

Committee	Dated:
Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee	06 July 2020
Subject: Superintendent's Update	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Discussion
Report author: Bob Warnock	

Summary

This report provides an update to Members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee on management and operational activities across the Heath since May 2020.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members views on the preferred long-term option for waste and recycling are sought.
- Members give feedback on whether the policy position on Cycling, as outlined in paragraph 26 should be reviewed to reflect the urgency represented by Covid-19 in relation to encouraging communities to commute by walking and cycling.

Main Report

Coronavirus Emergency Response and Issues

1. Following the Government announcement on 10 May 2020, the Open Spaces have seen a significant increase in usage as more people are now visiting and staying for longer periods of time. The car parks, tennis courts, athletics track, bowls and croquet have been re-opened, and the cafés are now serving takeaway food. Covid-19 Recovery Plans are being prepared for the other sports and leisure facilities that are currently closed.

Staff

2. On Tuesday 24 March 2020 an Emergency Roster was introduced to co-ordinate our response across the Division and to introduce new lone working and welfare arrangements. The Emergency Roster ensures that we have sufficient staff resource to undertake the Critical and Essential Services we are required to meet our Statutory Obligations to manage the Open Spaces.
3. The workforce has been split into two teams with a mix of early, mid and late shifts operating to provide cover. The majority of staff working on the Open

Spaces are lone working and the Duty Manager and Constabulary are monitoring staff welfare and providing backup in case of emergencies. Meetings with the Managers and Supervisors are being undertaken online using Microsoft Teams.

4. The Constabulary are patrolling in their two specialist vehicles and this is supplemented with Managers in vehicles being equipped with a loudhailers and emergency lights.
5. The challenge across all the Open Spaces is the significant increase in the number of visitors and the public's fatigue with the Covid-19 Regulations, especially during the warmer weather we have experienced significant challenges in relation to large groups gathering, litter, anti-social behaviour, lack of social distancing and cyclists across the wider Heath.

Communications

6. A series of press release have been issued since 24 March setting out the City of London Corporation's response to Covid-19 and urging the public to follow the Governments Guidance around social distancing and travel restrictions.
7. The City Corporation website has been regularly updated with information around facility closures, their subsequent re-opening arrangements and alterations to site closing times as a result of Covid-19.
8. The Director of Open Spaces along with the Chief Executive of the Royal Parks, the Chief Executive of the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and the Executive Director of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park issued a joint letter to Londoners on 3 April. The letter urged the public to follow the Government's Guidance around social distancing to help ensure that the Open Spaces and Parks were able to remain open. A further joint letter was issue on 13 May.
9. The Covid-19 posters at the entrances to all the sites has been regularly refreshed to reflect the Governments Guidance and to improve the clarity of the key messages to visitors. Additional signage has been installed at the smaller entrances on the Heath and at specific areas such as West Heath and Sandy Heath and are targeted to address issues such as cycling and waste.
10. Social Media monitoring remains active seven days a week, with Staff monitoring posts on Twitter and Facebook in order to notify the Duty Managers of issues being highlighted by the public. This allows Staff to target specific problems such as inconsiderate behaviour by visitors and to remind visitors of the Government's Guidance. The social media feeds are also being used to promote messages from the Government and the NHS to help reduce the spread of the virus, as well as to share uplifting images of the sites for those who cannot currently visit.
11. Communication representatives from across the Open Spaces Department are in regular contact with each other and the Marketing Manager for Open Spaces to ensure a consistent approach is taken regarding communication, although messaging is also tailored to fit individual sites where necessary.

Car Parks

12. Following the Government announcement on 10 May the Jack Straws and Lido car parks were reopened for public use on 15 May, with payment accepted by pay-by-phone only. The car park at East Heath re-opened for public pay and display parking on 1 June. The lower fairground site is still being utilised for NHS

parking to support staff working at the Royal Free Hospital. Officers are in discussions with the Royal Free Hospital around their withdrawal from the fairground site by the 4 July 2020.

