

Committee(s): West Ham Park Committee	Date(s): 19 February 2024
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: Executive Director, Environment	For Information
Report author: Bill LoSasso, Assistant Director	

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to West Ham Park since the last Committee meeting on 4 December 2023.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of the report.

Main Report

Conservation and Trees update

1. The tree inspection contract with London Borough of Islington recommenced in November 2023. The south-west quadrant of West Ham Park, which contains 802 trees, had a full inspection, and the remaining three quadrants had all the mature trees inspected. Fifteen trees have been identified for tree safety works, including several large London Planes. The North London Open Spaces Tree Team visited West Ham Park in December to draw up a priority tree works order for the tree contractor.
2. In November 2023, a large mature copper beech along Upton Lane had a Dynamic Load Test undertaken by a specialist arboricultural consultancy. The test revealed the tree had a satisfactory safety factor and required no works at this time.
3. During Storm Henk on 2 January 2024, a large sycamore and a medium sized mountain ash failed in the strong winds. The North London Open Spaces Tree Team attended the site to make both trees safe before the Park was

reopened to the public. During Storm Isha, the most recent winter storm on 21 January 2024, a large mature oak failed, which was made safe. West Ham Park remained closed during both these recent weather events in the interest of public safety and as per our severe weather protocol.

Events

4. We are busy working on the 150-year anniversary celebrations for 2024. A Steering Committee has been set up to finalise the concept and provide strategic guidance for the celebration, with several Committee members and other local stakeholders generously lending their time and expertise. The first meeting was held in early January to discuss and develop plans. We are currently working with the Friends of West Ham Park, the Natural Environment Division's Learning Team, West Ham United Football Club and local donors to create a robust calendar of events for the celebration and will report back to this committee as plans are finalised.
5. Park in the Dark was held by the Friends of West Ham Park on 8 December 2023. IT was a great success, with nearly 150 attendees. The participants made lanterns using battery-operated tea lights and glow sticks and then walked to the bandstand, which was illuminated by their creations. Upon arrival at the bandstand, everyone was greeted with carols from the Park Primary School Choir, and hot chocolate and mince pies were served.

Sports and recreation

6. Football has continued throughout December and January and the pitches have been used by both home teams. The West Ham Park team have maintained the pitches to a high standard and have recently completed some goal mouth renovation works that were needed due to damage and waterlogging caused from the heavy rains in November and December. The 11 a side grass pitch will now continue to be used by the local club, East London Ballers. Discussions are underway to prevent the waterlogging issue from recurring next year.
7. The cricket season starts in the spring, so the West Ham Park team is starting to prepare the pitches for the coming season. The hot summer months caused compaction and some damage to the pitches, but the autumn renovations have worked very well in bringing the pitches back up to standard. Work will be undertaken on the outfield this year as there is significant wear and tear and weed encroachment. There has been over 300 hours of use of the cricket nets in the past quarter.

150th anniversary

8. A separate report entitled 'Planning for the 150th anniversary for West Ham Park' has been submitted with the papers for this Committee.

Grounds Maintenance

9. The unseasonably warm weather has meant that visitor numbers have been relatively high for this time of year. The Rangers were cutting the grass up until the end of November, and this extended season reflects climatic changes.
10. Ground preparation for the hedge around the playground will commence in January/February 2024. A 360 excavator will be borrowed from the Epping Forest team to prepare the ground for soil conditioning and planting. The hedge will be a native hedge planted with species such as dogwood, hazel and hawthorn. The hedge will be three layers thick to create a more robust corridor and habitat for wildlife and will provide natural protection in a public area.
11. The planting of the playground raised beds took place in late November 2023. The day was led by the West Ham Park team along with horticultural apprentices from Golders Hill Park and Queens Park, which allowed for intra-divisional learning and collaboration. Seven corporate volunteers from Close Brothers Merchant Banking Group joined the day as well, expanding our partnership working and engagement impact. The selection of plants from New Zealand, Asia and the Mediterranean took inspiration from Fothergill's planting designs. The plant selection also took into consideration the location of the beds in a busy playground, so they are mature and 'child proof'. It was a great opportunity for the apprentices and corporate volunteers to learn how to manage and maintain the plants with knowledge and advice provided from the West Ham Park gardening team.
12. The gardening team has extended an existing shrub border to prevent a desire line that has recently been created through a lawn in the garden. The heavy footfall on this desire line was killing off the grass and creating a very boggy area on an ornamental lawn.

Playground

13. The playground at West Ham Park was recently inspected by an independent Health and Safety consultant, along with the other 10 playgrounds across the North London Open Spaces. A report was produced along with actions that needed to be undertaken, all of which have been completed. A new Playground Working Group has been established to discuss the recent inspections, reports and findings, with the aim of ensuring consistency with inspections and training across the North London Open Spaces. A Best Practice Guide on design, creation, installation, care and maintenance of playgrounds, including staff training, will also be written in line with the above review.

Partnerships

14. The team at West Ham Park continue to enjoy a strong partnership with the Friends of West Ham Park, who are a valued and dedicated provider of free community events, volunteer and engagement activities, and other forms of support for the park and surrounding community. Charlotte Cook, Chair of the Friends of West Ham Park, will join the Committee to provide an update on the tremendous work of the organisation.

Financial Implications

15. No implications.

Resource Implications

16. No implications.

Climate Implications

17. 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

18. No implications.

Risk Implications

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

Equality Implications

20. No impact.

Security Implications

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

Appendices

22. Ponds project 'Project on a Page'

Bill LoSasso
Assistant Director (Superintendent)
Natural Environment (North London Open Spaces)
bill.losasso@cityoflondon.gov.uk

