with paths running through either short mown grassland or through wooded areas with little or no graduation from short vegetation to trees.
  - The site should be managed in rotation to ensure a mosaic of heights and age structures to provide a variety of conditions for invertebrates and birds. It is recommended that the current rotation cycle of 5 years should be continued. Without management a ride would eventually become impassable or surrounded by tall trees.
  - A 1m-3m non-linear strip along the vegetated fringe of the central path should be cut on a yearly basis to allow shorter herbage and wild flowers to flourish.
  - It is proposed to remove 2 non-native trees from 2 sections of the ride in 2014 and 2016. These trees are relatively young and their removal would increase light levels.
  - A review of 2 possible further non-native trees (turkey oak) for removal should be made in 2014 prior to management works the following year. These trees are semi-mature.
4. Detailed proposals are listed in Section 3 of the Work Plan, which is attached as Appendix 1.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

5. Activities included within the management work plan will be undertaken using the Hampstead Heath local risk budgets. There is a reputational risk in not pro-actively managing the natural aspect of the Heath. Left unchecked the mosaic of diverse habitats for which the Heath is renowned would be lost to secondary woodland cover and scrub.

## **Legal Implications**

6. The City has a legal duty under the Hampstead Heath Act 1871 to maintain the natural aspect of the Heath.

## **Strategic Implications**

7. The proposals link to the theme in the Community Strategy to protect, promote and enhance our environment.
8. They also link to the Open Spaces Department Plan through the Strategic Aim to ‘adopt sustainable working practices, promote the variety of life (biodiversity) and protect the Open Spaces for the enjoyment of future generations’, and the Improvement Objective to ‘ensure that measures to promote sustainability and biodiversity are embedded in the Department’s work’.
9. These works also fulfil Essential Actions in the Part 1 Management Plan, including:

*Retain and enhance the Heath’s habitats and natural resources to enable continued quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the natural world by its visitors.*

*Manage the Heath’s woodlands and scrub to enhance their nature conservation value and improve their distinctiveness*

## **Conclusion**

10. A Ten-year management work plan is presented for one area of the Heath: the Sandy Heath ride site.
11. The establishment of the aims and practices for managing these areas will feed into the annual work programmes for the appropriate years. The management work plans are subject to review at the end of the 10-year period and sooner if unforeseen events occur.

## **Appendices:**

*Appendix 1: Draft 10-year Management Work Plan for Sandy Heath ride.*

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