

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): West Ham Park Committee	Dated: 3 July 2025
Subject: Assistant Director's Report	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes	-Diverse Engaged Communities -Leading Sustainable Environment -Vibrant Thriving Destination -Providing Excellent Services -Flourishing Public Spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Katie Stewart, Executive Director Environment
Report author:	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 1 May 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 addressed under the "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. The warm, dry weather has brought an increase in visitors to the park over the last couple of months, especially during weekends. The main tasks have included grass cutting and preparing the pitches for the grass cricket table, irrigating the beds and borders, weeding and adding organic mulch to the tree pits in the ornamental gardens.
3. Plans are underway to redesign and renew the shrub borders near the iris garden. Various climbing shrubs will be planted in the coming months to make a feature of the increased number of tree stumps, which are in the gardens.

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

4. The Gardening Team has a Level 2 Horticulture Apprentice who will complete her apprenticeship next April. Recruitment is underway to appoint a Level 3 Horticulture Apprentice who will learn and work alongside the Gardening Team, so the gardens continue to thrive and remain a place for quiet contemplation and relaxation for the local community, while providing a learning resource for upcoming open space professionals.
5. Green Flag and Green Heritage judging took place on Tuesday 13 May 2025. The judge was given a tour of the park by the Head of Operations and Parks and the Formal Parks Manager. The judge also met the Friends of West Ham Park and the Learning Team. Children from Park Primary School were planting a native hedgerow at Linden Gardens, and the Tree Team were also carrying out some decompaction work around a London plane tree, as part of the Carbon Removals Project. The Head Gardener also led the judge around the ornamental

gardens highlighting the Dr Fothergill interpretation in the Rose Garden. The official announcement date of the awards is Tuesday 15 July.

6. As reported previously, officers are using new equipment to de-compact soil as part of their approach to tree management. At the last meeting of the Committee, Officers were queried regarding the duration of impact from aeration of soils. The NLOS Tree Team is undertaking a study to determine the impact and duration of soil aeration, as well as the impact to trees. In collaboration with the City of London Corporation's Carbon Removals Project, the NLOS Tree Team will be undertaking an ongoing study of soil moisture, compaction and soil sampling, to aid in the understanding of the impact of environmental conditions that affect tree health at West Ham Park. The core of the study will involve analysing the soil conditions, then improving soil health, around the roots of two London plane trees located in the grass area between the office and the leaf dump to assess the benefits of soil work on the health of targeted trees.
7. Three trees have been identified for the study: two in average health and one in good health as a control. Each tree has had two sensors placed to monitor soil moisture and water balance in the xylem, one in the ground within the rooting area and one attached to the upper canopy. All three trees will have compaction testing with a penetrometer and soil samples taken before any remedial soil applications, this will then be repeated bi-annually to assess change. One tree will be subject to decompaction utilising a Vogt Geo injector incorporating air, compost tea and zeolite into the soil. One tree will be subject to decompaction utilising a Vogt Geo injector incorporating just air and water into the soil. One tree will be left as a control with just water application undertaken.
8. Additionally, targeted trees throughout the park which are in declining health will be targeted for similar soil amelioration work to aid improved rooting health.
9. The timeline for these works is as follows:
 - March 2025 - Sensors installed.
 - March/April 2025 - Penetrometer readings taken, then every two years for comparison.
 - May 2025 - Soil Sampling undertaken, then every two years for comparison.
 - June 2025 - Decompaction with Vogt Geo Injector and applications undertaken.

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.

