

## City of London Corporation Committee Report

<b>Committee(s):</b>  Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee  Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee	<b>Dated:</b>  16 September 2025  21 October 2025
<b>Subject:</b>  Assistant Director's Report (Heath)	<b>Public report:</b>  For information
<b>This proposal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes</b></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 Hampstead Heath since the last meeting of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (17 June 2025) and last meeting of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee (16 July 2025). The report has been updated since it was reported to

Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee in September to ensure accuracy and relevance of the report, as considerable time has elapsed since its initial writing.

### **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to:

- Note all paragraphs of 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 are covered in an "Additional Relevant Matters" section if and as needed.

### **We protect and conserve the Heath**

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

2. The Hampstead Heath draft hedgehog report, which is being funded by the City Bridge Foundation, has been received from Zoological Society of London (ZSL). This report provides an evaluation of the local hedgehog population based on data collected dating back to 2018 when the first survey was carried out. The report will describe how the hedgehog population has changed since 2018 and identify future conservation measures to protect this species. A previous report by ZSL was received in 2021 as part of the London Hogwatch Project, following another survey of Hampstead Heath that same year. The final version of the report will be circulated when available later this year.
3. An alder moth caterpillar was found in the Cohen's Field area this week which is a new record for Hampstead Heath and the vicinity. We will be able to add this to our Hampstead Heath moth record which is now estimated to be over 400 species. Officers are also very excited about a sighting of a purple emperor butterfly last week at the Ladies' Bathing Pond jetty. The Heath's Senior Ecologist is now surveying the area to identify possible breeding sites on nearby willow trees, upon which they lay their eggs. There have been several sightings over the years, but they are an elusive species. There is a point near Spaniards Road where males can sometimes be observed flying in the canopy, which is where they find mates.

4. The Conservation Team has commenced their summer grassland management programme, cutting on the Heath Extension and Cohen's Field. The grassland cutting maps have been updated to identify specific plant species or micro habitats that we want to avoid disturbing. 26 common spotted orchids have been recorded on the Heath Extension which is a similar number to 2024. This year the weather conditions are more favourable for the cutting and baling operations, which in damper summer periods have proved problematic.
5. The Conservation Team has acquired a new tractor-mounted cutting deck, which is being utilised to maintain the amenity areas along the Highgate pond chain, the sunbathing meadows at the Model Boating Pond and Men's Pond, and East Heath and the Vale of Health.
6. The Team has also undertaken bramble control in the gorse compartments above the Vale of Health, managed bracken on Sandy Heath, and addressed sapling growth on Cohen's Field, the Heath Extension and South Meadow. Additionally, a follow-up cut was performed on bramble and thistle areas across the Heath that were treated last autumn.
7. The Team has dedicated efforts to removing Himalayan Balsam from stream lines on both the Highgate and Hampstead pond chains. Completing this task prior to seed dispersal is essential for controlling the further spread and establishment of this invasive non-native species.
8. The planning application for the works to remove the Model Boating Pond Island causeway received no objections and has been approved by Historic England Archaeology who have no objection to the proposal. Planning permission is hoped to be received from Camden Council in early October. A contractor has been sourced to do the work and they are currently awaiting confirmation of planning approval to commence the work, which they estimate will take three weeks to complete.

#### Natural Flood Management (NFM) on Hampstead Heath

9. The Conservation Team has installed ten small leaky dams on the Heath Extension and the allotment stream line along the edge of Cohen's Field. The dams are constructed of light brash materials and Heath Hands volunteers were involved in the work. We have also requested that a City Surveyor's contractor install a small number of surface water deflectors along the newly repaired section of pathway next to Hampstead No. 2 Pond at East Heath, funded by City Surveyor's Department.

## **We protect and conserve the Heath**

### **Priority 2: Heritage aspects and landscape character are maintained**

10. The heatwave and warmer weather in June and July resulted in the Heath being very busy. Summer tasks included litter picking, cleaning the toilets and 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.
11. The Conservation Team carried out tree lifting along main pathways and cleared tree arisings following tree failures in South Meadow and the Vale of Health.

