

Committee(s)	Dated:
Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee – For Discussion	09.11.2016
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee – For Decision	21.11.2016
Subject: Superintendents Update for November 2016	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Decision
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Summary

This Report provides an update to Members of the Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee on management and operational activities in Highgate Wood since April 2016. The Report describes progress on operational working arrangements and income generation, sustainability, conservation and woodland management, infrastructure and facilities. This report also provides an update on the Café facility and seeks Members views on the proposed Annual Work Programme for 2017/18.

Recommendations

- Members are asked to note the content of this Report.
- That the views of the Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee be conveyed to the Hampstead Heath Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee at their meeting on 21 November 2016.
- That the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee consider the views of the Highgate Wood Joint Consultative Committee, and agree the proposed Highgate Wood Annual Work Programme 2017/18, as set out in Appendix 1.

Main Report

Background

1. Highgate Wood was awarded a Green Flag award for the 20th year running. It is one of only a few sites nationally to win the award every year since it was introduced in 1996.
2. Volunteer sessions recommenced in September following the summer period.
3. The tenth Community Day was held on 4 September 2016.

4. The new 2016/17 Conservation Area has been agreed and work will commence later this autumn. Tree safety management within the Wood continues to be supported by the Hampstead Heath Tree Team. The oak woodland surveys were completed again this year.
5. The electric vehicle entrance gate installation at Onslow gate is now underway with electrical supply being installed in late October.

Pavilion Café update

6. In June 2016 the Superintendent appointed an Independent Consultant to undertake a programme of engagement and consultation with users and non-users of the Parliament Hill, Golders Hill Park and Highgate Wood cafés, to inform an Options Appraisal to guide future decisions on these café leases.
7. In July 2016, the City formed a Café Working Party (CWP) comprising representatives from the lead campaigners, as well as representatives from each of the Consultative Committees with knowledge of the three cafés, together with a representative of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee. The CWP has met three times to agree the format and design of the engagement and consultation exercise, which is being implemented by the Independent Consultant. Initially a "Stakeholder Map" has been prepared to ensure the consultation is reaching all the communities that live around the Heath and Highgate Wood.
8. The engagement and consultation comprises:
 - An online questionnaire, available for six weeks commencing 26 September. A link to the questionnaire has been widely distributed to user groups and local community groups around the Heath and Highgate Wood.
 - Paper copies of the questionnaire with Freepost return envelopes have been made available at the Parliament Hill, Golders Hill Park and Highgate Wood cafés.
 - Food events are being held outside the cafés at weekends and during the week. These are being run by the Consultant, with the full support and participation of the existing café leaseholders, and are being used to engage proactively with café users.
9. A series of visits to other London Parks and Open Spaces cafés has been organised to look at a range of different offers and to meet the proprietors, to evaluate other successful business models. This will involve the members of the CWP and the three existing Leaseholders.
10. Once the initial results from the online and paper questionnaires have been analysed, the Consultant will be holding a workshop with the CWP to review the feedback and to discuss the outcomes that are emerging. This will be critical to establishing the Social, Environmental and Economic outcomes for each of the cafés.
11. Following this, towards the end of November the Consultant will report back the full findings from the consultation to the CWP, who will then have the opportunity to discuss the options for each café, taking into account the feedback from the public.

12. In January 2017, the Superintendent will present a report to the Hampstead Heath & Highgate Wood Consultative Committees, setting out the learning from the consultation and the options for café leases beyond January 2018. Once the views from the Consultative Committees have been considered, a further report will be presented to the Management Committee for decision.

Planned changes to closing times during the summer months

13. The new summer closing times were successfully implemented for 13 weeks from 2 May 2016 through to 1 August 2016.
14. To date, the Highgate Wood Manager has received two written complaints from members of the public regarding the new changes. These originated from members of the public that used the wood in the late evening for jogging or dog walking. The broad feedback that has been received has been positive.
15. There was no requirement for the Hampstead Heath Constabulary to attend the Wood to support the locking-up process.
16. It is proposed that the 2016 closing times be permanently adopted.

Changes to working arrangements

17. The new operational working arrangements reported in the April Highgate Wood Committee Report commenced on the 1 October 2016. The new working arrangements have been designed so that staffing resource can be shared more effectively across the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park, especially during the busier summer periods and school holidays. The new working arrangements will be reviewed after 6 months and 12 months.
18. The Team are supported by a pool of casual staff who provide cover for holiday and sickness. Under the new working arrangement there will be selection of Heath Ranger staff who will be deployed to work in the Wood to support the Team and reduce the reliance on casual staff.

