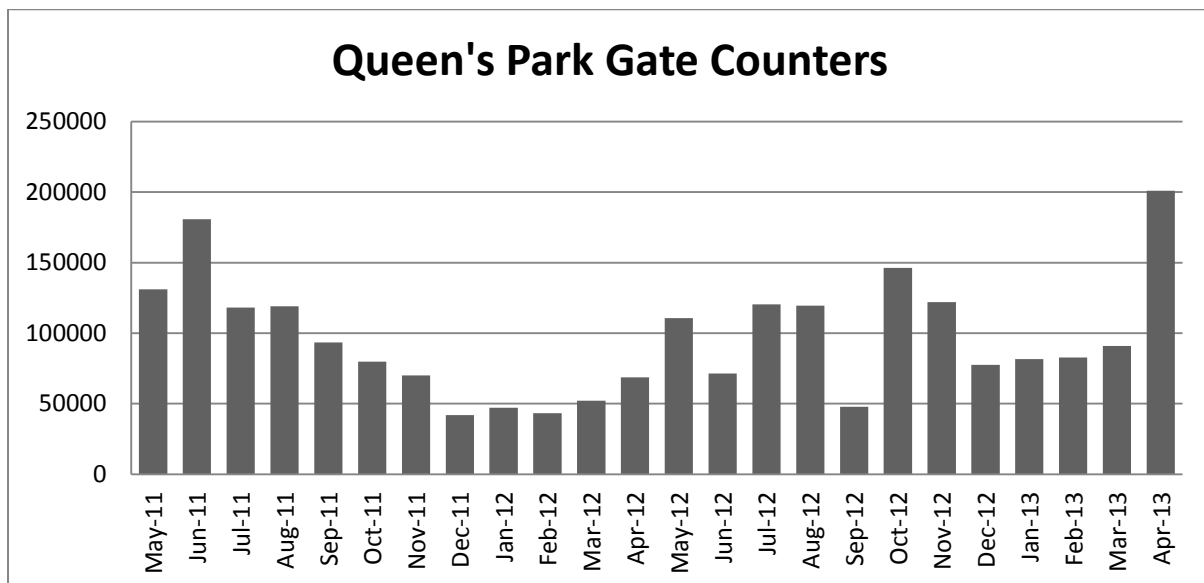


Committee(s):	Date(s):
Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group	12 June 2013
Subject: Superintendent's Update	Public
Report of: Simon Lee – Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Discussion
Summary	
<p>This report provides an update to members of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group on the management and operational activities since November 2012 in Queen's Park. The report provides progress on projects and other initiatives including sustainability and ecology, sports and recreation, landscape management, operational management and visitors which have taken place over the last six months.</p>	
Recommendation(s)	
<p>That the views of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group be received.</p>	

Main Report

Background

1. Over the winter period staff completed essential maintenance works. Sessions took place with focus groups to assist with the production of the Conservation Management Plan. Essential tree works have been carried out by an external contractor. The Lord Mayor of London visited the park and was joined by the Mayor of Brent and distinguished guests at a tree planting ceremony. Repairs and maintenance works have been carried out to the park furniture and infrastructure.
2. The park continues to be a busy focal point for the local community. Between the periods May 2012 - April 2013 the park saw 1,271,580 visits. The Play Area had 368,000 visits and the Children's Farm 152,646 visits.



Ecology and the Environment

3. The project in the Quiet Garden to increase perennial planting and reduce seasonal bedding continues. A small amount of summer seasonal bedding has been ordered from West Ham Park. The reduction in seasonal bedding is due to agreed budgetary savings in 2010. Interpretation signage will be reviewed to incorporate any new planting in this area.
4. The park obtained a John Deere Gator electric vehicle which was being underutilised elsewhere in the division. As this machine is electric, the park hopes to demonstrate a reduction in diesel usage this year.
5. The Hampstead Heath Arboricultural Team are visiting Queen's Park on a regular basis to survey Oak trees for signs of the Oak Processionary Moth (OPM). The OPM can threaten the health of Oak trees because they feed on the leaves. There are some public health issues associated with the moth too.

The moth has up to 36,000 bristles which contain a toxin. The bristle can cause irritation to the skin, sore eyes and if inhaled, breathing difficulties.

The Forestry Commission has reported sightings in the following area;

- Several boroughs in West and South-West London (discovered 2006)
- Bromley and Croydon Boroughs in South London (2012)
- Pangbourne in West Berkshire (2010)

There have not been any confirmed sightings of the OPM in Queen's Park.

6. Following a recent bi-annual inspection by our vet, it was suggested to make improvements to the planting around the pond area in the Children's Farm. This project will tie in with the installation of the new pond liner. The park gardener will support the animal attendant and other staff planting up this area with ornamental grasses.

