

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee	Date(s): 19/10/2020
Subject: Draft Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands Plan	Public
Report of: Open Spaces Department	For Discussion
Report author: Jonathan Meares, Conservation and Trees Manager	

Summary

This report provides an update on the Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands Plan. A previous report was submitted in April 2018 providing a draft outline of the proposed approach to preparing this document. Since then the draft strategy has been renamed the Ponds and Wetlands Plan. The Superintendent now seeks wider discussion and engagement with Members on the draft Ponds and Wetland Plan. A final version will then be prepared to be considered by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Members views are sought in relation to the approach, content and recommendations covered in the draft Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetland Plan (appendix 1).

Main Report

Scope of the Ponds and Wetlands Plan

1. The draft Ponds and Wetlands Plan focuses on the ecological and nature conservation management of the principle ponds on both Highgate and Hampstead chains and in addition the smaller ponds on the Heath Extension and at Golder's Hill Park. The Plan includes fishing, swimming and dog exercise as central recreational activities which impact on the biodiversity value of all the ponds under consideration. The Plan makes a series of recommendations for future management. It is not the purpose of this Plan to consider the wider implications of these activities; these will be addressed by other management documents.

The Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018 -2028.

2. The draft Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands Plan aligns with the Heath Vision and the Strategic Outcomes of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018-2028, particularly Outcome A: The Heath is maintained as a flourishing green space and historic landscape, and Outcome B: Improved quality of life for Heath visitors.

3. Outcome A's three priorities focus on habitat conservation and enhancement, heritage and landscape character, and maintaining a balance between nature conservation and heritage value and visitor activities. These are all critical components of the Ponds and Wetlands Plan.

Building on the success of the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project

4. An important component of the Ponds and Wetlands Plan is to continue to build on the ecological and habitat improvements incorporated into the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project. These works will enhance the biodiversity of the ponds and their marginal habitats but also have critical co-benefits in terms of climate change resilience and flood management.

Key components of the Ponds and Wetlands Plan

5. The report reviews the bathymetric survey that was carried out by the City Surveyors Department in 2020 and evaluates the results. Although, there are some useful findings there are some significant anomalies with the results showing much higher silt volumes than expected and these results will need to be discussed with the company who undertook the survey. Desilting is perhaps the biggest issue going forward with the long-term management of the ponds.
6. The draft Ponds and Wetlands Plan reviews the condition of individual ponds and associated issues with management, with specific focus on the larger water bodies and the ponds that received less interventions during the Ponds Project.
7. Recreational activities such as swimming, fishing and dog exercise are included in the report in terms of their impacts on the ecological and biodiversity value of the ponds, including water quality.
8. The final part of the Plan provides a number of recommendations, both general and also pond specific. Some of these recommendations provide innovative possible solutions to the long-term challenge of desilting but also with ecological and biodiversity enhancements.

Strategic Implications

9. Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018-2028 Strategic Outcomes A: Outcome A's three priority objectives focus on habitat conservation and enhancement, heritage and landscape character, and maintaining a balance between nature conservation and heritage value and visitor activities. B: Improved quality of life for Heath visitors, C: The Heath is inclusive and welcoming to a diverse range of visitors.
10. The Policy also meets the three objectives and outcomes set out in the Open Spaces Business Plan 2018-19 (a) Open spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible, (b) Spaces enrich people's lives

11. This Policy contributes towards the achievement of the two aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23. Contribute to a flourishing society (1-4), and Shape outstanding environments (9-12).

Financial Implications

12. The most significant issue is the financing of any future desilting works relating to maintaining open water and flood alleviation measures.

Conclusion

13. The ponds and wetlands on Hampstead Heath provide a core component to the Heath's overall ecological value in terms of habitat diversity, and consequently species diversity. The ponds are dynamic landscape features which require management in order to be conserved into the future. Their role also in buffering the impact of climate change add to the importance of their long term conservation.
14. Following Members feedback a final version of the Ponds and Wetlands Plan will be prepared for consideration by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Draft Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands Plan

Jonathan Meares

Highgate Wood, Conservation and Trees Manager, Open Spaces Department

T: 0207 332 3322

E: jonathan.meares@cityoflondon.gov.uk