

## **HIGHGATE WOOD CONSULTATIVE GROUP**

**Date:** Monday 17 November 2025

**Time:** 12:00 Walk; 13:00 Meeting

**Venue:** Heathfield House, 432 Archway Road, London, N6 4JH

### **ATTENDEES**

<b>Members:</b>	Jason Groves CC (Acting Chairman)	Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee - meeting only
<b>Co-Optees:</b>	Stephanie Beer	Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association
	Therese Gray	Highgate Conservation Area Advisory Committee
	Michael Hammerson	Highgate Society
	Laura Dekker	Friends of Queen's Wood
	Cllr Pippa Connor	London Borough of Haringey - meeting only
<b>Additional:</b>	Karin Oleinikova	Programme Manager, Heath Hands
<b>Officers:</b>	Bill LoSasso	Superintendent & Assistant Director, City of London Corporation
	Emily Brennan	Director, Natural Environment, City Corporation
	Marguerite Jenkin	Interim Finance Transformation Lead, City Corporation
	Jo Hurst	Assistant Director for Charity and Development, City Corporation
	Tom Hoyle	Project Manager, Natural Environment Charities, City Corporation
	Susannah Behr	Head of Development and Partnerships, City Corporation
	Jonathan Meares	Head of Conservation, City Corporation

Declan O'Brien	Ranger Manager, Hampstead Heath and Highgate Wood, City Corporation
Cindy Blaney	Senior Ranger, Highgate Wood, City Corporation
Rob Shakespeare	Head of Heritage and Museums, City Corporation
Helen Evans	PA to the Assistant Director, City Corporation - Minutes

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## **AGENDA**

### **1. Introductions and apologies**

It was noted that the Chairman, Alderman Gregory Jones, and Deputy Chairman, William Upton, were not able to attend. Member Jason Groves chaired the meeting. Apologies were also received from Cllr Scott Emery and Pauline Lobo.

### **2. Minutes of last meeting**

#### **a. Receipt of minutes**

Minutes were received and accepted as the official record of the meeting on 22 April.

#### **b. Actions from previous meeting**

All actions taken from the last meeting would be addressed in the upcoming agenda.

### **3. Assistant Director's Report**

The Assistant Director's report stimulated conversations on the management and conservation of the Wood, the main points being:

- a. BL formally gave thanks to the Highgate Wood Team for their work that went into the Green Flag Award which was achieved this year. This success is a testament to the hard work, commitment and expertise of the Team.
- b. Decline of the trees on site showing signs of stress from the summer's three heatwaves. It was mentioned that regeneration was needed in the Wood.
- c. To ensure the health of the Wood, fencing and dead hedging vulnerable trees for safety will continue, but it will be increasingly difficult to save beech trees.
- d. Information Hut: the Group received an update that the roof will be fixed by the end of March, with longer-term aspirations to renovate the structure, but this will require finding additional funds.
- e. The Superintendent gave an update to the Group on the cafe re-marketing process:
  - i. The decision will be made at Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park management committee in early December. The next step being to create the lease agreement(s) with the successful party.
  - ii. Bill advised that once agreed and signed, that the City Corporation will arrange for the successful applicant(s) to meet with local stakeholders to have a conversation on the future of the cafe and important considerations.
  - iii. Details of the cafe lease agreement(s) cannot be shared or confirmed at this stage. A longer-term lease allows for potential for significant investment in the fabric of the building. There will likely be changes and upgrades to the

- interior of the building, but not a complete redesign, or eradication of its current identity.
- iv. Introduction was made to Susannah Behr, the new Head of Development and Partnerships, who noted that she will be working to get the charities into a strong position for fundraising as the City Corporation builds its approach: making an impact, building communities and transforming spaces.
  - f. It was noted by a member that we need to minimise the risk that charities will be competing for the same donations. It was agreed we would ensure they work in partnership by leaning into each space's strengths.

#### **4. Briefing on the Grant Funding Model (45 - 60 mins)**

Emily Brennan, Jo Hurst, Marguerite Jenkin, and Tom Hoyle gave a presentation on the Natural Environment Charity Review and the Grant-Funding Model. The follow points arose:

- a. Funding will be realistic, pragmatic and flexible, but the principles have not yet been agreed.
- b. The changes will take place on 1 April, but in an evolutionary way rather than a complete change which would incur much higher expense.
- c. There will still be the opportunity to ask for additional funds to support ad hoc maintenance.
- d. The NECR process hopes to be complete within the next two years.
- e. Branding as a charity will need to be fully considered, due to the combination of Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood as one charity for two very separate spaces.
- f. Some members confirmed their support in investing in a CRM system.
- g. JG raised the point that communications and language need to give confidence to potential donors.
- h. It was noted that we need to ensure the cost of this shift to the GFM is funded by City Corporation and not the local charities.
- i. Concern was raised over the potential of being approach being too commercially driven, threatening the conservation of the Wood. Officers confirmed that the sensitivities of the Wood would always be considered and an appropriate balance between conservation and activity would be observed.
- j. On the whole, the Group was excited that Highgate Wood would be able to raise their own funds and keep this locally, and wished to consider the opportunities for the Wood, ensuring this was a balanced approach. City Corporation will need to communicate this effectively to reassure donors that monies raised are kept locally for improvements.

- k. It was suggested that City Corporation could hold walks for the public to educate on the conservation, ecology and management of the spaces at NLOS.
- l. It was mentioned that the City Corporation would consider re-establishing cross-divisional working groups to benefit from expert local knowledge on income generation, tree conservation, etc.

## **5. Heath Hands update on Highgate Wood**

KO presented the report from Heath Hands on their work in Highgate Wood. Key points raised were:

- a. Heath Hands could grow community involvement if they successfully identify additional resources.
- b. It was suggested improvement could be made to help the link between Heath Hands and Highgate Wood volunteer work, as it is not very clear; we need to improve locals' knowledge of how to connect with Heath Hands and get involved.

### **ACTION:**

- KO: to share the details of the Heath Hands signage in Highgate Wood and to share the link with the Group.

## **6. Highgate Wood 2026-27 Business Plan**

BL presented the draft Business Plan for comment, which details upcoming projects, major work streams and budget allocation to help prioritisation and aid long-term planning.

- a. JG queried if the Friends of groups proposal being in 2027-28; if brought forward this could stimulate fundraising at Highgate Wood.
- b. It was noted that wording in the Business Plan needed finessing, such as 'increase diversity of native species', which is not relevant for preserving the unique ecology of Highgate Wood.
- c. A member remarked that there is concern on monetising the green spaces through commercial activities, with the potential to detract from the spaces and harm the ecology.
- d. JG noted that Officers need to develop a relationship with the Met police due to coverage and security of the space. Officers replied that with the Constabulary recruitment, there will be more patrols of the space in the future.
- e. A member suggested that the City Corporation revise and reissue the self-guided walks leaflet in print and online.

## ACTIONS:

- SB - to engage Friends of groups, meeting with high-net-worth locals for support. SB to review and look to bring this forward in the Business Plan.
- BL – to engage with the Met on the policing of Highgate Wood.
- COL – to revise and reissue the self-guided walks leaflet in print and online.

## 7. Any other business

The Group was told of the news that Jonathan Meares will be leaving the City Corporation in January after 18 years. The Group joined in thanking JM and wishing him the best for his retirement.

End of meeting: 14:38

Next meeting date: TBC