

Committee	Dated:
Highgate Wood Consultative Group	18 April 2018
Subject: Superintendents Update for April 2018	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Discussion
Report author: Jonathan Meares – Open Spaces Department	

Summary

This Report provides an update to Members on management and operational activities in Highgate Wood since November 2017. The report describes progress on operational working arrangements, income generation, sustainability, conservation and woodland management, infrastructure and facilities. This Report is also reviews progress on the draft Woodland Management Plan, which is appended for comments. A copy of the 2018/19 Annual Work Programme is also appended to this Report for information.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members provide feedback on the draft Woodland Management Plan (Appendix 1).
- That the views of the Highgate Wood Consultative Group be conveyed to the Hampstead Heath Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee at their meeting on 23 May 2018.

Main Report

Revised working arrangements

1. Following the introduction of the revised working arrangements in October 2016 and a 12-month review in October 2017 the Highgate Wood Team are currently trialling a modified roster to allow longer rest periods between shifts.

Roman Kiln Project

2. The Friends of the Highgate Roman Kiln (FOHRK) were granted Registered Charity status on the 5 March 2018 and will now start planning their fundraising activities. Catherine West remains the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) Chairperson and will play a central role in the fundraising activity. This project is part of the Divisional Plan (Appendix 2, Project 1.13) and has a completion date in 2019.

3. The Highgate Wood Manager will be approaching the City Surveyors Department to request updated estimates for the reconfiguration of the Education Facility where it is planned to display the Kiln. There will be an approach to the Heritage Lottery Fund to explore options on funding applications and timing with City of London.

Sustainability

4. Work is now underway to review the current Waste and Recycling service across the Division, including the current arrangements in Highgate Wood. Costs have been steadily increasing over the last five years and service delivery has been inconsistent.
5. The review, project 2.2 in the Divisional Plan, will include a focus on public engagement, in the hope of reducing the amount of litter left on site, while encouraging the correct disposal of dog waste. There will also be drive towards increasing the current levels of recycling, which could be much higher. Unfortunately, a large amount of recyclable waste gets contamination by dog waste which is incorrectly disposed of.
6. The Open Spaces Department now have a total of 10 Photo Voltaic installations including one at Highgate Wood, generating close to 120,000Kw annually. Three additional systems were installed during 2017/18 at Epping Forest and the Parliament Hill Lido.

2018/19 Annual Work Programme

7. The Annual Work Programme (AWP) sets out cyclical and project works planned at Highgate Wood over the next 12 months and is integral to effectively prioritising programmes and works for resource allocation. The 2018/19 AWP is appended to this report (see Appendix 5).

Draft Woodland Management Plan and future funding opportunities

8. The first full draft of the Highgate Wood Woodland Management Plan has now been completed and is attached to this report (Appendix 1). The main sections of the Forestry Commission format used for the plan did not allow for much detail to be included, and the revised plan adds this detail in an appendix. The Wood is divided into 15 compartments, and for each compartment an ecological description is given, and the proposed management and timescale specified. Members are invited to comment on the Plan. After revision it will be made available for public consultation.
9. In order to apply for funding through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme the site will need to be registered with the Rural Payments Agency which then allows an application to be submitted in April 2019. The grant funding if successful will cover existing Woodland Conservation Work but will also focus on Veteran tree management.

Highgate Wood Conservation Management Plan

10. A mid-term review of the 10-year Conservation Management Plan will take place in 2018 and a Report will be submitted for the November Highgate Wood Consultative Group meeting. The review will focus on the vision and objectives laid out in the 2013 Plan and report back on progress. The new Woodland Management Plan will form part of this review. This forms part of the Divisional Plan (Appendix 2, Project 1.5)

Woodland Conservation and Tree Management

11. 16 young oaks saplings from Hampstead Heath were planted in the 2017 Conservation Area by Heath Hands Volunteers. Works in the 2017 Conservation Area have now been completed and there is already a promising level of natural regeneration.
12. January 2018 brought a succession of strong weather systems, in the form of storms Eleanor, David and Georgina. Highgate Wood closed on four separate days over the month of January and suffered significant tree damage numbering 27 separate tree incident reports including 10 major failures. Storm David on the 18 January 2018 had the biggest impact on site, accounting for 16 tree failures.

