

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee	Date(s): 17 May 2023
Subject: Assistant Directors Update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11 & 12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Executive Director, Environment	For Decision
Report author: Stefania Horne, Assistant Director	

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park since February 2023.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Agree the 2023-24 Annual Work Programme for Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park (appendix 1).

Main Report

Management Framework

1. The year 22/23 has seen the implementation of the subdivisional plan with the following achievements:
 - Hampstead Heath was recognised as part of the Queen's Green canopy initiative with 33 trees planted at the Heath Extension, Orchard and across the Tumulus field.
 - Restoration of Branch hill pond (John Constables Pond) In collaboration with the Redington and Frognal residents' association, the Heath and Hampstead society and Camden council.
 - Redeveloped three children's play areas on the Heath Extension, East heath, and the Vale of Health on Hampstead Heath. Introduced a new dog walking licence on Hampstead Heath

- Secured £2m for the Athletic track redevelopment at Parliament Hill
 - Secured £243,000 for the restoration of the Roman Kiln at Highgate Woods
 - Over £100,000 was secured for the redevelopment of the sandpit for the Queen's Park playground
 - Improvement works started at the Woodlan Walks at Queen's Park
 - Completed a postcard project, with a large collection of historic postcards of the Heath from the late 1800s and early 1900s published to give a fascinating insight into the history of the Heath.
 - Initiated a blueprint for improvements at Parliament Hill lido
 - Identified long grass management regimes at Hampstead Heath and Queen's Park supporting the climate action strategy.
2. The Natural Environment Division is consolidating its own strategic framework. A midterm review of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy is planned during 2023/24.
 3. An annual plan for 2023/24 is attached at appendix 1.
 4. Members are asked to agree the annual plan for Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park.

Events

5. The Affordable Art Fair returned to the Heath between 10-14 May.
6. The Night of the 10K Personal Best is planned for the 20 May.
7. On 8 May, in partnership with the London Borough of Barnet, a family friendly event was organised at Golders Hill Park to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. The event included a programme of music, and a special coronation light show. VIP hospitality was provided in partnership with The Heath & Hampstead Society and the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association.
8. Other upcoming events include:
 - 21 May, Hampstead 4 Heart walk - British Heart foundation
 - 4 June Sunday Heath Hands Community Day Heath Hands 1-4pm Parliament Hill Bandstand
 - 10 June Saturday Race for your Life Jubilee Hall Trust 10am-12pm Parliament Hill Bandstand
 - 18 June, Race of Life Cancer Research 11am-2pm, East Heath
 - 25 June, Kites on the Heath (joint event with Heath & Hampstead Society and City of London) 1-4pm, East Heath
 - 16 July Sunday Give It a Go Festival 11am-5pm, Parliament Hill
 - Queens Park Book Festival 2& 3 September.
 - Queens Park Day 17 September

9. We are progressing with the appointment of a contractor who will help to run weddings at the Pergola and we are currently reviewing the premises licence application following an initial refusal from Camden Council.

Projects update

10. A project on a page summary has been prepared in relation to the Ponds improvement works (appendix 2), and the Athletics Track improvements (appendix 3).
11. The implementation of cricket improvement works funded by English Cricket Board is progressing, tendering has been undertaken and a contractor appointed for implementation. Discussions are in place with the relevant planning authorities and feasibility work is in progress, particularly at Highgate Wood where football and cricket facilities are closely located.

Car Parking Enforcement

12. Officers are working with the Comptroller & City Solicitor and City Surveyor to finalise the contract and other management arrangements for the new enforcement regime which will be implemented in summer/autumn 2023.

Partnership Working

13. Our Partnership with Heath Hands continues to be strong. Over 14,300 hours have been contributed by volunteers in the year to date, with over 6,500 participants across all of our public activity programmes.
14. New wellbeing activities include a new walking programme and youth wellbeing project (InYouth) working with young people missing from education.
15. A new Nature's Calendar monitoring programme launched in partnership with the London Natural History Society complementing a successful reptile, butterfly and dragonfly monitoring programme.
16. A three year partnership agreement between City of London and Heath Hands is due for renewal, in August 2023, and it is proposed to extend the agreement until April 2024 to align with the financial year.
17. This will also allow more time to work on the new priorities for the next three years, bearing in mind that both Heath Hands and Hampstead Heath strategic objectives have evolved in recent years and continue to develop in response to national priorities and local needs.
18. In partnership with Butterfly Conservations and their Big City Butterfly Project we are creating two new wildflower meadows. An area of approximately 400sq m. was seeded at two sites on the Heath Extension on the 18th and 19th April. The Heath Extension site is linked to the climate action strategy and the relaxed mowing regime due to be implemented in 2023. Both sites should provide habitat for not only butterfly species but benefit a wide variety of other invertebrates.

