

HAMPSTEAD HEATH CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Monday, 25 January 2021

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee held
on Monday, 25 January 2021 at 5.30 pm

Present

Members:

Anne Fairweather (Chair)
Karina Dostalova (Deputy Chairman)
Ray Booth (Barnet Mencap)
Nick Bradfield (Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee)
John Etheridge (South End Green Association)
Mathew Frith (London Wildlife Trust)
Colin Gregory (Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association)
Michael Hammerson (Highgate Society)
Dr Gaye Henson (Marylebone Birdwatching Society)
Simon Hunt (Open Spaces Society)
Helen Payne (Friends of Kenwood)
Thomas Radice (Heath and Hampstead Society)
Susan Rose (Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee)
Richard Sumray (London Council for Recreation and Sport)
Simon Taylor (Hampstead Rugby Club)
Simon Williams (Vale of Health Society)

In Attendance:

Rob Shakespeare - Principal Curator, Keats House

Officers:

Colin BATTERY - Director of Open Spaces
Bob Warnock - Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Katherine Radusin - PA to Superintendent of Hampstead Heath
Richard Gentry - Constabulary and Queen's Park Manager
Jonathan Meares - Highgate Wood, Conservation & Trees Manager
Declan Gallagher - Operational Services Manager, Hampstead Heath
Yvette Hughes - Business Manager, Hampstead Heath
Paul Maskell - Leisure and Events Manager, Hampstead Heath
Alison Bunn - Assistant Director Facilities Management, City Surveyors
Leanne Murphy - Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cindy Galvin, John Weston, David Walton, Steve Ripley, Ellin Stein, Harunur Rashid and Sharlene McGee.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF ANY PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were none.

3. **MINUTES**

The public minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2020 were approved as a correct record subject to a typo.

Matters arising

150th Anniversary of the Hampstead Heath Act

Members received an update from Rob Shakespeare, Principal Curator, and the following comments were made:

- The main 150th Anniversary community event is provisionally held for 29 June 2021. The Anniversary will be an opportunity to explore important issues including the impact of the Act, conservation, preservation and engagement with the Heath.
- Two displays are being progressed; a temporary outdoor display consisting of 9 monoliths which will be situated on the Heath during June-July, and a series of permanent signboards which are being designed in partnership with the Heath & Hampstead Society.
- The local community and stakeholders will be consulted regarding the plan and outline content in February.
- A joint logo and communications plan are in development to enable a community partnership approach to the celebrations.
- It is hoped a national perspective would emerge from the online programme, local media coverage and community events.
- The Chair highlighted that emphasis should be placed on the Hampstead Heath charity and hoped the anniversary would be an opportunity to underline the importance of the registered charity.

Victorian gate and display board

Officers agreed to follow up with the interested Member offline regarding possible use of the gate. The previous City Skyline display board from the top of Kite Hill has been offered to the Museum of London.

4. **HAMPSTEAD HEATH, HIGHGATE WOOD AND QUEEN'S PARK COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The public minutes of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee (HHWQPC) meeting held on 7 January 2021 were received.

5. **SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE**

Members considered an update report of the Superintendent regarding Hampstead Heath and the following comments were made:

COVID response

- The Superintendent stated that the overriding priority during the current lockdown was to keep the City Corporation's Open Spaces open, safe and as accessible as possible. There had been an increase in the number of staff shielding and testing positive for COVID. The primary issue at the Heath remains the significantly increased footfall and resulting compaction and ground erosion. Staff are undertaking waste

collections very early in the morning as paths are very busy during the day.

Constabulary

- Members were informed that despite there being no New Year's Eve fireworks display, approximately 500 people gathered at the Parliament Hill viewpoint.
- The Constabulary have continued to Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce in relation to antisocial behaviour, cycling on non-designated paths and dog control.
- An online assessment through the Civil Aviation Authority is now required concerning the use of drones and the Heath's drone policy will be updated accordingly. Drones remain unpermitted at the Heath.
- With regard to Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), Members were advised that Officers were working with colleagues across the City Corporation to embed an FPN Scheme.
- A new Heath Radio system is being investigated. The St Columba Radio Mast lease will expire in Autumn 2021 and renewal is not possible.
- In response to a query from a Member (Highgate Society) concerning whether the mast could be removed, Officers confirmed that enquires would be made.

