

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons Committee	11/05/2015
Subject: Wanstead Park: Landscape conservation and regeneration progress update SEF 22/15	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest	For Information

Summary

The City of London is the primary landowner for the Wanstead Park Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. In 2009 Historic England placed it on the Heritage at Risk Register. The Environment Agency has also served notice in 2013 that the renewal of the 290 000 cubic metres annual abstraction licence, which supplies water to three of the Park's five lake cascade, beyond 2016 will in future be subject to works designed to reduce leakage.

This report outlines the work undertaken since 2009 to better understand the potential landscape conservation and regeneration potential of Wanstead Park. The report further sets in context a number of reports that will be forthcoming to the Epping Forest and Commons Committee upto January 2016.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to: Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. This report outlines the work undertaken since 2009 at Wanstead Park to better understand its landscape conservation and regeneration needs. Aspects of this work have been considered by the EFCC over the years, including a site visit in 2014 to consider the preliminary results on Hydrological research in the park.
2. The purpose of the report is to outline the process we are following that aims to draw this diverse and extensive research work together into a Project Plan for Wanstead Park. Later in the year a number of reports will be presented to the EFCC and this current report is the background setting the forthcoming reports in context.

3. Wanstead Park was a grand house, gardens and estate dating from the 1500s which enjoyed the patronage of both Royalty and the aristocracy for over 300 years. Following a spectacular decline, the Park was added to Epping Forest by City of London acquisition in 1880 and managed as a municipal park until the 1940s.
4. To protect its heritage interest, the boundaries of the remaining estate, stretching across four landowners, including the City, was declared a Grade II Registered Park and Garden (RPG) by Historic England (then English Heritage) and the London Borough of Redbridge in 1987. Following additional research by the City Surveyor's Department the Park's listing was revised to Grade II* in 2001.
5. Most of the original water sources supplying the Park's five lake cascade have been lost to development which along with sparse maintenance and war damage has resulted in inadequate water levels across the lake system. For much of the 20th century water levels were maintained by pumping from the River Roding but this was stopped by the Environment Agency (EA) in 2002. Since then levels have been maintained through abstraction of a maximum 290 000 cubic metres from the aquifer. In 2013 the EA made renewal of the aquifer abstraction licence conditional on a plan to reduce lake leakage and advised that aquifer supplies risk being lost entirely by 2020 due to more stringent licensing.
6. Wanstead Park is also a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation; a Groundwater Source Protection Zone and an Archaeological Protection Zone

Heritage at Risk Register (HARR)

7. The Park was declared 'At Risk' by English Heritage in 2009, with key concerns being the divided ownership; the loss of the traditional garden design of radiating planted avenues and the poor condition of remaining park features.
8. Wanstead Park was one of fourteen London Parks which were declared 'At Risk' in 2009. Of the three other Grade II* public parks on the At Risk register, Gunnersbury Park (Hounslow/Ealing) have secured Heritage Lottery Funding of £4.7 Million, while Crystal Palace having submitted an unsuccessful £7.5 million Lottery bid are now pursuing a new development enabled approach with the Park's new owners. We also understand that Grovelands Park (Enfield) have submitted an application to the HLF.
9. The Conservation Area which largely coincides with the core of the RPG was added to the At Risk Register in 2010 largely reflecting the issues affecting the RPG.

Current Position

10. With 200 000 visits/year, Wanstead Park is one of Epping Forest's eight most popular sites. Since the 1950s the site has been managed principally for its conservation interest, reflecting the loss of the former Tea Chalet and perhaps

legal guidance received by the Conservators on the 'natural aspect' following the City's purchase of Lords Bushes in 1930.

11. In 2013, following a meeting on the future of the Park involving constituency MP John Cryer; Ward Councillors; Redbridge Heritage Champion Cllr Chris Cummings and All London Green Grid representative at the request of the Chairman of the Epping Forest and Commons Committee and the Director of Open Spaces, a Steering Group was established to explore the potential for removing the RPG from the HARR. The group currently consists of:
 - a. City of London (landowner 76%)
 - b. Wanstead Sports Grounds Limited (landowner 22%)
 - c. Church of England (landowner 1%)
 - d. London Borough of Redbridge (landowner 1%, host Local Authority, LA for closed burial yard and LPA for Conservation Area)
 - e. Historic England (formerly English Heritage): London-based Landscape Architect
 - f. Friends of Wanstead Parklands (1,000+ membership group advocating restoration)
 - g. London Borough of Waltham Forest (interested adjacent Local Authority, whose jurisdiction coincides with part of the RPG at Bushwood)

12. Historic England have indicated that to achieve the removal of the RPG from the HARR the following needs to be in place:
 - a. A Parkland Plan encompassing the entire extent of the Registered Park and Garden;
 - b. An indication of a clear change in the trajectory for management including proposals for addressing the management of the cascade and identified heritage assets;
 - c. Some evidence of implementation to demonstrate commitment, with the recent vegetation works around the Grotto cited as a good example.

