

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee	Date(s): 19 June 2023
Subject: Hampstead Heath Bathing Ponds and Lido Annual Review 2022/23	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 Discussion
Report author: Stefania Horne, Assistant Director	

Summary

This report provides Members with a review of the Swimming season during 2022/23 at the Bathing Ponds and the Parliament Hill Lido.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. There are three Lifeguarded natural Bathing Ponds at Hampstead Heath. The Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond and Highgate Men's Bathing Pond are open all year round, and the Mixed Bathing Pond is Lifeguarded during the Summer season.
2. The Parliament Hill Lido is a Lifeguarded outdoor un-heated chlorinated 60m swimming pool which also opens all year round.
3. This annual update sets out:
 - A summary of the 2022/23 Swimming Season
 - Improvements in access at the bathing ponds
 - Planning for the summer 2023 season

2022/23 Swimming Season

4. The 2022/23 swimming season has been busy with over 600,000 swims – partly due to the increasing popularity of cold water swimming and due to the summer heatwave.
5. Swimming season tickets have again been extremely popular, particularly in Spring and in the lead-up to the warmer weather. From the beginning of May until the end of August, there was a mixture of free-flow where no advance booking was required and sessions which did require an advance booking at the Lido and at the Ponds a similar schedule was introduced from June until the end of August.
6. This hybrid system allows for spontaneity and for swimmers to swim each day without a booking although queuing was necessary when the Ponds or Lido reached capacity. This operational model is proving very effective in preventing large queues building up outside the facilities and reducing incidents of anti-social behavior inside the facilities, creating a safer environment for swimmers and staff.
7. The Hampstead Mixed Bathing Pond season operated until 31 October. Operational arrangements are listed in Appendix 1.

Season Tickets

8. The table below details the number and type of season tickets issued. The table shows the increase in demand and uptake of season tickets from 2020. Income from online season tickets is about a third of the total income.

Season Ticket Type	12 Month	6 Month	1 Month	Total 2022/23	Total 2021/22	Total 2020/21
All Facilities - Adult	483	268	-	751	582	407
All Facilities - Concession	129	64	-	193	152	125
All Facilities - Free Early Morning Swim for U16's & 60+	526	59	-	585	623	472
All Facilities – Free Carer	28	-	-	27	25	6
Lido - Adult	243	187	209	639	478	283
Lido - Concession	74	71	73	218	124	86
Bathing Ponds - Adult	876	1544	-	2,420	2,245	1307
Bathing Ponds - Concession	298	463	-	761	668	563

Season tickets issued 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Swimming participation

9. The following table shows the number of swims during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Facility	Number of swims
Lido	234,099
Bathing Ponds	368,678
Total	602,777

Outreach and community value

10. Free swim sessions were made available to several groups, schools and play-schemes throughout the summer at the Lido. This included:

- 30 young refugees from DOST visited the Lido on 4 occasions.
- A local Somalian group were introduced by Heath Hands to the Lido- most swimming in an open-air pool for the first time.
- Talacre Playcentre who visited on several occasions.
- Brookfield primary school participated in a 7 week water safety awareness programme for years 3,4,5&6. Our Lifeguards delivered 12 free sessions for 120 children in total.
- NHS key workers, many from the BAME community, were given an introduction to open water coaching on Tuesday evenings.
- Swim Unity provided 6 x women only sessions in September at the Lido
- Mental Health Swim sessions at the Lido and Mixed Pond continued on a monthly basis.
- The Lido hosted the British Water Polo Association's 60th Anniversary celebrations in July 2022. The current GB men's and women's team played exhibition matches against the GB 2012 Olympic teams.
- The charity Crisis held their Icebreaker challenge event at the Lido in January 2023.

Capital Project to improve accessibility, security and safety

11. Following the 2019 Swimming Review and advice from the Health and Safety Executive, funding was secured to implement safety, access and security works across the three Hampstead Heath Bathing Ponds. This work started on site in April 2023 and includes:

- Improving visibility from the lifeguard huts at Men's and Mixed Pond
- Addition of accessible changing, shower, WC and waterside hoist at the Men's and Mixed Pond and keeping the existing open plan changing room in the Men's Pond.
- Provision of accessible changing, shower and accessible WC within the existing accessible toilet space at the Ladies' Pond

12. The Ladies' Pond and Men's Pond have been able to stay open throughout the works and the Mixed Pond was delayed in opening by six weeks to allow for the more obstructive work, including laying a new power cable.

Health and Safety

13. Lifeguard numbers and maximum bather loads play an important role in keeping swimmers safe and training is provided on an ongoing basis to make sure staff remains competent and skilled. The maximum bather load for each pond has been capped at 100 in the water and this is managed by the Stewards during free flow sessions. The Stewards also control bather numbers during pre-book sessions.

Site	In water rescue	First aid	Other
Lido	14	14	
Men's pond	35	10	
Mixed pond	41	15	1
Ladies pond	19	14	1

Number of rescues or first aid incidents carried out by lifeguards from April 2022 to March 2023

Corporate & Strategic Implications

14. 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.
15. 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

16. Officers are still undertaking an analysis of income and expenditure for 2022-23. Fees and charges are reviewed on an annual basis for all activities, including swimming.

Resource Implications

17. No impact

Climate Implications

18. 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 operations for the bathing ponds and the Parliament Hill Lido.

Legal Implications

19. No impact.

Risk Implications

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

Equality Implications

21. No impact.

Security Implications

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

Conclusion

23. The swimming facilities on Hampstead Heath are busier than ever, which we can contribute to a number of factors: cold water swimming becoming more popular, hotter summers and the unique offer of natural swimming ponds close to central London. Season ticket numbers have increased as well as the number of individual tickets purchased. This upward trend of visitors puts pressure on the facilities and staff and training and upskilling is important to continue to maintain a safe and enjoyable environment. It also reinforces previous decisions taken to introduce maximum bather loads, a booking system and the increase of the number of lifeguards on duty.

24. We expect the 2023/24 season to follow these trends and again be very busy. The booking system will be reintroduced in the summer months to help ensure safety and the works to improve accessibility will also help with safety at the three ponds.

Stefania Horne

Assistant Director, Natural Environment

T: 020 7332 3322

E: stefania.horne@cityoflondon.gov.uk