Roman Kiln Project

19. The Highgate Wood Manager will arrange a meeting, towards the end of 2016, with key members of the Working Group to discuss how best to progress the Project. It may be possible to divide up the Project into separate work packages which would help with reducing the overall cost of funding.
20. Over a year has passed since the Heritage Lottery Fund made their decision not to provide financial support to the Project, so it is timely to reconvene and discuss a future bid and also raise funds for the match funding budget.

Sustainability

21. The City of London's Corporate Energy Efficiency Programme is progressing well with a successful partnership developing with the break down and Project Team from the City Surveyors and also the new Corporate Energy Team. City

Surveyors Department have confirmed that the boiler unit for the water heating system for the changing rooms will be replaced in April 2017 which will significantly improve the energy efficiency rating of the Pavilion building.

22. In Highgate Wood the overall energy consumption has improved greatly over the last eighteen months, with a 20% decrease in gas and electricity use compared to 2014/15 data. The relatively mild winter of 2015/16 may be a contributing factor for this.

Woodland Conservation and Tree Management

23. There have been no further site closures due to high winds over the spring and summer period. With the exception of a small number of tree limb failures, the period has been relatively quiet. The Tree Team have assisted with several cyclical pruning operations around the Lodge to thin out and prune back trees growing close to the garden fence line, and to stabilise several trees that had structural issues.
24. In early May the Tree Team used Highgate Wood for an aerial rescue refresher workshop for all the staff with Arboricultural training across the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park.
25. Several site meetings have taken place to confirm the location and dimensions of the next Conservation Area. The intention is to increase the area coppiced for this compartment and stagger the coppicing between December and January carrying out the hornbeam coppicing in the New Year. There is a significant amount of holly to coppice and some other assorted beech and cherry that will all be cleared at the same time.
26. As reported to this Committee in April 2016, squirrel damage continues to be an issue. Over many years the squirrel population has risen in Highgate Wood. They have become more persistent in a number of areas stripping bark mainly on hornbeam trees on trunks and branches high in the canopy. Hornbeams are very resilient as a species but once the squirrels have ring barked a trunk the tree's long term survival chances are very poor.
27. Our aim in Highgate Wood is not to eradicate squirrels totally as this would be impossible due to the thriving squirrel population in the surrounding area. We aim to bring the numbers down by installing a small number of Kania 2000 traps. These will be installed in non-public areas, and are currently used by English Heritage on the Kenwood Estate.
28. English Heritage have been trapping for a number of years and use the Kania 2000 trap, as it quickly and humanly kills squirrels. Staff will monitor the traps daily to dispose of any squirrels caught. The traps will be installed in November 2016 and the process will be reviewed after 6 months.
29. There was great excitement in the spring when a Kestrel pair produced three offspring in the 2007 Conservation Area. The family flourished and the fledglings attracted a good deal of attention. There have been several hedgehog surveys carried out this year, latterly by a Heath Ecologist working with the Heath Ranger Team and the Highgate Wood Team. Hedgehog sightings are very rare now in the Wood.



Figure 1: One of the Kestrel fledglings contemplating flight

Volunteer activity

30. From November through to March there have been a total of nine Heath Hands volunteer sessions. One was cancelled due to high winds in February, but overall the numbers of attendants is very encouraging, with 66 volunteers attending sessions during this period.
31. There has been a focus on managing the woodland growing alongside the Muswell Hill Road fence line, coppicing hazel and felling some of the more seriously damaged trees following squirrel bark stripping. In November Heath Hands volunteers carried out various works in the 2012 Conservation Area including transplanting wild service tree saplings. Ivy has been cut back where it is growing on trees and there were sessions in the café garden and at the western end of the field.
32. Comparing volunteer numbers with the same period in 2014-2015, numbers were down by eight, but this can be accounted for by the cancellation of one of the planned sessions. The Team will be increasing the number of sessions gradually and are hopeful volunteers will respond positively.

Oak decline and oak regeneration

33. Work continues to monitor the 100 young oaks, which have been protected using tree shelters. This year it was recorded that 48 of these trees had now died but there were still 36 looking relatively healthy.
34. The oak decline survey was carried out again with the assistance of a work experience student in June, July and August recording canopy density and general vitality within the study group. Overall there is no pronounced change but there have a continuing loss of oaks with three trees that were in severe decline in the previous year and an additional two close to the play area.

Tree disease and biosecurity issues

35. Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) was not found in Highgate Wood this summer or in any of the surrounding woodlands in the Haringey area. The Forestry Commission continued its containment operation in the control zone which included Hampstead Heath and the Kenwood Estate, where a biological insecticide was sprayed on the trees where nests were discovered last year.
36. What is not known at this stage is whether female OPM adult moths have managed to cover the short distance from Hampstead Heath to Highgate Wood this summer; that is those moths that managed to escape the control work in May and June. The *Thaumetopoea* genus of processionary moths is well studied in mainland Europe due their rapid adaptation to both climate change and predation.