### Hill Garden and Pergola

12. Structural repair and timber-strengthening works continue to take place on the Hill Garden and Pergola, with weekly surveys being carried out. The under-croft and mock window painting is complete. The perimeter railings, which border the Kitchen Garden, have been repaired, and the Gardening Team has cleared the foliage and plants that were causing extensive damage to a section of the red brick pergola columns.
13. The Hill Garden shelter has been repaired and repainted. Repairs were carried out to rectify damage caused by water ingress, including a new ceiling. Other works include repairs to handrails, brickwork and masonry. The bench that was removed and refurbished off-site has been reinstalled.
14. Additional funding has been secured to replace the Belvedere Roof. This area 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.
15. A Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the Pergola is planned to be commissioned in the autumn by the Heritage Estate Section (HES) in City Surveyor's Department and will be funded by a £60,000 budget recently secured from the Cyclical Works Programme (CWP).
16. The CMP will provide an in-depth understanding of the Pergola's history, heritage significance, and current issues and opportunities, while proposing a policy framework to guide decision-making. Additionally, it will include a detailed Maintenance Plan, outlining key activities, their recommended frequencies, and the responsible parties to ensure consistent and sustainable care of the Pergola.

17. Expected to be completed by summer 2026, the CMP will be an essential tool for planners, funders, and officers to support informed decision-making, funding strategies and resource prioritisation for the Pergola's long-term care and maintenance.

### **We protect and conserve the Heath**

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

18. The Tree Team has been continuing its cyclical tree inspections of roadside trees at various locations. The team has removed a number of London plane branches affected by Massaria disease along the Gospel Oak fence line, and several dead trees along the northern boundary of Sandy Heath. Additional dead trees have been removed at Golders Hill Park and Gospel Oak. The recent very high temperatures have contributed to a number of branch failures at various locations, including the remaining hybrid black poplar between the Men's Pond and the Highgate No. 1 Pond, and two ash failures on the Heath Extension. We have similar tree failure records in the tree failure database from previous summer heat waves, including the record-breaking temperatures in July 2022, and Officers will carefully manage this issue going forward as climate change progresses.
19. The Tree Team has continued its work managing oak processionary moth (OPM), which now focuses on monitoring high use areas for low OPM nests in trees, and removing those that pose a danger to the public. The team has continued its work recording and monitoring OPM parasitoid species and their impact on the OPM lifecycle and numbers of nests.
20. Work took place at the Downshire Hill entrance, next to the Hive, to install a root barrier to protect a neighbouring property from alleged subsidence caused by two trees belonging to Hampstead Heath. The work was commissioned by the City Corporation's Insurance Team. The installation was completed over a period of two weeks.
21. The Tree Team has started a programme of soil decompaction at Golders Hill Park, focusing on a small group of veteran trees that have highly compacted rooting zones. The areas treated are being cordoned off to allow soil recovery and will then be monitored over the next two to three years.
22. Members of the Tree Team attended a two-day International Biodiversity of Pollards conference at Burnham Beeches on 25 and 26 June, presenting in the field to 200 delegates on the practical aspects of pollard management and associated biodiversity.

23. During August, the Tree Team undertook additional safety reductions on trees at Millfield Lane, Mixed Pond and Keats House. In addition, an annual inspection of Veteran trees that have support systems—trees supported with braces, tethers and propping—was undertaken. All systems are in good order and not needing replacement at this time.
24. During September, the Team created an Arboricultural Impact Assessment on the trees on the island of the model boating pond to identify trees requiring protection during planned construction works on the causeway. Alongside this, the Team undertook tree inspections at Golders Hill Park, and carried out remedial tree works at Golders Hill Park and the Hill Garden, as well as dealing with two summer limb drops from large oak branch failures at South Meadow. On 15 September—a day of predicted 50mph wind gusts—we recorded five tree and branch failures.
25. Planning permission has been granted for new photovoltaic (PV) panels to be installed on the roof of the Lido. This project is due to commence in September/October 2025 and will ensure PV panels are extended across the remaining roof spaces.
26. Officers also confirmed that the City Surveyor's Department has identified sufficient funding to repair the water fountains on Hampstead Heath. In addition, a generous donor who is a member of the Heath & Hampstead Society will be funding one, or potentially two, fountains. Following appropriate due diligence as would occur with any donation, Officers are planning to install an appropriately sized, positioned, and worded acknowledgment on the fountain. This will likely take the form of a plaque. Installation is likely to take place this winter.

