

Committee(s): West Ham Park Committee	Date(s): 11 July 2024
Subject: Assistant Director's update	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan 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: 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 16 May 2024.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of the report.

Main Report

Grounds Maintenance

1. Work has been carried out in the grounds and gardens, which has included turf management, grass cutting, strimming, pruning, weeding and marking the sports pitches. The warmer, drier weather has resulted in increased numbers of visitors with lots of people having picnics and parties in the park. Carrying out grounds' maintenance work and duties can often be more challenging with the higher numbers of visitors. The gardening and ranger teams have been working hard with maintaining the gardens and borders and carrying out duties in preparation for the Green Flag judging, which took place on 10 June and for London in Bloom judging on 2 July 2024. The Green Flag judging on 10 June went very well, and the judge was impressed with the park. He was taken around the park, toured the gardens and was introduced to the Friends of West Ham Park volunteers working in the vegetable garden. He also met the learning team in the wildlife garden, as there were plenty of school groups using the park that day.
2. A new 10-year management plan is being developed this year, which will include all aspects including conservation and heritage. It will identify the short, medium and long-term objectives for the park, and this will be an ideal time to consider any new works, plans or projects for the park that fit those objectives. The new plan will need to be completed by December 2024, so it can be submitted with the next year of Green Flag and Green Heritage applications.

Sports and Recreation

3. Work has been undertaken to ensure the cricket pitch retains its excellent standard. The cricket season is now in full flow and the home teams are making the most of the warmer, drier and longer days. The cricket teams commented on how impressed they are with the pitch's condition, which is maintained by two site staff. Improvement works will be made to the pitch off season, which will include upgrading the post and chains that are used to keep the public off whilst the pitch is not in use. The 400m grass running track has been marked out for the summer and more bookings are expected from the local primary and secondary schools to hold their school sports days.
4. The Head of Operations and Parks met the Lawn Tennis Association again on 7 June at West Ham Park to discuss the tennis provision. Meetings are held regularly to ensure the tennis participation is developed and maximised, and more income is generated through coaching and court bookings, whilst reflecting the local neighbourhood and demographics within the London Borough of Newham. The tennis coaching arrangements with Tennis Come True are being formalised with a new licence. Each of the tennis coaches across the North London Open Spaces will be issued a new licence shortly until April 2025, so there is consistency across all four open spaces. Discussions were also held on

site with the Lawn Tennis Association on 7 June with regards to developing Padel at West Ham Park. The disused basketball court was highlighted as a potential location to support Padel.

5. As part of tennis and Padel discussions, the LTA produced a Periscope report for West Ham Park, which is a national mapping tool that contains demographic data relating to the named LTA Registered venue and its associated LTA members. The report breaks down the current UK tennis membership into six profiles and plots them by postcode, alongside the local population, showing where your undiscovered 'lookalike' members and players may be found. It's a tool that will be used to understand our competitors, our members and how we retain them, so we can understand what they want from their tennis experience at West Ham Park. This knowledge will also help us to create products and services to attract new customers in the future, provide valuable insight that can help us to create a retention plan to keep our existing members, create a marketing plan to recruit new members and support the development of any new facilities.
6. Two 'Swing Boxes – which are free app-operated weight benches – were installed in West Ham Park approximately six months ago, which were supported by Nuffield Health. We have received a lot of positive comments from users about this new equipment, and data from Swing Fitness which supports the comments received. The data has shown that 204 people have used the equipment with over 1,366 free sessions recorded, of which 23% have been group sessions. The median age is 34 with the youngest user being 16 and the oldest user being 72 years old. Most importantly, 94% of the users live within 2km of the park and 67% live within 1km, which highlights the importance of providing this free facility to local residents, its inclusivity and promotion of exercise, health and wellbeing.

Partnerships and volunteering

7. The Friends of West Ham Park have been carrying out four litter picks a week as the park has been getting busier. This work has supported the rangers and gardeners and allowed them more time to focus and prepare the park for the Green Flag and London in Bloom judging dates. Ten of the Friends will be running butterfly and insect identification training sessions in June. This will enable surveys to be carried out and to identify species using the park. The data will also be important, as we will be able to compare the numbers and species year on year, as more bulb planting and new hedges develop over the next few years. The training will be carried out by a local expert, Tim Harris, who works with the Wren Wildlife and Conservation Group. Friends of West Ham Park will

be leading two bat walks on 23 August and 20 September 2024. We remain grateful to the Friends for their support and value our strong partnership with this dedicated group.