Waste & Recycling

13. As part of the initial Emergency Response to the Coronavirus pandemic, Staff removed all the litter, recycling and dog waste bins from the Heath and the bins at Golders Hill Park were temporarily covered over. Signage and social media messaging were used to encourage visitors to take their waste home for recycling and disposal. This was broadly successful in the first phase of the lockdown.
14. The Golders Hill Park bins were subsequently made available for use in mid-May taking account of the increase in visitor numbers and the increasing availability of takeaway food being left in the Park.
15. As the lockdown measures have eased there has been a significant increase in the amount of litter left on the Heath. In response, dark green 600L Euro Bins have been placed in strategic locations around Heath. The lids of these bins are currently being left open to encourage visitors to deposit waste in the bins rather than leaving it around the base. (See Appendix 1).
16. Staff have also re-installed the dog waste bins on the Heath, however, the messaging is still for visitors to take their litter and dog waste home for disposal. Staff are emptying the bins more frequently however, on busy days we do not have enough capacity to deal with all of the dog waste and rubbish that is left on the Heath.
17. To provide additional resilience at weekends and mid-week a local contractor has been providing support servicing four of the bin locations. Glass recycling has also been added at these locations. Veolia have continued with collections from Parliament Hill and Kenwood Nursery Yard.
18. The Waste and Recycling Team are finalising training and paperwork for the deployment of a 7.5 tonne waste collection vehicle which will be based at Kenwood Nursery Yard. This will be operational from w/c 22 June.
19. We are extremely grateful to the visitors who have responded positively by taking their litter and dog's waste home for disposal.
20. A number of local community groups and neighbours have been helping with litter picking throughout the lockdown. This is hugely appreciated and we are now reaching out to these people with information and providing plastic bags, gloves and litter pickers.
21. We are currently operating under option 4, which offers a flexible, preemptive approach to waste management, where bins will be deployed according to demand, and thus minimises the waste infrastructure across the Heath.
22. Longer term options for replacing the waste and recycling infrastructure are being developed (see appendix 1). Members views on the preferred long term option are sought.
23. A programme of work will be developed to lay grass grids to ensure the bins are positioned on level ground to reduce manual handling risks. Chestnut paling enclosures planted with ivy and honeysuckle will be constructed to help disguise

the Euro Bins. A trial of chestnut paling was installed outside the Hive earlier in the year.

Cycling

24. The Open Spaces continue to see a huge increase in the number of cyclists unfamiliar with the restrictions on cycling. In particular the increase in unauthorised cycling around Sandy Heath is causing damage to the fragile ecology of this site.
25. Additional 'no cycling' signage has been installed and we are using frequent messaging across social media to ensure visitors are aware that cycling is restricted to the shared use paths. The Constabulary, supported by Rangers and the redeployed Lifeguards, are undertaking patrols to discourage this activity and engage with visitors. Unfortunately, the 'no cycling' signs are being frequently vandalised or removed.
26. The current position in relation to cycling on the Heath is as follows:
 - a) The Public Highway network around the Heath should be adapted and managed to promote safe walking and cycling routes.
 - b) Cycling to the Heath should be encouraged and cycle parking provided at the car parks and facilities e.g. Lido, tennis courts.
 - c) Pedestrians have priority access on the Heath.
 - d) The four shared use paths are maintained to provide safe access for walking and cycling.
 - e) Cyclists must give way to pedestrians at all times, and the maximum speed permitted on the Heath is 12MPH.
 - f) Waymarking of the shared use paths should be clear but unobtrusive.
 - g) Clear signage at appropriate access points where cycling is not permitted.
 - h) Information is readily available to cyclists, along with maps on the entrance signs indicating the shared use paths.
 - i) Engagement with Local Authority Partners and Schools to promote sustainable transport to support children walking and cycling to school. This could include initiatives such as "walking buses and cycle bursts".
 - j) Enforcement action is taken to address breaches of the byelaws, the Constabulary maintain a priority tasking in relation to cyclists. Constables will continue to engage, explain, encourage and enforce the Hampstead Heath byelaws.
 - k) The City Corporation committed to undertaking a review of the cycling provision within the mid-term review of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018 -2028. This would commence in 2024.
27. The London Borough of Camden are currently seeking feedback on the provisions within the Borough with the aim to "make it easier and safer for people to walk and cycle locally, shop on their local high street, reach their local green spaces, schools and NHS sites, all while maintaining physical distancing". Comments can be made at <https://camdensafetravel.commonplace.is/>.

28. In addition, the Hampstead Transport Partnership, Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum and Councillors for Hampstead Town and Frognal & Fitzjohn's Wards have undertaken an online survey inviting residents and businesses to suggest potential projects to encourage cycling and walking in Hampstead and Frognal & Fitzjohn's. The report makes a number of recommendations in relation to Hampstead Heath and is attached at Appendix 2.
29. The Superintendent seeks Members views and feedback on whether the policy position in paragraph 26 of this report should be reviewed to reflect the urgency represented by Covid-19 in relation to encouraging communities to commute by walking and cycling.