Ecology

13. The November 2017 Superintendents report provided an update on the continuing research project for hedgehogs 'Hog Watch' and the survey carried out during June and July 2017 which included Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood. The Institute of Zoology at Regents Park sent through their report last month and the findings although disappointing for Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood are very promising for Golder's Hill Park where there were 1,080 hedgehog sightings over the survey period. The survey also recorded other species including foxes which were noted in high numbers in both Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood.
14. The report also recommends that Highgate Wood needs to consider improving potential access for hedgehogs to private gardens although this would be restricted to the north west side of the site where the boundary abuts with the old disused Alexandra Palace track line and the rear gardens of Lanchester Road. Access could involve constructing corridors through or under the existing fencing.
15. Small mammal monitoring was carried out in November 2017 by the Heath Ecologist and a member of the Highgate Wood Team with guidance from a specialist small mammal Ecologist. Mammals were captured, marked and released. Wood mice were the only species captured during the monitoring. (Nearly 40 individuals).

Volunteer activity

16. Between 14 March 2017 and 13 March 2018, a total of 42 different volunteers collectively contributed 598 volunteer hours over a period of 28 afternoons, helping with a variety of conservation tasks, mainly coppicing holly and young trees and laying trees along area perimeters, but, also some planting. Volunteering statistics for Heath Hands are attached for information at Appendix 4,
17. Following a recent request to diversify the volunteer activities in Highgate Wood, one volunteer invested a week of their time inputting bird data from 14 years of paper records and basic computer tables. This information is now available for the Ecology Team to analyse and look at significant trends in Highgate Wood.
18. Volunteering is included in the Divisional Plan (Appendix 2, Project 3.2) with a focus in increasing opportunities for volunteers and diversifying activities.

Oak decline and oak regeneration

19. The rate of oak regeneration continues to be a concern, with over 70% of the seedlings that have been protected with shelters, being lost to drought stress or mildew or a combination of the two factors. Sapling oaks from Hampstead Heath have been planted so it is hoped that increasing planting may build up a viable replacement population as the older trees are lost.
20. The latest survey work on oak decline has been analysed and we now have a series of possible scenarios based on current estimates of death rates. Bearing in mind these are based on a survey that is still less than 10 years old the two proposed scenarios look at worst case outcome and best-case outcome.

