

Committee	Dated:
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee – For Decision	3 June 2020
Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee – For Information	6 July 2020
Subject: Hampstead Heath Swimming Covid-19 Temporary Arrangements	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Decision/ Information
Report author: Bob Warnock, Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	

Summary

This report sets out the short-term arrangements to adapt the swimming facilities in response to Covid-19, in order to introduce and maintain Social Distancing measures and to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of Staff and visitors.

The report also provides an update on the actions taken to implement the outcomes of the Swimming Review 2020.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee agree the temporary arrangements relating to online booking and session swimming as set out in paragraphs 13-17.
- Members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee agree the temporary arrangements around introducing additional control measures as set out in paragraphs 18-21.
- Members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee agree the temporary arrangements around charges and concessions as set out in paragraphs 22-28.
- Members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee note the report.

Current Position

1. Following advice from the Director of Public Health due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the swimming facilities closed on Sunday 22 March 2020.
2. Throughout the lockdown the Lifeguards have been maintaining a presence at the swimming facilities to prevent unauthorised access and to undertake maintenance tasks, which include:

Lido

- Maintaining the plant room and chemical dosing system.
- Cleaning filters and carrying out regular water quality tests in order to maintain pool water standards.
- Summer Season preparations - jet washing the pool surrounds, painting exterior walls and maintain the benches.
- Assisting contractors who are carrying out essential work such as servicing of Lido plant and paddling pool.

Bathing Ponds

- Summer Season preparations - jet washing decks, cutting back vegetation, deep cleaning of the changing areas, repairing the wooden rowing boats, cleaning life rings and the limit line floats.
 - Patrolling the areas around the facilities to provide support to the Rangers and Keepers.
 - Repairs to perimeter fences. Staff have undertaken localised repairs and a Contractor will undertake further repairs in mid-June.
3. Staff from the Heath's Conservation Team completed repair works to the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond dam in early May. These works were agreed with the Panel Engineer and were supervised by the City of London Corporation's Engineer.
 4. Eight Fixed Term Contract Lifeguards started on Friday, 1 May 2020. This is critical to ensure correct resources are in place for opening the facilities once it is appropriate to do so. Currently, the Fixed Term Contract Lifeguards, the casual Lifeguards and Basket Room Staff are supporting the wider Heath Team and the Highgate Wood Team by engaging with visitors around the Government's guidance and undertaking patrols and helping with waste management across the sites.
 5. The Swimming Facilities Supervisor has updated the Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work for the Bathing Ponds and Lido in line with the outcome from the Swimming Review. The Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work will be further updated in response to the latest advice in relation to Covid-19.
 6. All Lifeguards have been continuing their regular training using the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) online sessions. The Lifeguards have been maintaining fitness levels by individually swimming at the Lido (no team sessions). The Lifeguards have been provided with a copy of the new Open Water Lifeguard manual and are working towards achieving this qualification once the RLSS restart their assessment process.
 7. New rescue equipment has been purchased and the Lifeguards have been using this equipment at the Lido as part of their training. The equipment includes Kayaks, Stand Up Paddle boards and Surf Rescue boards.
 8. Safety signage is being updated to address a number of issues that were raised during the Swimming Review. New entry signage is also being prepared to complement the new payment messaging.

Covid-19 Swimming Facilities Recovery Plans

9. All the swimming facilities on Hampstead Heath are designated as outdoor Swimming Pools, as they have Lifeguards, changing rooms, toilets, showers etc. Due to this they will remain closed until the Government announces that we are moving into Step 3 of the Coronavirus Recovery Strategy. It is anticipated that this will be in early July 2020. However, Officers will need to ensure that the proposals for opening the facilities comply with the Government Guidance, therefore it is likely the facilities will open no earlier than 6 July.
10. Consequently, Officers are seeking Members support to introduce short-term arrangements to adapt the swimming facilities in response to Covid-19, in order to introduce and maintain Social Distancing measures and to ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of Staff and visitors. An outline of the works required are set out within appendix 1.
11. Draft proposals for adapting the swimming facilities were discussed with the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee on the 18 May 2020. Following the HHCC meeting, a series of virtual meetings with the Swimming Associations were arranged. These have proved helpful in preparing this report and Officers will continue to engage with the Swimming Association's as the temporary works are designed and implemented. Notable temporary changes at the facilities will include:
 - Installing Covid-19 site specific signage, temporary barriers and other temporary measures to maintain Social Distancing, such as one-way systems. These will need to be tailored to each of the swimming facilities.
 - At the Highgate Men's Bathing Pond this will involve establishing a new entrance into the facility; a new entrance to the changing compound; removal of the partition to the sunbathing area to extend the changing space to increase the capacity of the facility. Repurpose of the building used by the Lifebuoys as a changing space, allowing for the provision of additional welfare space for the Lifeguards and to allow for social distancing of our staff in their workplace.
 - At the Hampstead Mixed Pond this will require establishing a new exit from the pond with a ladder installed on the timber Lifeguarding jetty to create a one-way system avoiding congestion on the existing jetty.
 - At the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond the back gate will remain closed and entry and exit managed via Millfield Lane.
 - The Lido will be lane swimming only and the paddling pool and slide will be closed.
12. There are a range of temporary measures which Members are asked to consider in relation to:
 - Online booking and session swimming
 - Additional control measures
 - Charges and concessions

