

Committee(s)	Dated:
Highgate Wood Consultative Group	31 May 2017
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee	17 July 2017
Subject: Superintendents Update for May 2017	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Information
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Summary

This Report provides an update to Members on management and operational activities in Highgate Wood since November 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 Roman Kiln Project.

Recommendations

- Members are asked to note the content of this report.
- Members provide their views on the proposed cap on the number of licenced events in Highgate Wood.
- Members provide their views on the proposal for the Roman Kiln Project.
- That the views of the Highgate Wood Consultative Group be conveyed to the Hampstead Heath Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee at their meeting in July 2017.

Main Report

Background

1. Having successfully led the Open Spaces Department for over nine years, the Director, Sue Ireland, retired on the 28 February 2017. Colin Buttery has been appointed as the new Director of the Open Spaces Department, and took up the post on the 1 March 2017. Colin has been the Director of Parks and Deputy Chief Executive for The Royal Parks for the past 12 years and has been involved in conservation land management for over 30 years.

2. Colin has worked for the National Trust and Woodland Trust in a range of land management roles and the Boroughs of Bromley and the City of Westminster where he had responsibility for parks, cemeteries, tree management, leisure centres and a range of community facilities.
3. Colin is an ambassador for environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy and a member of the Forestry Commission's London Region Forest, and Woodlands Advisory Committee and Oak Processionary Moth Advisory Group.
4. On 1 February 2017 Tower Bridge, the Monument and Keats House joined the Open Spaces Department, following a restructure of the Culture, Heritage & Libraries Department. The Departments broader range of activities is now recognised as the Open Spaces & Heritage Department.

Changes to working arrangements

5. The new operational working arrangements are progressing well, and a number of staff from other teams across the Division have been deployed to work with the Highgate Wood Team over the winter period and into the spring. This has been an opportunity for other teams to learn new skills and work in a different environment. Highgate Wood staff have also had the opportunity to work on Hampstead Heath.

Roman Kiln Project

6. Key members of the Highgate Wood Roman Kiln Working Group held a meeting in March 2017 to discuss a way forward following the unsuccessful Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application in July 2015. The Working Group have drafted a constitution. The Highgate Wood Manager is currently consulting colleagues in the Comptroller and City Solicitors Department and the City Surveyors Department in relation to the constitution. It is the groups intention to submit an application to the Charity Commission to form a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).
7. The objects of the CIO are:
 - to return the Roman pottery kiln excavated in Highgate Wood to its natural woodland home.
 - to promote, in co-operation with other organisations and institutions, the conservation, study, interpretation and educational potential of all elements of the Roman pottery factory excavated in Highgate Wood between 1966 and 1978
 - to stimulate the study of archaeology and local history relating to Highgate Wood, Queens Wood and the wider Highgate, Muswell Hill, East Finchley and Crouch End areas for the purpose of public information and education, through all appropriate means and in collaboration with other organisations and institutions pursuing similar purposes
 - in particular, to establish, and support the maintenance of, an information center and display in Highgate Wood, London N6 to interpret and raise local and wider awareness of the unique 2nd century AD Romano-British pottery kiln excavated in the wood.

Note: This is the only Roman period kiln to be excavated and preserved for the future through conservation within Greater London. It is now stored in pieces in the cellars of Bruce Castle Museum where there is no public access.

8. The Group have also made a decision to adopt a new name and have settled on 'The Friends of the Roman Kiln' or FORK. Key members of FORK have worked on the Lauderdale House Project and the Liberal Democrat Member for Highgate has also joined the group and pledged her support.
9. The Superintendent welcomes Members views on this initiative.

Sustainability

10. The Corporate Energy Team is now scrutinising all Open Spaces' energy consumption. Although Open Spaces monitor and report on energy consumption and have reduction targets in place there is still some work to be done in collating and comparing the energy data. There is an overall fall in energy use across the Department of 1.1% but we still need to focus attention on reducing energy usage at individual sites.
11. The City Surveyors Department have replaced the hot water system for the Pavilion changing rooms and showers and there is a further months' work in replacing the pipe work and shower heads later this year. Once completed the new system should start to realise some significant energy savings.

Woodland Conservation and Tree Management

12. Storm Doris warranted the closure of Highgate Wood on the 23 February, and did cause some damage, through this was largely branch failures. Gusts reached speeds of 55mph during the height of the event. There were no other significant weather events over the winter and early spring and it has been a relatively quiet winter period.
13. The City of London's Tree Contractor was commissioned to carry out some priority work along the Muswell Hill Road in January and February. This has allowed the Highgate Team to focus their efforts on the new Conservation Area.
14. The work to create the 2017 Conservation Area commenced in December and continued through to March. The new area is the largest created at 1.5 acres since the practise started in 1977. There has been a new focus on maximising light levels and coppicing as many of the hornbeams as possible. The new area is directly adjacent to the western edge of the 2012 area, which is hoped will maximise the regeneration at ground level and help the existing oaks to recover crown density.
15. In January the new Conservation Area was the focus of a Divisional Team Day where 30 members of staff, including Managers, joined forces to help the Highgate Wood Team to complete the all-important protective hedging which will secure the area for the next 10 years. The assembled workforce managed to construct over 100 metres of dead hedging and chestnut pale fencing in the course of three hours; a really excellent result.
16. The new Conservation Area was discussed at length during an external visit from a Woodland Management Consultant in March. The Heath Senior

Ecologist, Highgate Wood Manager, and members of the Highgate Wood Team are working together to create a Woodland Management Plan for the site for the next 10 years. It is hoped to present a draft plan to the Committee in November.

