

# City of London Corporation Committee Report

<b>Committee(s):</b>  Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	<b>Dated:</b>  20 May 2025
<b>Subject:</b>  Assistant Director's Report (Highgate Wood)	<b>Public report:</b>  For Information
<b>This proposal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes</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>	£0
<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 Department
<b>Report author:</b>	Bill LoSasso, Superintendent, North London Open Spaces

## Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Highgate Wood since the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting on 4 February 2025.

## **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

## **Main Report**

### **Report format**

1. This report is formatted in alignment with the five strategic themes of the Highgate Wood Management Plan. Additional relevant items, if any, are included in an “Additional Relevant Items” section.

### **Sustainable woodland management**

2. Officers are reviewing the existing closure thresholds in Highgate Wood during high winds as part of the review of the Extreme Weather Policy. A paper will be submitted with recommendations in the next committee cycle.

### **Culture & heritage**

3. Designs for the proposed new visitor centre for the Roman Kiln have been developed and are in the process of being costed and consulted on with all parties.

### **Facilities & access**

4. The football season ended the weekend of 19/20 April. The single pitch at the lower part of the field has held up well after a long, wet winter. It has been quite a challenge to keep the pitch playable, but we have only had to cancel two games to date due to waterlogging.
5. The cricket season started on the weekend of 26 April. This season we have the advantage of a new ride-on roller to help with levelling and firming the square to an acceptable standard. The same four teams are scheduled to play again, with the bonus of Metro Blind Cricket Club returning, which draws in a lot of support from the locals and anyone passing through.
6. The English Cricket Board have funded two new cricket practice nets at the north end of the field. These were installed during early March and are currently closed

off to allow the new surfaces to cure. These will be a valuable resource for local schools and the current teams who have booked for this coming cricket season.

7. In February 2025, works were completed in the play area to replace all the damaged and decayed timber sections around the larger items of play equipment in the centre of the playground. Works were completed to replace over 180 square metres of the safety surface in both the main play area and the under-fives section. The largest area requires a new foundation, as the old, rubberised surface has subsided.

## **Community & Education**

### Roman Kiln

8. The 'Firing London's Imagination' education programme has continued to engage young people with the history of the Roman kiln. 529 school-aged students from Haringey schools and neighbouring boroughs with high pupil premium rates have participated in our KS2 programme between September 2024 and March 2025. In the beginning of this year, two local schools took part in our new workshop – KS2 Hands on Archaeology and local Roman history workshop – where students handle Roman artefacts and visit the Roman kiln exhibition in Highgate Wood. In the summer term of 2025, we are continuing our KS1 Roman woodland adventure session which is facilitated by Forest School practitioner Sally Bailey.
9. The successfully piloted Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEAM) structured work experience, which was piloted in July 2024 in collaboration with 'Turning Earth', will be repeated in summer term 2025. This course received excellent feedback from students, exposing them to the range of employment possibilities in the heritage field and further opportunities such as volunteering for the replica kiln firing event.
10. 'Firing London's Imagination' social media platforms have continued to expand, boosted by the Roman kiln activities in September 2024, with increasing reach and engagement with social media content. The social media posts continue to focus on promoting and showcasing work done in the learning and outreach programmes, offering behind-the-scenes progress of the project and providing new followers with an insight into the project's history.

### Volunteers and Conservation work

11. Since 24 October 2024, the Highgate Wood Team hosted 20 Heath Hands volunteer sessions. One of the new staff members of the team at Highgate Wood

is a skilled hedge layer and has led the volunteers on several sessions to help create several living hedge habitats by laying trees growing on the field edge and fringes of conservation areas. Materials were harvested from a coppiced area to create stakes and binders for the hedges. We also worked with the volunteers on other tasks, including laying holly to create enclosures around two large beech trees to protect root zones from foot traffic. Volunteers helped with tasks to reinforce the dead hedging around the bluebell area, cut back bramble to expand the area and repair sections of fencing around the conservation area.

12. Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood will be carrying out a follow-up hedgehog survey in June this year which will feed into Zoological Society London (ZSL) population assessment for hedge hogs.

#### Working with the TreeHouse School

13. TreeHouse School, a local school for people with autism, hosted an Autism Awareness Course in December 2024. Members of staff from Highgate Wood, Parliament Hill, Golders Hill Park, and Parliament Hill Lido attended the training course, which will help teams better understand autism and be better informed to support people with autism when they visit our various sites and facilities. The TreeHouse School bring their students into Highgate Wood regularly for nature walks and these interactions with nature provide important therapy for the students.

#### Forest Schools in Highgate Wood

14. Currently there are two commercial forest school groups operating in Highgate Wood: 1) Into the Woods Outdoor Nursery Ltd, and 2) Wild Learning and Development Ltd. They have both been operating under licence for the last eight years. Both groups have specific areas designated for their activities which are rotated every six months to reduce the ground damage and compaction. Updated commercial licences for Highgate Wood, including for the forest schools, are being issued during April.

#### **Climate resilience**

15. The North London Open Spaces Tree Team has recently taken delivery of new compaction alleviation equipment, funded by the Climate Action Strategy. The Tree Team is currently setting up a trial site in West Ham Park to measure the effects of compaction on individual trees. They will be starting a similar project in Highgate Wood to monitor the health of some of the older standard oaks which are part of the twelve-year oak decline study group. Compaction remains a major concern for many of the older more vulnerable trees in Highgate Wood, and

combining compaction monitoring and the continuing conservation of the ancient woodland through the cyclical creation of enclosed conservation areas will be critical in building resilience going forward.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

Strategic implications

16. No implications.

Financial implications

17. No implications.

Resource implications

18. No implications.

Legal implications

19. No implications.

Risk implications

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

Equalities implications

21. No implications.

Climate implications

22. No implications.

Security implications

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

## **Conclusion**

24. This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Highgate Wood since the last since the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting on 4 February 2025.

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