

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee	Dated: 17 June 2025 16 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?	£0
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 Department
Report author:	Bill LoSasso, Superintendent, North London Open Spaces

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last meeting of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (29th April 2025) and last meeting of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee (20th May 2025).

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Report format

1. The Assistant Director's Report aligns with the four strategic themes and ten priorities of the Hampstead Heath Management Strategy. Additional matters of interest and importance will be covered in an 'Additional Relevant Matters' section as needed.

We protect and conserve the Heath

Priority 1: A mosaic of natural habitats is maintained and flourishes

2. Spring and summer tasks have begun on the Heath, which includes grass cutting the amenity, fine turf and sports areas. All the cut areas are bordered by long grass to ensure it flourishes and provides an important habitat.
3. The Zoo team have started another busy season of surveying species in Golders Hill Park. They have continued the existing transects for butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies and bumblebees and this year, a new reptile transect has been created in the Dell. Heath Hands volunteers are assisting with these surveys.
4. The three hectares of amenity grassland that were identified in the September 2022 committee report on grassland management have started to develop into more species-rich lowland meadow, following nearly three years of halting mowing operations. We will continue to look for additional areas of amenity grassland that can also be allowed to revert into meadow. The reaction from the public has been very supportive.
5. In the most recent Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee meeting, an update was provided on the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment being undertaken across Natural Environment's portfolio of sites, including Hampstead Heath. The consultant presented a first draft report identifying BNG opportunities and their recommendations to the Natural Environment Division's BNG working group. As previously reported, the report references that Hampstead Heath Extension has potential for wildflower meadow creation, which could then be offered on the BNG market as 30-year, off-site environmental covenants for

developers. The report is being revised following feedback from BNG working group and we will update Members once the revisions have been completed.

6. The Tree Team has been treating a number of heavily compacted areas in Golders Hill Park with a geoinjector unit funded by the Climate Action Strategy Resilience Team. At the recent Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee Walk in Golders Hill Park on 26 April, Members were shown photos of the geoinjector unit, and the Head of Conservation explained how the treatment would help in soil recovery and improve tree health. We are now into the bird nesting season when the Tree Team has to reduce tree work activity, but the soil decompaction work can continue through this period and will have beneficial outcomes for the trees that are treated.
7. The Conservation Team has been preparing the dams and spillways for the six-monthly statutory inspection that took place on 2 May. The ground conditions are much drier this year than previous years and this has made the grass cutting operations on the dam faces easier. There will be a significant degree of coppicing required in the autumn at various locations along both the Highgate and Hampstead pond chains; we will install signage nearer the time to alert the public to the works.

We protect and conserve the Heath

Priority 2: Heritage aspects and landscape character are maintained

8. Structural repair and timber-strengthening works continue to take place on the Hill Garden Pergola, with weekly surveys being carried out. The Belvedere roof repairs have been completed. All the loose and blown plaster has been removed from the Belvedere undercroft and is being patch repaired in preparation for repainting. The contractors have erected bracing timbers for the red brick section of the Pergola, which is now complete along with the pond. The spiral stairs entrance rendering is almost complete and we hope it will be reopened imminently.
9. Works have commenced on replacing the fencing that runs underneath and away from the bridge to the bottom of the Victoria Steps. The Hill Garden shelter is still covered with scaffolding. The contractors have replaced the ceiling, and patch repaired the walls in preparation for a full repaint. The bench is also being restored and revarnished and will return to site once complete.
10. Upcoming works include graffiti removal and repainting the Pergola undercroft walls and ceiling, repairing the railings and handrail adjacent to the herb beds in

the kitchen garden and repairing the damaged and loose brickwork in the kitchen garden. Areas may need to be closed locally whilst remedial works are carried out to ensure the work is not disrupted and visitors are safely diverted elsewhere. Contractors are also working on the bridge and replacing loose balustrade bottles.