### **The Heath enriches our lives**

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

27. The football and rugby season finished on the Heath Extension on 4 May 2025. A survey was carried out to assess the condition of the football pitches on the Heath Extension in December 2024. The report highlighted the scope of renovations needed and made some recommendations. Discussions are now underway with Middlesex Football Association and the local football clubs who use the Heath Extension to improve the football pitches.
28. The cricket season commenced on 10 May and runs until 21 September 2025. Regular maintenance is carried out on the pitches and squares. Weekly games

are being booked and from the end of May to the end of July. Over 60 games of cricket have been played by local cricket clubs at Parliament Hill Fields.

29. The bowling and croquet season runs until 28 September 2025. Both the bowling and croquet clubs have played regular games and held several competition matches. The clubs will be having open days for members of the public to try the sports, and to grow their membership.
30. The tennis courts at Parliament Hill and at Golders Hill Park continue to be well used and busy throughout the summer months, with evenings and weekends fully booked. This summer (May, June and July) saw Parliament Hill tennis courts booked for an average of 2896 hours per month, up from 2628 hours last year, which is approximately a 10% increase. Golders Hill Park tennis courts were booked for 780 hours per month on average over summer, up from 656 hours average last year, which is an 19% increase.
31. 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. The summer sports and athletics season has been successful. The track was booked every weekday from May through to the end of July with school sports days and training sessions, with over 8000 pupils from over 40 different schools participating, including Camden Schools Sports Association.
32. Highgate Harriers hosted the Southern Athletics League Athletics meeting in June, and nearly 300 athletes from six different clubs participated in track and field events. In July, the Highgate Harriers hosted the London 5000m event, which is a club distance event. Nearly 300 athletes participated with over 1000 spectators. On Sunday 20 July, the Highgate Harriers hosted the Middlesex Youth League Athletics Meeting, and over 200 young athletes competed.
33. With warmer weather and heatwaves in June and July, the swimming facilities have been very busy. There has been an increase in the number of swims and income for the first three months of 2025-26, compared to the previous year.
34. A lot of repair work and maintenance was carried out at Parliament Hill Lido and the paddling pools in June. Repairs and maintenance tasks were also carried out on the paddling pool, so it could be opened for the May half-term.

35. The Ponds Accessibility Project has been completed at the Mixed, Ladies' and Men's Ponds. The final snagging list included repairs to the sliding door at the Men's Pond, which has now been completed.

#### Aerators and blue-green algae

36. The Ladies' Pond aeration system has been installed and is working well generally, which helps with water quality and addressing algal blooms. Work is being planned to install new aeration systems at the Men's, Mixed and Hampstead No.2 Ponds.
37. Despite the aeration system, however, the Ladies' Pond has been closed from 27 September to present (6 October – the writing of report) due to a significant blue-green algae bloom. The Ladies' Pond water levels are very low due to three heat waves and limited rainfall, as are the other ponds on both chains, meaning there is no water flowing through the system. This, as well as temperature and nutrient levels, are significantly contributing factors to the blooms – which can and do happen despite a well-functioning aerations system. Once a sufficient amount of rain water starts to flow through the pond system again, the situation will improve. During this time, the aerators will be left running to ensure adequate oxygen levels in the water and prevent fish and amphibian fatalities.
38. The water in the Ladies' Pond was recently tested, and the relevant levels were very high. There has been a slow improvement in the bloom, as measured visually, and Officers will be sending further testing samples for testing. If the results come back below the World Health Organisation's recommended threshold, the pond will be reopened. Given applicable timeframes for testing and review, the earliest that a reopening can occur is Wednesday 8 October. In the meantime, swimming tickets are being honoured at the Mixed Pond and Lido.

#### Ponds access

39. On 16 April 2025 the Supreme Court delivered its judgment in the case of *For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers* [2025] UKSC. The Supreme Court decided that the terms "man", "woman" and "sex" in the Equality Act 2010 refer to a biological man, a biological woman, and biological sex. The Court went on to emphasise that trans people have the separate protected characteristic of gender reassignment under the Equality Act which protects them from unlawful discrimination and harassment.