Savernake Bridge

- Members noted the existing and proposed plans, artists impressions and photographs for the new scheme provided in Appendix 1 which would realign the bins and posts and open up the area to make it more welcoming. New wooden fencing and gates would replace the current metal structures in line with the work to paths and entrances elsewhere on the Heath.
- Officers are working in collaboration with the London Borough of Camden and Heath Hands to introduce cycle parking, bridge artwork and planter improvements.
- A Member (Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee) noted that from the Camden side, there was no indication that the bridge led to the Heath and recommended introducing a finger point/notice board with a map to make this clearer. It was also suggested that the nearby Primary School could get involved with the project.
- A Member (Friends of Kenwood) felt this project was not a priority over other projects needed on the Heath and that relocating the sign board

was not necessary. Officers confirmed that relocating the sign board would provide a better view onto the Heath and shield the Hive building.

- A Member (Heath & Hampstead Society) confirmed that the Heath and Hampstead Society agreed with the improvements, planting and replacement to wooden fencing and gates.

Playgrounds

- The Superintendent noted a letter received from a local young resident (Appendix 2) regarding proposals to extend the age range at the Heath Extension Playground and improve accessibility. Officers have met with the local resident on site to discuss their initial ideas and a Landscape Architect has been engaged. The next steps are to meet online with local Stakeholders to scope the development of the playground.
- It was noted that the local resident has already engaged in fundraising activities to help fund the project and has worked to gather support from the local community. Members complimented the local resident on their hard work and saw this as a great example of how young people could get involved in caring for the Heath. It was hoped this initiative could be built on to bring in young people on other projects.
- A Member (Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association) voiced concern over the increase in age use for the playground as the space was designed to give small children a safe space to play. The Superintendent confirmed that the space was large, and that the proposals were to extend the age range to up to 12 years.
- In response to a question concerning the character of the equipment Officers confirmed that new equipment would align with the Heath and the play principles. Natural materials and features would be used to complement the setting, rather than bold bright colours.

Health Connections

- Members were advised that exploratory talks had taken place to develop an initiative to map the facilities and activities available on the Heath, and to build connections with local Clinical Commissioning Groups, charities and Partners to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community.
- It was noted that the Sports Advisory Forum welcomed and supported the proposals.
- A Member (Highgate Society) highlighted the elderly as an important group and queried if local resident/care homes could be included. The Chair noted that the Heath had mobility scooters that could be a helpful resource.

- Officers hoped the initiative could be integrated with the annual “Give it a Go” event to promote health and wellbeing. It was noted that Hand Hands and Camden Council were heavily involved.
- A Member (Barnet Mencap) highlighted Social Prescribers in GP Practices. The Chair encouraged Members to suggest any local connections that could be involved in Health Connections initiative.

Professional Dog Walking

- The Superintendent confirmed that correspondence had been received from many professional dog walkers and their clients. A meeting with the newly formed Hampstead Professional Dog Walking Association took place in December 2020 and Officers were working on an Expression of Interest Form to gain further information around the split between full and part time professional dog walkers who would wish to apply for a licence.

Contractors & Maintenance

- Members were informed that gas line replacement works would take place on the Heath from March 2021, with a programme of 6-8 weeks.
- The toilets at Parliament Hill have been refurbished. Works at the toilets in the Traditional Playground are due to be completed by 12 February 2021.
- Works at the East Heath Car Park have been postponed until April due to the very wet ground conditions.
- Funding has been sourced and investigations have begun this week concerning the Lido leak. Further exploration will continue, but Officers are optimistic that the source of the leak has been identified.

Capital projects

- The project concerning the accessibility, safety and security of the three Bathing Ponds and Lido is being progressed to Gateway 2.
- The Athletics Track Reconstruction Project has not been approved for Capital Funding and is deferred/ on a reserve list should funding become available. It was noted that the Track surface was still compliant with the TrackMark Accreditation but would need to be replaced in the near future to retain the accreditation.
- The Hampstead Heath Pergola superstructure repair and replacement bid was also deferred/on a reserve list should funding become available.

Planning

- **Telecoms Mast (outside Ivy House).** The appeal was dismissed on 12 January 2021.
- **108 South Hill Park.** A decision by Camden Council is pending.
- **55 Fitzroy Park.** Camden Council is still to determine the planning application.

