

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest Consultative – For consultation	10 02 2021
Epping Forest and Commons – For decision	08 03 2021
Subject: Wanstead Park: Wetland Improvement Proposals (SEF 09/21b)	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	2, 11, 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
Report of: Colin Buttery, Director of Open Spaces	For Decision
Report author: Geoff Sinclair, Head of Operations, Epping Forest	

Summary

This report is necessary to seek Committee approval for a proposed water management project for Wanstead Park that seeks to improve the sustainable water supply to the lakes as well as provide key biodiversity improvements to the lakes and the neighbouring River Roding. The project would be within the context of the Roding, Beam & Ingrebourne (RBI) Catchment Partnership and would involve collaboration involving the City Corporation, Thames21 and The Environment Agency. The City Corporation would provide arborist staff time and funding would be sought from the EA and others to support the project’s activity. The project outcomes would progress key actions identified in the Wanstead Park Parkland Plan.

Recommendation(s)

Epping Forest and Commons Committee Members are asked to:

- i. Approve option 1 of the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Epping Forest Charity is a member of the Roding, Beam & Ingrebourne (RBI) Catchment Partnership. The RBI partnership was formed in 2012 as part of the UK Government's Catchment Based Approach (CABA) initiative to help meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the measures set out in the Thames River Basin Management Plan. The RBI Catchment Partnership is co-hosted by London's waterway charity Thames21 and Thames Chase Trust.
2. Thames21 is registered charity working to improve the quality of life of people in the community by enhancing waterway environments across London. Since 2019, the Epping Forest Charity was a strategic partner of Thames21 and the charity has been working with the partners on options for addressing hydrological and aquatic biodiversity projects identified in the Wanstead Park Parkland Plan and that link with the objectives of the WFD.
3. This report presents a Epping Forest Charity and Thames21 joint project idea that will help to progress the resolution of water management issues at Wanstead Park and at the same time as supporting a goal of improving the catchment's wetland environments, as outlined in the RBI catchment action plan.

Current Position

4. Wanstead Park is East London's oldest public park and is considered to be London's greatest surviving designed waterscape. The Park has been listed as a Grade II* – 'a garden of special interest' - Registered Park and Garden (RPG) by English Heritage (now Historic England) since 2001, following an earlier Grade II designation in 1987. The Park was placed on the Heritage at Risk Register (HARR) by English Heritage in 2009 and a Parkland Plan was approved by your committee on 18th November 2019 that presents an action plan that will help to achieve removal of the Park from the HARR.
5. The condition of the water bodies in the Park has been identified as the single biggest issue to address in the Parkland Plan, including works to improve water supply/catchment and to address 'High Status' under the Reservoirs Act 1975, as amended by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Actions to address the High Risk status were presented to your Committee on 16th November 2020 and are being taken forward by the Wanstead Park Project Board chaired by the Director of Open Spaces.
6. "Improving water management to reduce calls upon scarce aquifer abstraction, establishing the strategy for creating a sustainable and resilient lakes system" is an objective of the Parkland Plan. At present 290,000 cubic metres per year of water from an underground aquifer via a borehole helps to maintain the lake levels, however, the water used is potential drinking water which is an increasingly scarce resource for London. In April 2016, the Environment Agency extended the water abstraction licence from the borehole until 31st March 2022, however they have indicated that aquifer water used to augment the lakes may be reduced in the future. The licence gave the condition that they would like to

see the recommendations outlined in the Wanstead Park Hydrology Study, JBA Consulting (2014) taken forward as part of efforts to maximise efficient water use in association with the EA. One of the JBA recommendations is to increase the natural inflows to the lakes through ditch clearance and investigation/clearance of the surface water drainage outlets should be undertaken. Proposals to utilise local catchment drainage to increase natural inflows to the lakes were submitted by Spa Flow Limited for the City Surveyor's Department in December 2020 with the recommendations currently being assessed for incorporation in future work programs.

7. The work of the RBI Catchment Partnership, has identified the potential role of the 14 ha of Wanstead Park cascade lakes, adjacent to the River Roding, to support actions to deliver the WFD and the Government's 25 Year Environmental Plan, which hitherto had not been fully recognised in the local river catchment plans. Particular actions identified are:
 - a. Improving water quality reaching the River Roding through reducing pollution from road runoff from the A114 through the introduction of sustainable Urban Drainage (SuD) features on the lake;
 - b. Reducing pressure on drinking water supplies by identifying and utilising more sustainable water sources;
 - c. Improving biodiversity in the river catchment through introducing wetland features to the lakes such as areas of reedbed (a priority habitat), promoting European eel and general fishery conservation and enhancing in-channel habitat on the River Roding.
8. As well as supporting the delivery of the WFD the actions would support the City Corporation's work to identify and develop a sustainable water supply for the lakes. The development of reedbeds may also help to reduce the need for water overall in the lake system.

