

Committee(s): Natural Environment Board	Date(s): 16/05/2024
Subject: Learning and Heritage Annual Review, 2023 -24	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Diverse Engaged Communities Leading Sustainable Environment Providing Excellent Services Vibrant Thriving Destination Flourishing Public Spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
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: Bob Roberts, Interim Executive Director, Environment Department	For Information
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Summary

This report summarises the key activities undertaken by the Learning and Heritage teams in 2023-24. It details progress and performance against these key activities and highlights successes and challenges.

The activities of the Learning and Heritage teams support all our recently adopted Natural Environment strategies, particularly the Culture, Heritage and Learning strategy.

Main Report

Background

1. Following the implementation of TOM2 in the Environment Department from May 2023, a new Culture & Projects Section was established to provide cross-divisional advice, support and services for learning, heritage and special projects across the Natural Environment Division. The section is headed by an Assistant Director, who reports directly to the Natural Environment Director, supported by a Head of Learning and Head of Heritage & Museums, with their respective teams.
2. The heritage team aims to conserve and provide access to our shared culture and heritage, which includes built and natural assets and intangible cultural heritage, providing a consistent and collaborative approach to managing our unique and iconic cultural offer. They do this through Keats House, The Epping Forest Visitor Centre and Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, and The Temple, as well as acting as the client team for the Monument, and an inclusive and engaging programme of exhibitions, events and special projects, and supporting activities.
3. The learning team provide opportunities to learn within our unique and inspiring green spaces. At a time of increasing disconnection from nature, a need to tackle the climate crisis, and a drive to tackle inequalities and enrich people's lives, our Learning Programme provides a key method for the City of London to contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents of some of London's most deprived communities through connecting them more powerfully to their local green spaces.
4. Benefits include increases in wellbeing, connection to nature, confidence and understanding.

Current Position

Heritage Programme 2023/24

5. The first added value project to be supported by the new Heritage team was the 'Firing London's Imagination' project. Officers had previously worked with Friends of Highgate Roman Kiln to secure funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to reinstate the Roman kiln which was excavated from Highgate Wood in 1968. A Heritage Officer was appointed with 50% of their costs supported by the project grant, to support the community and formal learning outputs of the project. In February 2024, the kiln itself was successfully removed from storage in Bruce Castle Museum, Haringey and sent for conservation. The Culture & Projects team are working with City Surveyor's and external consultants to repurpose the Information Hut in Highgate Wood to display and interpret the kiln for its return, scheduled for autumn '24. We are also working with the Highgate Wood team, heritage consultants and local creatives to build and fire a replica kiln for Highgate Wood Community Day in September 2024.

6. Keats House was open to the public on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays & Sundays, delivering a learning and events programme to support the 'Young Romantics in the City' exhibition in partnership with Cardiff University. Special projects, including 'The Wild Escape', supported by Art Fund, Keats House Summer School, and 'Poetry Versus Colonialism' and 'Culturally Speaking', funded by the Education Strategy Unit, engaged young people with nature, heritage and cultural venues. Over 7,300 people visited the house (+ c.42% on 2022/23) with a further c.1,000 students engaged through formal learning sessions and special projects and a similar number attending events and conferences hosted at the house.
7. The Epping Forest Visitor Centre and Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge at Chingford and The Temple at Wanstead Park, continued to welcome visitors, with over 42k in person visits in person to these sites. The Visitor Centre hosted exhibitions including 'Radical Landscapes' along with displays of local artists' work.
8. The Head of Heritage & Museums continues to work closely with Natural Environment and other cultural partner venues to deliver and develop projects funded by the Education Strategy Unit. In 2023/24, these included London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Guildhall Art Gallery, Museum of London Docklands and the Museum of the Order of St John, supporting the achievement of cross-cutting creative learning and social outcomes. LMA's 'Unforgotten Lives' exhibition was also hosted at East Heath in August and September and was seen by over ten thousand people during its three-week run.
9. The Culture & Projects section worked with City Surveyor's and other Natural Environment sections to ensure that our heritage assets are maintained and preserved for future generations. A Conservation Management Plan for The Temple was finalised in March 2024 following stakeholder engagement and the project to remove The Grotto from the Heritage at Risk Register has been progressed through the appointment of consultants to advise, consult on and determine the preferred scope of preservation works to this Grade II listed ruin.
10. Acting as the client team for the Monument, the Culture & Projects team continued to work with officers from Tower Bridge / City Bridge Foundation, who operate the Monument on a day-to-day basis, and City Surveyor's to provide public access to, maintain and preserve, and develop future plans for this Grade I listed, scheduled monument. In 2023/24, over 100K people visited the Monument (+ c.8% on 2022/23) achieving income of £363k (+ 6%).

