

HIGHGATE WOOD CONSULTATIVE GROUP
Wednesday, 22 November 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Highgate Wood Consultative Group held at Heathfield House, 432 Archway Road, London, N6 4JH on Wednesday, 22 November 2017 at 4.00 pm

Present

Members:

Karina Dostalova (Chairman)
Deputy John Tomlinson
Stephanie Beer (Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association)
Councillor Gail Engert (London Borough of Haringey)
Councillor Bob Hare (London Borough of Haringey)
Lucy Roots (Muswell Hill Friends of the Earth)
Michael Hammerson (Highgate Society)

Officers:

Alistair MacLellan	- Town Clerk's Department
Bob Warnock	- Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Jonathan Meares	- Highgate Wood & Conservation Manager

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Anne Fairweather, Marguerite Clark (Highgate Society), Peter Corley (Tree Trust for Haringey), Jan Brooker (Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee) and Alison Watson (Friends of Queen's Wood).

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the meeting held on 31 May 2017 be approved, subject to some typographical amendments.

Matters Arising
Squirrel Traps

In response to a question from Cllr Bob Hare (London Borough of Haringey), the Conservation & Trees Manager replied that it was difficult to give an estimate of the overall squirrel population in Highgate Wood. In response to a further question, he noted that the traps were likely having a small impact on the overall population, but that judgement on the effectiveness of the traps would be reserved until their introduction was reviewed after one year. Other sites, such as Kenwood, had introduced squirrel traps many years ago and therefore it was worth persevering with the traps in the Wood. He noted that it would not be possible to introduce pine martens into the Wood as a natural

deterrent – in line with a successful pilot in Ireland – as the Wood was too small an area to be a sustainable habitat for the animals.

4. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE FOR NOVEMBER 2017**

Members considered an update report of the Superintendent and the following points were made.

Revised Working Arrangements

- The Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager noted that these were working well, and that a revised duty roster was currently being consulted on with staff.

Roman Kiln Project

- The Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager noted that he was confident the Charitable Incorporated Organisation would be established by Christmas 2017. The project remained 'live' on the City of London Corporation's project management system.

Sustainability

- The Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager noted that he was looking to replace the battery-powered Bradshaw vehicle which had now come to the end of its working life.

Woodland Conservation and Tree Management

- The Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager drew Members' attention to the draft Woodland Management Plan appended to the report and noted that he planned to work with colleagues of his in Epping Forest and apply for a Countryside Stewardship Award, which would support delivery of the Plan.
- In response to a question from Cllr Gail Engert (London Borough of Haringey) the Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager noted that he was not certain that European Union (EU) grant funding would continue once the United Kingdom left the EU.
- The Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager noted that Members were welcome to provide comments on the draft Plan outside of the meeting, and that the final iteration would be put to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee in March 2018. At the request of the Chairman, he agreed to issue an email to Members after the meeting setting out the consultation timeline for the Plan, and what the review period would be.
- In response to a request from Cllr Gail Engert (London Borough of Haringey) the Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager agreed to

provide feedback to Members on his meeting with Natural England on 1 December 2017.

Stephanie Beer (Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association) left at this point of the meeting.

Ecology

- Members expressed their disappointment that there was little evidence that the Wood was populated by hedgehogs, but noted that Queen's Wood was similarly affected and that the likely reason was that hedgehogs preferred garden-like settings, which would explain their prevalence in Golders Hill Park.

Volunteer Activity

- The Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager noted that, whilst the size of volunteer groups had fluctuated in the past, group sessions were now very popular and oversubscribed.

Oak Decline and Oak Regeneration

- The Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager noted that the Forestry Commission was investing a lot of resources into investigating Acute Oak Decline (AOD) and Chronic Oak Decline (COD). The emerging theory was that the two conditions were in fact one and the same, and the causal agent was drought stress. Given the long life cycle of oaks, it was possible that instances of AOD and COD in Highgate Wood dated to intervention into the hydrology of the Wood when it was acquired by the City in the late nineteenth century.
- In response to a question from Cllr Bob Hare (London Borough of Haringey), the Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager agreed that soil compaction could be a contributing factor to AOD and COD. It was very difficult to establish if the conditions represented a macro-cycle as the only 'control group' of ancient oaks existed in Poland, and even those had been subject to some element of human intervention. In response to a further question, he replied that the City had tried air-spraying oaks but that the technique had been unsuccessful.

Tree Disease and Biosecurity Issues

- The Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager noted that Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) had yet to be detected in the Wood, but that staff were using the opportunity of autumn leaf fall to survey trees for evidence of OPM, particularly in areas of high activity such as the playground. He noted also that the City's Director of Open Spaces had formed a Biosecurity Working Group composed of staff from the City and Royal Parks to help coordinate responses to tree disease, biosecurity, and AOD/COD.

Pavilion Café

- The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath noted that the City was negotiating with the current provider for a lease ending 2021, the year that the City of London Open Spaces Bill was expected to become law. The Bill, once law, would empower the City to offer longer leases on cafes across its open spaces, thus providing incentive for tenants to invest more in their service provision.

Community and Events

- The Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager drew Members' attention to a tabled paper that outlined income for the Wood. He noted that the Queen's Park Consultative Group has queried ways in which a more commercial approach to revenue raising could be adopted at the Park.
- The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath noted that an Events Policy would be submitted to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee at its meeting in early 2018.

Infrastructure and Buildings

- The Highgate Wood and Conservation Manager noted that the introduction of a secure storage box for deliveries to the café had led to a clear reduction in vehicle movements within the Wood.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

5. DEVELOPING A DIVISIONAL PLAN FOR HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD, KEATS HOUSE AND QUEEN'S PARK

Members considered a report of the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath regarding the development of a divisional plan for Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park and the following points were made.

- The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath noted that the intention of the plan was to move towards a more outcome-focused way of working. 22 of the 39 projects outlined within the plan were relevant to Highgate Wood. Members were welcome to comment on the draft plan outside of the meeting.
- In response to a question, the Superintendent noted that a summary report would be submitted to Members each summer to provide an update on how divisional plan projects were progressing.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

6. **QUESTIONS**

Walking Guide

In response to a question from Cllr Gail Engert (London Borough of Haringey) the Superintendent of Hampstead Heath agreed to consider whether walking guides and associated literature could be provided in the Highgate Wood Café. Cllr Engert noted in particular that she would welcome, if possible, a bespoke guide to a walk from Muswell Hill to Primrose Hill via Highgate Wood and Hampstead Heath.

7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

Deputy John Tomlinson

The Chairman noted that this was Deputy John Tomlinson's first meeting and welcomed him to the Group.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that their next walk and meeting would be on 18 April 2018, with the walk commencing at 2.00pm and the meeting commencing at 4.00pm. The Town Clerk agreed to ensure that the walk and meeting did not clash with any other City of London Corporation committee meeting.

The meeting ended at 5.10 pm

Chairman

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