11. Officers are preparing an Expression of Interest for a potential grant to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in cooperating with heritage colleagues at the City Corporation. The fundraising consultants will feed into this work.
12. Last year, the Zoo Team let the corridors around the enclosures go wild and sowed some wildflower seeds. After some success last year, they have sown additional seeds this spring. The corridor planting provides additional screening for the animals in the Zoo as well as increasing the habitat and food provision for important pollinator species.

We protect and conserve the Heath

Priority 3: A balance is maintained between visitor activities and the conservation of natural, built and heritage values

13. Free concerts will resume at the bandstand in Golders Hill Park this summer from late May to August. The concerts, which have been well attended and organised events historically, will be on Sundays from 15:00-17:00hrs.

The Heath enriches our lives

Priority 4: Improved physical health, mental health and emotional well-being

14. The football and rugby seasons were busy and the pitches on the Heath Extension were regularly used. The rugby and football teams had their last games of the season on the first weekend of May as they have both been eliminated from the cup competitions. The Golders Hill Park Team took down the goal posts in mid-May.
15. The bowling and croquet seasons began on 12th April and run until 28th September 2025. Both the bowling and croquet clubs are looking forward to growing their membership and will be having open days for members of the public to try the sports this year.
16. The cricket squares have been prepared, and the cricket season is now underway. The first game on Parliament Hill Fields was on 19th April and the

season runs until 21st September 2025. The cricket season on the Heath Extension began on 10th May. Regular maintenance will be carried out on the pitches and squares. Weekly games are being booked in for the coming months.

17. Unfortunately, the final works around the cricket net structure on the Heath Extension were delayed due to suppliers, the delivery of materials and inclement weather conditions. The grounds maintenance work has now been carried out. The entrance has been re-turfed and is being regularly watered; additional fencing has been installed to ensure the area is protected whilst the turf knits together. The new cricket net structure was opened on 24th May 2025.
18. Parliament Hill Athletics Track continues to be well used by many clubs, schools, colleges and universities for athletic meetings, PE sessions, sports days and training sessions, and is very popular since its refurbishment. The summer sports and athletics season has started, and the track is getting booked up for the 2025 athletics season.
19. A grant was received from England Athletics to help purchase a new hammer net at the Parliament Hill Athletics Track, which has now been purchased and installed along with new starting blocks and some new competition hurdles. Work is now underway to gain quotes to refurbish the shot put on the Track.
20. The summer season at the Lido began on 3rd May with extended opening hours; the Parliament Hill Paddling Pool is scheduled to open on 24th May 2025. Pre-booked sessions for the summer start at the Lido and Ponds on 27th May.
21. A lot of work and renovations have been carried out at Parliament Hill Lido and the Ponds. Pre-summer maintenance was carried out at the Lido in March and April. This included repairs to the concrete terraces, refurbishment of the shallow end fountain, repairs to safety surfaces around the slide, internal decorations to the entrance foyer and replacement of pool channel grating. 10 new benches were purchased for customers to sit on poolside, which have been a welcomed addition by swimmers.
22. The Men's Pond main jetty has been repaired and refurbished and the diving board has been reinstated, which had been missed by many of the swimmers. New wooden fencing has been installed along the entrance path to the changing rooms, and this has replaced old, dilapidated wooden fencing.
23. The Ponds Access Project has been completed. The final snagging list is being addressed and should all be completed in May. As part of this project and the

planning condition, bike racks needed to be installed. Five cycle racks have now been installed outside the Men's Pond.