Online Booking & Session Swimming

13. In order to manage the number of swimmers at each facility it is proposed to introduce session swimming administered through an online booking and payment system. A limit will be placed on the number of swimmers available to book per session.
14. The option to use cash to pay for swimming on the Heath will be withdrawn and all payments will be made online.
15. Due to the time constraints and taking account of advice from the IT Director, Officers are seeking to partner with an existing online booking provider for the short term until the Heath App has been fully developed. Whilst a number of options are being explored, it is likely that a percentage of the income generated via the online booking will be retained by the provider for this short-term solution.
16. It is proposed that the online sessions will be non-refundable, except where sessions have been cancelled.
17. These short-term temporary arrangements will be kept under review and discussed with the Swimming Associations.

Additional Control Measures

18. The RLSS Guidance (appendix 2) recommends historical rescue data is analysed to establish where interventions are known to be prevalent and to remove high risk sessions. At the Swimming Facilities the incidents of children requiring Lifeguard assistance are historically high. Consequently, to reduce this risk Officers propose to suspend swimming for under 16's at the Bathing Ponds.
19. Therefore, to provide swimming opportunities for children under 16's it is proposed that family only sessions are introduced at the Lido and administered through the online booking system.
20. Taking account of the learning from the Serpentine Swimming Club, the number of swimming sessions will initially be limited to ensure the facilities are operating safely. The number of sessions would be increased if Officers considered it was safe to do so.
21. Officers will need to retain flexibility to close the swimming facilities if necessary, to protect staff, avoid crowding and to ensure Social Distancing.

Charges and Concessions

22. Season Ticket holders have been unable to use their tickets since swimming was suspended in late March. Officers propose to honour the period of time for which a Season Ticket was valid, but unable to be used. Once the temporary Covid-19 swimming restrictions have ended, and usual operating arrangements have resumed, extensions will be applied to Season Tickets.
23. In order to have an online booking system operating from July, Officers propose to delay the introduction of the free morning swim Season Ticket for under 16's and over 60's. However, these groups will be eligible for the concession rate when booking.

24. Officers propose that the day ticket charges for the Bathing Pond, as agreed by Members at their March 2020 meeting be applied to the sessions. In addition Officers propose the morning swim charges for the Lido are applied to sessions booked at this facility, however, the Concessionary rate be adjusted to align with the Ponds as the rounding due to cash handling is not currently applicable to this charge.
 - Adult Session Charge - £4.00
 - Concession Session Charge - £2.40
25. Concessions rates continue to apply to the following:
 - Freedom Pass
 - Disabled Card
 - Job Seekers Allowance
 - Students
 - Under 16's
26. Whilst we acknowledge the swim session at the Lido is slightly longer, this accounts for the additional time required to safely admit the swimmers to the facility.
27. The approach to levy the same charges at the Lido and Bathing Ponds will encourage swimmers to book at the facility most suited to their swimming ability.
28. The Parliament Hill Office will be staffed to assist swimmers with making online booking and payment. Staff will also be able to assist swimmers with additional access requirements.

Contactless Payment Technology

29. Whilst it is proposed to move to online booking in the short term, the long-term intention remains to implement contactless payment as agreed the Management Committee decision of 11 March 2020.
30. Contactless payment arrangements are being progressed and Officers have been working with Lloyds Bank to procure contactless payment devices, wristband season tickets and the development of a Heath App. The current timeline for developing the Heath App is eight weeks.
31. The Heath App will enable payments to be made, wristbands to be activated and managed and will also provide the opportunity to message season ticket holders to provide a range information, such as closures and renewal alerts. It will also be possible to expand the Heath App to include the Athletics Track as a second phase of the implementation programme.
32. Radio frequency data identification (RFDI) enabled wristbands will be used for both season ticket holders and will be an option for day visitors.
33. The provision of small lockers is being investigated. These would enable safe storage of personal effects such as phones, cards and wallets. The RFDI wristband could be used to unlock the locker, avoiding issues with lost keys.