Learning Programme 2023-24

11. The Learning Programme for 2023-24 has engaged audiences across Hampstead Heath (including Parliament Hill Fields and Golders Hill Park), Highgate Wood, Epping Forest (including Barn Hoppitt and Wanstead Flats), and West Ham Park.

Schools Service

12. Engaging 18,431 students, the school programme offered active learning experiences in nature and heritage, aligning with the National Curriculum while fostering skill development, wellbeing, and nature connection. It provided rich opportunities for first-hand observation of habitats, imaginative storytelling inspired by nature, active participation in activities like pond dipping and orienteering, and the development of teamwork skills through den building and orienteering.

Reaching Disadvantaged Students

13. With school workshops offered at Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest and West Ham Park the programme targeted schools in London's most deprived boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney, Haringey, Camden, Islington, and Waltham Forest. Additionally, bespoke offerings were tailored for children with special educational needs, those at risk of exclusion, and those in pupil referral units, with significant participation in nature learning and youth programmes.

Play Activities

14. At Hampstead Heath, two play centres provided indoor and outdoor facilities, nurturing children's mental health, wellbeing, social skills, and creativity. Notably, the centres catered to children from areas with high levels of child poverty, providing essential enrichment opportunities during school holidays. The centres are staffed by skilled playworkers who provide a safe and welcoming environment.

15. Despite these achievements, funding constraints post-TOM pose a significant risk to the sustainability of play centres. Growing our Divisional capability in fund-raising and, specifically, identifying a sustainable funding model for our play offer will be a major challenge for 2024-25 and beyond.

Youth Programmes

16. Bespoke programmes targeted at 13–25-year-olds engaged 758 participants struggling with education, employment, or mental health challenges. Collaborations with various organizations across London facilitated diverse activities aimed at empowering young people and fostering wellbeing, nature connection, confidence and involvement. Participating groups included pupil referral units, special needs schools, family support organisations, young carers, social prescribing practices and refugee/asylum seekers.

Climate Education Initiatives

17. Recognising the crucial link between nature connection and pro-environmental attitudes, the Learning Team has intensified efforts to incorporate nature connection across its programmes. It actively participates in initiatives and alliances like the Climate Action Pathways in Education (CAPE), aiming to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills to address climate change. It collaborates with Col Climate Action, Environmental Resilience and Education Strategy teams to develop a shared, strategic approach to climate education.

Collaboration

18. The programme has collaborated with a variety of internal and external groups to create and deliver bespoke programmes, share ideas and improve practice, including:

19. Internal: Education Strategy Unit, Tower Bridge Learning Team, Climate Resilience Team, Climate Action Strategy Team, Barbican Children's Library, DCCS Early Help Team, Virtual School Team.

20. External: RSPB, Wanderers of Colour, London Wildlife Trust, Transition Kentish Town, Queen's Crescent Community Association, Ambition Aspire Achieve (Newham), Family Action UK, Enfield Young Carers, Newham Young Carers, Tindersticks, Camden Early Help Team.

Grant Funded Projects

21. The Learning Team has achieved a significant milestone by securing funding from the City of London's Cultural and Creative Learning Fund for two impactful projects.

22. New Leaf: A grant of £1,920 has been awarded for a holiday programme designed to cater to children facing various challenges, such as poverty, disability, or caring responsibilities. This collaborative effort involves Barbican Libraries, 'Ambition Aspire Achieve' (a Newham-based charity for families), and the City of London Early Help Team. The project aims to expand the accessibility of City of London cultural opportunities while boosting confidence levels and enhancing wellbeing among participants. Activities include shared lunches around the campfire, mindful movement sessions, and crafting stories inspired by nature.

23. Nature Learning: The team has secured £18,500 for an outdoor learning initiative catering to children with autism and other additional needs, taking place at West Ham Park. This programme, which includes funding for a part-time position, is already engaging five schools per week, with an additional three schools on a waiting list. Through tailored, long-term nature-based learning experiences for students across Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Key Stage 1 (KS1), and Key Stage 2 (KS2), the project aims to

provide SEND children with increased opportunities to explore, play, and learn in natural environments, reaping the associated wellbeing benefits.