Tennis

30. The tennis courts at Parliament Hill, Golders Hill and Queen's Park were reopened on 16 May. Initially usage was restricted to alternate courts, however all courts are now available to book and use as adequate Social Distancing measures have been put in place and are being observed by those using the courts.

Athletics Track

31. The Athletics Track re-opened in a limited hourly capacity of 50 runners on 6 June. Members of the public must pre-book and pay for sessions before arriving at the facility. Currently the use of long throwing and jumping equipment is not permitted and there is no access to the changing facilities or toilets at present, but this will be kept under review.
32. Since reopening, nearly 1,000 people have used the track by booking online and 36 new season tickets have been purchased.

Bowls & Croquet

33. The Green was re-opened on 6 June; however, the pavilion facilities remain closed. Public pay and play bookings are being managed through the ClubSpark and equipment is not being made available for hire, to is making sure bowls is being played in a safe environment that conforms to Government Guidance

Swimming

34. The swimming facilities remain closed to the public and Officers have drafted Covid-19 recovery plans for the Lido and Bathing Ponds. An update on Swimming is included within the meeting agenda pack.
35. Officers have continued to engage with the Swimming Associations and Swimming Forum, and work is underway to adapt the facilities to allow Social Distancing. An update issued to the Swimming Forum is attached at appendix 3.

Cafés

36. All the on-site cafés closed on 23 March following the Government's announcement to control the spread of Covid-19.
37. The City Corporation is working with the tenants to provide support where possible and Officers have continued to engage with the tenants individually.
38. Café tenants have been written to recently, informing them of the continued support being given by the City Corporation during this challenging time.

39. The Superintendent of Hampstead Heath has received a termination of lease from the tenant of the Golders Hill Park Refreshment House. The lease will expire on the 30th November 2020. Andrew Pazienti, the current tenant, along with his late Uncle, jointly operated from the café for 47 years. A tender for the lease will be completed following outcomes from a user engagement exercise.
40. Following the latest Government update on 10 May, the café proprietors have recommenced their take-away services and ice cream sales having introduced queuing systems and other measures to ensure they can manage Social Distancing and operate safely.

Covid-19 Recovery Plans

Public Toilets

41. A recovery plan for the safe opening of toilet facilities is currently being undertaken. The Superintendent will provide an update at the meeting.

Playgrounds, Trim Trail & Outdoor Gym

42. Recovery plans are being prepared and these facilities. Reopening is likely to be considered within of Step 3 of the Governments Coronavirus Recovery Plan.

Hill Garden & Pergola

43. The Pergola is currently closed due the confined space making 2 m social distancing impossible. The Hill Garden remains closed, staff resources are being deployed to open other facilities and to manage the increased volumes of waste and anti-social behaviour.

Butterfly House

44. It is proposed this facility remains closed and is reviewed later in the year.

Sports pitches & training

45. The Superintendent will provide an update on Club Training arrangements.

Constabulary

46. Throughout the lockdown period a critical and primary role of the Hampstead Heath Constabulary has been to support staff lone working, carrying out welfare checks whilst staff are on duty and when they sign off at the end of their shift. The Heath Constabulary have supported staff with closing procedures and the locking of gates at Golders Hill Park and Highgate Wood.
47. Although restrictions on movement outside have eased, the Hampstead Heath Constabulary continue to engage, explain and encourage visitors to follow the Government's Guidance. Where appropriate, matters are escalated to the Metropolitan Police for them to enforce the Regulations.
48. The Constabulary Manager has continued to liaise with the Metropolitan Police Bronze Inspectors across Brent, Barnet, Camden and Haringey Borough Commands and the Local Authority Borough Emergency Control Centers (BECCS). Early June saw anti-social behaviour and social disorder occur at Parliament Hill Fields. The Metropolitan Police (MPS) were at the location in

response to another incident. An estimate 300 young adults and teenagers were dispersed by Police Officers following the outbreak of small scuffles within the group. A small number of arrests were made by the MPS.

