

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee	Dated: 14 January 2025 (For Discussion) 4 February 2025 (For Decision)
Subject: Re-opening of former tennis hut at Parliament Hill	Public report:
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes 	-Vibrant Thriving Destination -Providing Excellent services -Diverse Engaged Communities
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Yes
If so, how much?	Up to £8,500
What is the source of Funding?	Cyclical Works Programme
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of:	Katie Stewart, Executive Director of Environment
Report author:	Colin Houston, Volunteer Coordinator, North London Open Spaces

Summary

This report provides Members with an overview of the pilot re-opening of the former tennis booking hut at Parliament Hill as a weekend visitor engagement and interpretation base.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee: Review the report and provide any sought representations.

- Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee: Review the report and authorise officers to effectuate an agreement with Heath Hands to occupy and reactivate the Tennis Hut as described herein.

Main Report

Background

1. The former 'Tennis Booking Hut' at Parliament Hill, referred to as the 'Hut' in this report, is a small building (9 sqm) that was previously used to facilitate tennis bookings at Parliament Hill's tennis courts, among other public information functions (Appendix 1).
2. Tennis bookings are now managed online via Club Spark, and therefore the Hut is no longer required for its original purpose. The building was last staffed by City of London Corporation staff in 2016, and the nearby public information window was closed by the City Corporation in 2023 due to staffing reductions. The Hut is currently used as a storage space and for various other operational purposes by officers.
3. The overall condition of the building is good, with some decoration and weatherproofing required. Repairs are needed to its windows to enable them to open properly and facilitate public engagement from inside the Hut.

Heath Hands

4. Heath Hands (charity number: 1173419) is a charity that delivers a range of conservation, public engagement, community, learning and wellbeing programmes across North London Open Spaces (NLOS), Keats House and the Kenwood Estate. Heath Hands operates on Hampstead Heath pursuant to a Partnership Agreement with the City Corporation, which will be amended as necessary to reflect the content of this report and permit occupation of the Hut by Heath Hands.

Reactivation of Former Tennis Hut

5. Heath Hands have been successfully delivering a weekend interpretation programme on the Heath (formerly the RSPB's Wild About Hampstead Heath project) since 2016. Their volunteer Wildlife Interpreter, and interpretation tricycles, engage on average over 3,000 visitors a year about nature conservation and the community programmes on Hampstead Heath.
6. Heath Hands has proposed to pilot a reactivation of the Hut for a broader use of the space, including to create a weekend visitor engagement point in Parliament Hill. It will provide free information and resources to Heath visitors and act as a base for their nature interpretation programme.

7. There is currently £8,500 funding available in the City Surveyor's Department's (CSD) Cyclical Work Programme for targeted repairs to the interior and exterior of the Hut. NLOS officers will liaise with CSD on implementing these improvements in parallel with finalising plans with Heath Hands to reopen and reactivate the Hut.
8. After a period of repair and redecoration, led by the CSD and with additional work by Heath Hands, the Hut would reopen from late spring to early summer 2025, during limited hours on weekends, currently anticipated to be three hours each on Saturday and Sunday. There is the potential to expand to bank holidays in the future, though the ability to open is dependent on availability of Heath Hand's staff and volunteers.
9. Visitors will be able to ask questions, pick up maps and resources, and discover more about NLOS's management of the Heath and about the Heath's programme of community events, volunteering, wildlife conservation and campaigns, enabling better engagement of visitors. This will improve the overall visitor experience and also return to a limited degree a visitor service that was previously offered pre-TOM.
10. The building will also be utilised as a staff and volunteer base by City Corporation officers during community events and sports events at Parliament Hill.
11. In addition, Heath Hands and City Corporation staff set up a retail stall outside the Hut, nearby the Farmers' Market, between October and December. This allows Heath Hands to sell its annual Hampstead Heath calendar, the proceeds of which are used to further Heath Hands' mission on the Heath. In addition to the other benefits of reactivating the Hut as described herein, its reopening will allow for a more secure and reliable location for these holiday calendar sales.
12. The opening is being resourced by Heath Hands staff, with the support of their dedicated volunteers. The Heath Hands staff and volunteers will also support NLOS officers as needed and as capacity permits.

Financial implications

13. No implications. Up to £8,500 in available Cyclical Work Programme funding will be used to make necessary repairs to the Hut.

Resource implications

14. Existing staff at NLOS can absorb any additional duties created in providing oversight of the Hut.

Legal implications

15. The use of the Hut must be in the best interests of the Hampstead Heath charity and in accordance with the charitable objects (to preserve Hampstead Heath for the recreation and enjoyment of the public) and the other available powers. The objects of the Heath Hands charity are generally aligned. As outlined in the

report, Heath Hands focuses on the conservation and protection of green spaces, education, ecological monitoring and community outreach. The Partnership Agreement must also outline the terms and conditions of use by Heath Hands and clarify the roles and responsibilities of each party.

Risk implications

16. Risks are monitored and recorded through the Departmental Risk Register. Pursuant to its agreement with the City Corporation, Heath Hands carries appropriate insurance coverage as directed by the Chamberlain's Insurance Office.

Equalities implications

17. No implications.

Climate implications

18. No implications.

Security implications

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

Conclusion

20. This report summarises the work being done to reopen and reactivate the former Tennis Booking Hut at Parliament Hill as a visitor engagement and interpretation base.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Photos of former 'Tennis Booking Hut'

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APPENDIX 1: Former 'Tennis Booking Hut' at Parliament Hill