10. The Team continues to have regular meetings with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to discuss, develop and maximise the tennis provision and participation at West Ham Park. The next meeting has been arranged for the end of June. Padel and pickleball are on the agenda and will be discussed.
11. Pickleball is fast becoming one of the most popular racket sports in the world, as it brings together some of the best elements of tennis, badminton and table tennis, into a fun and exciting game for people of all ages and abilities. Up to four pickleball courts can fit into one tennis court and initial research has indicated that it's easy to set up, so Officers will discuss this sport with the LTA, investigate further and report back.
12. The cricket season is now underway with both mid-week and weekend matches taking place in the park. Both home teams—Amez and Bow Green—have been playing matches since the first week of April.
13. Two free swing boxes were installed at West Ham Park on 10 December 2023. Since their installation, the total number of users is 937, which equates to 4,162 hours of use. The repeat user rate is 72%. The reported improvement in mental health after ten sessions is 5.5%. One of the main reasons for users to engage with the swing boxes was not being able to afford alternative ways of exercising, which demonstrates the importance of these free and accessible facilities to the local community.
14. The London Cycling Festival, organised by London Cycling Campaign and London boroughs, brought together inclusive and family-friendly cycling events across London on 25 May. Newham was at the heart of the celebration, with a guided bike ride and events for residents including free pre-ride bike checks in West Ham Park. The main ride was to and from West Ham Park to Victoria Park and was very successful. It was a great opportunity for local residents to learn about some of the boroughs most cycle-friendly routes.
15. The City Schools Sports Day in the Park takes place on 19 June 2025. It has been organised by the Education Strategy Unit, Department for Community & Children's Services.
16. The London to Southend Bike Ride is 52 miles and will be held on 6 July 2025, starting from West Ham Park in Newham and ending in Priory Park, Southend.

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

17. The Gardening Team has developed a volunteer group of up to seven volunteers, who meet every Tuesday and Thursday, to carry out tasks in the gardens. The lead volunteer is the longest-serving volunteer who consults with the Head Gardener and organises the work for the wider volunteer team.
18. The Friends of West Ham Park organised the first community planting day on 18 May. The pollinator shrub planting took place on the mounds and whilst the numbers were lower than expected, all the planned planting was completed. Before the planting took place, the Park Team de-turfed and rotovated areas and added mulch and compost to improve the soil quality and water retention. Pollinator-friendly shrubs including buddleia, daphne, wild privet, berberis and common elder were planted.
19. Eid Prayer took place again on Friday 6 June in West Ham Park. It was organised by the UK registered charity Humanitarian & Saving Lives Trust. West Ham Park provides local residents of all ages, faiths, and backgrounds to come together to connect and enjoy nature, and this event brings together hundreds of people in a special moment of reflection, unity and joy.
20. Following the success of the 150th anniversary celebrations last July, the Friends of West Ham Park, with support from the Park Team, are organising another community event called 'Park Fest '25'. It will be held on Sunday 13 July 2025 from 1.00pm to 6.00pm. The event will celebrate the Park's 151-year anniversary as well as the Friends of West Ham Park's 20th year. The event will include workshops, family entertainment, sports coaching and activities, food stands and live music on the bandstand.
21. The Friends are organising and leading two public bats walks - on Friday 29 August and Friday 26 September 2025 - which are always very popular with the local community.
22. Newham's Biggest Leaf Pile has been planned for Sunday 16 November. It is the biggest and best community event of the year, but of course the date is dependent on leaf fall.

Additional relevant matters

23. George Irvin's Easter Fun Fair was in the park from 22 April to 6 May. It was a huge success and well attended by the local community. The Summer Fair will run from 21 July to 29 July 2025.

24. The recruitment and selection process is underway for the vacant Operative Ranger position. Business Services are in the process of recruiting a new Support Services Officer, who will support North London Open Spaces. The Officer will be based at West Ham Park but will also work across other sites.

Learning Team Update

25. April and May have been productive for the Natural Environment Learning Team, with over 1,000 primary school participants taking part in the outdoor learning programme. In addition to our regular learning workshops, such as orienteering and habitat exploration, the Team has supported local children to get involved and make a difference in the Park, with activities such as planting and making a hibernaculum.

26. The Learning Team's project for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) continues to provide tailored, long-term nature-based learning experiences for children to explore, play and learn in nature while gaining the wellbeing benefits associated with being in nature. The Learning Team has funding from the City's Cultural and Creative Learning Fund to staff and resource the project. Feedback from schools has been very positive.

27. In addition, the Learning Team youth programme has engaged young people from 'IntoUniversity', a charity supporting young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to attain their aspiration, and 'Ambition, Aspire, Achieve', a charity dedicated to supporting young people in Newham, with a particular focus on those most in need—including those with disabilities or additional needs.

City Surveyor's Update

28. In furtherance of supporting Members' understanding of the structure and ways of working of the City Surveyor's Department (CSD), CSD has provided a summary of its activities below that support West Ham Park, which is grouped into two programmes that support the Park: the Planned Preventive Maintenance & Repairs Programme and the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP).

