

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee	Date(s): 19/10/2020
Subject: 2020 Summer Swimming Season	Public
Report of: Open Spaces Department	For Discussion
Report author: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	

Summary

This report provides an update on the 2020 summer swimming season at Hampstead Heath which was impacted by COVID-19. A full review of the 2020 Summer Swimming Season will be presented to Members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee in November 2020.

An update on the commencement of the Winter Swimming Season is also include within the report.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Provide feedback on the Summer Swimming Season.

Main Report

Background

1. Following Government Guidance, online booking and timed swimming sessions at the Bathing Ponds and Lido were introduced on a temporary basis for the 2020 Summer Swimming Season. Parallel phone booking arrangements were also in place. The Summer Swimming Season ended on 20 September 2020. Thousands of swimmers were able to visit the Bathing Ponds and Lido from 18 July until the end of the season on 20 September.

Current Position

2. The Winter Swimming Season commenced on 21 September 2020. The operational arrangements for the Winter Swimming Season are outlined in appendix 1.

2020 Summer Swimming Season Review

Participation

3. The table below sets out the level of participation between 18 July 2020 and the 20 September 2020.

Location	Tickets Sold*	Adults	Concession	Children	Carer**
KLBP	29,452	19,774	9,537	-	141
HMBP	27,209	17,954	9,238	-	17
HMP	20,000	13,975	6,021	-	4
Lido –Lane Swimming	31,735	23,402	8,314	-	19
Lido – Family	16,380	7,002	1,509	7,821	48
TOTAL	124,776***	82,107	34,619	7,821	229

* not including any tickets eventually refunded/cancelled.

**Carers have free access.

*** in 2018/19 it is estimated that there were over 655,000 swims at the Bathing Ponds.

4. Across all the sessions the average no show rate was 21.7%. These are defined as being tickets which swimmers neither cancelled nor used.
5. A number of swimmers chose to book their session by using the telephone booking line. The number of session tickets booked for each facility is shown in the table below.

Location	Number of session tickets booked via the telephone service
KLBP	604
HMBP	139
HMP	87
Lido – Lane Swimming	89
Lido – Family	275
TOTAL	1,194

Income and Expenditure

6. The table below sets out the income and expenditure at the Bathing Ponds and Lido for the period of April - August 2020.

Bathing Ponds and Lido	
Employee Costs	£452,000
Operational Expenditure	£108,000
Total Expenditure	£560,000
Income*	£162,000
Subsidy from the Heath Local Risk Budget	£398,000

*Income is for the period 18 July to 31 August 2020. Online booking fees and VAT have been deducted

Survey Results

7. An online summer swimming survey was released on 1 September to seek swimmers' feedback on their experiences over the summer, taking account of the adaptations that were necessary to comply with Government Guidance and to maintain social distancing. The survey was publicised in an e-newsletter and sent to nearly 11,000 people who had used the Eventbrite booking system, and using the Heath's social media feeds – Twitter and Facebook. The survey closed on Friday 11 September and received 1,108 responses.
8. The natural surroundings of the Bathing Ponds (79%), the benefits to physical health (84%) and the benefits to mental health (93%) as a result of swimming outdoors all came through as common reasons people swim at Hampstead Heath. There were a mixture of feelings about the COVID-19 secure measures, including the advance booking system. Over 80 per cent of survey respondents gave the COVID-19 safety measures a score of between seven and 10, with 10 ranked as 'excellent', while almost 60 per cent rated the online booking system between seven and 10. Some Swimmers commented that the measures were too restrictive and removed the spontaneity of being able to swim without an advance plan. Many responders commented that online booking resulted in a calmer atmosphere, in comparison to a busy summers day at the Bathing Ponds and Lido and felt it was a safe environment to swim in during the pandemic.
9. The results of the Survey are attached at appendix 2.

Operational Issues

10. No issues arose from queue management, or swimmers not complying with Social Distancing measures. The capacities at the Bathing Ponds were increased gradually as the Lifeguards and Stewards gained more experience with the operational arrangements.
11. In order to prevent unauthorised access and damage at the Bathing Ponds in the evenings, contract Security Guards undertook overnight patrols.
12. Additional signage and patrols were implemented to provide advice to people swimming in the other Heath Ponds.
13. A small number of swimming sessions were affected by extreme weather.
14. On Thursday 17 September 2020 a surcharge of the Thames Water Sewer required the immediate closure of the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond. Daily water quality testing was implemented, and the results are published on the City of London Corporation website.

2020/21 Winter Swimming Season

15. The Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond reopened for the Winter Season on Saturday 26 September.
16. Water quality testing at the Bathing Ponds is undertaken by the Environment Agency, and this usually consists of weekly tests between May and September. Due to COVID-19 the Environment Agency have moved to monthly testing for Inland Bathing Waters with Good/Excellent water quality results.
17. The City of London Corporation has undertaken independent water quality testing in February, before the Bathing Ponds closed. The City Corporation also undertook independent testing ahead of re-opening the Bathing Ponds, with tests being undertaken on 24 June, 1 July and 16 July. Since the sewerage surcharge at the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond daily water quality testing has taken place. The results are published on the City of London website. This will revert to weekly testing in due course.
18. A further closure of the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond was necessary on Sunday 6 October 2020 owing to a deterioration in water quality. This is most likely linked to torrential rain since the 2 October. At the time of publishing, the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond remained closed.
19. In line with the outcomes from the Swimming Review the season tickets have now be reactivated and are being issued to all season ticket holders in the form of a plastic wristband. Each wristband has a unique number encoded into it, and this number is linked to an individual's account. The wristband will only track the date and time at which it is tapped against the device at the entrances to the Bathing Ponds and Parliament Hill Fields Lido.
20. The City Corporation is working with LoyLap as a Service Partner to manage the Wristband Season Ticket Holder accounts. LoyLap do not share personal or contact information with 3rd parties and expressly do not use personal information for marketing purposes.
21. Season ticket holders receive an email from LoyLap inviting them to create an account and set a password. This is optional and if swimmers choose not to set up their account, they will still be able to use their wristband Season Ticket to swim. If a swimmer chooses to set up an account, they will soon be able to:
 - Manage, link and remove a wristband season ticket through the Heath App (available on iOS and Android devices).
 - Renew season tickets.
 - Get weather warnings and announcements for the Bathing Ponds and Lido.

22. In addition to the wristband season tickets day tickets can now be purchased at the Bathing Ponds and the Lido using contactless devices and cash payment options have been maintained.
23. The Superintendent will provide an update at the meeting on the progress being made to implement the outcomes of the 2020 Swimming Review.

Next Steps

24. Officers will prepare draft arrangements for the 2021 Summer Swimming Season which will be discussed in Spring 2021.
25. Undertake a full review of the 2020/21 Swimming Season.

Conclusion

26. It was a difficult start to the 2020 Summer Season, with uncertainty around being able to open and welcome swimmers. However, the Team were delighted that once Government Guidance was received, they were able to quickly put in place COVID Secure arrangements which allowed the Bathing Ponds and Lido to reopen. There has been a huge demand for swimming, and through the session arrangements we have facilitated thousands of swimmers to access the Bathing Ponds and Lido in a safe, enjoyable way. Staff worked incredibly hard to ensure the Bathing Ponds and Lido were enjoyed during this challenging period.
27. A review of the 2020 Summer Swimming Season will be presented to Members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee in November 2020. A full review of the 2020/21 Swimming Season will be undertaken during summer 2021.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Winter Swimming Season arrangements
- Appendix 2 – Survey results

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