Events

- The Leisure and Events Manager stressed the uncertainty and difficulties in planning and preparing any events for 2021 due to the pandemic. Officers will take a flexible approach and work with event organisers to facilitate events where possible.
- The Affordable Art Fair event organisers are currently planning September dates, although these remain subject to COVID guidelines.
- The event organisers for the Night of 10k Personal Bests are in discussion with UK Athletics and will confirm this week if the event will take place in 2021.
- The English National Cross Country Championship has been postponed and the event organisers are considering if an Autumn event will be possible. The event organisers have contributed to planned restoration works by donating towards the cost of purchasing grass and wildflower seed mixes for the Heath.

Swimming

- The proposals (Appendix 3) set out plans for swimming during Spring/Summer/Autumn 2021. The proposals have been compiled to comply with Social Distancing and Tier 4 regulations, which were in place in December 2020. The proposals will be reviewed and amended ahead of implementation following updated Government Guidance.
- Feedback from the Swimming Forum and Sports Advisory Forum included reviewing the commencement date of booked sessions to align with the Lido, to offer an open “all-comers” session at the Lido, to consider swim tests for young swimmers at the Bathing Ponds, and retaining a cash payment option.

Financial Implications

- The situation has deteriorated since Christmas and an analysis of the December actuals is taking place to identify the extent of the budget overspend. Income streams are currently very limited, and expenditure

remains high to manage the impact of the high footfall being experienced at the Heath.

- A Member (Highgate Society) congratulated Officers on the phone mast appeal outcome and requested that the appeal document be circulated.
- Following the City Corporation's consultation feedback on the Planning White Paper, the Town Clerk agreed to follow up with the Remembrancer to provide an update at the next meeting on the next steps and to outline what the City Corporation was doing to raise awareness of the condition of its public open spaces and the need for Government to support their maintenance and restoration.
- A Member (Highgate Society) noted changes to the draft London Plan which were required by the Minister and would result in weakening the protection of Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land and recommended that the City Corporation request clarification on these changes.
- A Member (Friends of Kenwood) queried if the donate page on the Hampstead Heath website was a work in progress as the link currently only took the user to an email address. It was felt this needed more work to encourage donations.
- The Director of Open Spaces confirmed the donations page was launched in December 2020. It would now be possible to donate to individual projects or make general donations via the website. This would take the donator to a giving form rather than an email address. A key aim was to get the message out to the public that the Heath was a charity.
- It was noted that Heath Hands and Kenwood House also had their own donations pages.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- Provide feedback on the Savernake Bridge outline design proposals (appendix 1);
- Provide feedback on the proposed Swimming arrangement for 2021, as set out in appendix 3.

6. **MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces setting out the draft Divisional Plan 2021-2024 and the Conservation and Ecology Annual Work Programme (AWP) 2021-2022 for Hampstead Heath.

Members were advised that Officers had prepared the AWP in November 2020; however, projects were being reprioritised to focus more on recovery and restoration following the announcement of the third National Lockdown. It was

noted that the Heath was incredibly wet with eroded path edges and wide informal trails which would be a significant challenge to recover, with work taking a number of years to achieve this outcome. Restoration works are planned to commence in March/April. Dead hedging will be used to protect areas from compaction and to encourage bramble to recolonise where appropriate.

Members were very concerned by the current poor condition of the Heath and felt that restoration and recovery works should be prioritised over all other work. The Chair noted that Officers were working to produce more data on the footfall numbers at the Heath.

A Member (Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee) recommended the use of hawthorn which is impenetrable. Another Member (Highgate Society) queried if there was scope for volunteers to assist with restoration and recommended using local newspapers and social media to highlight the damage and compaction caused by increased footfall and usage.

Officers confirmed that they were working with the Heath Ecologist and Heath Conservation Supervisor to sequence restoration works. Officers were also considering introducing further wildflower meadows to aid restoration and increase biodiversity. A drone would be used to assess the extent of damage across the Heath.

With regard to a question concerning bringing in more volunteers, the Superintendent confirmed Heath Hands were the primary volunteer Partner. Currently volunteering activities are impacted by social distancing measures but as soon as it was safe to resume volunteering there would be an ambitious programme of work to tackle.

It was noted that enclosing areas for restoration would be challenging when balanced with the fact that space was required to enable visitors to socially distance. A Member (Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee) stated that the condition of some areas, e.g. the sunbathing meadow by the Boating Pond, would only recover by fencing it off for some time, and that Heath users needed to be informed as to why it would be necessary.

A Member (London Council for Recreation and Sport) felt, given the impact of COVID and finances, that the strategy should be reviewed in a year to see what if anything needed to be changed around priorities.

