

<b>Committee(s):</b> Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	<b>Date(s):</b> 25/11/2020
<b>Subject:</b> <b>Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands Conservation Plan</b>	<b>Public</b>
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 4, 11 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	
What is the source of Funding?	
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	
<b>Report of:</b> Open Spaces Department	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Jonathan Meares, Conservation and Trees Manager	

### Summary

This report presents a final draft of the Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands Conservation Plan for Members consideration. Once agreed the recommendations for the Plan will be embedded into the Divisional Plan and Annual Work Programme.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Agree the draft Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetland Conservation Plan (appendix 1).

### Main Report

#### Scope of the Ponds and Wetlands Plan

1. The draft Ponds and Wetlands Conservation 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 Conservation 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 Conservation Plan.

## **Building on the success of the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project**

4. An important component of the Ponds and Wetlands Conservation 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 Conservation 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 Conservation 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.

## **Key Data**

9. Ecological monitoring and measuring biodiversity change will be key to the successful delivery of the Management Plan. Ongoing monitoring of water quality in terms of aquatic flora and fauna will also be critical.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

### Strategic implications

10. 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, Support a thriving economy and Shape outstanding environments, in particular the following Corporate Plan outcomes:
  - (1) People are safe and feel safe.
  - (2) People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
  - (4) Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.
  - (11) We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment.
  - (12) Our spaces are secure, resilient and well maintained.
11. 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.
12. 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.

### Financial implications

13. The most significant issue is the financing of any future desilting works relating to maintaining open water and flood alleviation measures. Future funding for large scale desilting operations will be challenging with external funding the most likely route to achieve this.

### Resource implications

14. The Heath Ecologist will oversee the ecological and biodiversity monitoring supported by members of the Conservation Team, volunteers, and research students. The Heath Ecologist is also working with ZSL on a number of wider scientific research projects in the London area.

### Climate implications

15. The City of London Corporation has a newly adopted Climate Action Strategy which seeks to achieve Net 0 by 2040. There will be a range of measures implemented to realise this including increasing carbon sequestration and storage across the Open Spaces alongside biodiversity enhancement and resilience measures.

16. Building on the flood alleviation and resilience measures using nature based solutions which were part of the Ponds Project will be part of the interventions taking place on the Heath as part of the Ponds and Wetlands Conservation Management Plan recommendations.

## **Conclusion**

17. 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. The recommendations set out in the draft Pond and Wetlands Conservation Plan will be implemented in a phased approach through the Divisional Plan and the Annual Work Plan.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 - Draft Hampstead Heath Ponds and Wetlands Conservation Plan

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