24. Phase two of the maintenance project at the Ladies' Pond was completed on 4 April 2025, which was a six-week project. The Ladies' Pond was closed whilst the works took place, so the Mixed Pond was used for women-only swimming. The work included replacement of internal showers, replacement flooring and tiles in the shower area, replacement flooring in the changing area, refurbishment of the external shower, waterproofing of all shower areas and replacement to structural timber, resurfacing of the entrance path and lower meadow steps, sanding down and repainting of wooden cladding to main changing room building, resurfacing and levelling of disabled access platform, and repairs and refurbishment to the staff area. New wooden fencing has been installed along the entrance path to the pond, replacing old fencing. Alongside this, there was also the installation of eight new cycle racks and adaptations to the existing cycle racks.
25. As part of the City Corporation Climate Champions initiative, a volunteering day was organised by staff at the Ladies' Pond involving staff in conjunction with Heath Hands. It was a huge success and approximately 40 volunteers attended from different teams and departments to carry out various conservation and maintenance tasks around the pond. The Town Clerk, Ian Thomas CBE, and Director of Natural Environment, Emily Brennan, also attended the day, finishing the day with a refreshing swim in the Pond.
26. Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association is celebrating 40 years since its founding this year.
27. The Mixed Pond opened on 12th April 2025 to the public for the summer season and is scheduled to close on 31st October 2025 this season. Refurbishment has also been carried out in the staff kitchen area at the Mixed Pond. New wooden fencing has been installed at the entrance to the Mixed Pond. This included installation of seven new cycle racks.

The Heath is inclusive and welcoming
Priority 5: Increasing social inclusion

28. The Zoo Team hosted colleagues from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama for their away day at the end of March. They were given a tour of the Zoo and completed an enrichment build for the wallabies.

29. A joint event between the Zoo and Learning Teams took place to celebrate 120 years of Golders Hill Park Zoo on Thursday 29th May. Activities were inclusive and welcoming, fun, interactive and educational to engage with visitors. The event was centred around the new outdoor learning space, near to the donkey enclosure.

30. Meetings have been held with Capital Kids Cricket (CKC) to encourage more local schools and children to play cricket and use the facilities at Parliament Hill Fields. Funding applications will be submitted by CKC to support coaches and coaching programmes over the summer months, as well as to support further outreach work. Coaches will visit local primary schools and teach cricket in the summer term to foster interest and develop a junior local cricket club, which will then use Parliament Hill Fields as their home ground.

The Heath is inclusive and welcoming

Priority 6: Diversity and equality

31. The sandpit area at Golders Hill Park remains closed to the public, but as previously noted, the NCIL funding application for £65,000 to Barnet Council was successful. The funding will ensure the sandpit area is completed, the adjoining playground is renovated, access is improved with five pieces of play equipment to be replaced with DDA-compliant play items. It will be inclusive and welcoming and meet play safety standards. Officers are now in the process of progressing the paperwork and appointing an external contractor. It is hoped the work will be completed in the summer. Officers are grateful for this new partnership with Barnet Council and look forward to continuing to work together.

Together we care for the Heath

Priority 7: Increased sense of collective ownership and personal responsibility -and-

Priority 8: Visitor behaviour is pro-environmental

32. The Natural Environment Learning Team has had a successful and productive year on Hampstead Heath, engaging 9,806 school students and 20,582 play participants in 2024-'25. The play numbers are fairly consistent over the last three years, with a small year-on-year increase. School engagement numbers for 2024/25 are lower compared to previous years. This decline is primarily due to limited availability of Casual Education Rangers, who have traditionally helped us increase staffing levels during the busy summer months, enabling us to accommodate more school visits. Additionally, broken central heating in the Education Centre reduced the number of winter bookings, as many schools

prefer to have access to a warm indoor space for lunch after spending the morning outside on the Heath. In response, the Learning Team has reduced our reliance on casual staff and introduced fixed-term contracts for the summer term this year. This shift provides greater Learning Team staffing stability during peak periods of school demand. While we continue to encourage more winter visits, we recognise that increasing our capacity—particularly during the summer term—remains essential to fully meet demand.

Table 1: Hampstead Heath Learning Participation 2022 – 2025

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Schools	10,646	10,706	9,806
Play	19,846	20,345	20,582

33. A recent highlight from the sessions is the progression of the Green Changemakers project at the Adventure Clubhouse. In partnership with young people from the City of London Schools, the project has fostered meaningful connections with inspiring role models from across the Environment Department. Participants have learned to design and implement climate-resilient interventions, empowering them to take action in the face of growing climate anxiety. Among their plans is the creation of a new butterfly bank, a habitat enhancement that supports local biodiversity while building climate awareness. *Green Changemakers* offers young people a pathway to become part of a movement of active hope for the future.

