

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	Dated: 4 February 2025
Subject: Assistant Director's Report (Queen's Park)	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes 	-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?	£0
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Katie Stewart, Executive Director, Environment Department
Report author:	Bill LoSasso, Superintendent, North London Open Spaces

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting on 22 October 2024. Please note that while a meeting of this committee occurred on 3 December 2024, it was a "part 2" meeting of that on 22 October and no Assistant Director Report was produced.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Report format

1. At the meeting of 22 October 2024, Members expressed their desire for future reporting to be aligned with the charitable goals of each respective charity / open space under its remit.
2. In response, and aligned with Committee direction, Officers have adapted the Assistant Director's Report to align with the four themes of the Queen's Park Management Plan. Additional matters will be covered in an 'Additional Relevant Matters' section as needed.

Caring: We care for the Park to ensure it continues to fulfil its many functions for the benefit of the community, heritage and the environment, now and for future generations.

3. Queen's Park remains popular with visitors throughout the winter months. The main tasks are hedge cutting, tidying shrubs and borders in the formal gardens, weeding and leaf clearance from paths and play areas to maintain clear, safe access. Drains, gullies, ditches and grids are being checked and cleared to assist with the drainage on site.
4. The gardening team has been carrying out seasonal pruning and herbaceous border maintenance tasks. Some new planting has been introduced to fill gaps in the beds and borders caused by previous plant failures. Work has already been completed on the rose bed adjacent to the tennis courts and café where three *Rosa remembrance* have been added.
5. The playground toilet block renovations were completed at the end of November and are now open to the public. The additional funding was gained to carry out the internal refurbishment works, which included full internal decorations such as new toilet cubicles, new sinks, new hand dryers, walls and flooring.
6. The Park has been partially or fully closed eight times (six of which being all-day closures) since October 2024 due to high winds of over 40mph for safety reasons. During high winds and whilst the park is closed to visitors, the staff carry out a range of tasks such as site patrols, cleaning tools, machinery and equipment, cleaning staff areas as well as administration and office work. When the winds ease, patrols are carried out to check the park for signs of damage and tree failure.

Closure incidents since committee meeting on 22 October 2024

Date	Wind speed prediction	Wind speed actual	Length of time closed
23 November	50+ mph	41.5mph	All day
24 November	50+ mph	44.9mph	All day
07 December	57 mph	49.5mph	All day
08 December	51 mph	49.5mph	All day
18 December	43 mph	49.5mph	Closed until 10:30hrs
22 December	46+ mph	39.2mph	All day
31 December	45 mph	34.6 mph	Closed at 14:00hrs
1 January 2025	53mph	44.9mph	All day

Excellence: We maintain high environmental, conservation, heritage and horticultural standards.

7. Queen's Park was awarded Gold in the Large Park category at the London in Bloom Awards Ceremony on 3 October 2024, which is the ninth year in a row, with acclaim that 'The park remains a well-provisioned and well-used open space, well cared for by its staff and users, which also includes a mixture of modern and heritage... Queen's Park is a safe, welcoming, sustainable and accessible for all to enjoy. A well-deserved Gold Award.'

Inclusion: We ensure that the Park and its facilities are inclusive, so that all can enjoy the benefits of enhanced physical and mental well-being.

8. A review of the paddling pool is currently being undertaken following an independent assessment and report, which was carried out in April 2024. It assessed and reviewed the pool and water treatment, the pool's design, its operations under governing health guidelines, the pool's supervision, staff training, access, and security. These recommendations have been costed, and other options are also being explored. Meetings have been arranged to explore the options and costs of converting the paddling pool to an open splash pad. Splash pads offer many benefits including accessibility to everyone of all ages and abilities.
9. The tennis courts continue to be well used throughout the winter months. Cleaning and line painting has taken place. Regular meetings continue to be held with the Lawn Tennis Association to discuss tennis provision and ensure tennis

participation is developed, accessible to everyone and maximised at Queen's Park.

10. The sensory garden landscaping renovation work was completed in mid-December. The angle and width of one entrance was enhanced to improve accessibility for wheelchair users and parents with pushchairs. New fencing has been erected, and a recently planted border is on display for the public to enjoy.

Community: We engage visitors and the local community in understanding and caring for the Park.

11. A local residents' association (QPARA) held a Christmas carol singing event in Queen's Park on Saturday 14 December. Kensal Pines kindly donated a Christmas tree, which was installed in the tree pit in front of the café. The event was a huge success with a big turnout from the local community who enjoyed mulled wine from the café and carols from Queen's Park Singers.

Other Relevant Matters

12. One Operative Ranger position was advertised in December. Short-listing has taken place, and interviews will be held in January 2025. Another Operative Ranger position, dedicating duties to the farm as well, will be advertised by the end of January after a member of staff left City Corporation employment at the end of December.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

13. The Queen's Park Management Plan outlines the strategic direction of the charity. The activities noted herein further the achievement of the strategic outcomes noted therein. The activities noted herein also further the relevant strategic outcomes of the City Corporation Plan (2024-2029) and Natural Environment Strategies (2024 - 2029).

Financial implications

14. No implications.

Resource implications

15. No implications.

Legal implications

16. No implications.

Risk implications

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

Equalities implications

18. No implications.

Climate implications

19. 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.

Security implications

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

Conclusion

21. 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

Assistant Director (Superintendent)

Noth London Open Spaces

Environment Department (Natural Environment Division)

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