



Hampstead Heath Sports Advisory Forum

Zoom, 30 September 2020, 5.30pm

Attending

Richard Sumray (Chair)	RS	Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee
Anne Fairweather	AF	Chair, Hampstead Heath Management Committee
Karina Dostalova	KD	Deputy Chairman, Hampstead Heath Management Committee
Debbie Bush	DB	Community Sport and Physical Activity Manager, Camden
John Carrier	JC	
Eleanor Kennedy	EK	Parliament Hill Lido
Marc Hutchinson	MH	Winter Swimming Club/ Heath & Hampstead Society
Sandy Nairne	SN	
Ella Mitchell	EM	Hampstead Rugby Football Club
Simon Taylor	ST	Hampstead Rugby Football Club
Rudolf Benjamin	RB	Hampstead Heath Tennis Coach
Robert Gibbs	RGi	Hampstead & Highgate Angling Society
Joseph Lowe	JL	Highgate Harriers
Natasha Cendrowicz	NC	Highgate Harriers
Richard Presley	RP	Highgate Harriers

Officers

Bob Warnock	BW	Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, COLC
Declan Gallagher	DG	Operational Services Manager, COLC
Paul Maskell	PM	Leisure and Events Manager, COLC
Richard Gentry	RG	Constabulary & Queen's Park Manger, COLC
Richard O'Mahony	ROM	Parliament Hill Keeper Team Leader, COLC
Kate Radusin(notes)	KR	PA to Superintendent of Hampstead Heath, COLC

Also attending

Anandi Shah	AS	Parkrun
Adam Lennox	AL	Parkrun
Nigel Robinson	NR	Pro-Active Camden

ITEM		ACTION
1.	Apologies	
	Richard Caylor, Phil Cordingley and David Walton.	
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting (21 July 2020) and Matters Arising	
	Minutes agreed with 1 addition to the AOB wording. It was noted that JC needed to leave the meeting at 6.15pm, and MH at 6.20pm.	
3.	Swimming	
	BW provided an update on the Bathing Ponds and a sewage surge which had occurred at the Ladies' Bathing Pond, resulting in closure between 17-26 September. Ladies' only swimming was provided at the Mixed Bathing Pond (4.30-6.30pm) and Lido (1.30-4.30pm) during the closure period. The Bathing Ponds and Lido are all currently operating under the Winter Season arrangements. Capped free flow is managed by the Stewards. Payment can be made by contactless or	

cash. A report on Swimming is being prepared for the October HHCCC meeting, and the results of the swimming survey will be attached.

RS questioned if Lido income was down.

BW confirmed this was the case. Bathing Pond income is up (as enforced payment is now in place) however the Lido income is down due to the restrictions on numbers of swimmers. We would usually have several very busy days which would help with income generation.

PM many swimmers had been in favour of the online booking process, and the difference at the facilities compared to previous years. The closure of the Ladies' Bathing Pond put pressure on the Mixed Bathing Pond last week, however staff have managed. Water testing is currently being undertaken on a daily basis. The manhole where the surcharge took place was not known to Thames Water. Staff are checking this area as part of their daily routine.

BW the waster testing results are available on the website.

JC was concerned that not all users would have access to make a booking or payment online and did not want this to be prohibitive to access.

BW confirmed that phone booking had been available during the summer months to help swimmers book into a swim session. Additionally, the season tickets can be purchased by filling out a paper application form at the Bathing Ponds or Lido, and cash payments for Season Tickets are also being accepted. Staff are continuing to support swimmers to ensure the facilities are inclusive.

RS suggested that in due course it would be helpful to discuss how technology was being and could be used across the Heath to see the direction of travel.

AF stated that the summer and winter season swimming arrangements got many people swimming again, in what has been a difficult time, which is testament to the staff. Not all Lidos have been able to open following the lockdown. She said she had recently swum at the Ladies' Bathing Pond, the Social Distancing measures in place were working well and there was a pleasant atmosphere. If the applied charges had not been introduced by the Heath's Management Committee ahead of the lockdown then, due to the Government enforced closures, there would be a very difficult situation with money.

RGI raised the issue of unauthorised swimming at the Model Boating Pond, which was impacting on angling.

RS noted that the issue was touched on in the draft Ponds and Wetlands Plan.