Lake Cascade System

13. The 'backbone' of the garden design is a 300 year-old five lake cascade which runs through the shared ownership. According to Historic England the continued viability of the lake system is the single biggest heritage conservation consideration in the RPG.

14. Historical sources suggest that even with supplies augmented from now lost waterbodies such as the Lakehouse Lake and the Holt waterway which linked Leyton Flats with Wanstead Park there was insufficient inflow to maintain water levels in the cascade. The Environment Agency made the renewal of the 2013 abstraction licence conditional on the completion of a Hydrology Study. The 2016 licence renewal is likely to be subject to a leakage management strategy and beyond 2020, given London's growing water shortage, pumping from the aquifer may be severely curtailed or even cease.

15. An additional complication is that four of the five lakes are also Large Raised Reservoirs (LRRs) under the Reservoirs Act 1975 (three are in COL ownership). The remaining City owned sub-25,000M³ lake is monitored as an LRR as a precaution. The EA are currently undertaking a risk-based review of LRRs and have provisionally given the largest LRR – Ornamental Water – a High and unexpected assessment. This is currently being challenged by the Department of the Built Environment.

Recent Development Work

16. Working through the Wanstead Park Steering Group the City of London has sponsored a number of projects since 2012/3 to improve our understanding of the the priorities and potential actions required so that the RPG is no longer identified as at Risk. Projects completed or still under progress are outlined below:

- a. *Conservation Statement (2009)*: City of London and English Heritage funded study. The £26 900 study found that Wanstead Park had a range of significance around its Heritage features; nature conservation interest; buried archaeology and public recreation. The report recommended improvement to the Lakes; Park entrances; the maintenance of The Grotto as a managed ruin and the restoration and improvement of recent plantings.
- b. *Strategic Assessment of Wanstead Park Heritage Features (2013)*: English Heritage commissioned Compass Archaeology to carry out an assessment of the heritage status of Wanstead Park at a strategic level. The £10,000 study identified 151 'heritage assets' and 32 heritage 'events' (investigations) within the Park and assessed the assets for their condition, vulnerability, and heritage value. Recommendations about future work, including positive conservation management measures were also included. This report will be brought to EFCC in November 2015;
- c. *Hydrology Study of the Lake Cascade (2014)*: £45k study by JJB specialist consultancy and funded by the City Surveyor that established a 'water budget' for the five lake cascade system and identified significant failures within the cascade system. The report presents a complex picture of the hydrological interactions between the lakes and seeks to identify engineered solutions that could help to restore water levels in the lakes to their design level throughout the year. This report will be brought to the EFCC in September 2015;
- d. *Rhododendron Study (2013-14)*: It is believed that there could be survivals of many of the original plantings of rhododendron from the different phases of design in the Park. In 2013 and 2014, Lear Associates surveyed over a 100 different rhododendron plants for species, parentage and variety. All plants were photographed, recorded on a Global Positioning System (GPS) and foliage or flowers sampled. Other information was collected such as size of trunk and location. The full report on this work is currently pending and will be brought to the EFCC in September 2015;

- e. *Veteran Tree Survey (2015)*: Lear Associates have been engaged to survey trees identified in the Debois Survey (1990) of Wanstead Park as likely to have been planted sometime in the 1700s. The 2015 study will estimate if a 1700 planting date is sound, confirm how the trees were used in the original designed landscape, the condition the trees are in and what remedial work may be needed to prolong the life of these trees. The report on this work will not be ready till towards the end of 2015.

