

Committee(s)	Dated:
Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee – For Discussion	27-06-2016
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park Committee – For Decision	18-07-2016
Subject: Cross country pilot on the Hampstead Heath Extension	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Decision
Report author: Declan Gallagher, Open Spaces Department	

Summary

This report sets out a request, received from London Heathside to use the Hampstead Heath Extension, for a young athletics cross-country race in 2016/17.

Following collaboration between London Heathside and Officers from the City of London Corporation a proposal and race route, which meet the guidance set out in the Hampstead Heath Management Plan has been draw up.

Recommendations

It is recommended:

- That the views of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee are received on the proposal to hold a pilot event at the Heath Extension in the 2016/17 season, as set out in Option A.
- That the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen’s Park Committee approve the proposal to hold a pilot event at the Heath Extension in the 2016/17 season, as set out in Option A.

Main Report

Background

1. Hampstead Heath hosts a number of cross-country running events throughout the year, these range from small local races to large Southern and National events. In addition, the Heath hosts the Camden School Association cross-country event and a weekly 5K Parkrun.

Current Position

2. At the Hampstead Heath Sports Advisory Forum (HHSAF) meeting on 02-02-16, it was agreed that the Operational Services Manager would meet with members of London Heathside on site to discuss the possibility of holding a young athletics

cross-country race in the 2016/17 season. A site meeting took place on 30-03-16, and following this a proposal and race route was circulated by London Heathside to the HHSFAF on 09-05-16.

3. At the HHSFAF meeting on 16-05-2016 constructive discussion and debate took place regarding the proposal. The HHSFAF were supportive of a pilot event taking place on the Heath Extension, subject to a route being identified that met the guidance set out in the Hampstead Heath Management Plan, and which was agreed on by both the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee and Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queens' Park Committees.
4. The Hampstead Heath Management Plan 2007-17 had designated three sports areas: Parliament Hill (Sports Area A), a section of the Heath Extension (Sports Area B) and the northern side of Golders Hill Park (Sports Area C) (see Appendix 2).
5. The Management Plan sets out 8 criteria which must be fulfilled to allow sport to take place outside of the designated sports areas:
 - i. The new sport or relocation of an existing sport is recommended by the Sports Advisory Forum following an assessment of perceived demand.
 - ii. The sport cannot be accommodated within one of the Sports Areas.
 - iii. There is no significant detriment to the general public's enjoyment of the Heath.
 - iv. There is no significant threat to the natural Heath.
 - v. The practice of the new sport or new location does not expose the City of London to a material risk of criminal or civil liability, and is permitted by the City's insurers.
 - vi. The adverse impact, if any, on established informal sport in the relevant area must be outweighed, in the view of the Sports Advisory Forum, by the demand for, and public benefit of, the new or relocated sport.
 - vii. It is consistent with good turf management practice.
 - viii. No permanent structures are needed by the sport in question.
6. The proposed cross-country route is not contained within the footprint of the designated sports area on the Heath Extension. The southern part of the route does not meet criteria iv (above), as it passes through an area of species-rich grassland (see Appendix 4) containing for example, lady's bedstraw, musk mallow and meadow brome. Combined with other plants present, such as black knapweed and ox-eye daisy the area provides important habitat for butterflies, bees and other invertebrates.

Proposals

7. Part of the area crossed by the proposed route is used for a long-term experiment looking at different cutting regimes in order to assess which is best for

nature conservation. A cross-country run over this area will negatively impact upon this experiment. The proposed route will also have an impact on various trees at the northern end of the course. Heavy footfall will lead to compaction and possible direct damage to surface roots of the adjacent trees.

8. The Operational Services Manager and the Highgate Wood, Conservation and Trees Manager have put forward a slight amendment to the proposed route that will ensure there is no permanent damage caused to the Heath Extension. The new revised route will utilise the cricket outfield, football, rugby pitches and bridle way, avoiding the species rich grassland and impact on tree roots (see Appendix 3, and 4).

Options

9. Option A – Members are asked to consider holding the event on the Heath Extension as a pilot, using the route identified in Appendix 3 that will ensure no permanent damage is caused to the Heath Extension. **This is the preferred option, and is supported by the HHSF.**
10. Option B – Members are asked to consider adding the event, as an additional cross country race on the main body of the Heath, using an established course taking into account the capabilities and requirements of young athletes.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

11. The event supports The Corporate Plan 2015-19 KPP4 *“increasing the outreach and impact of the City’s cultural, heritage and leisure contributions to the life of London and the nation”* / draft Open Spaces Business Plan 2016-2019 key action *“improve the health and wellbeing of the community through access to green space and recreation”* / draft Open Spaces Sport and Physical Activities Framework *“encourage participation in formal and informal recreation to enable healthy and active lifestyles”*.
12. The Sports chapter of The Hampstead Heath Management Plan: Towards a plan for the Heath 2007-2017 sport overriding objective states to *“Work collaboratively in maintaining and developing the existing sports facilities and activities in response to changing demands ensuring appropriate provision for all sections of the community”*.

Implications

13. Athletes and spectators will be encouraged to use local transport to travel to the venue, as there is limited adjacent off street parking, as to not impact upon neighbouring residents.
14. Refreshment arrangements will be provided by the event organiser and will be removed from site at the earliest opportunity after the event.

15. There may be temporary damage along the edge of the football and rugby pitches and reasonable contributions for any restoration works required following the event, will be met by the event organiser.

16. The City will enter into a licence agreement with the event organiser.

Conclusion

17. Careful monitoring will be under-taken to ensure that the Heath landscape and wildlife are protected, and that local residents and Heath users are not unnecessarily impacted upon.

18. It is widely acknowledged that Hampstead Heath is the home of cross country running in England. This event will contribute to the health and wellbeing of younger cross-country runners.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Proposal from London Heathside to use the Hampstead Heath Extension for a young athlete's cross-country race in 2016/17
- Appendix 2 - Hampstead Heath Management Plan – Sports facilities & Areas
- Appendix 3 - Amended cross-country route
- Appendix 4 - Hampstead Heath Management Plan – Broad Habitat Types

Background Papers

- Hampstead Heath Rugby Club request for a third rugby pitch:- Hampstead Heath
- Consultative Committee, (03-11-2016) and Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee, (24-11-2014).

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