

HIGHGATE WOOD CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Friday 26 April, 1pm meeting

432 Archway Road, London, N6 4JH

Members:	William Upton KC CC (Chair) (WU)	Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queens Park Committee (online meeting only)
	Jason Groves (Deputy Chair) (JG)	Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queens Park Committee
Co- Optees:	Therese Gray (TG)	Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee
	Laura Dekker (LD)	Friends of Queen's Wood
	Michael Hammerson (MH)	Highgate Society
	Cllr Pippa Connor (PC)	London Borough of Haringey
Officers:	Bill LoSasso	Assistant Director NLOS
	Jonathan Meares (JM)	Head of Conservation
	Declan O'Brien (DO'B)	Ranger Manager Hampstead Heath and Highgate Wood
	Simon Glynn (SG)	Assistant Director Culture and Projects
	Rob Shakespeare (RS)	Head of Heritage and Museums
	Michaela Wright (MW)	Heritage Officer
	Karin Oleinikova (KO)	Heath Hands Programme Manager
	Helen Evans	Minutes (meeting only)

Apologies

Lucy Roots

Introductions

There were some errors on the agenda noted. We had Cllr. Pippa Connor in attendance, and officers from the Corporation accidentally excluded, these were: Simon Glynn, Michaela Wright, Rob Shakespeare and Karin Oleinikova. We noted that Peter Corley of Tree Trust for Haringey had sadly passed since the last meeting. The Chair was joining us online, so Deputy Chair was acting Chair.

Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting, held on 13 November 2023, were agreed.

Assistant Director's Update

- **Volunteers & conservation work**

JM offered his thanks to KO and the Heath Hands volunteers, who have been very active in the Wood with 13 sessions since the last meeting. It was discussed whether more volunteers were needed but KO advised they were at capacity. It was mentioned that with nesting season from April to September there is limited work that can be done during this time. DO'B mentioned they we have a camera capturing footage of a blue tit nest with 14 eggs.

It was mentioned that Heath Hands had been working with local residents to help make gardens more hedgehog friendly. There is an issue of genetic isolation in the hedgehog population at spaces like Regent's Park, which we are hoping to mitigate through engagement and education.

- **Tree management**

The Consultative Group discussed the recent high winds and the lowering of the closure threshold to 37mph. JM said closures above these speeds were justified and would continue. It was questioned whether we are lowering this due to being concerned we could be sued, and whether we might be being overly cautious. There was the mention of the recent death of a lady walking along the pavement in high winds and that we have to safeguard civilians, but that it is not possible to stop people walking along the roadside around the wood. It was mentioned that this death has made us cautious. JM mentioned we have a statutory duty of care to regularly inspect trees for safety. The closing of our other sites was mentioned. Kenwood, used as an example, closed with lower thresholds in April due to its number of ancient trees. PC questioned whether this was new practice and wholly necessary, mentioning that in the countryside, people are left to make the decision on safety and risk themselves, questioning upon whom lies the responsibility of personal safety. As an example, in Camden spaces they put up signage advising of the danger and don't close spaces, although we didn't know which space(s) this was and how it compares to Highgate Wood in terms of woodland. It was mentioned this decision to close requires the right balance, as we don't want to see the wood closed too often. We expect 37mph to be met around six times a year. The National Trust and

other organisations also make the decision to close woodland with variable thresholds to safeguard life. DO'B advised the Consultative Group that it takes one hour to close the wood to visitors, so we only close with forecasts of wind that will be of longer duration. JG advised we need a year's worth of data to make decisions on the new threshold, balancing safety with the number of days closed.

ACTION (JM): in November's report, provide a figure of trees and branches down from the past year and number of days closed in the year to discuss.

- **Recruitment**

BL provided an update that the Corporation would be hiring a Head of Business Development & Partnerships which will cover all NLOS.

- **Roman Kiln project**

RS gave a presentation on the Roman Kiln, showing its position in the wood, and how it was excavated and is being conserved. It was advised that we will continue to consult on the extent to which we conserve and restore in terms of the kiln's missing parts.

Works include: refurbishing the existing Information Hut, including replacing the roof, in order to house the original kiln; and build a replica kiln adjacent to the Information Hut, which will be fired three times during September. The latter will require a gazebo / pergola style structure to protect the replica kiln, which will be constructed from wood to ensure it is in harmony with existing structures and the natural environment of the Wood.

The works required to the hut to prepare it for the kiln will require funding. The team are working with City Surveyors to establish the budget for the project. This is going to be a 3-year project in total, but the full realisation might take us a little beyond this.

JG asked whether the project had a timeline, and expressed his satisfaction with the new plans for the information hut compared to the previously proposed plan. The kiln has gone to a conservation team and due to be returned in August. It was noted that we need to establish a conservation management plan for the life of the kiln. The timeframe they are looking at for the replica and the hut is September, with the site works time frame TBC. A contractor is in place for the works.

MW went on to present the work of the STEM programme and the engaging of local children in the project. It was discussed that we will continue to use social media to showcase work,

inspire, and engage people with woods. It was mentioned that the children's pots that have been fired using clay from the wood ought to be used for media coverage.

ACTION (HE): to send MW's part of the presentation to Jen Wood, who manages NLOS social media.

The Consultative Group discussed the existing Roman history trail in London and whether we could get the wood included to link up to other historical sites, to attract visitors and engage the public. It was confirmed that there will be an event to open the kiln to the public.

It was noted that this is a busy time of year for the Lord Mayor and City Corporation. JG mentioned that we should try to get this on BBC London. Katherine West a local MP is very interested in the project.

ACTION (RS): to liaise with Roman history trail and get Highgate Wood added.

ACTION (BL and RS): to get a date in the diary for opening the Kiln Project and begin organising this event.

- **Management Plan Update**

A new management plan will be approved before the end of the year. It was queried if this will go out to consultation beforehand and whether a heritage assessment is in need of being updated. JM advised that we will refer to any existing plans for the creation of the 5-year management plan, as they are still valuable references, but that we will keep in mind of how understanding of the site has changed and adjust accordingly.

- **Café tendering**

BL provided an update that the cafe licences at all four spaces are being planned for tender. Currently, discussions are being had with City Surveyors on various matters, including the tenancy length.

ACTION (BL): update with more substantive details on the criteria for the vendors, length of term etc.

The Consultative Group then discussed the condition survey of the Highgate Wood Café and necessary repairs and improvements. BL advised we would make repairs and the site made suitable for future operators. Officers are also interested in ensuring that the space is a 'community hub', with the potential to host community-centric small events, including for

families and children. These events will likely be small, intimate musical events, not making an ecological impact on the Wood, and that officers would seek feedback from users on what types of community events might be most sought. It was mentioned that the café isn't currently well used by dog walkers, who prefer the kiosk and alternative local cafés. A consultation on cafés occurred in recent years. The desire to preserve the building was discussed, and the current layout as a smaller space with limited indoor seating, which may have an impact on attracting customers.

- **AOB**

A 12-month business plan was included in the papers. Concern was expressed over the phrasing of 'business' for a green space. Reassurance was given that this is standard practice and it's not a public-facing document. There is going to be an update to the wood management plan.