Sports and Recreation

7. Due to moss growth over the winter period a contractor sprayed and treated tennis courts 5 and 6. This activity will form part of the parks work programme and will be scheduled in to take place annually. A reason for moss growth in this area of the courts is due to lack of sunlight from shady trees.
8. To promote the City of London tennis coaching sessions in the park, the park manager purchased two A1 pavement signs which have been placed outside the café and the Pitch and Putt hut. It is hoped that these new signs will promote and generate further interest in available courses. The signs can be changed to promote other events and activities in the park.
9. A new tennis booking system is in place and is working effectively. Players can turn up at the booking hut in advance and make a reservation one week in advance, avoiding the need to wait for court availability on busier days.
10. Queen's Park Rangers did not hold soccer training schools in April due to their staffing costs not being covered in October; they are reconsidering holding events in the summer.
11. The City of London and Queen's Park are accepting Spice Time Credits for tennis and pitch and putt games on selected days of the week and times of the year. Spice is a social enterprise that develops time banking systems for communities and public services that engage and empower the many rather than the few. People are thanked with credits for contributing time to their community (putting 'Time In'). People use credits to access events, training and leisure services.

Conservation and Heritage

12. The park manager is currently producing a leaflet which will have information on some of the historical aspects of Queen's Park. Chris Blandford Associates are assisting with this. The leaflet is in draft form and a copy will be made available to members at the meeting.

Landscape Management

13. During the annual tree inspections of 2011/12 carried out by ACS Consulting and the Hampstead Heath Arboricultural team, a number of safety works were identified. These works included crown reductions on structurally weak canopies, removal of significant dead wood above target areas, lifting canopies above the external road and paths to statutory height regulations and felling one tree due to basal decay. The 34 trees worked on included; 11 Horse Chestnuts, 9 Common Ash, 6 London Planes, 5 Maples and 3 Limes. The above works were contracted out to Woodland Tree Surgery Ltd. The specification included carrying out the works in three tranches over the winter period to minimise disruption to the public and staff.



Tree Works in the Park

14. The main field and bandstand field were slit, fertilised and seeded. The contractor used his equipment to slit and seed the desire line which had been created by joggers and walkers adjacent to Kingswood Avenue.

15. In April 2013, in the area where new play equipment has been installed, 130 metres of Common Hornbeam has been planted. As part of the play area master plan, it was agreed to soften the edges with natural planting. Members of the local community supported staff with this planting.



Hedge Planting in the Play Area (credit Alison Moulding)

16. Improvements and repairs have been carried out in the play area over the winter months. Additional matting has been installed on the mounds of the aerial runway to reduce the impact of erosion on the mounds. Works have been carried out in the paddling pool including; repointing of the wall, repairs to the pool lining (under guarantee), re-bedding uneven slabs on the pool side due to tree roots. Following recommendations made in a ROSPA inspection report, new chains and seats were fitted by staff to the swings.
17. New planters are being built by staff, these will be located between the paddling pool and the fence line before the summer.

Operational Management

18. A new contract commenced in January 2013 with Enterprise who are the Corporate contractor for waste and recycling. All general waste collections from the Queen's Park compactor will now be taken to the City of London's waste transfer station at Walbrook Wharf, and from there transported by river barge to the 'energy from waste plant' at Belvedere in Bexley. This facility is managed by Cory Environmental processing over 550,000 tonnes of assorted waste from in and around the London area.
19. Recyclables from Queen's Park continue to be collected by Veolia on behalf of Brent Council who are operating a regular collection service.
20. The park manager is investigating the viability of installing a new type of bin in the park which has compaction ability and is completely self-powered,

meaning it can hold up to 6 times more waste than an average street bin, thus reducing the number of collections from bins in the park.

21. A number of options are being considered with regard to the changes with the staff rota in Queen's Park. Budgetary savings will mean the park will see a reduction of one full time post in March 2014. A revised rota will ensure the available staff resource will continue to provide a well maintained park.
22. A contractor has been appointed to carry out necessary repairs to the signage and interpretation panels in the park. They are currently refurbishing the City of London crests and will install new interpretation and map panels along with replacement strap lines on the entrance notice boards before the summer period.
23. Under the annual work programme, work was carried out to the block paving in the Quiet Garden. There were a number of raised areas causing a potential trip hazard by root encroachment and the blocks lifting. The Arboricultural team were consulted before any roots were cut.
24. Other works have been completed under the annual works programme; this has included painting the staffroom, a section of the exterior fencing along Kingswood Avenue and the exterior of the animal huts in the farm.
25. To reduce the impact of pigeon nuisance at the Lych gate, staff installed spikes and netting in the roof area. There was also a health issue with pigeon faeces on the benches which has now been resolved.
26. Over the winter months, staff carried out repairs and maintenance to 60 benches in the park. This involved screwing and gluing and re-staining benches.
27. The goat enclosure and aviary in the Children's Farm has been re-turfed, this will now form part of the annual work plan for staff. A new pond liner has been fitted by staff as the old liner was ripped and leaking.
28. There have been no reported Health and Safety accidents in the park relating to staff during the period November 2012 – May 2013.

