

## City of London Corporation Committee Report

<b>Committee(s):</b>  Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (For Information)  Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee (For information)	<b>Dated:</b>  13 January 2026  3 February 2026
<b>Subject:</b>  Assistant Director's Report (Hampstead Heath)	<b>Public report:</b>  For information
<b>This proposal:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes</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 update to committee of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (16 September 2025) and the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee (21 October 2025).

## **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to:

- Note the content of this 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. As of 10 December 2025, Officers have received planning permission and permission to start work for the Model Boating Pond project from Camden Council. The planning application was validated on the 27 May and planning consent was granted on 7 October. Officers are working with specialist contractors to schedule work for early in the new year. The project is expected to take approximately three weeks once work commences.
3. In October and November, the yearly bat box checks on the Heath were undertaken. Whilst only three bats were recorded this year, this was the 10<sup>th</sup> year of monitoring the boxes and 90 bats as well as over 50 bird nests have been recorded during this time. In the form of bat droppings there is also evidence that many more are being used, alongside their use by several invertebrate species. 27 bat boxes are currently monitored across Hampstead Heath.
4. As part of the Climate Action Strategy (CAS), the Conservation Team and Senior Ecologist have installed over a dozen leaky dams across the Heath, which are small scale natural flood management structures that slow down water flow and

help to reduce flood risk and enhance local ecosystems. Decompaction and small water diversion works on Parliament Hill were undertaken in late October to address runoff and flood issues. Initial works were undertaken by the Conservation Team followed by a Heath Hands-led session with volunteers from Camden.

5. Diffused aeration systems have been installed on the Mixed and Men's Bathing Ponds, as well as Hampstead No.2 and the Model Boating Pond. These systems are replacing older systems and will aid with water quality and improve oxygen levels for aquatic life. These systems are due to be operational by mid-December once electrical connections have been upgraded.
6. The Senior Ecologist attended a workshop organised by the Heath & Hampstead Society to host local veterinary practices and share information and ideas on how to reduce pollution from veterinary parasiticides. Officers thank the Heath & Hampstead Society for their support in this area of concern.
7. The Conservation Team has been undertaking hedge laying as part of annual works. Hedge No.1 at Parliament Hill has been laid in a repeat of works carried out in 2009 to maintain the lower hedge as a thick hedgerow habitat for nesting birds.
8. The teams have been carrying out autumn/winter tasks, which includes hedge cutting, cutting back spent flower heads and foliage on some of the perennial plants in the winter borders, leaf clearing, and re-establishing the planting displays. Some spent flower heads have been left to extend the structure and interest of the borders as well as provide excellent visual interest on frosty mornings.

#### Tree Team update

9. During October, the Tree Team responded to a birch tree failure near Spaniard's Road, which fortunately did not cause any damage. A mature *Robinia* stem fell in windy conditions at the edge of the meadow above the Mixed Pond and was cleared from the grass. A large declining poplar tree by Highgate No.1 Pond was further reduced to maintain stability and habitat, while a mature sycamore with basal decay was reduced to a habitat trunk along Cuttings Path. The Team also cleared a fallen willow opposite the Men's Pond and removed a large ash limb near the Millfield toilets. Ahead of path repair works, the oak trees along the Zoo Path were lifted and dead-wooded, and a dead mature birch was removed from the water garden at Golders Hill Park. Various other trees across the site had

dead and hanging branches removed. Tree Risk Zone inspections were carried out at Golders Hill Park, the dams and the play areas.