49. Intelligence from the Metropolitan Police suggested the likelihood of public disorder the following week. The MPS had a planned response to this intelligence. This led to a successful operation, deterring and preventing a repeat of the previous weeks events.
50. Constabulary patrols continue to focus on a number of priority issues including; the increase of cycling on non-designated routes across the Heath, anti-social behavior, illegal fishing. Constables have been engaging with visitors and encouraging compliance with the Government Guidance. Following an increase in visitors on the West Heath, targeted patrols are being carried out with the intention of addressing anti-social behavior in this area. The Constabulary Manager is working with partners to engage with West Heath users and encourage responsible use of this area.
51. Unauthorised swimming is currently an issue at the Bathing Ponds and the Vale of Health Pond. The Constables have engaged with the individuals around the dangers of swimming in non-Lifeguards ponds.
52. The Constabulary have been liaising with partners to encourage those sleeping rough on the Heath to take up accommodation with the support of the Camden Routes off the Streets Outreach Team.
53. The Constabulary Manager has introduced an online angling permit, enabling those who want to fish on the Heath to apply for a permit online for a small annual fee. Further work is being carried out to develop a Bivouac permit application process within the same online platform.
54. Data captured is showing an increase in anti-social behavior from visitors to the Heath in recent months. The Constabulary continue to provide much needed coverage from early in the morning until late into the evening, patrolling all areas of the Heath as they provide support to staff, promote responsible behavior and respond to issues and concerns raised by visitors.

Tree Safety & Oak Processionary Moth

55. The Tree Team have continued with scheduled tree inspections across the Tree Risk Sequencing Areas. 22 out of the 31 inspection zones have been completed.
56. The Team have also carried out two drive through inspections after high wind events which have focused on identifying tree damage on perimeters and major paths. The Team are on call to respond to tree hazards identified during these inspections, as well as those reported by Heath Staff and members of the public. These works have included:
 - Making safe and clearing the failed copper beech at the Vale of Health Pond which occurred during high winds on (10/05/2020).
 - Making safe and clearing failed crown section on the Veteran oak at Golders Hill Bandstand (10/05/2020).

57. Oak Processionary Month Caterpillars hatched on the 21 April. Following Forestry Commission guidance, the practice of targeting oak trees in high use/risk areas will be adopted. Spraying was undertaken by a specialist contractor in early and mid-May.
58. The Tree Team have PPE and will continue their own programme of inspection for caterpillars and will be removing processions by portable electric vacuum as they start moving down trunks.
59. The Tree Manager and Trees Team Leader were interviewed on BBC Country File (07/06/2020) describing the effect of OPM at Hampstead Heath and how it is managed, including the increasing impact of parasitoids on the OPM population.
60. Collector App is now in use by Tree Team and volunteers to manage and plot OPM nests across the Division.
61. As of 16/06/2020 the Team have located and plotted eight nests within Golders Hill Park, and 38 nests around the Parliament Hill area. The number of nests will increase until the end of July.

Ecology & Conservation

Monitoring

62. Many of the ecological monitoring tasks have been impacted by a reduction of volunteers and Social Distancing restrictions in place. Limited reptile monitoring has been undertaken but it is hoped that some later season dragonfly and butterfly monitoring may resume.
63. A Heath wide breeding bird survey launched in partnership with the Heath & Hampstead Society has continued to be undertaken by volunteers. Volunteers from the Society have been going out weekly as part of their exercise and recording breeding birds along 8 routes throughout the Heath. The survey has so far been a great success with around 40 breeding bird species being recorded and numerous nest sites of species such as Great Spotted Woodpecker and Sparrowhawk discovered. The survey is continuing and was covered in local and national press articles. Full analysis of the data has not been undertaken, but historic breeding records have been digitized to allow for comparison.
64. The Ecology Team has been working with the Zoological Society of London and some hedgehog monitoring has been initiated on the Heath fringes such as the Fitzroy Allotments. Initial results indicate that there is a good distribution of hedgehogs in adjacent areas to the east of Hampstead Heath. Ten hedgehog nesting boxes constructed by Heath Hands have been placed in locations across the Heath.

Annual Work Programme

65. Grassland management in the 2020/2021 Annual Work Programme (AWP) has been reduced with some of the early cutting regimes impacted by a redirection of staffing resources to other tasks. The majority of AWP tasks have flexible completion dates, although this will of course increase the number of jobs to be completed later in the year which may not be possible. Grassland management cutting maps have been produced for small areas of grassland to be cut in June.

66. Tenders documents are being produced by the City Surveyors Department for the planned desilting of the Golders Hill Park Ponds this autumn. Tenders will include environmental enhancement requirements such as the re-use of sediment for wetland planting.

