

<b>Committee(s):</b> Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 10 July 2024
<b>Subject:</b> Assistant Director Report - Highgate Wood & Queen's Park	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	-Diverse engaged communities -Leading sustainable environment -Vibrant thriving destination -Providing excellent services -Flourishing public spaces
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>£0</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Emily Brennan Natural Environment Director	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Bill LoSasso Superintendent North London Open Spaces	

### Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last Hampstead Heath Consultative Meeting on 22 April 2024.

Given the unique structure of this Committee, and following discussion with the Chairman, North London Open Spaces officer reports will resume the past practice of being split between the two charities for which this committee is responsible - Hampstead Heath charity and Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Kilburn charity – where possible.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

## Main Report

### Parliament Hill / Leisure

1. Meetings and arrangements are underway for 'Give it a Go' 2024, which will be taking place on 14 July. It is a collaborative event with partners from Camden Council and local sports clubs and leisure centres. It's an event to promote health and wellbeing and a chance to try out new sports from tennis to fencing and bowling to boxing.
2. A decision has been made to repair one lane of the existing cricket nets on Heath Extension. The existing budget of the City Surveyor's Department will be used to repair one of the lanes. The other lane cannot be repaired, as the tree roots under it make this unfeasible. It has previously been considered whether a relocation of the nets elsewhere on the Extension was possible, but after internal review it has been determined that a move would be more expensive and exceed the funding available, would take planning permission and risk losing the Surveyor's funds that must be spent by 31 March 2025, and that a relocation would threaten currently open views on the Extension.
3. Football and rugby season is now completed at Heath Extension. Bookings are also increasing for the football pitches, rounders and grids at Parliament Hill Fields, with schools and the general public. Summer sports grids have been marked out and are now being used by Camden School Sports Association (CSSA), local schools, and groups for football training and general fitness. Work is underway to mark out rounders pitches for local schools.
4. Hampstead Heath Extension changing rooms have been closed due to traces of Legionella in a recent routine water quality test. The changing rooms were closed immediately after the issue was identified, our risk guidance for Legionella has been followed, and we are working closely with the City Surveyor's Department and specialist external contractors to address the situation and ensure continued public safety. Despite the closure of the changing rooms, there will not be any impact on our sports clubs' ability to use sports pitches while work is carried out to resolve this problem. It is hoped that the changing rooms will be reopened by the start of the rugby season in September this year.
5. The Lido and Ponds are getting much busier with the warmer weather, and with more awareness and publicity being generated about the health benefits of year-round swimming, showing a year-on-year rise. As an example, the weekend of 11-12 May was very busy with over 3,000 visitors to the Lido and

over 10,000 visitors to the three bathing ponds. Wi-Fi connection has now been installed at the Mixed Pond and new cables were installed at the Men's Pond in April to strengthen the Wi-Fi connection, which will help with payment made by credit cards.

6. The Lido started its summer opening hours on 4 May and the Mixed Pond opened to the public on this date. Repairs and maintenance of the Lido and Parliament Hill paddling pools began on 16 May. The work includes new filter media and dosing units for both paddling pools and a new pump for the Lido paddling pool. Both paddling pools were able to open on Monday 27 May, in time for the half-term.
7. The Ponds Access Project is now coming to a close. All the work at the Ladies, Mixed and Men's Ponds have progressed well and is now complete. The hoists are installed, the grating has been added and the sliding doors at the Men's Pond were installed the week commencing 13 May. The extra grating to fill the void in the Men's Pond has now been instructed and will be carried out in mid-June. The handover is scheduled for when all work associated with the Ponds Access Project will be signed off and completed. Training was provided to the lifeguards at the end of March on how to use the new hoists. Heath Hands helped with some planting at the Mixed Pond to replace vegetation removed during the Ponds Access Project. They also installed new fencing to help with control of the new accessible platform.

## **Golders Hill Park**

8. The main task currently is cutting the grass, but areas of long grass are being left where possible to create more wildlife friendly areas within Golders Hill Park. The sandpit area is still closed due to refurbishment works taking place. Progress has been made with the local team, but it has been decided to appoint external contractors to complete the work, due to the machinery and technical expertise required to meet play safety standards. Quotes are being gained from contractors to install the remaining plastic sleepers. The sandpit remains closed, but we are working hard to ensure it can be opened in a timely manner. The other half of the sandpit area where the sunshade is located was opened by Saturday 18 May.
9. Structural repair work has taken place on the Pergola and five of the worst columns were pinned at the base with two 450mm steel pins. Temporary structural repair work has been carried out and the eastern section of the colonnade was reopened on 15 May 2024. It is now safe for the public to access temporarily until August 2024. Future steps are now being evaluated. Senior Building Surveyors are still working with specialist contractors on the

next phase of works, as parts of the pergola may need to be removed to ensure continued public safety if a longer-term, more comprehensive solution is not implemented. A feasibility report has been commissioned by the City Surveyor's Department to identify options, and the cost for a full restoration is currently estimated to be more than £2 million.

