

Appendix 2

Draft outline of a Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands Strategy.

Summary

There is a need for a long-term strategy for managing the Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands. This report provides a draft outline of the proposed Strategy.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members views are sought in relation to the approach and content covered in the draft Ponds and Wetlands Strategy.

Main Report

Requirement of the Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands Strategy

1. The ponds on Hampstead Heath are an integral part of the historic landscape, and provide great conservation and biodiversity value, as well as a recreational resource for Heath users. Longer term the ponds themselves require planned periodic management interventions, such as desilting, in order for them to continue as open water bodies. This work has been carried out periodically on the three bathing ponds, and some of the smaller water bodies to maintain them as open water. The continued desilting of the larger ponds will be increasingly difficult to fund and there is a requirement to to explore alternative options alongside desilting operations
2. Alongside the management of silt accumulation there are other planned conservation and habitat management operations to maintain the ponds themselves and their immediate environs. These are encapsulated in the Annual Work Programme (AWP) and Compartment Management Plans. A critical part of this work is Ecological monitoring.
3. Due to the ponds being classified as reservoirs under current Environment Agency Legislation, in the form of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 there are compliance duties that require attention including biannual inspections, and monitoring of the dam structures and flood alleviation measures which were constructed as part of the Ponds Project.
4. The management of water quality for aquatic fauna, and recreational use is a major component of the draft Strategy. A balance needs to be struck between managing algal blooms, caused by nutrient loadings, and acceptable water quality for swimming and aquatic ecology.

5. With the completion of the Ponds Project in October 2016 the major health and safety concerns raised by Consultants and Reservoir professionals were addressed and there were important ecological and landscape improvements incorporated into the design. These improvements require on-going management and the opportunity for further enhancement over time to continue to improve biodiversity value.
6. The draft Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands Strategy forms Project 1.3 in the 2018/19 Divisional Plan, and is scheduled for completion in 2019. The scope of this Strategy is still being developed and this draft is an initial proposal of what the document will cover.

Background and history

7. The Heath contains some 36 ponds, the largest being the Men's Bathing Pond at 1.8 hectares. In terms of the way these ponds are managed, they can be classified into three categories: large, formal or small. Most of the larger ponds (almost lake-like in size) were created by damming streams to create reservoirs between the late seventeenth century and early nineteenth century.
8. The Highgate Valley ponds were formed along the eastern tributary of the River Fleet. Those on City of London land are: Stock Pond; Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond; Bird Sanctuary Pond; Model Boating Pond; Men's Bathing Pond; and Highgate No.1 Pond. There are two further ponds at the top of the chain, Wood Pond and Concert (or Thousand Pound) Pond, which are within English Heritage's Kenwood Estate.
9. To the west are the Hampstead Valley ponds, formed along another tributary branch of the River Fleet. Those on City of London land are: the Vale of Health Pond, the Viaduct Pond, the Mixed Bathing Pond, Hampstead No.2 Pond, and Hampstead No.1 Pond.
10. There are additional chains of ponds located at Golder's Hill Park, West Heath and the Hampstead Heath Extension. These are significantly smaller in size.

Long term versus short term approach

11. It is proposed to create a 20 year strategy for the ponds and wetlands to incorporate aspirational objectives and a programme of planned works extending to 2038. A Strategy extending beyond that will become increasingly difficult to draft due to factors such as Climate Change and changing financial resources.
12. A critical element of the Strategy will be exploring more sustainable cost effective methods and technology for desilting and controlling nutrient loadings. Fortunately, a number of the major ponds were partially desilted during the Ponds Project and this has improved the water quality and reduced the

necessity to desilt the Bathing Ponds, but a number of the smaller ponds will require this treatment in the near future.

The Hampstead Heath Ponds Project

13. The engineering works carried out between February 2015 and October 2016 effectively future proofed both the Highgate and Hampstead Pond chains against catastrophic failure and reduced the risk of loss of life.
14. The ecological and landscape improvements incorporated into the design were key to the success of the Project with a succession of awards. Most important is the reaction of the diverse Heath users, who have embraced this success and acknowledge the improvements that have been made.
15. The Model Boating Pond Island ecological survey has shown the potential value of retaining the site as a wildlife sanctuary. Subject to Committee approval this project will become part of the Ponds and Wetlands Strategy planned for 2019.

Hydrology and the 2007 Management Plan and 2012 Natural Landscape Chapter

16. The Natural Landscape Topic Paper of the Part II Management Plan was approved by Committee in 2010 following a number of revisions. The Paper provided a description and management policies for the five broad habitat types across the Heath, including Water bodies, streams, ditches and wetlands. The Essential Actions, Aspirational Goals and Policy reference numbers are listed below. These will need to be reviewed and captured in the Strategy document.
17. Essential Action NL5: Manage the Heath's ponds to enhance their nature conservation value.
18. Essential Action HY2: Undertake detailed surveys and further data collection and to develop an overall management strategy for the ponds on the Heath and their associated watercourses.
19. Aspirational Goal NL19: Extend the West Heath sphagnum bog outwards and along the valley towards the Leg of Mutton Pond.
20. Aspirational Goal NL20: Establish a significant area of reedbed.
21. Policies 37,38,39,40,41,42,43, 44,45

Principal areas to be addressed by this Strategy

22. Reservoir Legislation requirements. Inspections, monitoring and maintaining the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project.

23. Natural Landscape - Ponds as historical landscape features.
24. Management focus on maximising species and habitat diversity (London BAP) Priority Habitats.
25. Water Quality for recreational purposes and compliance with Bathing Directive.
26. Recreation, access and learning.

Stakeholders to be involved in drafting the Strategy (consultation)

27. A small stakeholder group comprised of Swimmers, CoL staff, City Surveyors, Department of the Department of the Built Environment and representatives from the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee.

Principal outcomes of the Strategy

28. Conservation of the principal ponds and wetlands as landscape features for the next 20 years.
29. Increased biodiversity value on all the principal ponds and wetland habitats.
30. A sustainable and affordable long term plan for managing silt build up in all ponds.
31. The recognition of Hampstead Heath for its conservation and ecological diversity in the form of an internationally recognised designation.
32. Resolution of existing conflicts between biodiversity and recreational aspects of the Ponds and Wetlands habitats on Hampstead Heath.

Relationship with Divisional Plan, Annual Work Programme and the Cyclical Work Programme

33. The Strategy is planned for completion and Committee approval in April 2019.
34. Conservation work and ecological monitoring will be encapsulated in the AWP.
35. Dam safety will be captured in the CWP including monitoring.
36. The approved strategy will need to be referenced in the 2018 Management Plan.
37. Conclusions.
38. Appendices.

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