40. Following this ruling, and in line with other service providers, the City of London Corporation has committed to a careful review of our access policies and will be engaging and consulting with users of the swimming ponds and other stakeholders via a public consultation.
41. Members previously agreed to carry out a consultation exercise on the access arrangements at the bathing ponds following the Supreme Court judgment. A specialist consultation consultant has now been retained to support the City Corporation with this exercise over the Summer/Autumn period. This will ensure that everyone's voice is heard and enable us to make properly informed decisions about the impact of current and potential future arrangements, while meeting our legal duties.
42. We recognise the sensitivity surrounding this debate and the complexities concerning access arrangements at Hampstead Heath's swimming ponds. In considering the way forward, we have taken, and will continue to take, specialist legal advice.
43. Members previously decided that the current access arrangements at the bathing ponds, which has been in place since 2019, should remain unchanged pending the outcome of the consultation exercise and consideration of the results by the appropriate Committees.
44. The following temporary signage has been erected at the Ladies' Pond: "Those who identify as women are welcome to swim at the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond. The Ladies' Pond is open to biological women and trans women with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment under the Equality Act 2010. The City of London is preparing a public consultation on the future admissions policy at the Ladies' Pond." Equivalent signage has been erected at the Men's Pond.
45. As has been widely reported in the media, Sex Matters has now initiated judicial review proceedings against the City Corporation regarding the access arrangements at the Ladies' Pond and the Men's Pond. The claim is being robustly defended with the assistance of leading counsel. The threatened injunction is not currently being sought by Sex Matters, but they have applied for the proceedings to be expedited. Any developments after the time of writing (1 September 2025) will be updated verbally at Committee.

46. Our priority remains to ensure that we provide a safe and respectful environment for everyone.

### **The Heath is inclusive and welcoming**

#### **Priority 5: Increasing social inclusion**

47. Golders Hill Park Zoo celebrated its 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary in May. A joint event between the Zoo and Learning Teams was held during half term, which coincided with BIAZA Love Your Zoo week. A representative from BIAZA attended, as the event featured in their comms. Activities were fun, inclusive and diverse to attract a wide age range of children. The event was well attended, and both teams received a lot of positive feedback.
48. The Golders Hill Park Zoo Team is in the process of recruiting new volunteers, and they are busy hosting summer placements for students. Several veterinary students join the Team each summer through to the end of September.
49. The Lido has taken 15 school bookings in July for their end-of-term school outings, involving 30 children per booking.
50. Dost is a registered charity that offers young refugees and migrants opportunities in London, helping to establish community, equipping them with skills and connections. Dost has liaised with staff at the Lido and visited the outdoor swimming pool twice; 24 young refugees had the opportunity to swim at the Lido at a discounted rate.

### **The Heath is inclusive and welcoming**

#### **Priority 6: Diversity and equality**

51. 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. Officers have met with Barnet Council and progressed the necessary paperwork. Officers are working with Procurement to appoint an external contractor, so the work can commence as quickly as possible. The new sandpit and play equipment will be accessible, inclusive and welcoming and will meet play safety standards. 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 &**

## **Priority 8: Visitor behaviour is pro-environmental**

### Learning Team Update

52. April to July 2025 was a busy and productive time for the Natural Environment Learning Team. The Team facilitates children and young people to connect with nature through active learning in our green spaces, as nature connection in childhood is the foundation for pro-environmental behaviours in adulthood.

Participation included:

- a. 5,274 school students participated in outdoor learning programmes, including orienteering, eco-art and habitats
- b. A total of 8,138 people participated across two play centres
- c. 15 City Corporation secondary school students have participated in a 'Green Changemakers' project at the Adventure Clubhouse, researching, designing and creating a bee and butterfly bank, and collaborating with inspiring role models from the Environmental Resilience Team and Heath Hands
- d. 153 young people participated in the youth programme; groups included Pentland Pupil Referral Unit and the East Africa Collective.

53. Heath Hands has provided an update on their work as a separate report entitled "Heath Hands Activity Update."

## **Together we care for the Heath**

## **Priority 9: People treat the Heath and other visitors with respect**

### Unauthorised party on West Heath

54. As previously reported to this Committee, an unauthorised party took place on West Heath on 14 June 2025, with activity - including set up, the party, and dispersal - occurring from 9.30am to 8.00pm. This was the ninth such event to be organised by Act Up London. While the event itself was promoted online with its details kept secret, City Corporation Officers learned of the intended date in March and worked with the Metropolitan Police to coordinate a response and presence. The Metropolitan Police and Officers attempted to communicate with the organisers in advance. These attempts were ignored but acknowledged on the day of the party when Officers responded.

55. It is estimated that 500 people attended the party in this wooded area of the Heath, which is not a permitted event site under the Heath's event policy. The party resulted in significant health and safety risks - exacerbated by the party's organiser being visibly and significantly intoxicated. Officers experienced verbal

abuse and theft of Officer and security contractor equipment (Constabulary vehicle keys and contractor body camera). Significant litter was left, the Charity lost income due to having to close Jack Straws Car Park, and additional expense to the charity was incurred due to overtime and redeployment costs.