Proposals

9. It is proposed that a joint project be established between the Epping Forest Charity, Thames21 and the Environment Agency (EA) to progress a water management project at Wanstead Park to improve the sustainable water supply and biodiversity of the Park's lakes.
10. A three-phase project is proposed:
 - a. Phase 1: Restoration of the in-channel habitat within 1.2km stretch of the River Roding bordering Wanstead Park to the east. This will involve the City Corporation arborists and volunteers working together to hinge small marginal trees into the river and securing them in place to create more diverse flow types leading to improved ecological conditions. This would also complement the City Corporation work to improve the riverside walk along the River Roding through opening vistas onto the river.
 - b. Phase 2: Commissioning of a consultant to complete a detailed scoping study of Wanstead Park that will identify the most appropriate actions for addressing the lack of wetland features, the lake's water retention issues,

the poor quality fishery and lack of European eel habitat, and the road-runoff pollution from neighbouring roads. This would require 100% funding from the EA.

- c. Phase 3: Implementation of some of the habitat improvement measures identified in the scoping study that will help improve the ecological condition of the Park's lakes. This will be subject to additional resources being identified to undertake this work.

11. The EA have been approached to canvas their view and meetings with local staff from the EA have been held. The Epping Forest Charity's C provision of free angling at Wanstead Park this was particularly well received!

Options

12. Your Committee are asked to consider two options:

13. **Option 1:** The proposal to develop a joint water management project at Wanstead Park be supported.

14. The proposal supports the development of a sustainable water supply for Wanstead Park, a key action within the Parkland Plan and also part of the requirements under the borehole water abstraction licence. The City Corporation investment is arborist and volunteer staff time to undertake practical works. **This option is recommended.**

15. **Option 2:** Do not approve the proposal to develop a joint water management project at Wanstead Park .

16. This would impede our ability to identify and progress sustainable water supply for the Park. **This option is not recommended.**

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Epping Forest Consultative Committee Feedback

17. The Friends of Wanstead Parklands. The Wren Group, London Wildlife Trust and the Bushwood Area Residents Association all offered their support.

Strategic implications

18. City of London Corporate Plan 2018 - 2023: the restoration and maintenance of the internationally and nationally important habitats of Epping Forest directly underscore the *third pillar* of the Corporate Plan, which is to "*shape outstanding environments*". The biodiversity improvements arising from this project will support improvement and diversification of wetland habitats and conservation of protected species. e.g. European eels.

19. As a Registered Park and Garden and sitting within a Conservation Area works will need the approval of Historic England and the local planning authority, the London Borough of Redbridge

20. Open Spaces Department Business Plan 2020-21: The proposals contribute towards meeting the following outcomes of the plan: 1,3,4,5,7,8,9 and 11.

Financial implications

21. The outline management program has been framed to fit within existing levels of local risk spend at Wanstead Park.
22. Several projects have been identified which will only be progressed if additional financial and practical support can be obtained, including funding from the EA.

Legal implications

23. Subject to the provisions of the Epping Forest Acts 1878 & 1880 the Conservators are under a duty at all times to keep Epping Forest uninclosed and unbuilt on as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. They are also under a duty at all times as far as possible to preserve the natural aspect of the Forest.
24. The proposals contribute towards meeting requirements under the EA Abstraction licence pending for Wanstead Park.

Charity Implications

25. Epping Forest is a registered charity (number 232990). Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity must be taken in the best interests of the Charity.

Risk implications

26. None

Equalities implications

27. No negative equality impacts were identified for this proposal.

Climate implications

28. The proposals could help mitigate the impact of increased storms arising from Climate Change through the potential retention of storm water in the local catchment and surrounding roads in the lakes. Introducing areas of reedbed and improved wetland habitat to the park's lakes will also likely increase their carbon storage capacity. Along with the more effective use of drinking water these actions are part of the six-year action plan in the City Corporation Climate Action Strategy: 2020-2027.

Security implications

29. None.

Conclusion

30. A proposal for developing a joint project water management project at Wanstead Park between the Epping Forest Charity, Thames21 and the EA has been made. This would contribute towards improving sustainable water supplies for the lakes a key need under the Parkland Plan agreed for the Park. The project would further secure biodiversity enhancements through wetland habitat creation and conservation of fisheries and European eels.
31. The proposals would require allocation of Arborist team and volunteer time with further actions of the project dependent on the funding being obtained. A request to the EA for this has been submitted.

Background Papers

- Wanstead Park Ponds Project – Initial Engineering Assessment
16:11:2020
- Wanstead Park: Conceptual Options Plan (SEF 38/19b) 18:11:2019

Appendices

None

Report author

Geoff Sinclair

Head of Operations, Epping Forest, Open Spaces Department

T : 020 8532 5301 E: geoff.sinclair@cityoflondon.gov.uk