Planned Preventive Maintenance & Repairs

- a. Planned preventative maintenance and reactive repair work addresses unexpected damage or wear that disrupts normal operations and functionality. This function is delivered by the 'Facilities Management Team' at CSD, which falls under the remit of the City Surveyor's Department's 'Operations Group Director'. This function is not part of the CWP.
- b. CSD's policy is to undertake preventative maintenance on assets, which is maintenance that is carried out at pre-determined intervals or according to prescribed criteria, and which is intended to reduce the probability of failure or the degradation of the functioning of an item. 'Planned Preventative Maintenance' is further defined as maintenance activities that are carried out with forethought, control and records to a pre-determined plan, based on the results of condition surveys. This method aims to avoid or to mitigate the 'consequences of failure' and to minimise maintenance-induced failures and their associated costs. It is based on the criticality of the failure to the organisation and is also known as scheduled maintenance (definition from BS 8210).

Cyclical Works Programme

- c. The sole focus of the CWP is on planned forward maintenance activities (e.g. component replacement and refurbishment) that ensure longevity and efficiency, whilst enhancing the operational estate. This function is delivered by the 'Minor Projects Team', also under the remit of the Operations Group Director.
- d. Members should note that whilst both areas described above are core functions of CSD's responsibility in maintaining the operational portfolio, they are inherently different workstreams.
- e. To inform the cyclical works that are delivered, CSD maintains 'forward maintenance plans', which are made up of cyclical projects relating to building, electrical, mechanical, infrastructure, statutory and heritage items, and also include the periodic engagement of consultants to undertake condition surveys which review and reset the baseline for a given asset's 'forward maintenance plan'.
- f. The needs outlined in these forward maintenance plans inform bids to Resource Allocation Sub-Committee and Finance Committee for funding to support the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP). Input for these bids is also provided by the 'Reactive and Planned Preventive Maintenance' Team. Forward maintenance plans, and thus funding bids, are also

informed by any new needs that arise from recently undertaken capital projects. Each project item in a forward maintenance plan is given a replacement cycle in line with the asset lifecycle, with an associated cost for the planned work.

- g. The next CWP bid will be submitted to Resource Allocation Sub-Committee and Finance Committee in October 2026. Approved funds will then be available from 2027-28. This will coincide with 'Year 4' of the current CWP programme, and any additional funding approved is likely to further increase investment for North London Open Spaces' property portfolio (including West Ham Park) in 'Year 4' and 'Year 5' of the current CWP programme.

29. In addition, colleagues at CSD will be providing an update on delivery of the CWP for inclusion in all future Assistant Director Reports to the Committee, beginning with the update below.

30. The CWP for 2024-25 across NLOS has made progress in its first year. Projects are advancing and significant portions of the budget have already been committed. Despite some initial delays in staff recruitment and minor variances in budget allocations, the CWP programme is on track to meet its objective, with strategic planning and stakeholder engagement efforts having laid a solid foundation for the successful delivery of the programme over the next five years. Some key projects across West Ham Park throughout 'Year 1' of the CWP included works to the vehicle shed and the water play feature filter house, as well as needed works on lodges, seeing a total of £87,000 spent across the portfolio.

31. Members are advised that the City Surveyor has ambitious plans to deliver £976k of works in Year 2 of the current CWP programme at West Ham Park. This will include a refurbishment of the changing room and public toilet facilities, as well as additional needed work to lodges.

32. Members are referred to Appendix 1, which is an overview of Year 1 performance for the City's Estate. From slide six, this includes headlines for NLOS across the course of the programme.

33. In response to a query at the last committee meeting regarding the scope and periodicity of condition surveys performed by the City Surveyor's Department, they report that all assets are scheduled for inspection in the Forward Maintenance Plan every 5-7 years, though previous funding constraints have seen these timelines extended in some cases. Officers are liaising with the City Surveyor's Department to obtain a schedule of surveys for West Ham Park, and

other North London Open Spaces sites (Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park).

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Financial implications

34. No implications.

Resource implications

35. No implications.

Legal implications

36. No implications.

Risk implications

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

Equalities implications

38. No implications.

Climate implications

39. 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

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

Conclusion

41. This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to West Ham Park since the last committee meeting on 1 May 2025.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: City Estates CWP – Year 1 overview

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