56. To protect the Heath, the public, and Officers, Officers will be seeking an injunction to prohibit future occurrences of this unauthorised party. Additional information will be shared with this Committee in due course.

### West Heath

57. In mid-August, Officers hosted a tour of West Heath followed by a discussion about various challenges and health and safety matters related to this area of the Heath, including the proliferation of its use as a public sex environment - including during daytime hours, the increase in drug use that has occurred, the proliferation of related sexual detritus, and the accompanying abuse that Officers and the public have experienced in recent years. In attendance were NLOS Officers, Officers from Camden Council, and representatives from the National Health Service, Heath & Hampstead Society, Change, Grow, Live – Camden's contractor for sexual health outreach, and the Metropolitan Police Service.
58. The walking tour reviewed the situation on West Heath, including its use as a PSE – including during daytime hours in front of the public and staff, a parallel proliferation in the use of drugs, the proliferation in creation and accumulation of clinical waste (sexual detritus and used needles in the hundreds), and the verbal abuse and threats to officers and members of the public by those using the spaces as a PSE and/or for drug use. The work of City Corporation Officers to date was discussed. The complexity of the situation was acknowledged by all.
59. This was the second stakeholder meeting on this topic and reflected expanded attendance from the initial meeting in May. The Metropolitan Police committed to patrol the public highways where illegal drug use has been observed. Officers will be meeting to determine appropriate next steps and will continue to discuss the situation with stakeholders to continue a partnership-based approach and seek to address these health and safety risk in the most appropriate way possible.
60. Two additional security guards from Parkguard have been stationed at the Lido from 23 May to 14 September 2025 to assist staff with crowd control and anti-social behaviour. A third security guard has been assigned on very busy days,

when temperatures exceed 30 degrees, to assist with control of the Lido borders and illegal entry over the walls and through the cafe.

61. So far this year, Lifeguards and Swimming Stewards have reported 25 incidents at the Lido and Ponds of customers having been abusive or aggressive towards them. Officers continue to report these incidents through appropriate internal channels. Last year, there were 10 officially reported incidents of ASB reported between June and August, ranging from verbal to physical abuse. These reported figures, however, are likely to be lower than the actual number due to underreporting. A new reporting system for all swimming staff has now been put in place making it easier to report any issues, accidents, incidents or near-misses.
62. Several overnight trespassing incidents have occurred at all three Bathing Ponds, including the Lido and Cafe, which have been subject to vandalism and theft. During these break-ins, there is often damage to property, theft, and litter. To date, the swimming staff have been able to ensure that areas are made safe before opening the next morning.
63. Filming has taken place across the Heath, including at the Men's Pond for a feature film. Several regular swimmers from the Men's Pond were used as extras, and the Pond remained open for public swimming during the filming.

## **Together we care for the Heath**

### **Priority 10: Responsible management**

64. Hampstead Heath has retained its Green Flag Award and Green Heritage Award status. Judging for the London in Bloom awards took place on 26 June 2025 in Golders Hill Park and the Hill Garden and Hill Garden Pergola. The results will be announced in autumn of 2025.
65. Golders Hill Park Zoo attained BIAZA (British & Irish Association of Zoos & Aquariums) Accredited status in May for demonstrating world class standards with a mark of "excellence." The Zoo is among the first to be accredited in the new scheme launched by BIAZA. The comprehensive accreditation process and standards go beyond the UK/Ireland's zoo licensing inspection. It recognises the best zoos and aquariums in the country, which demonstrate the best in animal care and work to create a better planet for animals and people.