17. Although Highgate Wood has a Conservation Management Plan there is no specific management document for the woodland and the other associated habitats on the site. The plan will be largely based on the current Forestry Commission's model Woodland Management Plan, but there will be additional information included, most importantly an evaluation of the current condition of the woodland. A short summary document is attached with this report which shows the proposed content of the Management Plan (see Appendix 1).
18. A number of squirrel traps have been purchased and installed at various locations.
19. The nesting Kestrels who previously set up home in the large oak in the 2007 Conservation Area, have returned to the Wood over the last few weeks. The pair are raising another family and have been accompanied by a pair of Tawny owls, who rather surprisingly are nesting in the same tree. We are hoping that both families will get along well, and happily raise their respective young in harmony, but there is going to be a great deal of interest in how the situation develops over the next few months.

Volunteer activity

20. 25 Heath Hands Volunteer sessions were held over the 2016/17 period, an increase of two sessions from the previous year. The volunteers have been busy working on a number of projects including the new Conservation Area and then the protection of the bluebell area in the last sessions in March. The existing pathway through the bluebell patch close to the Roman Kiln site has been improved by using recycled play bark from the play area. The dead hedging along the pathway has been repaired and reinforced. This is important work as the bluebells are particularly sensitive to trampling and compaction and we hope that this will allow the bluebells to spread.
21. With the new Woodland Management Plan there will also be an opportunity to draft a volunteer work programme which will detail future works on an annual basis.

Oak decline and oak regeneration

22. This work will continue and be included in the new Woodland Management Plan as an annual survey and then subsequent report. The value of this work will increase over time and it is still hoped that the results of the survey will contribute to the wider studies by the Forestry Commission and other organisations on acute oak decline (AOD) and chronic oak decline (COD).

Tree disease and biosecurity issues

23. Results for the Forestry Commission's winter Oak Processionary Moth (OPM), survey indicate that nests were found from 2016 in Queen's Wood. This will have instigated a Statutory Plant Health Notice to have been issued to

London Borough of Haringey and we will be providing our colleagues in the Tree Department with some guidance on management of this pest species.

24. With nests having been discovered in Queen's Wood there is a high possibility that there are also nests as yet undiscovered in Highgate Wood. Over the next two months both the Highgate Wood Team and Heath's Tree Team will be increasing surveying operations in the wood to identify any possible nests. We will also be installing Forestry Commission notices advising the public what to do if they come across the caterpillars.

Sports and Recreation

25. The football season has been significantly disrupted this winter by the wet weather and a number of complaints about the showers in the changing rooms being out of service. The teams affected have been reimbursed for the fees they had paid for the changing rooms. The situation has improved with the new boiler being installed, and the further work to replace the pipe work and shower heads and controls will be carried out during the start of the cricket season when the showers are used less frequently.
26. The outfield is has been over seeded and works are now focusing on preparing the cricket field for the forthcoming season.

Pavilion Café update

27. In April 2017, Members of the Highgate Wood Consultative Committee were consulted via e-mail in relation to the Café Options Appraisal Report. The Report recommendation was for new three year leases to be negotiated with the current providers at the Highgate Wood, Parliament Hill and Golders Hill Park Cafés. The feedback received was supportive of this approach.
28. On 15 May, a Report was presented to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee. Following a decision by Members, new three year leases will be negotiated with the current providers of the Highgate Wood, Parliament Hill and Golders Hill Park Cafés. The Service Standards and Performance Indicators that have been developed following the public engagement and consultation exercise will be used to monitor and measure the cafés performance.

Community and Events

29. The programme of winter walks and other activities was well attended. Income from the educational licenced activities over the 16/17 period is just under £11,000.
30. The Highgate Wood Management Team have discussed the future provision for these activities at length and recommend that the number of licenced events is capped at the current provision as the carrying capacity of the site has been reached. We would welcome Members views on the proposed introduction of an events cap.

31. Consequently, the Team will need to incorporate management objectives into the proposed Woodland Management Plan to mitigate the impact that the licenced events continue to have on the woodland understory and regeneration. There will be an opportunity to work more closely with the licensees to make the children aware of the sensitivity of the woodland environment and to develop strategies for reducing the direct negative impact on the areas where the activities are held.

Infrastructure and buildings

32. The electric gates at the Onslow entrance are now fully operational following a number of minor technical issues. The new layout including the new pedestrian entrance has made the pedestrian access much safer as the vehicle and pedestrians are now separated. The Team are able to closely monitor and regulate vehicle access and they can open and close the gates remotely.
33. The opportunity to further reduce café deliveries has been achieved by installing a secure storage box inside the pedestrian access removing the necessity for early morning deliveries to be made directly to the café.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

34. 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*'.
35. 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

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

Conclusion

37. Highgate Wood is already benefiting from the improved vehicle access control due to the new electric gates. There will be a continued focus on woodland management with the new woodland management plan and the second stage of the work on the latest Conservation Area. The Team will be preparing for the challenge of dealing with the arrival of OPM and we will continue to strengthen partnerships with other woodland sites such as Queen's Wood. We look forward to working closely with the Friends of the Roman Kiln, and supporting a second HLF application bid.

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