

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| Committee(s): | Date(s): |
| Policy & Resources (For Decision) | 20 March 2014 |
| Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (For Information) | 7 April 2014 |
| Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee (For Information) | 14 April 2014 |
| Subject: | Public |
| STEM and Policy Education Programme – Policy Initiatives Fund Application | |
| Report of: | For Information |
| Director of Open Spaces | |
| Summary | |
| <p>The Hampstead Heath Ponds Project is a complex engineering and landscaping project which has stimulated a great deal of interest within the local community and which presents us with an opportunity to engage children and young people on a range of issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical geography • Human geography • Engineering • Public speaking and debate • Open space management and landscaping • Public policy and decision making • Understanding of risk <p>This is particularly exciting from the perspective of promoting STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths) alongside issues of public policy and debate.</p> <p>It is proposed that an education project be launched alongside the engineering and landscaping project to use this opportunity to engage and educate children locally. This is line with the City's educational strategy and related initiatives, and will complement the existing work of the education team.</p> | |
| Recommendation | |
| It is recommended that:- | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Policy & Resources Committee approve that the Ponds Project Education Programme be funded for three years at a total cost of £144,000 (£51,000 in 2014/15, £50,000 in 2015/16 and £43,000 in 2016/17) can be met from the Policy Initiatives Fund, categorised as "Communities" and charged to City's Cash. 2. That this report be received by the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee and Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee for information. | |

Main Report

Background

1. Ponds Project is project at Hampstead Heath to reduce the risk of pond overtopping, embankment erosion, failure and potential loss of life downstream in line with the Reservoirs Act 1975 while meeting the obligations of the Hampstead Heath Act 1871. In addition to the improved safety of the dams, there will be a number of significant ecological benefits including improved water quality, enhanced habitat quality and a more natural looking landscaping around the Model Boating Pond.
2. The project has caused some controversy locally and in addition the direct benefit to the students engaged in the educational project, it is hoped that as an ancillary impact, it will also further enhance local understanding of the project and the factors which underpin it.
3. The Hampstead Heath education service has engaged with over 35,000 students since it opened in 2006. It currently engages with approximately 6500 students per year across a range of subjects including science, geography, history and art. The service provides high quality education for students ranging from early years and foundation stage to postgraduate students. The programmes are extremely successful and popular with Camden schools and are a key method for engaging young people and their communities with the social and natural history of the Heath.

Current Position

4. The appointment of BAM Nuttall has now been approved by Committee, and they will be starting the Ground Investigation works at the end of March. This presents an excellent opportunity to launch both the educational outreach programme with on-site physical geography and exploration of the findings of the investigations, and to begin to embed the construction contractor into the site and local community.
5. The Hampstead Heath education programme is currently running at full capacity with over 6500 students taking part in 2013. The programme is currently managed by 1.5 FTE members of staff and a pool of freelance educators. It is therefore necessary to identify additional resource in order to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the ponds project.
6. It is envisioned that the benefits of the educational programme will be twofold: increased levels of engagement locally and across the City educational family with the Heath and the Ponds Project – benefiting both children and the schools, but also the project by increasing understanding and support.

Proposals

7. The Ponds Project education programme would aim to engage with schools within a one mile radius of the Heath over a 3 year period. The programme will aim to include both primary and secondary schools.
8. It is proposed that the project work with 25 local primary schools on a one lesson programme on the Heath focused on the Year 3 programme of study on rocks. This innovative programme would allow the students to experience the unique opportunity to 'see below the surface' which the project affords.
9. The Ponds Project education programme offers a unique cross-curricular case study which can enrich the new National Curriculum guidelines for Key Stage 3-5 in Science, Geography and Citizenship. We propose working with 10-15 secondary schools per year on a multiple lesson programme. A first lesson would take place in-situ and would focus on the physical and human geography of the ponds project. A second lesson would take place in the school and encourage students to understand the role of the community in decision making through debate and role play.
10. It is hoped that we will be able to develop a more intensive relationship with one or two schools so that they can follow the progress of the project. In addition to site visits and lessons at schools, it is also hoped that we may be able to develop a programme to bring a students to the City to find out more about the public policy side of the project, including the challenges of implementing legislation, democracy and decision making. This element of the programme should be able to interact with the City's broader educational agenda and activities, and has the potential to allow students to engage with elected Members directly – offering a unique insight into the City of London.
11. As well as delivering lessons directly, the project will also produce a range of educational materials that can be used by schools themselves as an educational resource. This would be a key deliverable from the project and one which would have life beyond the three years of the funded programme.
12. It is intended that relationships be developed with both independent organisations and City institutions to aid in the delivery of the project.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. The Ponds Project Educational outreach work supports the City's vision for "high quality, accessible and responsive services benefiting its communities, neighbours, London and the nation", and specifically supports KPP5 "Increasing the impact of the City's cultural and heritage offer on the life of London and the nation".
14. The project supports the aspirations of the City's Education Strategy and the broader London agenda.

Implications

15. It is anticipated that the programme will cost a total of £144,000 (£51,000 in the first year, £50,000 in the second and £43,000 in the third year). These varying costs are derived from the anticipated reduction in the costs

associated with producing new educational materials as the programme goes on.

16. The proposed costs can be met from the Policy Initiatives Fund, categorised as “Communities” and charged to City’s Cash.
17. The current uncommitted balance available within your Committee’s Policy Initiatives Fund 2014/15 amounts to some £272,000 prior to any allowance being made for any other proposals on today’s agenda. Substantial funds currently remain in the fund for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Conclusion

18. The proposed Ponds Project Educational Outreach initiative presents an excellent opportunity to build on the existing highly successful educational outreach already provided at North London Open Spaces by using the Ponds Project to engage a wider group of Children and Young People both locally and across the City’s educational family in a wide range of subject areas. The production of educational and support materials would have value and life beyond the conclusion of the engineering and landscaping project, adding to the community benefit.

Esther Sumner

Ponds Project & Management Support Officer, Open Spaces

T: 020 7332 3130

E: esther.sumner@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Grace Rawnsley

Community Education Officer, Open Spaces

T: 020 7332 6671

E: grace.rawnsley@cityoflondon.gov.uk