34. The option to facilitate online booking via the Heath App is also being explored. This would be more cost effective and add functionality to the online booking capability. At this stage it is not clear how long these arrangements will be required to operate. Officers will continue to engage with the Swimming Associations throughout this process.

Cyclical Works

35. Officers are working with colleagues from the City Surveyor's Department to progress works on the replacement hot water boiler for the Ladies' showers at the Lido. Works are scheduled to commence on 8 June 2020 for a period of 3 weeks.
36. The project to upgrade the 3-phase electrical cabling to the Mixed Pond is a funded project within the Cyclical Work Programme. We are discussing with the City Surveyors Department the timescales for the works. Funding bids for new fencing, sewerage pumps and control gear have been submitted for the 2021/22 Cyclical Work Programme bid process.

Capital Project

37. To implement the works identified during the Swimming Review in conjunction with the Superintendent, the City Surveyors Department have appointed a firm of Project Management Consultants and Cost Consultants to support the development of the Capital Project.
38. The works across the three Bathing Ponds and the Parliament Hill Fields Lido have been scoped in accordance with the outcomes of the Swimming Review to inform the development of a Capital Project Gateway Report for stages 1 & 2. The draft high-level programme is attached at appendix 3.
39. The Project will include the access works at the Highgate Men's Bathing Pond, the back gate and adaptations to the accessible toilet at the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond, a review of the facilities at the Hampstead Mixed Pond and a review of the vacant space at the Parliament Hill Fields Lido and improvements to security and waste management.
40. The Gateway 2 Report will be discussed with Members of the Swimming Forum, Sports Advisory Forum, Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee before being presented to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.

Finance

41. Covid-19 is having a significant impact on the Heath Local Risk Budget, particularly in relation to a reduction in income from car parking, events, filming, leases, licences, sports bookings and swimming. In addition, expenditure has increased on signage, waste collection, disposal and staff costs. Extensive cost control measures have been introduced to manage the impact on the Local Risk budget.

42. The adaptations to the facilities in accordance with the Covid-19 recovery plans will be funded through the Superintendents Local Risk Budgets. Along with the works to introduce contactless payment technology.
43. During the Swimming Review concerns were raised with respect to the financial accessibility of the facilities. Investigations into a Support Fund have commenced and an initial meeting with the City Bridge Trust has taken place. Further work on this aspect are being prioritised.
44. A Capital Bid will be submitted to seek funding for the Capital Works identified from the Swimming Review.

Risk

45. There is a risk that the demand for access to swimming results in crowds gathering at the facilities. To mitigate this, sessions will be introduced and may initially be restricted to weekdays and early mornings. When periods of exceptionally hot weather are forecast it may be necessary to close the facilities to reduce the likelihood of crowds developing leading to a breakdown in Social Distancing measures and social disorder.
46. There is a risk that the Social Distancing measures and online booking arrangements will not be in place to facilitate an anticipated July opening, subject to Government Guidance. Officers have developed a Project Plan to coordinate the implementation of the works discussed in this report.
47. Unauthorised swimming at the Bathing facilities and the non-lifeguarded Ponds is a significant concern. Staff continue to undertake patrols around the ponds and barrier tape and signage has been deployed to discourage unauthorised swimming.
48. The Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work will be updated to reflect the revised temporary operating arrangements.

Communications

49. A Communications Plan is being drafted. This will outline the steps that the City Corporation will take to provide clear messaging to swimmers around the changes to the swimming facilities and the requirement to book a session online in advanced of arriving at the facilities.
50. The Communications Plan will communicate elements of the Recovery Plan to the media, Heath swimmers and visitors, Londoners and other key external and internal stakeholders, explain the new arrangements for opening safely while Covid-19 is still a risk and provide clear messaging on the entry system, online booking and payments and how people can access the Bathing Ponds and Lido.

Conclusion

51. Due to Covid-19, Officers are developing plans to introduce short term arrangements to enable the swimming facilities to reopen, in-line with Government Guidance. These arrangements will be kept under review taking account of RLSS Guidance, feedback from swimmers and Staff. A further report will be prepared in due course to review the effectiveness of the short term arrangements and consider how the facilities will be managed in the long term once Social Distancing measures are relaxed.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft Swimming Facilities Covid-19 Recovery Plans
- Appendix 2 – RLSS Guidance
- Appendix 3 – Draft High-level Programme

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