10. A notable highlight in October was the remeasurement of the UK Champion Wild Service Tree in West Heath for the first time since 2017. It now stands at 28.2 metres, an increase of 1.5 metres, retaining its champion status for the species as the tallest in the UK. The team also hosted a walk with DEFRA along the Hampstead Heath veteran tree trail, discussing management, ecology, and pest and disease updates.
11. In November, the Tree Team lifted trees from the entrance at Gospel Oak to the One O'clock Club to allow contractor access. Dead wood was removed from a large Cappadocian maple along Cuttings Path, and diseased branches were pruned from London planes along the horse ride on the Heath Extension. A large red oak at the top of Lime Avenue was reduced along the main footpath. The Team also received training on the newly acquired DynaTree stability assessment equipment, funded by the Carbon Removals Project. This tool will help inform balanced management decisions, enabling the retention of trees with dysfunction while continuing to provide ecosystem benefits. Tree Risk Zone inspections were undertaken at Sandy Heath, West Heath internal paths, and Lime Avenue. Ecological work included haloing veteran trees at South Meadow and Wildwood Road.
12. From 23 to 29 November, two members of the NLOS Tree Team joined colleagues from Burnham Beeches, Epping Forest, and Spanish arboriculturists on a study and continuing professional development tour in the Basque Country. The team worked on veteran beech pollards originally cut by City Corporation staff in 2007, whose responses were studied in detail in 2009. This collaborative work has informed guidelines for prolonging the life of old pollards and preserving both their heritage and the fragile ecological assemblages they support. The trip provided a rare opportunity for staff to work together, share ideas, and strengthen international collaboration. The City Corporation also signed a concordat with the Ancient Tree Forum to formalise best practice in veteran tree management. This initiative aims to ensure all relevant staff obtain VetCert certification, benefiting the management of these special trees. While some team members already hold VetCert accreditation, others are preparing for it.

### Camden Nature Corridor

13. The Camden Nature Corridor (CNC) is a community-led initiative coordinated by the Heath & Hampstead Society to create a biodiversity corridor from Hampstead

Heath southward through small nature reserves and new housing development into central Camden. The CNC is designated, priority infrastructure into the new Camden Local Plan 2026-2041 and included in the GLA's Local Nature Recovery Network.

14. A key CNC objective is to make Hampstead Heath's biodiversity and habitats more resilient to growing visitor pressure from an anticipated 3000 new homes and new routes to the Heath being developed immediately south of the Parliament Hill area. In so doing, it will also bring health benefits associated with Heath biodiversity to these communities.
15. NLOS has been an active participant in CNC design. One element of this is to improve habitats for biodiversity in the Parliament Hill area, including new hedgerow and scrub planting and swales for wetland creation and water management. This plan is captured in the proposed Parliament Hill Improvement Projects identified for external funding in the Hampstead Heath Five-Year Business Plan (2025).
16. To finance its development, including this work on Hampstead Heath, the CNC will seek grant, CIL, Section 106 and BNG-offset funding. The Society would like to work closely with the City Corporation to secure resources for these improvements in the Parliament Hill area and improve engagement with existing and new communities nearby.

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

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

17. Following Historic England's announcement in November that elements of the Pergola and Hill Garden have been added to the Heritage at Risk Register (HARR), the City Surveyor's Department has commissioned a consultant to produce a conservation management plan, due to be completed by summer 2026. An initial feasibility report has indicated that the restoration of the site via a phased project will require an investment of well over £4m and over 40 months of work.
18. This project represents potential for a significant capital fundraising campaign, and an opportunity to engage local stakeholders and new audiences from the outset in this high-profile project for Hampstead Heath Charity. The aim is to remove the Pergola from the HARR and ensure it will be accessible and enjoyed

by all for generations to come. Officers will develop and share a 'Case for Support', outlining the ambition, expected timeframe, and budget for the project. Potential supporters will be consulted and engaged throughout, including an expression of interest (EOI) to the National Heritage Lottery Fund.

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

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

19. Parkguard security officers were appointed for the Lido from 23 May to 14 September 2025 to assist staff with crowd control and ongoing and increased anti-social behaviour. This support ensured there was an overall reduction in anti-social behaviour compared to previous years and much better crowd control on hot days, and the security presence played a vital role in improving staff safety and customer experience.
20. Planning permission has been granted for new photovoltaic (PV) panels to be installed on the southern and south-western roof space of the Lido. This project will coincide with electrical upgrades to the Lido. Both projects will commence in the new year and be completed before the end of March 2026. It will ensure PV panels are extended across the remaining roof spaces. This project is being delivered by the City Surveyor's Department.
21. Officers have noted an increase in problematic cycling on the Heath, including cycling at excessive speeds on permitted cycle routes, cycling in unpermitted areas, and collisions and near collisions with pedestrians. In response, Officers will be focusing efforts to better promote safe cycling in 2026 and enforce cycling in unpermitted areas. This will involve increased enforcement by the Constabulary, made possible through the addition of three appointed new Constables via the ongoing recruitment effort, targeted and appropriate signage, traffic calming measures that slow cyclists in high-traffic areas while not impeding accessibility for others, and proactive messaging via social media and other forms of media.
22. To address challenges on the Heath regarding the use of Lime and other e-bikes, Officers engaged with Lime Bike in the second half of 2026 to instruct them where cycling is and is not permitted on the Heath, address cycling in unpermitted area, address the use of pedal-assisted Lime bikes at excessive speeds on the Heath, and address an ongoing issue with abandoned Lime bikes on the Heath that takes up Officers time to address. As a result, Lime has agreed the following updates

