

City Surveyor's Department

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Dear Dr Hughes

HAMPSTEAD HEATH PONDS PROJECT – CHANGE TO PROJECT TIMETABLE

Although significant progress has been made over the past few months in progressing the Ponds Project on Hampstead Heath, concerns have been recently expressed by members of the stakeholder group and the Chairman & Deputy Chairman of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee. The concerns relate to the amount of time stakeholders are being afforded to consider the technically complex documents presented to them. Currently they feel that sufficient time has not been allocated to the process, this is particularly problematic for those representing wider interests as they need time to garner the views of their constituent members.

The City of London Corporation considers that additional consultation is not inconsistent with the requirement to proceed "with all deliberate speed". Considering the local community and the experiences of other dam projects, meaningful consultation is essential. Failure to undertake sufficient consultation at this stage could result in greater challenges at planning stage leading to a possible longer extension of the current project timescales.

Further to the recent meeting of senior City officers with Mike Woolgar and your discussions with Simon Lee, we are writing to you to provide an update on the progress of the scheme and to also advise you that we feel in the interests of the scheme a proposed change to the project timetable is necessary.

As you are aware Atkins has undertaken detailed work as part of a fundamental review to assess the largest flood that the dams could face – known as the Probable Maximum Flood or PMF - and to check if the dams will withstand it. This fundamental review of storm events and resulting flows through the ponds has been carried out using industry standard methods, based on established guidance from the Department for environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE).

Preliminary results of review

Atkins' work shows flood peaks are generally 30% to 50% lower than those estimated by 2009 Haycock assessment and there will be less water to deal with. However even at these smaller floods the dams will overtop and breaches are possible, with risk to life and property. This means that works will need to be undertaken to make the dams safe. To reduce the risk to life and property downstream some work will need to be done to ensure the dams can pass the PMF safely.

The change in the quantum of water, while positive news, has resulted in a lot of queries from the stakeholder group as they did not fully understand the technical documents presented to them by Atkins and have needed more explanations so they could explain the differences to their respective organisations. Your support in answering stakeholders queries has been most valuable and the recent meeting at your Epsom offices was certainly much appreciated and has helped members of this group better understand the basis of your report. Your offer of further meetings for representatives of the stakeholder group will we are sure be of value.

In addition to this, the proposal to undertake the wider public consultation over the summer holidays period on the preferred option has received negative feedback. In view of the importance of consultation in preparing for planning permission, it is therefore now proposed that the formal public consultation commence in the autumn. Such an approach is likely to mitigate potential challenges to the project during the planning process, reducing the risk of delay this would present.

Atkins is currently undertaking various modelling to identify a short list of options for the City of London Corporation to consider which should form the basis upon which the City of London Corporation will formally consult the Heath Management Committee, Consultative Committee and the wider public as to the 'preferred' option to be taken as the basis of the proposed planning application in May 2014.

City of London Corporation members have now endorsed an extended project timetable, which seeks to address the stakeholders concerns, whilst being extremely mindful of the strategic risk it and yourself carries. The revised timetable provides stakeholders with more time to be engaged in the iterations moving from a Long List of Options to the two or three preferred options. This additional time demonstrates that the design team is undertaking due process, reducing the risk of planning inquiries which would extend the project timescales considerably.

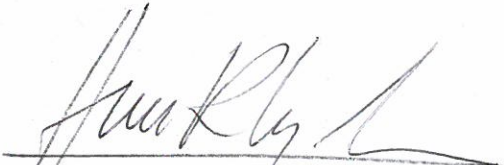
Currently it is anticipated that a three month extension in consultation could potentially extend the whole programme by approximately six months due to seasonal construction and wildlife issues. We would however restate that The City London Corporation is still committed and intent on moving forward to agree a scheme as soon as practically possible to mitigate the risks it is facing, and are endeavoured to proceed with deliberate speed towards the mitigation of this strategic risk to local residents.

We enclose details of the proposed programme with key dates.

	Previous Programme	Updated Programme
Problem Definition		May 2013 – end of June 2013
Atkins undertaking modelling to develop constrained options list to identify a short list of preferred design options.	May 2013	May 2013 – end of July 2013
Dialogue continuing with Health Management Committee and other appropriate Committees / Stakeholders.		May 2013 – end of June 2013
Shortlist of Preferred Design Options presented to CoL for consideration and for formal consultation with the Health Management Committee and other appropriate Committees / Stakeholders.	July 2013	July 2013 – September 2013
Procure and appoint 'preferred' contractor to assist in technical design preparation for 'preferred' option		July 2013 – November 2013
Wider Public Consultation	August 2013 – September 2013	September 2013 – November 2013
Preferred Option agreement by CoL and Health Management Committee and other appropriate Committees / Stakeholders	January 2014	January 2014
Preparation of planning application		February 2014 – April 2014
Submission of Detailed Planning Application to Camden Council	End of February 2014	May 2014
Estimated Determination of Detailed Planning Application	August 2014	November 2014
Place final build order with selected 'preferred' contractor		December 2014
Detailed Design and Preparation for Construction Phase	February – September 2014	January 2015 – March 2015
Commencement of Works on Site (Phasing to be agreed)	October 2014	April 2015
Completion of Works	March 2016	October 2016

We would be grateful if you would formally confirm that you are prepared to support these changes that we feel will enable the scheme to progress effectively and in a timely manner. If indeed you have any particular concerns then please let us know so that we may advise Members accordingly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis', written over a horizontal line.

Huw Lewis
BSc, BArch, MSc, RIBA, MAPM
Interim Director of Construction Projects Group

Cc Mike Woolgar Atkins