10. In partnership with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and Heath Hands, the NLOS Senior Ecologist led a hedgehog survey workshop in Golders Hill Park. Wildlife cameras were placed throughout the park and will be in situ for approximately 3 weeks from the 1 May 2024. Based on previous surveys, Golders Hill Park remains one of the healthiest hedgehog populations in London, and results of this year's survey will be known later this summer.

## **Conservation**

11. The Conservation Team was called in by the Swimming Team to carry out some emergency reinstatement to the Mixed Pond access path following the completion of the contractor works to install an upgraded electrical supply. The work was successfully completed last week with the assistance of the lifeguards, and we are now just waiting for the coxwell gravel aggregate to dry out before the surface is rolled to achieve a suitable wearing surface for access to the facility. The team has also been involved in tree damage clearance at various locations following the recent wet and stormy weather, and last week started the weekly butterfly transect surveys. With the recent warmer drier weather tree irrigation operations have recommenced as part of a three- to five-year establishment programme.

## **Ecology**

12. The Ecologist has now identified potential sites for new leaky dams on the Fleet Stream as part of the Climate Action Strategy objectives to improve resilience and reduce flood risk. These minimal structures using natural materials will be constructed by the Conservation Team over the next twelve to eighteen months. 150 wildlife cameras have been installed around the Heath to start the new hedgehog survey. Heath hands volunteers and the Zoological Society London (ZSL) team were involved in installing the cameras. Ecological monitoring is planned for the butterfly meadow installed in 2023 on the Hampstead Heath Extension, using the Butterfly Conservation App.

## **Arboriculture**

13. The Tree Team has been carrying out scheduled inspections at a number of locations around the Heath and follow up tree works. We had more stormy weather during April, which caused several tree failures which were then worked on and made safe by the Tree Team. They also carried out repairs to the veteran tree enclosure fencing at the Vale of Health and provided professional advice and guidance during a film shoot below Kite Hill.

### **West Heath unlicensed gathering**

14. A large unlicensed amplified music event and party occurred on 15 June in the woods of West Heath. This event was initially reported to numerous Members and officers by members of the public as a political demonstration and encampment. While there appear to have been some political aspects of the event, and there were political messages that were hung and subsequently removed by Heath officers, the event appears to have been primarily an annual celebration of George Michael's life that has arrived unannounced on West Heath in recent years.

15. The gathering was much larger than Heath officers were equipped to safely manage or disperse. Given concerns about public safety given the size (c. 500 ppl), lack of license, location in a non-event space, unsafe and unlit egress and muddy and slippery paths, intoxicated self-identified organiser, and refusal of the organisers to stop, loud amplified music until midnight, the Metropolitan Police were called to provide support.

16. The Met ultimately decided to not forcibly disperse the crowd and stayed on site until agreement was reached for the event to conclude at 10.00pm. Until then, the party and music continued. A site visit the following morning showed c. 35 garbage bags that had been filled - including an empty petrol canister that underscored the public safety risk, litter, and worn natural areas of West Heath. Officers discarded all of the waste. Officers will liaise with the Metropolitan Police to discuss the event and ensure the best possible coordination for expected future incidents.

### **Events**

17. The 'Night of the 10K PBs' was held on Saturday 18 May 2024, which was a qualifying event for athletes ahead of the Paris Olympics this summer. It was a wonderful evening that was supported by representatives from the management and consultative committees, local councillors and the Mayor of Camden, and the Town Clerk. There were thousands of spectators, athletes from over 40 countries represented, over 50% of athletes running their own

personal best, and a spot at the Paris Olympics secured by Megan Keith. William Upton KC CC supported the event in a television interview, and over 100,000 people watched the event on the European Athletics YouTube feed.

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18. The Hampstead Heath and Golders Hill Park music programme begins on Friday 21 June and finishes on Sunday 25 August. We have a varied mix of music genres which caters for our wide and diverse audiences during the event.
19. Heath Hands – our valued partners on the Heath and in Highgate Wood – celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 6 June at a well-attended event on the grounds of Kenwood House. The event was a joyous celebration of Heath Hands' achievements in support of green spaces the past quarter century, and was attended by numerous volunteers, elected officials, this committee's Chairman, Director of Natural Environment, Superintendent and numerous other Heath officers. We remain grateful to Heath Hands for its support of the Heath and Highgate Wood and look forward to continuing to work together toward their conservation.

### **Financial implications**

20. No implications.

### **Resource implications**

21. No implications.

### **Legal implications**

22. The unlicensed event in paragraph 14 occurred in violation of Heath byelaws and

### **Risk implications**

23. Risks are monitored and recorded through the various risk registers, including the Division and Departmental Risk Registers.

### **Equalities implications**

24. No implications.

### **Climate implications**

25. Included within the business plan for 2024-25 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.

### **Security implications**

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

### **Conclusion**

27. This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last Hampstead Heath Consultative Meeting on 22 April 2024.

**Appendices:** None

### **Bill LoSasso**

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