- a. Lime bike's geofence has been updated to ensure that its pedal-assist feature will only work on permitted cycle routes on the Heath
  - b. Lime bike's pedal-assist feature will only allow for a top speed of 12 mph to be reached, which is aligned with the Heath's cycling policy
  - c. Lime bike's geofence has been updated to disallow users from abandoning bikes on the Heath following a ride
23. Lime bikes will remain able to be used as a normal bicycle, without the pedal-assist option, anywhere on the Heath, just as any bicycle could be used. These new improvements, however, are welcomed by Officers working on the Heath, who report improvements in the experience of Lime bike use on the Heath. Officers are engaging with other e-bike companies in an effort to effectuate similar updates and improvements.

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

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

24. The football and rugby season began on the Heath Extension on 15 September 2025. Three football clubs now use the Heath Extension and play regular games. Only the junior rugby team are now using the Heath Extension due to issues with the changing rooms and on-going detection of Legionella.
25. The changing rooms on the Heath Extension remain closed. They have been disinfected multiple times and tested for Legionella, but without constant use, Legionella remains a high risk. For a trial period, the showers were physically turned on twice a week by the Golders Hill Park team and once a week by a CBRE engineer to carry out a third flush. However, this task was time consuming and costly, and is not a sustainable management approach. It is also not sustainable given the significantly limited use of the changing rooms, which are only used at weekends for 6 months of the year.
26. Officers are investigating how to attract more usage of the pitches and changing rooms, but also need to consider damage to the pitches from overuse and wet conditions, which can lead to injuries and costly repairs.
27. Officers need to fully consider the complexities and the financial and staff resource needed to control Legionella and in determining how to proceed. Officers been presented with several options by the City Surveyor's Department, the costs for which are being developed to further inform decision making, which are:

- Option 1: Decommission the areas that have been testing positive and install filters on the area remaining in service, but this would involve modifying pipework within the building and replacing the filters every 90 days.
- Option 2: Decommission the areas that are testing positive and not proceed with the filters.
- Option 3: Keep the entire changing room operational and complete an additional clean and disinfection and continue to monitor the situation for recurrence of Legionella, which is likely. This option will result in repeating an approach that has already been unsuccessful.
- Option 4: Keep the entire changing room operational, complete an additional clean and disinfection, and install filters to all the changing rooms.
- Option 5: Decommission the entire building.

28. Officers have requested for the City Surveyor's Department to provide the timescales to implement each of the options, the estimated costs, the on-going maintenance/servicing required by teams to maintain and keep the changing rooms operational, as well as the probability of ridding Legionella and the related impact on staff and resources. Decision-making will depend on the information received.

29. The cricket season ran until 21 September 2025 on the Heath Extension. Regular maintenance has been carried out on the pitches and squares, and it was very busy over the summer months. Positive feedback has been received from local clubs about the cricket facilities. Weekly games were also played at Parliament Hill Fields, and the cricket season concluded on 8 September 2025.

30. The bowling and croquet season ran until 28 September 2025. Both the bowling and croquet clubs have played regular games and held several competition matches. The clubs also had open days for members of the public to try the sports, and to grow their membership. End-of-season renovations were carried out to maintain the high quality of the greens.

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. From July to mid-December, over four thousand people have participated in organised training and events at the Athletics Track. This includes over thirty schools, two Camden School Sports Association events plus the usual club training nights and two corporate events. This includes the Highgate Harriers London 5000m open meeting, which is planned to be an annual event,



and the London Youth Games on 8 November in which 2000 competitors participated with a large crowd of spectators.