Together we care for the Heath

Priority 10: Responsible management

34. At the time of writing, we are waiting for the Green Flag Award and Green Heritage Award judging date for the Heath, which is typically carried out in May, and the London in Bloom judging date for Golders Hill Park, which is typically carried out in June or July.
35. A lot of identified works were scheduled in the Cyclical Work Programme for Golders Hill Park and the Heath, which will be completed in the coming months and later this year. This includes electrical works and renovations to the staff yard and renovations to the toilet blocks (roof repairs and internal decorations) at Golders Hill Park, which are due to be completed in July 2025. Portaloos will remain available for visitors whilst the toilet blocks are out of action.
36. Replacement fencing works are scheduled to start in May, which includes the repair and replacement of wooden cleft fences and gates at the Ponds, education

areas, Parliament Hill cricket enclosure, and grassy area next to the paddling pool. Resurfacing of the main pathways in Golders Hill Park is scheduled to start in the next few months.

37. Significant repairs and improvements have been made to the playgrounds at Parliament Hill Fields, which includes new equipment (swings sets, multi play and rockers) and refurbishment of the trim trail. The work was completed in May. The recently refurbished Heath Extension playground continues to be very popular with local residents and is regularly used. Officers remain grateful for the support of local residents and associations that made the project possible. Playground signage has been erected at all the playgrounds, which is now consistent across all playgrounds in North London Open Spaces.
38. The new leisure management system planned for the swimming operations continues to be progressed, with technological features and integration being advanced. The project is on track to deliver the new system in early September 2025.
39. The first of two annual visits from the Showmen's Guild took place from 7th to 21st April. As is tradition, the fair operated over a 13-day period on the Heath, with significant footfall over the weekends which included the Easter Bank Holiday. The fairs attract a culturally diverse audience, including many families, and serve as an accessible community day out for people across London.
40. The annual Affordable Art Fair began on 7th May with a charitable opening night and closed on 11th May. The Fair was once again a success, and officers will soon begin conversations with the organisers for 2026.

Additional relevant matters

41. Rudy, one of the ring-tailed lemurs at Golders Hill Park Zoo, sadly passed away in March 2025. Rudy had been unwell, and despite the best efforts of the Zoo team and the vet, her condition continued to deteriorate. It was decided that given her advanced age and clinical symptoms, it was kinder and more ethical to euthanise her. The post-mortem confirmed she had a number of tumours.

Update from City Surveyor's Department

42. Some key projects across NLOS throughout the first year of the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP) include a recently concluded capital project at the Kenwood

Ladies' Pond, which involved an investment of c.£250k to upgrade the existing facilities for both the users and staff. Work is also underway undertaking a large fencing package and numerous drainage works at different locations across the Heath. Earlier in the year, a series of electrical enhancements were delivered at Parliament Hill Lido, allowing for the installation of solar panels which will contribute to City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy (CAS) carbon-saving targets. A package of works renewing the public toilet at Golders Hill Park is also underway to bring the facilities up to current standards.

43. The City Surveyor has ambitious plans to deliver £2.9m value of CWP to NLOS projects in the second year of the programme. This will include works to several lodges, a refurbishment of the Heathfield House staff office and Archway Road complex, and a package of works to the East Heath bothy.

44. Members are advised to refer to Appendix 1, which is an overview of year one's performance for the City's Estate. From slide six, this includes headlines for NLOS across the course of the programme.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

45. This report furthers strategic aims of the updated Hampstead Heath Management Strategy and the Corporate Plan.

Financial implications

46. No implications.

Resource implications

47. No implications.

Legal implications

48. No implications.

Risk implications

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

Equalities implications

50. No implications.

Climate implications

51. Some climate benefits will be delivered as part of the works being managed by the City Surveyors department.

Security implications

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

Conclusion

53. This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last meeting of the respective committees.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: City Surveyor's Department Cyclical Work Programme

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