24. A dedicated outdoor facilitator collaborates closely with schoolteachers to design learning experiences that cater to the specific needs of their students. These experiences encompass a wide range of objectives, including fostering teamwork, encouraging exploration in nature, building confidence, applying classroom learning in a new context, enhancing language skills, promoting decision-making abilities, fostering a connection with nature, and facilitating emotional regulation.
25. Given the significant concern surrounding the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their peers, these targeted programmes serve as invaluable tools in addressing and ultimately bridging this divide.

Staff resources

Heritage

26. From May 2023, a new heritage team was formed within the Culture & Projects Section, comprised of 2.33fte officers based at Keats House, 1fte officer based at Epping Forest and self / project funded heritage officer roles (initially vacant) all reporting to Head of Heritage & Museums (1fte).
27. In 2024-25, a review of the impact of TOM2 will be conducted, including a review of capacity within the Heritage teams to operate visitor attractions and manage projects across the Division, led by the Director of Natural Environment and reported to Committees in due course.

Learning

28. Due to the recruitment moratorium, the Learning Team started the year with two vacant posts, and the majority of staff on short-term contracts. This year, we have been able to give all core staff permanent contracts and fill our vacancies. In addition, a grant from the City of London's Cultural and Creative Learning Fund is funding a new part time Learning Officer to expand our learning offer for children with additional needs.
29. Due to a reallocation of Divisional resources from financial year 2024-25, the £29,000 previously allocated annually for casual play staff for the delivery of its school holiday play offer at the Parliament Hill play centres is no longer available. This change has prompted the Learning team to explore alternative fundraising avenues.
30. Currently, the Natural Environment Division is actively developing a comprehensive fundraising framework, an ethics policy, and due diligence guidance to ensure transparent and responsible practices. Without these protocols in place, the Learning team cannot actively seek funding from certain sources, such as affluent individuals who frequent the play centres with their children. However, once these protocols are established, the Learning team anticipates a broader spectrum of fundraising options

becoming available. Another challenge is the lack of an established process to prioritise funding requests across different teams in the name of Hampstead Heath charity. In the interim, officers are actively pursuing funding opportunities for which learning activities are eligible, to sustain the play offer at Parliament Hill. If further funding is not secured by July 2024, the Corporation's play provision at Parliament Hill during the school summer

31. holiday period (and, on which, the local community has come to rely) may be cancelled.

Governance and operations

32. Heritage: Key activities this year were:

- Supporting the charity review of Keats House and recommendations to Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee
- Developing a new agreement for Keats Community Library to operate from Ten Keats Grove and review of fees and charges for Keats House, both of which were approved by Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee.

33. Learning: Key activities this year were:

- Drafting Service Level Agreements between Learning and NLOS
- Investigating accident at play centre, resulting in the development of new safety checks and training.
- Installation of two new pond decks in the Hampstead Heath teaching gardens to provide an enhanced learning experience.

Finance

34. The end of year financial position for both the Heritage and Learning teams is not yet available but will be reported to the relevant Committees by the Chamberlains Department in due course.

