

<b>Committees</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	16 May 2016
<b>Subject:</b> Hampstead Heath Ponds Project – Progress Report	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Superintendent of Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Director	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Jennifer Wood, Open Spaces Department	

## Summary

One year into the Ponds Project construction programme and work is currently taking place at seven sites across the Heath. Although there have been some delays at Model Boating Pond, the project is scheduled to finish on programme - by the end of October 2016.

## Recommendations:

It is recommended that members:

- Note this report.

## Main Report

### Background

1. As previously reported, the Ponds Project was initiated following a series of hydrological studies which revealed that, in the event of a severe storm, there was a risk the reservoirs on Hampstead Heath could overtop, potentially leading to erosion and dam failure, putting lives, property and infrastructure at risk. A wide range of options were evaluated, and one selected and approved in June 2014 for each chain of Ponds, on the basis that it met the necessary legal, operation and design criteria. Planning consent was granted in January 2015 by the London Borough of Camden's Development Control Committee, subject to Conditions and a Section 106 agreement. Preparation works took place in February and March 2015, with the main works starting on 13 April.

### Planning Conditions and Section 106

2. City Officers are continuing to liaise with colleagues in Atkins and the London Borough of Camden to discharge the Planning Conditions associated with the approval, in line with the work programme. The final Conditions which related to the finishes of the new Kenwood Ladies' Pond changing rooms have now been submitted to Camden.
3. We await the outcome from Camden on a separate planning application which was submitted to cover a revised design of a small section of the end of the new wall at Highgate No. 1 Pond. The design was altered in this location to meet the requirements of the landowners whose land part of the flood defence it to be built

on, to minimise the impact to trees and to lessen the visual impact from the Heath. A separate application was required as the property is listed and in a Conservation area. The City Surveyors' Department are liaising with the land owner's solicitors to arrange access for the proposed works and to enter into a formal agreement for future maintenance/improvements access rights.

4. Part of Camden's conditions required a Community Working Group be established to monitor the progress of the project. This group have now been meeting monthly for over one year and also take part in regular guided walks of the site. The last walk took the member into the hole that (then) formed the base of the dam at Model Boating Pond. Another walk is scheduled to show the members the new Ladies Pond facilities.

### **Construction work**

5. The works at Model Boating Pond, on the Highgate Chain were the largest piece of construction work of the whole project, with 27,000 cubic metres of clay to be moved from borrow pits into a section of drained down pond to build a new dam, 2.5m higher than the existing earth dam. As previously reported there have been delays caused by issues with the temporary dam and the volume of wet silt being greater than anticipated.
6. Works placing clay are now proceeding well in this location with five metres of clay being laid in approximately three weeks. The weather impacts the speed of this work, as wet clay is more difficult to deal with.
7. Desilting work has successfully taken place at four ponds, which includes all three bathing ponds. This work will improve water quality and benefit aquatic life. Desilting work started at Viaduct Pond, but due to the amount of debris (logs and sticks) blocking the equipment, the suction technique was unsuccessful. BAM Nuttall are now planning to remove the debris with floating excavators before returning to the suction technique.
8. The Ladies Pond building was successfully craned into position in early April after arriving on the Heath in five modules. It was challenging getting the large modules onto the Heath along with a crane large enough to lift them, but the time saved, and reduced impact to the environment, by prefabricating the building far outweighed that of a traditional construction technique. The Ladies Pond is due to re-open for swimming in early May.
9. Construction work at Stock Pond is now complete, with only the turf still to be laid. This will take place later in the spring.. Works at Men's Bathing Pond and Highgate No. 1 are due to start imminently.
10. On the Hampstead Chain, the major earthworks, focussed on the Catchpit area are well underway. In this location 7,700 cubic meters of clay is being moved from a borrow pit in Pryor's Field to build up a new dry dam in an existing valley. Vale of Health and Viaduct ponds are both complete and Hampstead No. 1 and No. 2 are due to be finished in spring.

11. The project remains within budget and within the original programme. A more detailed update on budget and issues will come to this Committee in the next round of reports.

### **Environmental Mitigation**

12. From now on the focus begins to shift from construction to the ecological aspects, as improving the Heath's environment has always been key element of the project. Environmental works at Bird Sanctuary pond have been a success with the addition of a deep channel and wetland scrapes to help prevent the reeds from drying out and to provide additional habitat for birds, amphibians and invertebrates. A water rail, (a bird who likes water) which is rare on the Heath, has already been spotted using these wetland scrapes. Aquatic planting shelves are being constructed at several ponds and in total 25,000 new aquatic plants of 15 different species will be planted. This will result in an additional 1700 cubic metres of aquatic planting which is an important habitat the Heath does not have in abundance.
13. At least another 30m of the Fleet stream will be uncovered as part of the project. Not only does this have historical importance as the Heath is the only place in London where the Fleet stream flows above ground, but the additional open stream provides good habitat and feeding for birds and amphibians. Six hectares of wild flower meadow will also be sown by the end of the project with a seed mix specified by the Heath's ecology team. Although the construction element of the project is due to be finished in October 2016, some of the environmental works, such as the restoration of wild flower meadows, will take place after this time due to the seasonal nature of this work.

### **Education**

14. The Ponds Project Education Programme launched just over a year ago, with the aim to engage and educate children in a range of curriculum based topics, utilising opportunities provided by the Ponds Project. The main focus is on Secondary Schools and to date we have run 58 secondary sessions for 1407 students, putting us behind schedule on this aspect of the project. We had planned to have delivered 83 by this stage. The reason this figure is behind is due to lack of uptake from secondary schools. We have also run 22 primary sessions for 581 students, putting us ahead of schedule for Primary engagement. Our sessions have received excellent feedback from teachers.
15. During British Science Week we ran dam building activities with BAM Nuttall for all the year 7 students in one school in Hendon, engaging with 188 students over three days.

### **Conclusion**

15. Construction works are progressing well with another pond completed and another two due to be finished imminently. The successful installation of the Ladies Pond building and the headway in the environmental restoration works are another two positives as we look toward the completion of the whole scheme. Engagement with stakeholders is going well and their future involvement as we

move towards the legacy of the project is currently being considered and will be reported to this Committee in due course. The project remains within budget (although BAM have claimed for additional costs and this is being evaluated) and within the original programme. A more detailed update on budget and issues will come to this Committee in the next round of reports.

Previous committee reports are available at: [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/committees](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/committees)

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