Wanstead Park Project Plan

17. Since English Heritage (now Historic England) added Wanstead Park to the HARR in 2009 a considerable amount of work has been undertaken to fully understand the landscape conservation and regeneration potential at the Park. This has generated a substantial resource of technical reports and there was a need to draw all these together and provide a sense of direction for activity at the park
18. LDA Design were engaged in November 2014 to undertake a review of the knowledge and evidence base on Wanstead Park and to provide direction for future planning in the Park. Working with the Wanstead Park Steering Group LDA were tasked with establishing a consensus within the partnership's key stakeholders over the scope of works that should be included in future landscape conservation and regeneration at the park. In particular they were to:
 - a. Identify a landscape conservation and regeneration programme that will lead to the removal of the park from the Historic England 'at risk' register;
 - b. Identify a landscape conservation and regeneration programme that would satisfy the criteria for the HLF Parks for People programme, which is the most realistic funding option for any larger scale projects.;
 - c. Compile the capital costs for delivering the above landscape conservation and regeneration works;
 - d. Compile the annual revenue costs of managing and maintaining the parkland post completion of any programme of works;
19. Following desk and field based assessment LDA identified the key activities that a Parkland Plan for Wanstead Park should consider and grouped these under the following three categories:
 - a. *Priority Projects*: Activities proposed for implementation within a shorter 5-6 year time frame;
 - b. *Longer-term priorities*: Activities where resource and planning needs or the project precedence require a longer time frame of 7-15 years;
 - c. *Possible Aspirations*: Activities identified as potentially desirable but which are beyond the scope of current project planning activity. These were presented to help give a longer term sense of direction to the project plan and to test out some less commonly discussed ideas. Time frame 16 years plus.

20. The three sets of proposals were put out for public comment as part of a 'Feedback Fortnight' on 23rd February 2015 to 10th March 2015. 268 individuals responded to the questionnaire. 194 people responded to the consultation via an online response form and 78 using paper questionnaires. Four organisational responses were received from English Heritage, the Friends of Epping Forest, Vision RCL and the Wren Wildlife and Conservation Group. Broadly speaking there was public support for proposals to improve access and to address water management issues while ensuring the park retains its existing natural character and expressing concerns about potential over restoration of the Park. Heritage management issues were identified as activity suited for the later phases of activity. A report on the consultation exercise is in preparation with the raw results being drawn upon by LDA in the development of the parkland plan. The Feedback Fortnight Consultation Report will be brought to the EFCC in July 2015
21. The LDA Project Plan will be completed in April 2015 and will be the culmination of over six years' worth of research activity into management options for Wanstead Park. Broadly speaking these options are presently thought likely to fall into two categories:
- a. *Works achievable within existing resources:* Activity which already fits or with some refocusing could fit within work undertaken using existing staff and financial resources. The works undertaken around the Grotto in 2014 and visited by the EFCC in 2014 are an example of this sort of activity:
 - b. *Works requiring additional resources:* The Project Plan will highlight and prioritise actions that will require significant resourcing and which are beyond the capabilities of the Epping Forest Local Risk Budget and staff. For example, works on the Lake Cascade system would feature with potential funding available from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Proposals

22. During the 2015 EFCC committee cycle it is proposed that we promote discussion on the future of Wanstead Park. In the first instance there is a need to bring to Committee a number of outstanding reports, namely:
- a. *Strategic Assessment of Wanstead Park Heritage Features;*
 - b. *Hydrology Study of the Lake Cascade;*
 - c. *Rhododendron Study (2013-14).*
23. It is also possible that status of the LRR, Ornamental Waters, under The Reservoirs Act 1975 and the cascade, under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, could be changed during this time which could have material consequences for management of the park.
24. It is proposed that the LDA Parkland Plan be revised as required following the different discussions at the EFCC and be brought to Committee in January 2016 for discussion on the way forward.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

City Together

25. *City Together*: The LDA Project Plan exercise and background research meet two of the key themes “A world class City that supports our communities” and “A World Class City which protects, promotes and enhances our environment”
26. *Open Spaces Department Business Plan*: The LDA Project Plan exercise and background research follow from three of the Open Spaces Department’s Strategic aims of: providing high quality accessible open spaces, involving communities in site management and adopting sustainable working practices.
27. *Corporate Plan 2013-17*: The LDA Project Plan exercise and background research meets the objective of the Corporate Plan to provide valued services to London and the nation.
28. *Statement of Community Involvement*: The City of London has consulted on the preparation of the original Conservation Statement for Wanstead Park (2011) and in 2015 consulted on the LDA Project Plan.

Implications

29. Legal Implications: The Epping Forest Act 1880 includes an additional power at section 5 to reflect the the City’s purchase of Wanstead Park in 1880..

Conclusion

30. A substantial amount of work has been undertaken to research and understand the landscape conservation and regeneration needs at Wanstead Park since it was added to the Heritage at Risk Register in 2009.
31. The LDA Parkland Plan will draw together the extensive body of research and undertake stakeholder feedback to prepare a draft Project Plan to achieve the removal of Wanstead Park from the HARR and to identify how best we can access funds under the HLF’s Parks for People programme.
32. During 2015 the landscape conservation and regeneration needs at Wanstead Park will be fully discussed within the EFCC with the aim to agree a way forward to achieve the parks removal from the HARR.

Appendices

- None

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