Figure 2: Tractor spraying for OPM control Hampstead Heath

37. Ash Dieback has been confirmed within a kilometre of Highgate Wood and also at various locations on Hampstead Heath. This will not be a major concern for Highgate Wood as its ash population is very small but there will be secondary impacts in the additional pressure on the Tree Team which will mean that they have less time to provide support for Highgate Wood.

Sports and Recreation

38. The cricket season has now finished and all the end of season renovation works completed. Only two matches had to be cancelled due to inclement weather conditions. All the Teams have given good feedback on the standard of pitches this season. Staff have been using the large ride on roller from Hampstead Heath to maintain the pitches, which gives a much firmer pitch which in turn provides a better batting surface.

39. The football season started the week after the cricket had finished. The goal areas have been newly seeded and are ready for public play.
40. The area next to the café on the top football pitch will be fenced off each week due to drainage issues and opened up at weekends when the pitch is used. The board walk at the bottom end of the field (behind the cricket practice nets) is now in place ready for the winter season. The outfield is due to be over-seeded in early October to bulk up the grass coverage and keep the weeds at bay.

Community and Events

41. There have been a wide range of activities and walks laid on by the Team over the summer season. These include; a bird walk by the Marylebone Bird Watching Society in May; two well attended bat walks, and an additional nine other guided walks covering history, tree identification and insects.
42. The tenth Highgate Wood Community Day (formerly Heritage Day) was held on the 4 September. Short of the wind at the beginning of the event that caused a few exciting moments with the Gazebos, the day was a great success with both participants and the public enjoying a variety of activities, a Punch and Judy show and a dog show. The 'Monkey Do' Team provided another exciting temporary play space for children.
43. As part of the GLA's London Tree Week in late May early June, an event was hosted in Highgate Wood called the Canopy Stair. This is an innovative temporary stair system that allows access into the tree canopy. One of the straight stemmed oaks on the edge of the field was selected and a spiral light-weight wood and aluminium tread system was attached to the tree. The effect was dramatic and 800 people were able to experience the Canopy Stair over the weekend (see figure 3).

Infrastructure and buildings

44. The work programme for the new electronic gates at the Onslow entrance is in progressing and works have already started on the new pedestrian entrance on the southern side of the existing gates (see figure 4). The City Surveyors Department have appointed contractors to carry out the initial path and pedestrian walkways. Work will then commence on installing the gates and operating equipment in November.
45. As already mentioned above in the Sustainability section the old boiler that currently supplies hot water for the two changing rooms is being replaced with a new more energy efficient system in April of 2017.



Figure 3: Canopy Stair

Planning and Local Development

46. The two major new housing developments currently under construction to the north and south of the Wood were mentioned in the April Report to this Committee. These are already having an impact on the site, particularly the new flats on Archway Road, previously the old Magistrates Court. The Highgate Management Team will continue to monitor the work at both development sites and report back on any issues. Most recent data from the electronic logging system indicates just under 800,000 people visiting Highgate Wood from the beginning of October 2015 through to same period this year.



Figure 4: New pedestrian access Onslow Gate

Annual Work Plan for Highgate Wood

47. The Highgate Wood Team has been producing an operational work plan for some years that lists cyclical works to be completed by the Team. The Management Team are now working towards producing an Annual Work Programme format that Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park will use. Included with this Report as Appendix 1 is the current 2016/17 programme and the proposed 2017/18 programme.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

48. The City of London Corporation's Corporate Plan (2015-2019) states under Key Policy Priority 5 *'Developing and improving the physical environment around our key cultural attractions; and providing safe, secure, and accessible Open Spaces'*.
49. It will also help fulfil the Open Space's Department's Business Plan 2016-2019 Vision to *'Preserve and protect our world class green spaces for the benefit of our local communities and the environment'*. The content of this report also has a direct impact on the five core values of Quality, Inclusion, Environment, Promotion and People, and contributes to all four of the Department's key objectives.

Financial Implications

50. The operational requirements highlighted in the report will be met from the Superintendent's Local Risk Budget.

Conclusion

51. In 2017 there will be a continued focus on Woodland Management and the creation of the new Conservation Area. There will also be on-going work to strengthen partnerships with other woodland sites such as Queen's Wood, and to control tree diseases and pests.

Appendix

- Appendix 1 – Highgate Wood Annual Work Programme 2016/17, and Proposed Highgate Wood Annual Work Programme 2017/18

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