32. The Gardening Team has been hosting volunteer sessions with Heath Hands at the Hill Garden and Pergola twice a week and in Golders Hill Park twice a week. These sessions provide essential maintenance support to the teams and provide an opportunity for the volunteers to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
33. The Ladies' Pond aeration system has been working well, which helps with water quality and addressing algal blooms. However, the Ladies' Pond was closed due to very high levels of potentially toxic blue-green algae on 27 September. After taking regular testing and following advice from the World Health Organisation, the Pond reopened on 21 October. New aeration systems were installed at the Men's, Mixed and Hampstead No.2 Ponds at the end of November.
34. Several events have been held across the Bathing Ponds. This included the Hampstead Mixed Pond Association's end-of-summer-season celebration on 28 September, which was well attended. Hampstead Heath Winter Swimming Club commenced at the Mixed Pond on 28 October. The Kenwood Ladies' Pond Association celebrated their 40th anniversary on 21 September on the Upper Meadow, which was successful and well attended. The Ladies' Pond also celebrates its 100-year anniversary in 2026.
35. There will be a couple of events held at the Ponds over the festive season. This includes the traditional Christmas Day Lifebuoys' Race, which commences at 11.00 am which is followed by refreshments and festive music provided by the Lifebuoys. The traditional New Year's Day swim will also be held at the Ladies' Pond.

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

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

36. Following an audit of signage on the Heath last year, and alongside the corporate identity review by the City Corporation, Officers are currently prioritising signs for removal, replacement and repair based on their condition. As part of the review, Officers will be proposing designs that 1) highlight the charity status of the organisation 2) are clear and easy to understand 3) are physically robust to endure the weather over time and 4) are in keeping with the natural and built environment of the Heath. We anticipate a phased approach, with signs only replaced at the end of their lifecycle. Given limited funding available, the full replacement of all Heath permanent signage will take multiple years.

37. The Golders Hill Park bandstand hosted five summer concerts including the London Youth Community Band on 6 July, ENJO English Jazz Band on 13 July and London Saxophone Choir on 3 August 2025. The bandstand was also hired out by local residents for birthday parties.

38. Over the summer months, the Zoo Team hosted ten work experience placements for students looking to gain hands on experience. The team also worked with the Learning team and welcomed 120 school children to the Zoo in September, to learn about the Zoo collection.

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

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

39. 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 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.

40. The annual play safety inspections were carried out on all the playgrounds in October 2025 to ensure the play equipment remains safe and accessible and inclusive and welcoming for children of all ages.

41. The Lido took 15 school bookings in July for their end-of-term school outings, involving 30 children per booking. Water Safety Awareness sessions were also provided by Lido lifeguards to two local primary schools over a two-week period in July.

42. 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 liaised with staff at the Lido and attended three afternoon sessions in July, August and September; 25 young refugees from various backgrounds had the opportunity to swim at the Lido. 15 refugees from Western Sahara came in August for their first ever Lido experience.

43. Cold-water swimming classes were offered to NHS workers at Parliament Hill Lido. Sessions took place every Tuesday during July, August and September.

Mental health swims have continued on a monthly basis from July through to December.

44. Parliament Hill Lido continues to be inclusive and welcoming and will be hosting two charity events in early 2026: Crisis Icebreaker charity dip on 7 February and North London Hospice charity dip on 28 February 2026. Parliament Hill Lido User Group (PHLUG) will also hold a Winter Solstice Swim on 20 December, and donations will be made to a local foodbank.

#### Ponds access

45. The public consultation ran for 8 weeks and closed on 25 November. Focus groups were held on the 28 and 29 November. The public consultation received 38,742 responses. Responses and focus group feedback are currently being analysed independently by Tonic, and the report will be available in the new year.
46. Once the results of the consultation exercise have been analysed, Members will be asked to review the findings and make a final decision on the Ponds Access Policy, taking into account our legal and regulatory duties, equality impacts, safeguarding responsibilities, and practical enforcement needs.
47. As Members are aware, Sex Matters subsequently 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 permission hearing for the judicial review took place on 17 December. A decision on permission is expected early in the new year, and Members will be updated verbally at Committee.
48. Our priority remains to ensure that we provide a safe and respectful environment for everyone.

#### **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 (September–November 2025)

49. During autumn 2025, the Natural Environment Learning Team delivered an active programme supporting children and young people to build strong

connections with nature - an essential foundation for lifelong pro-environmental behaviours.

