

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Management Committee	Date(s): 29th November 2023
Subject: Assistant Director's 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: Interim Executive Director, Environment	For Discussion
Report author: Assistant Director	

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since June 2023.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of the report.

Main Report

Events

1. Give it a Go! (16th July) – the popular event where everyone gets an opportunity to test their skills and abilities across a wide range of different activities. This was another well attended event, with over 4,000 participants throughout the day. The Mayor of Camden generously gave her time to participate, and events included demonstrations in martial arts, yoga, mindfulness, and rugby. In addition, there were many stalls with health and wellbeing professionals sign posting information and help aimed at improving the community's health and wellbeing.
2. 24th Duathlon (3rd September - This is a partnership event organised in partnership with Hampstead Rugby Club, Jubilee Trust and the City of London. This year, we offered competitors an online experience which worked well. We were unable to finish on the track due to ongoing work, however, the event was well supported with over 350 competitors. The Duathlon cup was again won by Tri London, with the women's winner Amy Pritchard completing the course in 36 minutes and

40seconds - and first-man back Luke Thomas completing the course in 33minutes and 36seconds.

3. Natural Aspects, the Heath and Hampstead Society's annual concert (3rd September) - This event was designed to celebrate local culture and a fond goodbye to the summer. Bands included John Etheridge and Vimala Rowe Bangla, Shur (a local Bengali group), the Spud Peelers (an Irish country and folk ensemble) and the Estimators (a traditional Jamaican ska band). The day attracted large numbers of visitors, with lots of families and local people picnicking.

The upcoming events on the Heath include:

- Conker Festival (8th October), in partnership with Heath Hands, at the Parliament Hill Bandstand.
- Zippos Circus (9 – 18th October set up; 19-29 live) returns to East Heath Carpark for set up from 9-18th October and then open to the public from 19-29 October)
- The London Youth Games (18th November) flagship event the Cross-Country championships

Projects update

4. A project on a page summary has been prepared in relation to the Ponds Project (Appendix 1), and the Parliament Hill Athletics Track improvements (Appendix 2).

Athletics Track refurbishment

5. The athletic track is red category due to the high risk related to the tight timelines. There have been a number of issues over the last three months with replacing the tarmac of the track. FM Conway, the lead contractor, had to complete significant repairs to several areas of the track where there was insufficient sub-base to replace a tarmac base course. Works were also delayed due to unforeseen needed repairs to the existing drainage, as well as periods of wet weather. The specialist sports surface is now being laid and the base layer is nearly completed as of 5th October. The next phase is laying the polytan layer, a rubber crumb synthetic (describe what this is) and then re-marking the track's lanes. The forecasted completion date is highly dependent on weather conditions this month into November as the polytan surface has to be installed in dry conditions.

Ponds Project (accessibility)

6. The works are progressing after a number of delays. At the Men's Pond, the installation of the steelwork that will make up the new jetty is now underway and cable trenching is starting at the Mixed Pond for the upgraded electricity supply that will be installed.

Partnership Working

7. Partnership working with the Heath and Hampstead Society, Heath Hands and the London Natural History Society (LNHS) is very strong and allows us to conduct a range of activities that inform our annual conservation plans. The LNHS continue their grant-funded floral survey of the Heath, which is revealing a number of rare species including liverworts and lichens.

Parliament Hill Masterplan progress

8. A separate Parliament Hill Masterplan report is attached with the visitor survey results in the reports pack. Please refer to this for current information.

Constabulary Update

9. There is a separate report on the Hampstead Heath Constabulary attached with the papers for this Committee. Please refer to this for an update. The Constabulary have been supported this summer by Parkguard Ltd, a National Police Chief's Council approved company.

Nature Conservation and Ecology

10. In September, rare breed sheep were once again grazing on Hampstead Heath. In a partnership between the City of London Corporation, the Heath & Hampstead Society, the Rare Breeds Survival Trust and Heath Hands, sheep grazed a site on the Heath Extension. As well as grazing down the long grass, several invertebrate species were found utilising the sheep dung, including at least two species of dung beetle.
11. In partnership with the Royal Free Hospital, a live feed wildlife camera was installed on Hampstead No.1 pond. The camera is currently being trialled by the hospital patients for a potential wider rollout.
12. Two wildflower meadows were created in partnership with Butterfly Conservation. Both meadows, one at Queens Park and the other at the Heath Extension, flowered well in their first year. Approximately three hectares of grassland were taken out of the regular mowing cycle and allowed to revert to meadow as part of the Climate Action Strategy. The Conservation Team have been cutting the meadow areas on the Kenwood Estate as part of a partnership arrangement with English Heritage.
13. A master's degree student has just finished a project looking at levels of chemicals from pesticide in Heath ponds, working in partnership with the City of London Corporation and the Heath and Hampstead Society. Results are being peer reviewed to ensure their accuracy. Findings will be shared once peer reviewed.
14. Branch Hill Pond has had a deeper refuge area for aquatic species created, and hundreds of wildflower plugs have been planted around the pond and wider area. The newly deepened section of the pond will reduce the chances of the pond drying out during future droughts and will increase the site's climate change resilience.
15. National hedgehog monitoring scheme (NHMS). Cameras have recently been collected from the Heath Extension and wider area as one of the first sites to be used for the newly created scheme.
16. Two new moth species for the Heath were recorded this year, the Hornet Moth and Six-belted Clearwing.

Tree Team works

17. The team have had a busy summer clearing storm damage at Queen's Park and the Heath Extension in July. They have been carrying out works on a number of

veteran trees at South Meadow, Sandy Heath, Vale of Health, Hampstead Gate, and Golder's Hill Park. They have also been continuing their Integrated Pest Management programme monitoring Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) nests and the parasitoid populations across the Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park. The team are still actively involved with the annual Canker Stain of Plane survey for the London area, which is managed by Forest Research and the London Tree Officer's Association. At the end of September, the Tree Team met with the new Assistant Director and led a walk around some of the areas they are managing.

18. The Tree Team have been supporting the West Ham Park Team in removing OPM nests and carrying out tree inspections on site. The team has also been to Burnham Beeches, supporting that team with important work on the ancient Beech pollards which require specialist pruning and propping work.

Formal landscape

19. Golder's Hill Park won the London in Bloom Gold Award in the Large Park category, and the Pergola Garden won the Gold Award in the Walled Garden category. The Hill Garden also won a Gold Award in the Small Park category and Queen's Park won the Gold Award in the Large Park category. This was a great accolade for all the teams involved and we are delighted with these results.

20. As we approach the end of the busy season and enter into the autumn, we can return to the subject of a fitting memorial for our great friend and colleague Declan Gallagher. We have a number of ideas and they all are centred around Golders Hill Park, where Declan spent so many years, and where he brought up his family. We will report back at the next meeting and share proposals with the Committee.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

21. 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.
22. 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

23. No Impact

Resource Implications

24. No impact.

Climate Implications

25. Included within the annual plan for 2023/24 (appendix 1) 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

26. No impact.

Risk Implications

27. Risks are monitored and recorded through the Departmental Risk Register.

Equality Implications

28. No impact.

Security Implications

29. Security implications are monitored and recorded through the Departmental Risk register.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Project on a Page (Swimming Capital Project)
- Appendix 2 – Project on a Page (Athletics Track Capital Project)

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