BW confirmed that the Heath Team were responding, as it was a safety risk. In previous summers there have been swimmers climbing over the walls of the Lido, which hadn't happened this year. Instead, we are seeing people attempting to swim in the Model Boating Pond. Security guards are patrolling the Bathing Ponds after hours to discourage unauthorised swimming and stop damage being caused to the facilities.

RGI queried if swimmers had been fined?

RG confirmed that the Constabulary and Staff were seeking to educate the swimmers they spoke with around the dangers of unauthorised swimming. The Heath Team are under a huge amount of pressure.

RS a balance needs to be maintained between educating and enforcement.

	<p>RB since online booking for tennis courts has been introduced, the Staff at Parliament Hill have been very helpful in taking cash payments and assisting people with making bookings.</p> <p>NC the swimming online system tickets booked up very quickly. There was no way to cancel tickets.</p> <p>BW adjustments were made to the online booking system which allowed cancelations and refunds, and this point was touched on in the survey. The demand for tickets was very high.</p> <p>RS noted that the Staff had done well in very difficult times and gave his thanks. We will need to see what lessons there have been, that can be incorporated into operations next year.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Angling</p>	
	<p>BW a draft of the Ponds and Wetlands Strategy has been circulated. Swimming and Angling are referenced in the recommendations.</p> <p>(NR left the meeting)</p> <p>MH (speaking on behalf of the H&HS), the Society is presently opposed to any increase in angling on the Heath principally for the reason that the anglers have not demonstrated, as a body, that they are able to control and reduce the damage to birdlife. The following information is based on reports from our subcommittee members this summer. Mostly on Hampstead No 2 Pond, but also on the Highgate Ponds, our volunteers have rescued at least 21 pigeons with line trapped around their feet.</p> <p>Although there are very few swans on the Heath nevertheless the summer has seen the following incidents - and this is not an exhaustive list. On 21 June a cygnet was rescued with feet entangled in a fishing line. On 5 July on Hampstead No 1 Pond a cygnet was found with a hook in its neck and feet tangled in line. On 18 July on Hampstead No 2 Pond a cygnet was rescued with its feet tangled in line. On 24 July the male swan on Hampstead No 1 Pond was rescued with a hook in its neck and its feet tangled in line. Angling is taking place on the south bank of the Men's Pond. Swimming there earlier this week I saw an angler deliberately throwing his line repeatedly over the buoy line (which is meant to demark the limit of angling) into the bathing area where I was swimming, in fact quite close to me.</p> <p>RG we are aware of some of some incidents where swans have been caught with hooks and line A £5 fee has been introduced for Angling permits. The online system used enables us to send information updates to the Anglers, we could message with information about being more responsible. We believe it is only a small minority of Anglers.</p> <p>RGi 300 Anglers have signed up for a permit, who also have EA licences to fish. Poachers (unauthorised Anglers) are using lures. On the Heath Anglers are supposed to use barbless hooks. If the Anglers are all condemned, they will go elsewhere. HAHAS proposals are to reduce the closed season to allow school tuition between April and July (currently this isn't possible due to the closed season, which ends on 16 June). Ealing start their angling season at Easter, and Poaching is most common during the closed season. (Second Proposal) Float fishing can cast out to only 5-10m with a visible float, whilst the limit line is 35-45m away. The North Bank is the best location for float fishing casting off and has good access for disabled Anglers.</p> <p>(MH & JC left the meeting)</p>	