50. Over 1,750 school students took part in outdoor learning sessions such as orienteering, eco-art, and habitat exploration. While many children growing up in areas of economic disadvantage are missing out on out-of-classroom learning experiences, our school programme participants came from boroughs experiencing high levels of child poverty, including Tower Hamlets, Haringey, and Camden. The programme provides access to outdoor experiences that may otherwise be unavailable for these children, along with a boost to wellbeing, nature connection, and confidence to explore outdoors.
51. Over 2,800 children and families engaged across two play centres. With opportunities to play outside being eroded while London's residents have the least amount of greenspaces per person in any region, the centres ensure that more people, regardless of background or circumstance, can play freely in nature and connect with one another.
52. The participation figures for September to November are lower than 24/25 figure. This year, 30 school sessions were cancelled or postponed at short notice, often due to high winds or very cold weather (equivalent to 900 participants, whereas during this period last year only seven sessions were cancelled), and whilst these sessions were rescheduled some dates are pushed back to December or the new year. In addition, there is a crucial barrier for schools: our website does not display our bookings email address, instead it contains a link to click to send us a message. Many school servers block links like this from loading and we know this happens because teachers tell us over the phone or contact us from their home computer, via the website. This reduces the likelihood of a new school choosing us over somewhere they can contact smoothly and efficiently. We understand that there is a policy to use clickable links, and not display an email address, however, this is potentially impacting on our bookings. That said, Q4 are fairly strong, so we should meet our targets. YTD, the play centres have engaged 15,400 participants which is 79% of the 19,500 annual target, and the school programme has engaged 7,024 participants which is 71% of the annual 9,900 target.
53. The youth project worked with groups from pupil referral units and SEND schools, offering tailored programmes that supported confidence-building, wellbeing, and positive nature connection.

54. Wates, a City Corporation building contractor, donated a full day of volunteer labour and all materials to improve the Learning Team Adventure Playground including a new planting area, log circle, and fruit trees. This contribution, valued at £20,000, provided infrastructure that enhances both biodiversity and learning experiences. These improvements build on the new butterfly and bee bank, created through the Young Green Changemakers Project, funded by the City's Cultural and Creative Learning Fund and delivered in partnership with Heath Hands, the Heritage Team, and the Environmental Resilience Team.
55. Together, these initiatives enrich biodiversity while giving young people meaningful opportunities to participate in planting, stewardship, and environmental action - strengthening confidence, agency, and pro-environmental behaviours.

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

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

56. Overnight trespassing continues to be a concern at the Ladies', Mixed and Men's Ponds, particularly during the summer months. People gain unauthorised access, swim out of hours, have BBQs, damage property, and leave significant amounts of debris and waste. This included damage to the wooden rowing boat at the Ladies' Pond. Significant debris was also thrown into the Pond, resulting in a diving ban imposed while lifeguards searched and retrieved items. A full scuba diving search and litter pick of all three bathing ponds is scheduled for spring 2026 and work is being progressed to review security measures, which includes access, CCTV cameras and additional patrols out of hours.

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

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

57. The London in Bloom Award ceremony took place on 20 October at RHS Wisley. Golders Hill Park was awarded a Gold award in the London in Bloom Large Park over 25 acres category. The Hill Garden was awarded a Gold in the Small Park category and the Pergola was awarded a Gold in the Walled Garden category. These awards are a testimony to the care, hard work and dedication of the teams as well as Heath Hands volunteers who maintain and develop Golders Hill Park and the Hill Garden and Pergola.

58. The Gardening Team along with Heath Hands volunteers have been working on the planting area around Tom's Pond in the flower garden at Golders Hill Park. The failing *Buxus sempervirens* hedging and failing roses has been removed. The plans are to redevelop and re-plant this area next year, which will be led by the recently appointed Head Gardener.
59. The welfare of the Zoo collection and their enclosures is of paramount importance. The Eurasian Eagle Owl enclosure had a new roof, and the Zoo Team along with Heath Hands volunteers carried out work to renovate the enclosure. The wading bird enclosure requires significant remedial work, so it was agreed to move the nine birds to Birdworld in Surrey on 03 September. The wading birds have settled-in well and remain in good health. The Zoo Team has screened off this enclosure, whilst work continues on the redevelopment plans for this enclosure.
60. The Zoo Team has conducted over a hundred surveys within Golders Hill Park. This includes butterflies, bumblebees, dragonflies, and damselflies. The new wildlife garden has also been surveyed, and a new reptile transect has been set up. The results will inform maintenance, and responsible management will be carried out to ensure the species and their habitats are enhanced.
61. In October, the Zoo welcomed five male harvest mice to the collection. Information and updates are shared with members of the public through the Zoo's social media channels and newsletters. The Zoo Head Keeper and an apprentice attended a BIAZA Harvest Mouse Workshop to learn about conservation programmes and practice survey techniques.
62. Golders Hill Park Zoo underwent its full Zoo licence renewal inspection on 24 October. The inspection went well, and the inspector was very complementary about the Zoo and its achievements. A few conditions need to be completed in the coming months.
63. The perimeter wall at Parliament Hill Lido needs urgent temporary stabilisation using external wooden props. This is due to subsidence and movement and is being addressed by the City Surveyor's Department whilst a longer-term solution is being discussed. The props are planned for installation in January.
64. There will be extensive work to refurbish the public showers, toilets and changing space at the Men's Pond in early 2026. This work is part of the Cyclical Works Programme and is being led by City Surveyor's Department. The main jetty repairs were completed in November and the diving board will be repaired and reinstated in January 2026.

