

Committee(s) Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee	Dated 10 July 2024
Subject: Assistant Director's Report: Highgate Wood & Queen's Park	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's "Corporate Plan (2024-2029)" does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Diverse engaged communities Leading sustainable environment Vibrant thriving destination Providing excellent services Flourishing public spaces
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: Emily Brennan, Natural Environment Director	For Information
Report Author: Bill LoSasso Assistant Director (Superintendent) North London Open Spaces	

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting on 21 May 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 contents of the report.

PART 1: HIGHGATE WOOD

Volunteers

1. Volunteer sessions with Heath Hands have now stopped for the summer months until September to allow the birds to nest undisturbed. We will be looking at projects for the start of September to help us clean up dead hedging, breaking down camps and coppicing in some of the older conservation areas.

Tree management and conservation

2. Hampstead Heath tree team have been paying us regular visits, inspecting and collecting Oak Processionary Moth caterpillars. They visually inspect the canopy of the trees around the field and the playground area and remove any processioning caterpillars low to the ground, so they don't affect any public or dogs.
3. The live TV camera based at the playground building provides the public with some spring watch entertainment. Blue tits built a nest in the camera box, and they were successful in producing and fledging 14 chicks on 22 May. We also had approximately nine Woodpecker nests around the wood, which also bred quite early and benefitted from the abundance of small caterpillars.

Events

4. The insect safari run on 1 June was a success, with our Senior Ranger and local enthusiast running the event. Another safari is to be held on 6 July.
5. The summer guided walks will occur on 13 July, and our well attended bat walks begin on 17 July and are held once a month until September.
6. The annual Community Heritage Day will be held on 1 September 2024

Site maintenance

7. We have had several complaints from the public regarding the numbers of rats in and around the Wood. This is unusual, and due to the mild winter and heavy rainfall, which caused them to breed and has pushed them out of their flooded dens above ground more often than usual. With the weather improving as we go into summer, we believe that the number of rats above ground will diminish as their burrows dry out. The Highgate Wood Team are addressing the issue with limited targeted use of traditional rat control methods, as well as hiring a contractor who is putting down traps which catch the rats alive, and they are then dispatched humanely.

8. Contractors have been in since the start of June rewiring the tractor shed and are now rewiring our main office in the wood.

Recruitment

9. We are recruiting for one Ranger and two Operative Rangers. Once appointed, all position will be filled at Highgate Wood. Interviews are planned for July.

Sports

10. Cricket season has now started, with the same four teams from last year enrolled. To date, we have only had one game called off due to rain.

PART 2: QUEEN'S PARK

Invasive Species

1. Japanese knotweed has been found along the North side tennis court hedgerow. This was previously treated in this location several years ago. We will prepare to treat this at the start of autumn when the plant is fully active and will absorb the herbicide efficiently, minimising the risk of return. Toxic Hemlock plant has been identified on one of the mounds on the South side of the park. We have fenced this area off and installed signage. We are currently investigating the best course of action to eradicate this and prevent the plant from reestablishing itself in the future.

Sandpit

2. A post-installation ROSPA play safety inspection was carried out which identified some issues that needed to be addressed with the play equipment. This work has now been completed. Further measurements were then taken, which identified more wet pour (surfacing) was needed than was originally calculated and included in the tender/drawings. This has now been addressed and the contractors will be onsite from 17 June to complete the work, weather dependent. Once this is completed, a further ROSPA play safety inspection will be carried out. If everything is satisfactory the sandpit will be open to the public before the end of June. We can then identify a date to have an official opening to celebrate.

Staff Recruitment

3. Two Operative Rangers were appointed and have now started. One of the new team members has experience working with farm livestock and has been working closely with the Senior Ranger and the Zoo Manager to make improvements to the farm area. The other new team member brings a

background in conservation, adding new skills and knowledge to our local team. The final position of Ranger is currently advertised with the closing date for applicants of 21 June.

Farm

4. The Zoo Manager has secured two more sheep which should be onsite from July and is working towards finding two more billy goats. The newly appointed Operative Ranger (Farm) successfully secured the donation of four ducklings, these are currently being kept in a separate nursery enclosure and will be introduced to the public and the rest of the ducks once they reach maturity.

Events

5. 'Kilburn State of Mind' festival – a day of music and activities in the park - went ahead as scheduled on 1 June. The event was a success and was well organised by the sponsoring organisation. The event is becoming more popular each year and was attended by several hundred visitors this year.
6. 'Shakespeare in the Squares' returned for another successful year on 15th June in the park, performing "All's Well That Ends Well". The afternoon show was well attended despite heavy rain in the morning.
7. The biannual 'Open Gardens' event occurred on 16 June; the park provided the bandstand for two bands to perform, the first being the Palace Band who were a wind ensemble act followed by the Big Top Chorus.

Green Flag Award and London in Bloom Award

8. Judges for the Green Flag award attended site on 2 May and were shown around the site by the Formal Parks Manager and Senior Ranger. Good impressions were given by the judges, and winners will be notified on 16 July at the awards ceremony. London in Bloom judging is due to take place onsite 3 July.

Financial implications

9. No implications.

Resource implications

10. No implications.

Climate implications

11. Included within the annual plan for 2024-35 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.

Legal implications

12. No implications.

Risk implications

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

Equality implications

14. No impact.

Security implications

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

Appendices: N/A

Report author

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

bill.losasso@cityoflondon.gov.uk