66. On the 24 May 2025, DEFRA released the new standards of modern zoo practice. The standards must be met to ensure compliance with the Zoo Licensing Act, which covers animal welfare, public safety, conservation and education. These standards will not be enforced until May 2027, giving collections the required time to make the necessary changes. As part of the new standards, DEFRA have reviewed all the risk categories and recategorised some species. A notable change is the recategorization of red deer from a 'Category 2' to a 'Category 1' animal. 'Category 1' animals require firearms and trained personnel to be on site because the contact between the public and any individual animals is likely to cause serious injury or be a serious threat to life, based on hazard and risk of injury, toxin, or disease, irrespective of the age and vulnerability of the visitor. For this reason, Officers will need to relocate the three red deer at Golders Hill Park to another facility.
67. With the new changes to the DEFRA standards of modern zoo practice, this will mean relocation of the red deer and greater focus on maintaining high standards of animal welfare, so a full review is needed of the planned income generating activities.
68. Officers are also reviewing the lemur and the wading bird enclosures at the Zoo. Designs and costs are being obtained from zoo build specialists, as the enclosures need to be aesthetically pleasing to ensure the best possible welfare for the animals, whilst also ensuring visitor experiences are enhanced. This will enable the team to plan and welcome new species into the Zoo in line with the Zoo's Collection Plan.
69. The welfare of the collection is of paramount importance. The wading bird enclosure requires significant remedial work, so it has been agreed to move the nine birds to Birdworld in Surrey. The birds will undergo pre-movement tests to ensure they are in good health, and a professional animal transporter will be used to facilitate the move.
70. A lot of identified works were scheduled in the Cyclical Work Programme for Golders Hill Park and the Heath. This includes drainage works around the Zoo, electrical works, and renovations to the staff yard and buildings. Additional security measures such as CCTV and external lighting have been completed. Repairs and renovations to the paths are planned to start in the autumn.
71. Renovations to the toilet blocks at Golders Hill Park are due to be completed at the end of August. Full renovation works have included extensive roof repairs

and internal decorations as well as repairs to the limited-access disabled toilet. The toilets adjacent to the Zoo and the temporary portaloos in the disabled car park will remain available for visitors until the toilet renovation is complete.

72. The 'limited-access disabled toilet' was already not compliant with governing standards to qualify as accessible due to the physical limitations of the space, but it will remain to be reserved for those with RADAR keys given its near-compliant dimensions. The walls of this toilet have been waterproofed and boarded to provide a base to fix items, which has meant the internal size of the building has now been further reduced. The toilet dimensions are now 1420mm by 1880mm, and compliant dimensions are 1500mm x 2200mm. Suitable signage has been installed to ensure that the nature of the space is appropriately communicated.
73. Routine sampling was carried out at the end of May at the Heath Extension changing rooms, and the results confirmed the presence of Legionella again. Despite having completed a bypass and installing dumping valves previously, the types of showers do not pull water through the shower units; the showers need to be physically pushed on to turnover the water, and this needs to be carried out at least three times a week once the Legionella has been cleared. Disinfections and resampling will continue until the Legionella has been cleared.

### Steward's Huts

74. Swimming Stewards are members of the Swim Team that facilitate access to all four swimming facilities at the point of entrance. This includes checking or granting tickets to swim at the facilities. At the swimming ponds, includes working outside for the entirety of their shift in "stewards' huts." The hut at the Ladies' Pond is a modular, prefabricated structure that has been painted in the same colour as other buildings on the Heath (juniper green) to blend in better with its surroundings. At the Men's Pond and Mixed Pond, Swimming Stewards currently must work out of small wooden structures that were built in-house at NLOS.
75. As previously reported to this Committee, Officers are developing a new Leisure Management System to facilitate modern booking at all swimming facilities on the Heath. The LMS will replace the current systems that are currently in use, which are inefficient, costly, and do not meet current needs. Implementation of the booking system is on track for the start of the 2026 season.
76. New hardware must be purchased and installed to allow Swimming Stewards to operate this new booking system once completed and operational. The hut at

the Ladies' Pond – which was approved for installation in 2022 as part of the Ponds Access Project - can accommodate this new hardware, but the huts at the Men's and Mixed Pond cannot, as they are too small.

77. To accommodate the new hardware, and critically to also ensure that the City Corporation provides a more secure and suitable working environment for our Swimming Stewards, Officers plan to install two additional new steward's huts - one each at the Men's Pond and Mixed Pond - that closely resemble the one that is currently in place at the Ladies' Pond.
78. Like the hut at the Ladies' Pond, the proposed huts are prefabricated and will be painted juniper green to align with other structures on the Heath and improve the aesthetics of the structure and better blend into the landscape. In addition, landscaping and/or trellis with plantings will be installed to ensure they blend in with the Heath landscape. Appendix 2 shows the existing hut and the proposed huts, which are both 2.3m x 1.5m in size. The installation of wooden huts that are watertight, secure, and insulated would be significantly more expensive (c. £46,000) than the existing and planned models (\$6,400) and would likely require a bespoke build. Officers are pursuing necessary processes with Camden Council to install the huts.