8. West Ham Park charity continues to benefit from the extraordinary efforts of local volunteers, to whom we are grateful. In FY'2023-24 (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024), we hosted 516 volunteers in the park. As of the date of this report, we have hosted 118 volunteers in the park this fiscal year (1 April 2024 – 31 March). Our Head of Development & Partnerships, once appointed, will support our continued development of volunteering efforts across North London Open Spaces.

Events

9. From Friday 17 to Sunday 19 May, the park hosted a funfair, which was run by George Irvin Leisure. There were 17 rides and stalls for all ages and the event was a huge success, as the weather was also very warm over the weekend. Many people attended the fair and there were queues to enter until the end of each day. The park was left clean and tidy once the fair had been broken down and demobilised. Many park users commented on how much they enjoyed having the funfair in the park.
10. The park hosted the Sustainable Newham Green Fair on Bank Holiday Monday (6 May 2024), which involved lots of planning with Sustainable Newham. Despite the heavy rainfall and wet weather conditions, the event ran smoothly, and a good number of people braved the elements and supported the event.
11. Eid Prayer and celebrations occurred on 16 June from 07.30 – 11.30am and were well attended.

Tree Management

12. On 23 May the Tree Team felled five small to medium dead trees. The five trees felled were two over-shadowed rowans in the garden, two sweet chestnuts and one robinia in the Linden Gate area due to suffering from root dysfunction due to localised water logging. There are five sycamores in the park (two mature and three young) which have suffered from recent drought years and are now infected by sooty bark disease, these trees will be felled later this summer. A weeping willow in the garden was scheduled for reduction due to trunk decay, but a live nest of great tits was noted in a cavity in the trunk, so the tree has been cordoned off until later in the year when the nest is no longer in use. The team is

examining the feasibility of replacing these trees, taking into consideration suitable species.

13. Tree inspections at West Ham Park will be coming in-house from summer 2024. We are fortunate to have three highly skilled Lantra-trained professional Tree Inspectors on our NLOS Tree Team, and they will undertake the annual tree inspections going forward.

14. This year's proactive Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) caterpillar surveillance by NLOS tree team has begun. On 30 May, a full inspection of the 93 oak trees in the park was undertaken. Five live processions were recorded in five trees, (mostly Turkey oaks), all at height in the canopies and out of influence on park users, and thus not requiring any further action. There will be a further inspection for OPM with a focus looking for low-situated nests before the 150 celebrations take place.

Learning Team Update

15. Between April and May, 360 school students and 62 family members participated in the Learning Programme at West Ham Park (April – May 2024). Their habitats workshop has been very popular, with school students able to learn from first-hand observation through activities such as pond dipping and comparison of habitats and minibeasts. Their community campfire programme for WHP 150 is thriving, and their programme for children with special education needs and disabilities is over-subscribed. Two new Learning Volunteers have been recruited, offering additional support for our programme whilst gaining new skills and experience in outdoor education.

16. The Learning and West Ham Park teams have worked together to create a new log circle in the South Meadow for both school and public use. The log circle will improve the visitor experience for groups using the park independently, helping groups to feel welcome and comfortable in the park.

150th anniversary celebration

17. This topic is the subject of a separate report provided as part of this agenda pack, entitled "Update on planning for the 150th anniversary for West Ham Park."

Financial Implications

18. As noted above, officers have sourced and been successful in obtaining £55,000 of additional funding for the West Ham Park charity 150th anniversary celebration.

Resource Implications

19. The anniversary celebration will require additional operational resource as noted within this report.

Climate Implications

20. Included within the annual 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. The Climate Action Strategy will be embedded into future strategies which are currently being drafted within the Natural Environment Division.

Legal Implications

21. No implications.

Risk Implications

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

Equality Implications

23. No impact.

Charity Implications

24. West Ham Park is a registered charity. Charity Law obliges a trustee to ensure that the decisions taken in relation to the Charity are taken in the best interests of the Charity.

Security Implications

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

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