65. Further maintenance work has been carried out at the Ladies' Pond. This included remedial works to the walls and shower units in the public shower area, and repairs to the flooring and doors. This resulted in the Ladies' Pond being closed for a week, but women-only swimming was transferred to the Mixed Pond during these works from 3 - 9 November.
66. The new leisure management system (LMS) planned for the swimming operations continues to progress, with technological features and integration being advanced. The project is on track to support season ticket holders and pay-as-you-go swimming. Implementation of the booking system is on track for the start of the 2026 season, with its launch in spring. Training has been given to frontline staff to learn how to use the new system. Consultation with the swimming user groups has also been carried out, with regular updates at the Swim Forum meeting held in November 2025. Replacement kiosks for Swimming Stewards are required at the Men's and Mixed Bathing Ponds to accommodate the new hardware that is necessary for the LMS. Planning permission is being sought, with procurement of the kiosks to follow.
67. The City Surveyor's Department has informed Officers that they are projecting a significant overspend for the current financial year on reactive maintenance works, and as a result, spending controls are being put into place through 31 March 2026. This will result in prioritising absolutely necessary tasks and those that are statutorily required, or those that can be funded alternatively, and deprioritising other works. It is hoped that the ongoing investment and improvements being made via the City Surveyor's Department's Cyclical Works Programme will improve the overall state of the estate, thus reducing the need for reactive repairs.
68. Officers have been informed of planning permission that has been granted by Camden Council for the installation of a 13-meter-high telecommunications mast on West Heath Road – just east of Platt's Lane - on land owned by Camden Council jutting into the street and adjacent to the Heath. Officers are conferring with the company on tree works that are being requested to install the masts, and Officers are conferring with Camden Council on the seeming oversight in consultation with the City Corporation on this application.
69. Trenching works at Golders Hill Park for the new electrical ducting around the orchard and from the tennis hut up to the Zoo complex began in mid-November and were completed in early December 2025. The existing cabling wasn't fit for purpose, and this work will ensure a better and safer electrical system.

70. CCTV needs to be installed at the Golders Hill Park Zoo to ensure security and to meet the requirements of the Zoo Licence. The cost is being covered by the City Surveyor's Department, as part of the electrical upgrade work for Golders Hill Park. The poles, which will mount the CCTV cameras, will require planning permission from Barnet Council, as the poles need to be 5 metres above ground.
71. A staff bothy has had a complete refurbishment, and the main staff bothy will be refurbished in the new year.
72. Many of the pathways are being refurbished in Golders Hill Park. The cost is being covered by the City Surveyor's Department. The identified paths are being replaced with tarmac and edging boards making them safer and accessible for visitors. The drains are also being re-aligned near to the cafe towards the Zoo and toilets. This work should be completed by 19 December.
73. Fencing repairs have been completed across the Heath, which has included new wooden double gates to the cricket enclosure and area next to the paddling pool.

#### **Additional relevant matters**

74. One of the Zoo apprentices passed her Level 3 Keeper and Aquarist qualification and will be leaving when her contract ends in March 2026.
75. The Zoo Team is currently recruiting a new apprentice, and 400 applications have been received for this position. The recruitment and selection process is now underway.
76. The Zoo Head Keeper has started his DMZAA qualification (Diploma in the Management of Zoo and Aquarium Animals).
77. There was a successful recruitment for the position of Head Gardener for Golders Hill Park, the Hill Garden and Pergola. The new Head Gardener will be commencing in early January 2026.
78. Recruitment is underway to fill the position of Ranger at Golders Hill Park. Interviews will be taking place in January 2026.



79. Three Constables were successfully recruited, with anticipated start dates in late January or early February. Recruitment will continue for the last remaining vacancy.

