

## City of London Corporation Committee Report

<b>Committee(s):</b> West Ham Park Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 01 May 2025
<b>Subject:</b> Assistant Director's Report	<b>Public report:</b> For Information
<b>This proposal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes</b></li></ul>	-Diverse Engaged Communities -Leading Sustainable Environment -Vibrant Thriving Destination -Providing Excellent Services -Flourishing Public Spaces
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	No
<b>If so, how much?</b>	N/A
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	N/A
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	N/A
<b>Report of:</b>	Katie Stewart, Executive Director Environment
<b>Report author:</b>	Bill LoSasso Assistant Director (Superintendent), North London Open Spaces

### Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to West Ham Park since the last Committee meeting on 6 February 2025.

### Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of the report.

## Main Report

### Background

1. The Assistant Director's Report aligns with the four strategic themes of the West Ham Park Management Plan (2025-2035). Additional matters of interest and importance will be covered in an "Additional Relevant Matters" section as needed.

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

2. There have been seven high wind events between January and March 2025, with gust speed predictions ranging from 41 - 53mph. There were no significant tree failures reported, but several small-to-medium branches were shed and cleared by West Ham Park staff before gates were opened after site closures.
3. There were closures at West Ham Park on the following dates in January and February 2025:

Date	Period
01/01/2025	All day
24/01/2025	Morning
26/01/2025	Afternoon
27/01/2025	All day
23/02/2025	Afternoon

4. Park closing times are extending and visitors are increasing once again with the longer days and warmer weather. The Park Team have been busy with tasks including turf management and grass cutting, hedge cutting, pruning, and marking out and preparing the cricket square. The square is currently being treated for moss and broadleaf weeds and will be scarified to remove any dead material and thatch before the start of the season. After the Easter holidays, the 400m running track will be marked out for athletics training, school sessions and sports days.
5. City Surveyors Department are currently obtaining quotes from contractors to price up and carry out extensive internal and external repairs to the public toilets and changing

rooms at West Ham Park. The refurbishments will be carried out in the coming months and completed before the start of the school summer holidays.

**Excellence: We maintain the highest environmental, conservation, heritage and horticultural standards.**

6. The Friends of West Ham Park have been working on the vegetable garden beds and digging in manure and mushroom compost to support the growth of vegetables over the coming months. Maintenance work will be carried out on the railway sleepers that form the raised beds later this year, as many of them are now in disrepair.
7. In partnership with the Carbon Removals Project, the Tree Team have been improving soil health around the roots of two declining London plane trees located in the grass area between the office and the leaf dump, to assess benefits of soil work on the health of target trees. Three trees have been identified: two in average health and one tree as a control. Each tree will have two water assessment sensors placed to monitor soil moisture and water balance in the xylem, one sensor in the ground within the rooting area and one sensor attached to the upper canopy. All three trees will have penetrometer compaction testing with soil samples taken before any remedial soil applications. This will then be repeated annually to assess change. One tree will be subject to decompaction utilising a Vogt Geo injector incorporating air and bio char into the soil. One tree will be subject to decompaction utilising a Vogt Geo injector by incorporating air into the soil. One tree will be left as a control with no remedial works undertaken. Between March and May 2025, the sensors will be installed with samples and readings taken before the decompaction is carried out. The Team will then carry out further sampling and readings over the next two summers in the hope of seeing an improvement to the soil's, and trees', health.
8. The Natural Environment Division has commissioned an external consultant to evaluate the potential of biodiversity net gain (BNG) off-setting at Natural Environment sites. In England, BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021), and ensures that development projects result in an overall improvement to biodiversity, either on-site at the development site or off-site. This would create potential opportunities for sites to engage with developers completing projects elsewhere and enter into agreements where biodiversity enhancement projects funded by the developers would gain equivalent BNG credits, enabling the developers to satisfy planning requirements set out in the

Environment Act 2021. The West Ham Park charity has been working in partnership with other City Corporation and specialist consultants to look at external funding options which could assist with increasing biodiversity across the park. The team is looking at options for enhancements of the Park's grasslands where biodiversity improvements could be made and funded via the BNG scheme.

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

9. The Team continues to have regular meetings with the Lawn Tennis Association to discuss, develop and maximise the tennis provision and participation at West Ham Park.
10. Hundreds of people celebrated the start of Eid at a community event on Sunday 30 March in West Ham Park, organised by the Humanitarian and Saving Lives Trust. It was the second large-scale Eid prayer to be held in West Ham Park, with the local Muslim community welcomed to mark this special and spiritual occasion amongst the Park's natural beauty and serenity.

**Community: We work in partnership with our local community and engage visitors and the local community in understanding and caring for the Park.**

11. Hedge planting around the playground was completed earlier this year and is beginning to come into bud and leaf. The majority of the planting was carried out by the Friends of West Ham Park, Park Primary School and the 11th Newham West Scouts. Together they planted 1,500 plants. The area will be mulched with woodchip to suppress the weeds and retain the moisture in the soil. Stock fencing around the hedge will be erected to protect the hedge from dogs and people. The fencing will be removed once the hedge has established over the next two or three years.
12. Following the success of the celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Park in July, the Friends of West Ham Park are planning a community event this summer to mark the anniversary, which will be called ParkFest 2025. The event will include family games, a picnic and more live music acts. The event is being planned by the Friends, with support by the West Ham Park team.

13. The Friends' pollinator shrub planting work will commence in April. The West Ham Park team will be preparing the ground to ensure it is suitable for planting. The areas will be de-turfed and rotovated, and mulch and compost will be added to improve soil quality and water retention. The Friends received the grant from the City Bridge Trust and will be spending the grant amount on pollinator friendly shrubs like buddleia, daphne, wild privet, berberis and common elder. The combination of shrubs will give a longer flowering schedule to provide food for pollinators throughout spring, summer and autumn, and provide much needed habitat in a new section of the Park.

### **Additional relevant matters**

14. A member of the West Ham Park Team has retired as an Operative Ranger. We are recruiting for the vacant position.

15. The Team has purchased some new pieces of equipment to replace some old equipment that was no longer fit for purpose. Additions to the fleet include a hauler with towbar and a high dump ride-on mower, which will help increase efficiency and improve our ecological impact when carrying out operational tasks around the Park.

### **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

#### Financial implications

16. No implications.

#### Resource implications

17. No implications.

#### Legal implications

18. No implications.

#### Risk implications

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

## Equalities implications

20. No implications.

## Climate implications

21. Included within the business plan for 2025-26 are a series of projects which contribute towards achieving the City of London Corporation's Climate Action Strategy, which was launched in October 2020. A key part of the strategy is conserving and enhancing biodiversity alongside reducing carbon emissions.

## Security implications

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

## Conclusion

23. This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to West Ham Park since the last committee meeting on 6 February 2025.

## Author

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