

HIGHGATE WOOD CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Date: 14 November 2024

Time: 12:00 Walk; 13:00 Meeting

Venue: 432 Archway Road, London, N6 4JH

Members: William Upton KC CC (Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee) **Meeting only**

Pauline Lobo CC (Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee)

Co-Optees: Stephanie Beer (Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association)

Therese Gray (Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee)

Michael Hammerson (Highgate Society)

Laura Dekker (Friends of Queen's Wood)

Cllr Pippa Connor (London Borough of Haringey) **Online only, meeting only**

Cllr Scott Emery (London Borough of Haringey)

Officers: Bill LoSasso (Superintendent & Assistant Director, City of London Corporation)

Jonathan Meares (Head of Conservation, City Corporation)

Declan O'Brien (Ranger Manager Hampstead Heath and Highgate Wood, City Corporation)

Cindy Blaney (Senior Ranger, Hampstead Heath and Highgate Wood, City Corporation) **Walk only**

Colin Houston (Volunteer Co-Ordinator, Heath Hands) **Walk only**

Rob Shakespeare (Head of Heritage and Museums)

Additional: Karin Oleinikova (Heath Hands)

Enquiries: **Helen Evans**

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AGENDA

1. Apologies

Jason Groves

2. Introductions

William Upton thanked the group for joining and apologised for missing the walk.

3. Minutes of last meeting

To receive the minutes of the Highgate Wood Consultative Group meeting held on 26 April 2024.

- a. Correction to minutes: part 4 re. tree management: the lady who died was in a car, not a pedestrian crossing the road.
- b. Minutes approved

4. Actions and matters arising

4.1 Tree management:

- a. Officers provided a table of figures of tree damage from the past year and number of days closed to date in 2024 compared to 2023. This was brought to the Consultative Group in response to the change in wind speed thresholds leading to the Wood's closure. JM explained that the table in the report, item 15 in agenda pack is to be replaced with the newly distributed paper with two tables.
- b. This table demonstrates:
 - i. 2024: 9 closures varying from major events to less-significant events; overall number of tree damage events totaling 13.
 - ii. 2023: there were 5 closures, with 14 tree damage events reported.
 - iii. We experienced more instances of extreme weather in 2024.
- c. In 2022, a storm in February caused a death. HSE investigated after the fatality and were satisfied with the inspection systems in place at the Wood.
- d. There was an issue with a local resident reporting damage to their car to Cllr Emery which was investigated by Officers earlier this year, with no issues found. The trees adjacent to the road were inspected recently before the event and were deemed to be in good condition, with no debris found.

- e. Officers advised that we are reliant upon weather predictions and that weather could be less significant than predicted, but in these cases, we continue as per predictions. JM advised that we have trees failing below 40mph winds.
- f. Officers noted that the Tree Team research safety recommendations and wind speeds to inform best protocol.
- g. It was queried whether we are potentially closing too often, or not often enough. We need to capture the length of closure as well as frequency, and need to capture the closures in the 37-39mph threshold.

ACTION (JM): further report on Wood closure and wind speed figures in April.

- h. It was agreed that signage and communication on social media is sufficient.
- i. Officers said that there were no plans to further lower the thresholds.
- j. It was noted that balance is needed between information and independence of visitors using their own risk assessment and sense.

4.2 Kiln project: this was addressed later in the meeting.

4.3 Cafe re-tendering:

- a. Officers updated the Group that the cafe remarketing report would be presented to committee on 3 Dec. Officers will update the Group at the next HWCG in spring.

ACTION: Officers to provide further update in next meeting on cafe re-marketing.

- b. It was noted that dog walkers are perceived to use the cafe less due to having to leave their dog unattended in order to access the cafe, and a layout change was suggested.
- c. It was suggested we could experiment with allowing dogs more extensively in this area, by swapping the dog-free and dog-allowed sections, as long as there is no hygiene or safety issue.
- d. One member commented that on several occasions the forest school has been talking too loudly in cafe area, which could deter people from using the cafe seating areas; liaison with them on this was suggested.

5. Updates

5.1 Assistant Director's Report

- a. City Corporation has finalised an agreement with Heath Hands. BL thanked Karin for the work of Heath Hands.
- b. Michael Hammerson was thanked for his work on moth surveys, with the survey in its 40th year.
- c. The Group suggested MH could carry out sessions with Heath Hands volunteers in order to allow the continuance of his work into the future.

5.2 Roman Kiln project update

- a. WU expressed thanks to the Culture and Heritage Team, and noted that the project is going well.
- b. An architect is being consulted for the works to improve the Information Hut. It was mentioned that funding was available from the City Surveyor's Cyclical Works Programme for the works.

ACTION: (RS) to share more details on the development of the Information Hut in a future meeting.

5.3 Recruitment

- a. A new Operative Ranger has recently joined the team and another is currently being recruited, with a start date later this month.

5.4 Sports field and play area

- a. The Group discussed the issue of the quality of the pitch, which is worsening due to climate change, damage from dogs digging, the lack of availability of suitable machinery and increased wear and tear from use.
- b. Officers noted the succession of seasons means no weekend is free, increasing wear and tear.

5.5 Highgate Wood Management Plan

- a. BL expressed thanks to the Consultative Group for their contributions to the Management Plan consultation.
- b. The Group expressed overall satisfaction with the Plan. No further feedback was offered.

6. Any other business

- a. Heath Hands

- i. The Group commended Heath Hands on 9,000 hours of volunteering.
- ii. Congratulations were expressed for their recently passed 25th anniversary. KO noted that a video had been produced to celebrate the occasion.
- iii. It was noted that there was a lack of association between Heath Hands and Highgate Wood. The Group discussed whether some wood-specific volunteering identity with increased capacity could be considered.
- b. Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Committee will receive the Highgate Wood Management Plan in December, for approval.

Next meeting date: TBC

Meeting ended at 14:26