Ecological impacts

67. An increase in desire lines and erosion has been observed throughout the Heath and off-route cycling has continued. Works to address the impact will need to be included in the revised AWP.
68. Members of London Natural History Society have observed an increase in picnicking and trampling of sites that are particularly sensitive to erosion including a site for a rare spider found at very few places in London. This small area at the Vale of Health may be temporarily enclosed for the protection of this species.

Grounds Maintenance

69. Staff continue to maintain the amenity grassland and the fine turf sports areas, although at a greatly reduced cutting frequency due to the ongoing dry period. Staff have maintained irrigation of newly planted trees and shrubs which were planted in late winter and early spring 2020. Flower border maintenance is ongoing including, weeding, pruning and dead-heading spring and early summer flowering plants.

Contractors & Maintenance

Path Repairs

70. Repairs have been undertaken at the Tumulus path and on the East Heath path between the Fairground site and Hampstead No.1 and No.2 Ponds. In addition, potholes have been filled across the network of paths across the Heath.

Fence Repairs

71. A number of fence repairs have been identified and works are likely to start on site in late-June.

Parliament Hill Toilets

72. Refurbishment works at the toilets ceased in response to Covid-19. The temporary toilets have been removed, however the works on site are not due to be completed until mid-July.

Events

73. Eight Wedding and Civil Ceremonies which were due to take place at the Hill Gardens and Pergola have been postponed. Camden have confirmed that no ceremonies will take place before 30 June.

74. The Leisure and Events Manager continues to liaise with the Showman's Guild in relation to the August Bank Holiday fair. It is currently unclear if the event will be permitted to take place.

Planning

Golders Hill Park - Land at the front of Ivy House

75. There has been an appeal to the Secretary of State because the London Borough of Barnet refused planning permission for the proposed development of the installation of an upgrade of Phase 7 monopole combined with wraparound cabinet at the base, with associated works including the installation of seven telecommunications cabinets. The City Corporation has submitted a written objection to the Planning Inspectorate. The City Corporation is of the view that the proposal will be unduly prominent to the detriment of the townscape and the environs of Golders Hill Park and the wider Heath. It is further of the view the Appellant has ignored opportunities to consider appropriate alternatives in terms of siting and design. The Appeal proposal also raises concerns that it will adversely affect pedestrian comfort and highway safety in the vicinity of the School and Park entrances.
76. On the 12 June 2020 a further objection was submit to the application for Prior Approval (in accordance with Schedule 2, Part 16 A.3(3) of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended) for the installation of:
- “Proposed 20m Phase 7 monopole c/w wraparound cabinet at base and associated works”.
77. The proposed telecommunication equipment including a 20m tall mast, antennae and 7 cabinets are to be sited in the center of the pavement outside Ivy House 94 - 96 North End Road London NW11 7SX.
78. In accordance with the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 16, A.3(3) of the GPDO, the City Corporation's objection relates to the adverse impact resulting specifically from the 'siting' and 'appearance' of the telecoms equipment proposed.

55 Fitzroy Park

79. Consultants instructed by the London Borough of Camden have prepared a technical note having reviewed the drainage submission for a proposed development at 55 Fitzroy Park. On 6 May the Superintendent and the City Corporation's Consultant Hydrologist participated in a virtual meeting to discuss the outstanding drainage issues. The drainage issues identified during the meeting are being collated to enable the developer to respond.
80. The Superintendent will provide an update at the meeting on the following planning applications:
- Boncara, 35 Templewood
 - Jack Straws Castle
 - Lido Temporary Fence

Volunteering

81. Risk Assessments and Safe System of Work are being updated for volunteering. This will ensure the safety and wellbeing of volunteers and the staff leading the sessions. The number of volunteers per session will have to be reduced, which will mean tasks are undertaken in a more targeted manner. Initially, practical grounds maintenance sessions will be restarted in non-public spaces, alongside litter picking, followed by activities at enclosed gardens like at Keats House and the Hill Garden.
82. Wildlife monitoring (where social distancing is easy to implement) will be phased back alongside the grounds maintenance, but large scale groups, youth, interpretation, and community volunteering activities will be immensely challenging to restart in the short term.
83. There has been an increase in informal volunteering taking place on the Heath, with individuals and groups litter picking. In light of the increased waste and recycling being left on the ground, the work of these volunteers is greatly appreciated.

Dog Walking Code of Conduct

84. A small Working Group has been formed and a virtual meeting is being arranged.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Waste & Recycling long term plan & map.
- Appendix 2 – Hampstead Neighbourhood Forum Report on measures to encourage walking and cycling
- Appendix 3 – Swim Forum update -16.6.20

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