	<p>RS thought it would be helpful for reps from the HAHAS and H&HS to discuss the proposals in further detail. In relation to the propositions, keeping dogs and angling separated, and limiting dogs' access should be supported. Float fishing at the Men's Pond would help the issues there. In relation to the closed season, he thought we should tread carefully and look at for educational purposes as a starting point to see how it goes and then reassess.</p> <p>ST if you extend the season, if there were more legal Anglers, this might drive down the number of irresponsible Anglers.</p> <p>RS noted there were some implications for nesting birds set out within the Plan.</p> <p>RGi the Vale of Health Pond was fishable 20 years ago but is now rewilded and overgrown and lost for fishing.</p> <p>BW the discussions have been helpful. In section 77 of the Plan the closed season is discussed, and recommendations are set out to address the swimming issues, especially in summer. We will welcome further comments from the HHCC.</p> <p>RGi responsible Anglers are the eyes and ears of the Heath.</p>	
5.	Sports Update	
	<p>RS opportunity for Club Reps to give an update on how the summer has gone.</p> <p>BW the Track Forum is tomorrow. We need to ensure we maintain a Covid secure facility.</p> <p>JL (Athletics)the Highgate Harriers were happy with the current arrangements and access at the Track for training on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. It would be good if other Clubs could be added into the agreement.</p> <p>SN (Croquet) there have been really positive discussions with staff in relation to the Risk Assessments. The pavilion is still out of use, but the club has been able to get in a lot of play and it has gone as well as it could have. The Parliament Hill Green is looking good. The Club has lost some members to shielding, but some new members have joined. The Club has a feature in the upcoming edition of the Ham & High.</p> <p>ST (Rugby)the Heath Team had assisted in the Club using the Heath Extension for the juniors. The Club are currently training outside the Athletics Track. The Club would like to return to training at the Track. There have been some injuries due to ruts in the ground. There are currently 200 juniors, split into 2 sessions.</p> <p>EM (Rugby)the Extension was great to use in the summer, but now looking at lighting, and options to move back to training at the Track. The Club appreciate the help and support. RFU Guidance is still at 'Stage D' which is still restricting. League games are not likely before January 2021.</p> <p>RB Tennis is going very well. There has been a lot of new and returning players and some courses have run. Moving the start time to 7.30am has helped. Thanks to PM and RG.</p> <p>RS common theme that comes through is support from the Heath Staff and a lot of demand to get involved. How can we capture the demand in the coming months? How can we encourage BAME communities and stimulate activity on the Heath?</p> <p>DG It has been a challenge for Staff to maintain the cricket squares and green. We need a compromise with the Rigby Club and all the Clubs at the Track for access. The area where the Club is currently training is heavy clay and had cracks due to the dry summer.</p> <p>DB congratulations to everyone who has worked through the RA process. A Camden Active newsletter will be circulated to the Forum by KR. If you would like to sign up for get in touch for support.</p> <p>RS raised the issue of cycling.</p>	

	<p>BW there are practical issues, cyclists straying off the designated paths, particularly Sandy heath. Staff have been patrolling and additional signage has been installed. Signage makes it clearer which paths can be used and which cannot. There has been lots of compaction and parallel paths from Heath users trying to Social Distance from each other.</p> <p>AF we are on the same page as Camden, improving the route around the Heath and places to store bikes. The Lido path was discussed. Camden are looking to improve Savernake Bridge. A joint approach is key.</p>	
6.	Events	
	<p>PM only 2 events have taken place since lockdown. GIAG and Race for life have been cancelled. The London Youth Games upcoming in November but +may not go ahead. The English National Cross Country is due to take place in March 2021. The start and finish lines and spectators are difficult for the event organisers to manage with Social Distancing. The events may take place inside without spectators. We are looking at how we can manage the Lifebuoys Christmas Day swim at the Men's Bathing Pond.</p>	
7.	Parkrun	
	<p>PM currently suspended, but we are still in discussions with the Race Directors. An October return is being looked at. Interaction with runners and other Heath users is a concern.</p> <p>AS confirmed that plans for an October restart had been halted due to the rise in Covid cases, and the lack of time to get landowner consents. There is no current restart date. Discussions with PM will continue.</p> <p>BW thanks to Parkrun for volunteering and litter picking during lockdown.</p> <p>AF also gave thanks to Parkrun. The number of runners involved makes it hard to restart under the circumstances.</p>	PM
8.	Pro-Active Camden Update	
	<p>RS Camden and the Heath could be better coordinated. There are lots of ways which would coordinate and develop initiatives to support Health and Wellbeing. DB outlined the work undertake by PAC before and since lockdown, in relation to the 'young people action plan'.</p> <p>RS suggested that a memorandum of understanding could be developed.</p> <p>RGi EA rod licence sales have increased by 200,000 since lockdown. With 400,000 holders in London.</p> <p>RS suggested that Camden and the Heath put together a join Strategic paper for discussion at the next meeting.</p>	BW
9.	AOB	
	<p>DG between 5-9 October resurfacing works will be undertaken on the main path from Highgate Road to Savernake Road. Alternative access routes to the Track will be in place.</p>	
10.	Upcoming Meeting Dates	
	2021 meeting dates to be circulated by KR for consideration.	KR