#### Cafe remarketing

79. Following consultation with the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee, and as previously reported to this Committee and following approval and instructions from this Committee, the three cafes on the Heath are being remarketed, inviting proposals from all interested parties, including existing operators. As a registered charity, we have an obligation to ensure that we are achieving the best overall outcome for the Hampstead Heath charity itself and our visitors when we lease our spaces commercially, which requires us to competitively remarket the café space in the building.
80. All cafes at North London Open Spaces, including the three on the Heath, are currently operating under tenancies at will, which are not meant to be long-term arrangements, and it has been many years since the cafe offer was holistically reviewed and marketed competitively. This remarketing process will provide greater clarity and long-term security for our café operators and the Heath charity, supporting investment in the sites and enhancing the visitor experience. We are doing this with a specialist agent to promote the sites more widely, reaching beyond our usual channels, and to ensure as many suitable operators



as possible are aware and able to express interest.

81. Officers recognise and value the cafes as hubs of community and gathering places and seek to build upon this. The remarketing is not a purely profit-driven process. Consideration will be given to numerous criteria, including café concept, menu and food offer, environmental management, community and social value, management approach, experience and references, as well as the financial offer and overall strength of the business plan. This approach has been directly informed by the previous process and experience in 2016, and it benefits from the work done following that process to ensure the evaluation reflects several important factors, noted above.
82. The remarketing process began in mid-July and the deadline for bids occurred on 24 September. The remarketing process received a very strong response, and Officers from NLOS and City Surveyor's Department are now reviewing the submissions and conferring with the agent and will prepare a report with recommendations for consultation with Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee and decision of Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee.

### **Additional relevant matters**

83. One of the Zoo apprentices passed his Level 2 Animal Care and Welfare apprenticeship with distinction and will be moving on to his Level 3 Keeper and Aquarist course in the autumn.
84. Recruitment is underway to fill the position of Head Gardener for Golders Hill Park, Hill Garden and Pergola.

### **Events Update**

85. Race for Life (8 June 2025): Race for Life returned to the Heath with a stronger turnout than in previous years. This remains a valued community event that combines fitness, fun and fundraising in the fight against cancer.
86. Run for Your Life (July 2025): We were pleased to partner once again with Jubilee Hall Trust for this inclusive community event. Run for Your Life is a joint effort between the City Corporation, Jubilee Hall Trust and the Royal Free Hospital, promoting health and well-being through participation at all fitness levels. This year marked the first time that proceeds from the event — along with

those from the upcoming September duathlon — will support the Royal Free's new cancer prehab and rehab programme.

87. Kite Flying Festival (22 June 2025): This unique and much-loved annual event, delivered by the Heath & Hampstead Society and supported by Heath Hands, took place once again on Kite Hill. The event attracted significant turnout despite high temperatures. This event remains a highlight in the Heath's annual programme.
88. Survivors Children's Concert (17 May 2025): This celebratory event, showcasing the resilience and creativity of children and young people, occurred in May. Last year's location near the Lido caused operational challenges, and the relocation to the Parliament Hill Bandstand in 2025 proved a more suitable setting that enabled increased attendance and positive feedback.
89. Highgate Harriers 5K (4 July 2025): Highgate Harriers piloted a summer evening 5,000-metre track event aimed at club runners looking for a sociable, high-quality race. Some highlights were the participation of Olympic gold medallist, Alex Yee, and drawing an enthusiastic crowd of nearly 2,000 spectators and runners.
90. Bandstand Concerts (Summer 2025): Despite budget reductions, Officers maintained a vibrant summer programme by inviting bands to perform free concerts on a voluntary basis. Thanks to strong local support, several artists have agreed to play for free, attracting large audiences, including during the Kite Flying Festival Sunday, and the series continued through August which were well attended. Bands have also played at the Parliament Hill bandstand and attracted good numbers. One of the standout moments of the season was the performance by *Dandelion* and involving over 20 young musicians from a wide range of backgrounds. Their vibrant, youth-led performance brought a fresh energy and diverse audience to the bandstand.
91. Summer Fair (August 2025): The Summer Fair was held as part of the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain traditional bank holiday fairs in the Bank Holiday of August 2025. This vibrant community event featured rides, stalls, and entertainment, attracting many visitors. The fair contributed to the local economy and community spirit, with a very positive overall reception. A couple of noise complaints were received but were addressed internally by the Film and Events Manager, ensuring minimal disruption to surrounding areas.
92. Natural Aspect Summer Concert (31 August 2025): The Natural Aspect Summer Concert, organised by the Heath & Hampstead Society in collaboration with the

