

Committee(s):	Date(s):	
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	27 th January 2014	
Subject: Management Work Plan for the Model Farm Compartment	Public	
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Decision	
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report presents a detailed work plan for the Model Farm compartment.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>That the Management Committee approves the detailed management plan for the Model Farm compartment of the Heath.</p>		

Main Report

Background

1. In order to manage the Heath, it is necessary to prepare detailed Management Work Plans stating how each distinct area of the Heath will be managed, in line with established policies. Such documents will then feed into the annual work programme.
2. 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. Plans for a number of areas have previously been presented to the Management and Consultative Committees. This report presents one more plan, for the Model Farm compartment (copy appended to this report).

Proposals for Model Farm Management Work Plan

3. The Model Farm compartment is located towards the north east of Hampstead Heath and consists of an enclosed area in the most recently acquired land under City of London Corporation management.

4. The compartment can be divided into 3 distinct sections, these being the top meadow, central and Farm sections.
5. The compartment contains a mixture of fine leaved grassland, rough grassland and scrub and an old Farm section with remnant walls and tiled floors, providing a unique habitat on the Heath
6. The compartment provides an enclosed and relatively undisturbed habitat for a variety of species, including the United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, the grass snake. Snakes of all age ranges have been recorded in the site, showing its importance as a grass snake refuge and possible breeding site. The compartment forms part of the Heath's grass snake monitoring scheme.
7. The overall vision is to maintain the compartment as a mixture of meadow and open scrubland primarily as a habitat for grass snakes.
8. The top meadow should be cut in autumn yearly with grass incorporated into habitat piles for grass snakes. The central section should be managed as open scrubland with a yearly cut to prevent further succession.
9. The remnant farm section should be maintained in a stable state with trees and shrubs prevented from growing into the walls. This section should also have 50% of its area cut yearly to maintain a scrub mosaic.
10. It is proposed to remove the invasive species Himalayan balsam, and to treat Japanese knotweed in this compartment.
11. It is also proposed to remove 2 relatively young sycamores from the farm section in 2014. Their removal would increase light levels.

Financial and Risk Implications

12. Activities included within the management work plan will be undertaken using the Heath's 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

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

Strategic Implications

14. The proposals link to the theme in the Community Strategy to protect, promote and enhance our environment.
15. 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'.
16. 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.

Maintain the Heath to protect and enhance populations of plants and animals protected by law, identified as being Priority Species in national and local Biodiversity Action Plans, or identified in subsequent management planning as being worthy of protection.

Conclusion

17. A Ten-year management work plan is presented for one area of the Heath: the Model Farm compartment.
18. 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 Model Farm compartment.

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