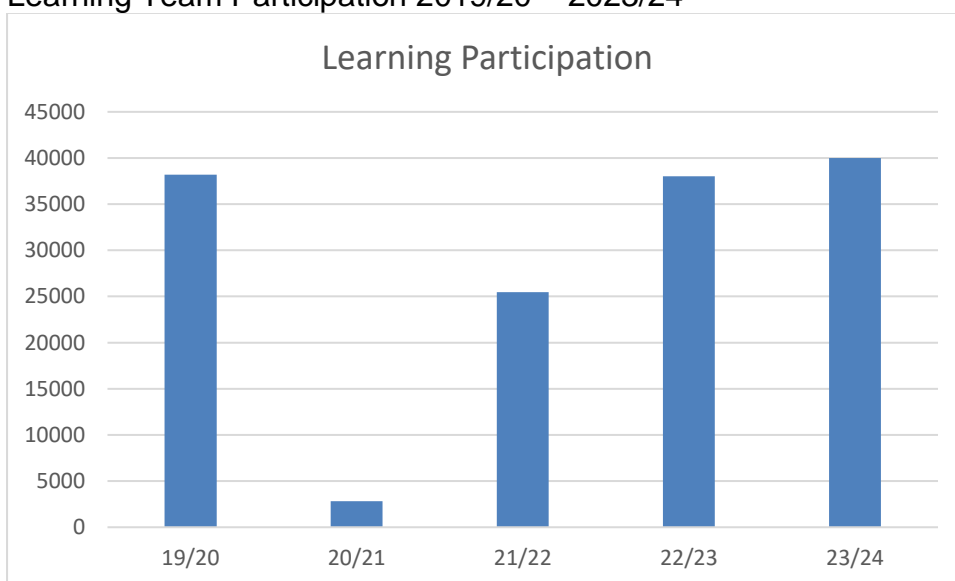
Key Data

Number of in person visits to heritage buildings / visitor attractions	2022/23	2023/24* (* provisional figures, subject to checking)
Keats House	5,149	7,338
The Monument	92,899	100,123
Epping Forest Visitor Centre ('The View')	N/A	30,731
Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge	N/A	10,572
The Temple	N/A	930
TOTAL	N/A	149,694

Learning Programme Engagement 2023-24	
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Hampstead Heath Schools	10796
Epping Forest Schools	4065
West Ham Park Schools	3570
West Ham Park SEND	257
Hampstead Heath Play	20345
Youth Programme (cross-site)	758
Family Programme (cross-site)	132
New volunteers	1
TOTAL	40004

Learning Team Participation 2019/20 – 2023/24



(Note Covid dip and rebuild following the pandemic.)

Evaluation

35. The Learning Programme has had a positive impact on participants' sense of wellbeing and nature connection.

Schools programme

Wellbeing:

- 10% increase in feelings of wellbeing
- 88% participants felt happy or very happy after taking part.

Nature Connection:

- 7% increase in feelings of nature connection
- 88% felt connected or very connected to nature after taking part

Play programme

Wellbeing:

- 100% participants felt happy or very happy after taking part.

Summary of successes in 2023-24

36. The learning programme engaged 40,000 participants and reached people in London's most deprived boroughs.
37. The learning programme has increased participants' feelings of nature connection, which correlates with pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes later in life.
38. The learning team are leading a UK network of researchers and educators to develop best practices in climate education. They are collaborating with Col Climate Action, Environmental Resilience and Education Strategy teams to develop a shared, strategic approach to climate education.
39. In its first year, the new heritage team has focussed on maintaining and rebuilding its core offer of opening visitor attractions and delivering exhibitions, events learning and special projects, underpinned by best-practice buildings and collections management processes.
40. The 'Firing London's Imagination' project is underway, supporting local community outcomes and engagement and, with external funding, providing a model for how the heritage team can expand its scope and support for priority projects in future.

Summary of challenges

41. Identifying a sustainable funding model to continue to operate the popular play offer and dedicated play centres at Hampstead Heath.
42. Identifying a sustainable funding model for the Heritage and Museums team to enable the team to provide the necessary expertise and support across the Natural Environment Division.
43. Strengthening relationships with partners and stakeholders across our learning venues and heritage sites, clarifying roles and responsibilities with partners, working in a complementary manner with third party learning and heritage providers across our open spaces in support of improved operations.
44. Corporate and Strategic Implications: The Learning and Heritage programmes contribute to the delivery Corporate Plan's outcomes:
 - Diverse engaged communities
 - Leading Sustainable Environment
 - Providing Excellent Services
 - Vibrant Thriving Destination

- Flourishing Public Spaces

45. Financial implications: The challenges identified include the need for a sustainable funding model for the play centres at Hampstead Heath.
46. Resource implications: The challenges identified include how to provide the necessary heritage expertise across the Division under the current model.
47. Legal implications: None
48. Risk implications: If the challenges identified are not met, the risk increases in delivering expected services.
49. Equalities implications: None
50. Climate implications: The learning team are leading a UK network of researchers and educators to develop best practice in climate education. They are collaborating with CoL Climate Action and Education Strategy teams to develop a shared, strategic approach to climate education, recognising the role of education as a driver for sustainability.
51. Security implications: None

Conclusion

This report summarises the key activities undertaken by the Learning and Heritage teams in 2023-24. It details progress and performance against these key activities and highlights successes and challenges.

The learning and heritage teams have delivered a successful year with an increase in visitors and participants compared with 2022-23. Qualitative evaluation has also shown an increase in the well-being and nature connection experienced by participants. Challenges have been identified and these will inform future activities, including business planning and operational changes in 2024-25 and beyond.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

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