A Member (London Wildlife Trust) was reassured that Officers were prioritising recovery and noted the damage to land and ancient woodland flora across London with COVID exposing that there was not enough green space available. The Member felt drone footage would assist the evidence base to show the impact. The Chair agreed as the impacts would affect future costs.

It was suggested that a Government Minister be invited to visit the Heath to understand the damage and pressure on open spaces. The Director of Open Spaces advised that London-wide and National groups were pressing hard for

a green recovery fund from the Government as there was huge concern regarding all open spaces, especially natural environments and conservation sites. This work was being led by Natural England.

Members voiced support of the Chair and Deputy Chairman's stance on the budget reductions given the current condition of the Heath and were supportive that more investment was needed.

With regard to the Divisional Plan, the Superintendent advised that projects had been reviewed and reprioritised towards recovery and restoration. Electric vehicle options were being investigated to ensure the Heath fleet is compliant with the Ultra Low Emissions Zone in October 2021.

Regarding the feasibility study concerning charging payment for access at toilets, a Member (Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents' Association) felt this was a challenging subject and should be properly discussed. Members were advised that the study was a starting point to bring information to the Committee for consideration.

In response to a query from a Member (Dartmouth Park Conservation Area Advisory Committee) concerning the view at the top of Parliament Hill, it was confirmed that the Tree Team would progress work in the AWP to open up the view before bird nesting season.

RESOLVED – That:-

- Members provide feedback on the draft Divisional Plan 2021-2024 (Appendix 1);
- Members provide feedback on the draft Conservation and Ecology Annual Work Programme 2021-2022 (Appendix 2).

7. **FEES AND CHARGES 2021-22 & 2022-23**

Members considered a report of the Director of Open Spaces setting out the proposed fees and charges for a range of sports and services provided at Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park for 2021-22 and the proposed fees and charges for Weddings and Civil Ceremonies for 2022-23.

The Sports Advisory Forum feedback was that the inflation increase should happen to avoid a bigger increase in the following year.

A Member (Hampstead Rugby Club) noted concern for Clubs who were struggling financially and offering refunds for membership and hoped that they could be offered a group discount for multiple use. A monthly direct debit scheme for people struggling to pay off their season ticket was also suggested. Officers agreed to look at the feasibility of this option.

In response to a query concerning inflation increases on those paying by cash, Officers confirmed that the vast majority of people were paying by contactless or card.

A Member (Heath and Hampstead Society) suggested that the City Corporation revisit further opportunities for above-inflation increases in charges for Weddings and Civil Ceremonies, Forest Schools, photography, etc.

RESOLVED – That:-

- The Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, Highgate Wood Consultative Group and Queen's Park Consultative Group discuss the proposed fees and charges for 2021-22 and 2022-23, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report;
- The views of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, Highgate Wood Consultative Group, and Queen's Park Consultative Group be conveyed to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee at their meeting on 24 February 2021.

8. **CYCLICAL WORK PROGRAMME (CWP) 2021/22 UPDATED BID REPORT**

Members considered a report of the City Surveyor setting out the details of projects which will now be undertaken in 2021/22 and delivered within that year which form part of the previous year's programmes. In addition, the main changes to how the CWP will operate and be delivered in year 2022/23 onwards is also provided.

Officers reassured Members that whilst funds had reduced, all urgent health and safety works would be identified working with the City Surveyor and funds would be bid for when necessary.

RESOLVED - With two hours having elapsed since the start of the meeting, in accordance with Standing Order No. 40 the Committee agreed at this point to extend the meeting by up to thirty minutes.

In response to a concern raised by a Member (Vale of Health Society) regarding mountain bikers at Sandy Heath, Officers confirmed Lifeguards were supporting the Ranger Team and Constabulary to patrol this area.

RECEIVED.

9. **VOLUNTEERING UPDATE**

Members received an oral update concerning volunteering at the Heath. Members were advised that as a result of the COVID restrictions, Heath Hands have proactively undertaken work were possible in a COVID secure manner and have ensured that volunteers were updated and supported.

Heath Hands have secured funding to purchase an electric vehicle to assist with moving materials across the Heath. Support is also being offered for Health Connections. It was hoped that volunteers could return to full strength in the summer and support staff with recovery.

10. **QUESTIONS**

There were no questions.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was none.

12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting on 19 April 2021 was noted.

The meeting ended at 7.38 pm

Chairman

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