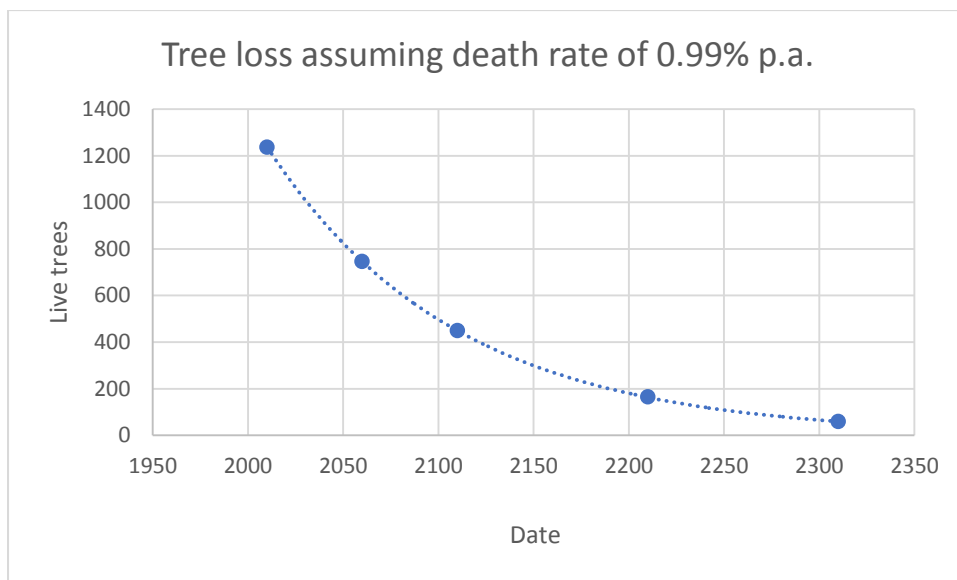


Figure 1 – Tree Loss per year based on a rate of 0.99%

21. In Figure 1 the death rate diminishes over time and the existing generation of 140 to 200-year-old trees are lost over a longer time scale.

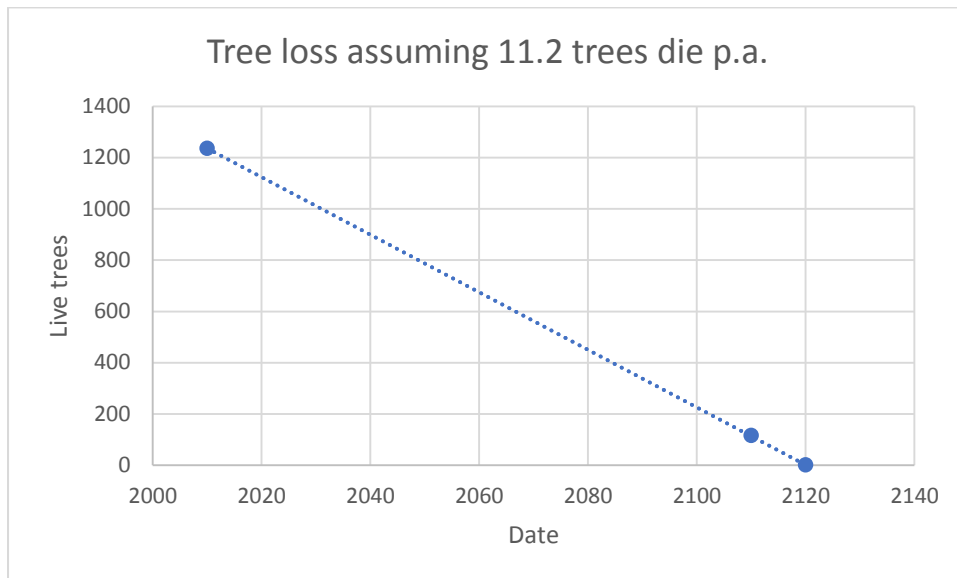


Figure 2 – Loss per year based on a rate of 11.2 trees per year

22. In Figure 2 the death rate remains constant and the entire remaining population of oak standards are lost in just over a century.
23. There is also a third scenario (not illustrated) where the death rate will drop significantly as the oak standards 'self-thin' and light conditions will improve with the forest canopy becoming more open and competition for water and nutrients reducing. What will happen in the next 100 years will be subject to many variables including climate change and increasing pressure from visitor numbers with compaction and loss of understory.

Tree disease and biosecurity issues

24. A Forestry Commission Survey for Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) was carried out over the winter months on a sample area of oaks in Highgate Wood along the Muswell Hill Road fence line. The Forestry Commission have recently circulated information on spraying across London for 2018 and Queen's Wood is listed as having 164 trees with OPM nests. Alexandra Palace has 81 effected trees, very close to the number on Hampstead Heath. It is surprising that nothing has been discovered to date in Highgate Wood.
25. Biosecurity continues to be a priority for the Department, with *Phytophthora ramorum* at Epping and the new concern of *Xylella fastidiosa* a bacterial pathogen with a very wide host range originally from the Americas, not present in the UK, but spreading in the Mediterranean.

