

City of London Corporation Committee Report

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| Committee(s): Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (for information) Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee (for decision) | Dated: 29 April 2025 20 May 2025 |
| Subject: Five-year Business Plan (Hampstead Heath) | Public report: For decision |
| This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties • provides business-enabling functions | |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | Spending is and will be as per approved annual and supplemental budgets |
| If so, how much? | Spending is and will be as per approved annual and supplemental budgets |
| What is the source of Funding? | <u>Multiple</u> -Local Risk -City Surveyor's Department -Capital Funding -Climate Action Strategy -External Funding -Charity income |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department? | Yes, where spending is planned |
| Report of: | Katie Stewart, Executive Director Environment |
| Report author: | Bill LoSasso, Assistant Director (Superintendent), North London Open Spaces |

Summary

This report provides an updated draft of the first five-year business plan for Hampstead Heath. As previously noted to the committees, this mandated new and longer-term planning effort will be refined over the course of the next two years.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee: Review the Hampstead Heath five-year business plan provided at Appendix 1 and provide any comments
- Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee: Review and approve the Hampstead Heath five-year business plan provided at Appendix 1

Main Report

Background

1. As previously reported to the committees, the City Corporation is now developing five-year business plans at its open space charities on a rolling five-year basis. The five-year Business Plan will state the charities' planned workstreams for Hampstead Heath over a five-year period and will show how and when the various workstreams will be resourced and delivered.
2. Business planning for NLOS is complex and has become more complex in recent years due to multiple factors, including NLOS's complex multi-site structure and reporting relationships, recent staff reductions, having a large number of staff who split their time across more than one site, and the practice of workstreams being conceived, funded, and delivered variously by NLOS and other City Corporation departments and initiatives that nevertheless require NLOS resource to deliver (eg, City Surveyor's Department programmes and the Climate Action Strategy).
3. The development of a five-year business plans will support central planning, delivery, and reporting on these numerous workstreams across four sites for our NLOS sub-division, as well as better time management for Officers.
4. The five-year Business Plan will be updated annually to reflect changes in priorities and resources. This review will typically occur annually, but may occur by exception at other times to capitalise on new opportunities or respond to arising circumstances.

5. The five-year Business Plan for Hampstead Heath (Appendix 1) lists proposed prioritised workstreams to deliver on the charitable obligations and ten priorities of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy. It also illustrates how these workstreams further relevant goals of the Corporate Plan and Natural Environment Strategies. The plan sets out the specific priorities and activities for the Heath, and progress against them will be reported.
6. The Hampstead Heath five-year Business Plan is an important planning and communication tool. It allows the charity to articulate its priorities in a resource-constrained environment, and to plan with as much predictability as is feasible what workstreams it believes are reasonably achievable given these resource constraints. Workstreams tentatively planned for years beyond the current year will necessarily be tentative and will be refined as clarity on our year resources and circumstances becomes clearer.
7. In principle, once the workstreams for a given year are established, any new area of proposed work will require consideration to how new resources can be secured or to which existing workstream(s) will need to be paused, ceased, or deferred in order to include anything new in the plan.
8. The five-year Business Plan is not an exhaustive itemised list of NLOS's workstreams. Including an itemised list of the day-to-day "business as usual" activities that take up the majority of Officers' time would be impractical. This "business as usual" work is guided by an Annual Work Plan that guides the day-to-day activities of officers and sets out cyclical tasks that are planned and delivered on an annual or seasonal basis. This includes activities such as litter picking, cleansing, grass mowing, patrols, and the voluminous other critical tasks that are performed regularly as part of the day-to-day running of the Heath.
9. The draft five-year Business Plan currently focuses on 2025-26 and 2026-27. The plan will be further developed over time as greater clarity on future years' resources becomes available, Officers complete the project prioritisation process as needed, and Officers develop estimates on the resourcing needed to deliver sought workstreams.
10. Estimating the resourcing devoted to workstreams, both at Hampstead Heath and across all four of NLOS's open spaces, is complex and will evolve and be refined over time. To illustrate the complexity, these estimates must reflect that fact that while many Officers work exclusively at Hampstead Heath (eg, Rangers working exclusively at Hampstead Heath), other Officers at NLOS work across multiple or all of the open spaces within NLOS's purview.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

11. The Hampstead Heath five-year Business Plan will further the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy Outcomes and Priorities, the Corporate Plan's strategic outcomes, and the four Natural Environment Strategies, as further detailed in this report.

Financial implications

12. Activities in the five-year Business Plan will be planned to meet the existing local risk of Hampstead Heath.

Resource implications

13. Officers managing Hampstead Heath are operating in a resource-constrained environment. The five-year Business Plan will support better alignment of workstreams within available resourcing to better articulate what is and is not possible to be delivered by Officers in any given year.

Legal implications

14. The City Corporation as the charity Trustee is responsible for ensuring that the Hampstead Heath charity fulfils its charitable purpose, which is the "preservation of Hampstead Heath for the recreation and enjoyment of the public". The five-year Business Plan will assist the delivery of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy and provide a clear framework for decision-making, including resource allocation which is in the best interests of the charity, The Plan will support Members of this Committee to exercise their duties responsibly on behalf of the City Corporation.

Risk implications

15. Activities within the business plan are assessed within the Hampstead Heath Risk Register.

Equalities implications

16. The Heath Vision describes an inclusive and safe space that brings people together, where a diversity of people, activities and perspectives are welcomed and respected. The Strategic Outcomes that "The Heath is inclusive and welcoming to a diverse range of visitors" will be furthered by the five-year Business Plan.
17. Activities within the business plan have or will have equalities impact assessments where relevant and appropriate.

Climate implications

18. Several of the activities with the five-year Business Plan are specifically to address climate-related issues.

Security implications

19. Relevant security risks are assessed with the Hampstead Heath Risk Register.

Conclusion

20. A first five-year Business Plan is being developed to prioritise workstreams at Hampstead Heath. The plan lists proposed prioritised workstreams to deliver on the charitable obligations and ten priorities of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy and illustrates how these workstreams further relevant goals of the Corporate Plan and Natural Environment Strategies. The plan allows the charity to articulate its priorities in a resource-constrained environment and agree with confidence the activities that will occur on the Heath in any given year with as much predictability and forward planning as is feasible. In principle, if any new areas of potential work are identified throughout the lifespan of the five-year Business Plan that are not already included in the plan, consideration will need to be given to how new resources can be secured or to which existing workstream(s) will need to be paused, ceased or postponed to accommodate any new work.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Five-year Business Plan for Hampstead Heath

Background Papers

- None

Bill LoSasso

Assistant Director (Superintendent)

North London Open Spaces

Environment Department (Natural Environment Division)

bill.losasso@cityoflondon.gov.uk