Visitors and Community

29. The park hosted a "Winter Gathering" event in December 2012. Music was provided outside the café and Santa Claus made an appearance, turning on the lights on the tree with 200 visitors in attendance. The café provided refreshments and there were arts and crafts activities for children.

30. On the 1st March 2013 to mark its first Mayoral visit since its centenary in 1987, Alderman Gifford, the Lord Mayor of the City of London Corporation ceremonially planted a Common Oak tree in Queen's Park. The Lord Mayor was joined by The Worshipful the Mayor of Brent, Cllr Michael Adeyeye. Both Mayors, along with guests, were taken on a tour by park manager Richard Gentry, taking in the Quiet Garden, play area redevelopment and the Woodland Walk.



Tree Planting Ceremony in Queen's Park

31. In April 2013, Jonathan Meares, Highgate Wood & Conservation Manager supported the park manager with a tree walk around the park for the community. 14 people attended the walk and the feedback received was positive with interest in future walks.
32. It was agreed at the November 2012 meeting that the Park, in conjunction with 'Where is the Nomad' could hold four outdoor films in 2013. These films have been scheduled in to take place on the following dates;
- 17/08/13 - Stand by Me
 - 24/08/13 - Usual Suspects
 - 07/09/13 - Crouching Tiger
 - 21/09/13 - Roman Holiday
33. The Queen's Park Area Residents Association (QPARA) will not be holding the Book Festival in 2013. It is hoped that this popular event will return in the future.
34. The Queen's Park day event will take place on 15 September 2013. The City of London is in consultation with members of the organising team from QPARA to discuss arrangements for this event.
35. Children's entertainment and bands have been arranged for the summer period, flyers and posters advertising the events will be produced in due course to promote the events to the wider community. Attempts have been

made to hold activities for older children. Brent Sport Development have contacted the City of London and requested the use of Queen's Park during August to hold free multi sports events and activities which will include a variety of popular sports and games for 7 – 14 year old children. The proposed dates are; 12 to 16 August, 10.30am -12.30pm.

36. The park manager is making use of social media via the Hampstead Heath Communications Officer, including twitter to advertise events and activities in the park.
37. New interpretation signage has been installed in the farm. The signage provides information about the birds which are in the aviary. Over the winter period the Children's Farm received 40 formal school visits which amounted to 1,120 children.
38. Seven classes from Salusbury School were involved with bulb planting in the park during November 2012. Other schools were invited to join in with this activity.

Representation on the Joint Consultative Group

39. The park manager contacted four local residents groups who he considered may have an interest in the management of the park and its future development as an important hub within the local community. The following groups were contacted; Kensal Triangle Residents Association (KTRA), Brondesbury Residents and Tenants Association (BRAT), Aylestone Park Residents and Tenants APRATA, and Mapesbury Residents Association (MAPRA).
40. Two replies have been received expressing an interest in joining the Joint Consultative Group and representing their respective associations. A response has been received from APRATA and NorthWest2 via MAPRA.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

41. The management and provision of Queen's Park provides a vital retreat, enabling people to escape the daily pressures of living and working in London. The park fulfils many of the themes within the City's Community Strategy, but specifically providing "A World Class City which protects, promotes and enhances our environment". "A World Class City which is vibrant and culturally rich". "A World Class City which supports our communities".
42. It will also help fulfil the Department's Strategic Aims and Objectives 2, (Involve communities and partners in developing a sense of place through the care and management of our sites.) and 3, (Deliver sustainable working practices to promote the variety of life and protect the Open Spaces for the enjoyment of future generations).

Implications

43. There are no financial implications arising from this report, the operational requirements which have been highlighted in the report will be met from the Superintendents' local risk budget. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Conclusion

44. It is acknowledged that Queen's Park continues to be a popular Open Space within the community, serving a wide and diverse audience. The staff that work in the park take great pride in the service they provide to the community and are actively engaged in a number of initiatives to ensure that the management of the site is sustainable and operates within the financial limits set down by the City Corporation.

Appendices

- None

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