Sports and Recreation

26. The sport's field has not coped very well with the poor weather conditions we have been encountering over the last few months. Only six official football matches have been played since the Christmas break. The pitches have been waterlogged which has made it impossible for the Team to carry out drainage improvement work. Despite the poor state of the pitches the children's coaching sessions have been taking place on the other parts of the field which has increased our income. With the cricket season rapidly approaching it is hope that the weather will change.

Playground

27. We have had a new cable and carriage installed in the playground on the aerial runway. New fence posts have been installed around the playground perimeter and at the front of the special needs unit. A new entrance on the front of the slide will be constructed soon, this is due to heavy wear and tear. Staff have installed a new shrubbery where sand used to collect, and this will be planted up after the summer break. Works to fill in holes around the playground will take place in the next few months.

Pavilion Café update

28. The previous tenant at the Highgate Wood Pavilion Café informed the City that they would cease trading on 4 March 2018, due to operational matters.
29. An interim solution has been sourced and the operator Hoxton Beach are currently operating on a Tenancy at Will. Hoxton Beach are the current operator at the Hampstead Heath Lido Café. The feedback received has been very positive.
30. The Superintendent will undertake a competitive tender process during the summer of 2018 to award a lease to commence in January 2019.

City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018

31. The City of London Corporation (Open Spaces) Act 2018 received Royal Assent on 15 March 2018.
32. A copy can be accessed at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/ukla/2018/1>. This additional legislation has significant implications for the City Corporation and its ability to manage its Open Spaces. The Act focuses primarily on three main objectives:
 - Clarifying general management powers;
 - Strengthening the City Corporation's powers to deal with anti-social behaviour; and
 - Providing greater opportunity to generate income to be re-invested back into the running of our green spaces.
33. Exercise of the new powers will be decided by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee following consultation with the Highgate Wood Consultative Group.

Licenced events and activities.

34. Highgate Wood Site Specific Events Policy will be prepared for Members to consider at their next meeting. The Site Specific Policy will establish clear guidelines on event provision for the site.
35. A table has been prepared which sets out the income generated from, and the number of people attending, licenced events. Figures for 2016/17 and 2017/18 have been provided for comparison.
36. We have also shown the number of the school groups using the site and education sessions in the form of 'Walk Talks' that are held over the course of

the year. See tables attached in the appendices showing numbers and comparison between 2016/17 and 2017/18 (Appendix 3).

Infrastructure and buildings

37. Bound gravel resurfacing has been carried out on 50% of the internal paths within the wood, with a marked improvement in the wearing surface. Hoggins, a naturally occurring quarried self-binding aggregate has been used to carry out the resurfacing, but weather conditions deteriorated during the operation with snow and very cold weather, so the works have had to be postponed until the conditions dry out.
38. A new drain run has been installed serving the female toilets and changing rooms which replaces a partially collapsed section which caused blockages during busy times of the year.

Divisional Plan

39. The 2018/19 Divisional Plan was approved by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee on 21 February 2018.
40. A 4th Quarter update on the status and progress of the 2017/18 Divisional Plan Projects is attached at Appendix 2. Members are asked to note the progress of the Projects, and in particular Projects with April 2018 milestones.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

41. 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*'.
42. 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

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

Conclusion

44. The conservation of the Ancient Woodland habitat of Highgate Wood for future generations remains a focus for the Team, and the draft Woodland Management Plan when approved will provide clearer guidance and management over the next 10 years. Highgate Wood is relatively small in woodland terms and its capacity is limited in terms of a recreational space. The Team have a vital role in monitoring the health of the woodland and the direct impact of increasing visitor numbers.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 –Highgate Wood Management Plan (final draft)
- Appendix 2 – 2018/19 Divisional Plan (Including 4th Quarter Status & Update for 2017/18 Divisional Plan).

- Appendix 3 – Licenced Events, School Walks and Schools Sports usage 2016/17 & 2017/18.
- Appendix 4 – Heath Hands Progress Report.
- Appendix 5 – 2018/19 Annual Work Programme

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