City of London Corporation, was held on 31 August 2025 at the Parliament Hill Bandstand. The event featured a lineup of live music including:

- Kinobe – chill-out duo
- Peace & Love – ska/reggae/blues/rock fusion band
- Roscoe P Coltrane – high-energy rock & roll
- DJ Dig it Sound System – set between live performances

Additional activities included: circus skills workshops, stilt walkers, the Heath & Hampstead Society stall, and volunteer recruitment for local greening projects. The event attracted over 2,000 attendees, celebrating music, nature, and community engagement on Hampstead Heath and was funded by the Heath & Hampstead Society.

93. Hampstead Heath Duathlon (7 September 2025): The 26th Hampstead Heath Duathlon, affectionately dubbed the "Pondathon", was held on 7 September 2025. Organised by Hampstead RFC, City of London, the Jubilee Hall Trust, and Krono Sport, the event attracted approximately 600 registrations, with a strong turnout on the day. Participants competed in a swim-run format across the Heath's ponds, fostering community engagement and promoting outdoor fitness. The event received positive feedback, and discussions are underway for next year's planning.

94. Orienteering Event (21 September 2025): A successful orienteering event took place on 21 September 2025, attracting around 400 participants. The event was part of the London City Race weekend, enhancing the Heath's profile in the orienteering community. Participants, including many under-12s and international attendees, navigated courses across the Heath's diverse terrains. The event was well received, with excellent weather contributing to its success. The NLOS team provided crucial logistical support, ensuring smooth operations.

95. Filming: Officers continue to host and oversee filming activities on the Heath as a way to generate income. Recent activities include a two-day shoot and a music video shoot. Further opportunities are being explored and entertained where appropriate.

#### Update from City Surveyor's Department

96. In furtherance of supporting Members' understanding of the work being done by the City Surveyor's Department (CSD) on Hampstead Heath, CSD will continue to provide an update on delivery of the Cyclical Works Programme in the Assistant Director reports to the Committee (Appendix 1).

97. 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 (running from 2024-25 to 2029-2030), and any additional funding approved is likely to further increase investment for North London Open Spaces' property portfolio (including Hampstead Heath) in Year 4 and Year 5 of the current CWP programme.

98. Members are advised that the City Surveyor has ambitious plans to deliver c. £2.0m of works in Year 2 (2025-26) of the current CWP programme across Hampstead Heath. This will include works to paths and fencing at various sites, a refurbishment of the Heathfield House complex on Archway Road, and a refurbishment of Kenwood Cottage.

99. In response to queries regarding how projects are prioritised within the CWP, Members are advised that works are prioritised using a structured scoring system aligned with the Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy and the Climate Action Strategy. Projects are assessed based on statutory compliance, health and safety risks, heritage impact, and sustainability. Those under £10,000 or related to statutory inspections are automatically funded, while others are scored and ranked. The process ensures that funding supports the most critical and strategically aligned works across the City Corporation's portfolio.

100. Members should note that the phasing and prioritisation of the CWP remains fluid in accordance with changing priorities, health and safety concerns and operational constraints.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

### Strategic implications

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

### Financial implications

102. Costs for the ponds consultation and specialist advice on this topic are being funded centrally by the City Corporation.

### Resource implications

103. A number of the workstreams mentioned above are new (eg, ponds consultation and cafe remarketing) are more expansive and time consuming than when the 2025-26 business plan was developed, or unanticipated altogether. Reforecasting of the five-year business plan will occur later this year.

#### Legal implications

104. Officers will be seeking an injunction as noted in paragraph 52, which requires a court order. NLOS Officers will liaise with colleagues in the Comptroller & City Solicitor's Department on this matter.
105. Officers continue to take specialist legal advice on the ponds access following the decision of the UK Supreme Court in *For Women Scotland*.

#### Risk implications

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

#### Equalities implications

107. No implications.

#### Climate implications

108. Some climate benefits will be delivered as part of the works being managed by the City Surveyor's Department.

#### Security implications

109. Security implications are monitored and recorded through the Departmental Risk register. Obtaining an injunction as noted in paragraph 52 will improve security on Hampstead Heath.
110. Officers are anticipating additional protests at the ponds during the consultation period. Ensuring the safety of Officers and the public is a top priority, and Officers are planning accordingly.

#### Conclusion

111. 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 Report

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