Café tendering

19. Eight firms of external agents were approached to progress with the marketing for the tendering of the cafés and a preferred company was appointed.
20. The brief will include advice on likely rental value and a marketing strategy, taking in to account local needs.

Parliament Hill and Queen's Park Development

21. Work is progressing to take on board feedback from stakeholders on the vision for key priorities for Parliament Hill and create a masterplan that will help to focus on needed improvements for the area.
22. Next steps are focused on further feasibility work, with detailed drawing and visuals to inform a draft vision that will be shared with users with a planned engagement during the summer.
23. An engagement exercise is planned for Queen's Park to identify improvement opportunities for the current facilities and a vision for the park that can integrate nature recovery with formal use, particularly focusing on the woodland walk improvements and the play area.
24. Improvement works for the sandpit are in progress, the contractor should be appointed during the spring and works can hopefully commence after the summer.

Nature Conservation

25. All the 33 Queen's Green Canopy Trees have been planted and have benefited from the plentiful rainfall over the last few weeks. A final ceremony to mark the completion of the tree planting took place on the 15 April to coincide with the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee Walk.
26. The Conservation Team have been busy coppicing hazel on the Heath Extension pond chain, and also managing gorse habitat on Pryors' Field. They have now started a series of works for the upcoming Reservoir Inspection on the 17 April.
27. The Nature Conservation Team has also been working in Queen's Park to improve the woodland walk, with scrub clearance and interventions that will help to improve ground vegetation.

Sport and participation

28. The City of London Corporation is developing a sport strategy for the Square Mile. The Natural Environment is linking to this strategy by developing its strategic framework for sport and participation, considering the wider offer with outdoor sport and the high profile that they offer with regional, national and international events.

Good News

29. HMRC has confirmed that the registration of the new account for Hampstead Heath for gift aid has been approved and we are now in the process of setting up a framework that will allow the collection of gift aid for our campaigns, working with Just Giving. We are aiming for the use of gift aid to be available this spring and will inform Members once the scheme is up and running
30. The applications for Green Flag have been submitted. Judging has taken place and results are expected in late summer.
31. New biodiversity boards have been prepared by the Heath and Hampstead Society in partnership with the City of London Corporation and English Heritage. The boards will be focused on nature recovery and habitat management.
32. The application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the restoration of the roman kiln was successful. The £247,000 project includes proposals for the kiln to be displayed in a refurbished Visitor Information Centre, with refreshed interpretation on the natural environment of the woods and the significance of the kiln. The funding application also included a school and community learning programme that will strengthen our outreach work on site. Key milestones for the project are:
 - Recruitment of a project and engagement officer: spring 2023
 - Development and implementation of school outreach programme: academic years 23/24 and 24/25
 - Community event and engagement: autumn 2023
 - Kiln restoration work and information hut improvements with exhibition completed by autumn 2024

Corporate & Strategic Implications

33. The projects and works outlined in this report contribute towards the achievement of the three aims set out in the City of London Corporate Plan: Contribute to a flourishing society, Support a thriving economy and Shape outstanding environment.
34. The projects and works outlined in this report contribute towards the achievement of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy 2018-2028 Strategic Outcomes A: The Heath is maintained as a flourishing green space and historic landscape, B: Improved quality of life for Heath visitors, C: The Heath is inclusive and welcoming to a diverse range of visitors and D: Greater number of and diversity of People taking care of the Heath.

Financial Implications

35. Donations are currently being sought for the following project:

- Model Boating Pond Island - wildlife sanctuary (£50,000). The project includes works to install additional reed beds and protect the island at the Model Boating Pond. £6,303.00 has currently been raised towards this project.

36. Donations can be made via the City of London website: <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/donate-to-hampstead-heath>

Resource Implications

37. No impact.

Climate Implications

38. Included within the annual plan for 2023/24 are a series of projects which contribute towards achieving the City of London's Climate Action Strategy, which was launched in October 2020. A key part of the strategy is conserving and enhancing biodiversity alongside reducing carbon emissions. The Climate Action Strategy will be embedded into future strategies which are currently being drafted within the Natural Environment Division.

Legal Implications

39. No impact.

Risk Implications

40. Risks are monitored and recorded through the Departmental Risk Register which forms part of the meeting agenda pack.

Equality Implications

41. No impact.

Security Implications

42. Security implications are monitored and recorded through the Departmental Risk register which forms part of the meeting agenda pack.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Annual plan for 2023/24
- Appendix 2 – Project on a Page (Swimming Capital Project)
- Appendix 3 – Project on a Page (Athletics Track Capital Project)

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