

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee	Dated: 16 July 2025
Subject: Assistant Director's Report (Highgate Wood)	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 Highgate Wood since the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee meeting on 20 May 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 have been reviewing the closure threshold for Highgate Wood in high wind events, with expectation to submit a report at this meeting of the Committee. As part of that review, and following discussion with the corporate Health and Safety Team, officers have determined that additional work remains to be done on this topic before a report and recommendation can be finalised and brought forward. Officers currently hope to have the report ready for the next meeting of this Committee.
3. The Highgate Wood Team continues its nature recovery work to protect areas of high footfall and compacted soil with dead hedging. These areas will remain enclosed until the soil has recovered and the ground flora has regenerated.
4. The Highgate Wood Team has been surveying the condition of 341 oak trees within the woodland for 15 years. The total oak population of the wood is 1,346, of which 252 are now dead. These dead trees continue to have great nature-conservation value as standing dead wood but require careful management in terms of public safety. The rate of loss within the oak population remains less than one percent. This year there were no additional dead oak trees recorded within the survey areas, but two oak trees were recorded as dead within the wider woodland.

Culture & heritage

5. The proposed rebuilding of the Highgate Wood Education Centre and quotation submitted by the City Surveyor's Department has exceeded the funds available from the National Lottery grant. A meeting was held on the 3rd June to approach an alternative contractor to that offered by the City Surveyor's Department. A

representative from the company that constructed the Education Centre in the mid 1990s, attended the site meeting to review the plans and proposals and will be submitting a quotation within two weeks. Haringey Planning will be approached to advise whether planning consent is required.

6. During May, the Highgate Wood Roman Kiln educational schedule delivered three Roman woodland adventure workshops at Highgate Wood, and one primary school visited the Roman Kiln exhibition in June as part of a local Roman history and archaeology workshop.

Facilities & access

7. The cricket season is now well underway, with the dry weather in May providing good playing conditions. The new ride-on roller is helping to improve the quality of the pitches. The two new cricket practice nets are being used regularly.
8. The City Surveyor's Department is carrying out urgent repairs to a number of sections of perimeter fencing around Highgate Wood. A site meeting took place on the 17th June to identify the sections most urgently requiring repairs.

Community & education

9. Heath Hands weekly volunteer sessions are now closed for the bird nesting season and will resume in the autumn. Heath Hands will be involved in a hedgehog survey conducted in partnership with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), using trail cameras to estimate hedgehog numbers in local areas. The survey starts on 12th June and will take place over two weeks.
10. The Natural Environment Division's Learning Team has hosted ten sessions in Highgate Wood this year focusing on environmental education. Sessions have been well-attended and the Learning Team plans to expand the programme to include the Roman Kiln Project and the planned activities.

Climate resilience and nature conservation

11. ZSL has been awarded a grant towards equipment and staffing costs to support the implementation of hedgehog and wildlife monitoring, and local community engagement in Highgate Wood and Hampstead Heath. This will support data analysis work on Hampstead Heath's existing camera data as well as a new survey of Highgate Wood and nearby Queen's Wood with cameras. This work

will then generate a report published later this year on population density of hedgehogs in the local area and offer insight into how the population has changed since 2017 when hedgehog surveys were first carried out. Heath Hands will be supporting the project.

Corporate & strategic implications

Strategic implications

12. This report furthers strategic aims of the new Highgate Wood Management Plan and the Corporate Plan.

Financial implications

13. No implications.

Resource implications

14. No implications.

Legal implications

15. No implications.

Risk implications

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

Equalities implications

17. No implications.

Climate implications

18. No implications.

Security implications

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

Conclusion

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

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