80. Recruitment for a Head of Conservation was not successful, unfortunately, and another recruitment campaign is underway to fill this critical post.

#### Remarketing of cafes

81. The remarketing of the cafes on Hampstead Heath has now concluded. The Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee has awarded leases to the three cafes on the Heath to Daisy Green - an independent, family-owned business with 18 locations across London, including a public park. Each location has its own style, feel, and aesthetic. They do not have an identical or homogenous identity or layout. They are not franchises. This commitment to individuality will remain for the cafés on Hampstead Heath, and each location will be uniquely considered based on its surroundings, taking inspiration from the architecture of the buildings, and the local surroundings, personalities and influences, while maintaining familiarity and continuity in the building where appropriate and possible for existing customers.

82. As previously noted to this Committee, each café was marketed as an individual opportunity; the cafés were not collectively marketed as one opportunity for which one submission could be made. Interested parties were required to submit individual submissions that reflected their offer for each individual cafe. This approach was communicated to interested parties, and any submissions that made one single offer for the collective operation of multiple cafes were rejected.

83. The remarketing process was not a profit-driven exercise. In reviewing submissions for the award of new leases, consideration was given to a number of factors, including café concept, menu and food offer, environmental management, community and social value, management approach, and experience and references, as well as the financial offer and overall strength of the business plan. The Charity's commitment to this approach, and its focus on numerous non-financial factors, was proactively communicated via press release and other media communications, the marketing agent's website, the agent's communications with interested parties, and in the marketing materials and submission requirements that were provided to interested parties. It is Officers' understanding that some potential operators that initially expressed interest in this leasing opportunity ultimately opted out of submitting proposals

upon learning of and due to the requirement to submit such detailed information regarding the quality (i.e., non-financial) elements of their offer, underscoring the effectiveness of this communication.

84. The remarketing of the Heath cafes received a strong response. Some prospective operators were interested in the lease at more than one cafe, and they submitted separate submissions as per the requirements of the remarketing exercise.
85. Daisy Green's proposals for each café were tailored to that specific property, and all were deemed reflective of a high-quality offering. Strengths of the offers made by Daisy Green include, but are not limited to: concepts that are unique to each cafe with quality aesthetics and decor - including art and children's programmes; high quality yet accessible menu offerings – including local ingredients and local business patronage; quality affordable menu options at each café that cater to dietary requirements; strong sustainability and environmental credentials, including a recently commissioned report on the company's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance and targets; anticipated B-Corp certification in 2026 – reflecting their commitment to creating a material positive impact on society and the environment through their operations; paying the London Living Wage for all non-under-16 intern staff; strength and variety of existing and proposed-for-the-Heath community and art programmes, charitable activities, and support and fundraising for local charities; strength of operational management and oversight; extended opening hours; and demonstrable experience and success in other and varied high-volume locations. In addition, Daisy Green is committed to retaining existing staff at the cafes, where possible, providing continuity at each location.
86. Daisy Green will also make significant investment in both the cafés and catering operations at each site - both inside and out - including new planting and greenery to further improve the aesthetics and environment of the cafés and improve their integration with the Heath.
87. Officers are now actively progressing the next steps on the transition to a new operator at each cafe, and are liaising with Daisy Green on the provision of an interim food and beverage service on the Heath while the interior fit out of the cafes occurs. In addition, the City Corporation will be completing its own scheduled works to the exterior of the buildings in parallel with the new operator's interior works in early 2026. It is anticipated that all works will be completed by

spring 2026, and the City Corporation is working to minimise any service disruptions during this time. Access to the Heath and its recreation assets will not be affected. Additional information will be shared with this Committee in due course.

88. The City Corporation recognises and values the contribution that the existing operators have made over the years, and while it is appreciated that the result may be disappointing, wishes them well in their other existing and future business endeavours. We remain committed to ensuring that the cafes continue to thrive as welcoming hubs where people can meet and relax and are focussed on supporting a smooth transition and a positive future for these important community assets.

#### Events update

89. Hampstead Heath Duathlon – 7 September 2025: The 26th Hampstead Heath Duathlon – affectionately known as the “Pondathon” – was another outstanding success. Delivered in partnership with Hampstead Rugby Football Club, the City of London, and the Jubilee Hall Trust, the event continues to grow in profile and remains one of the most cherished community sporting occasions on the Heath. Hundreds took part, and the event was inclusive, fun, and welcoming to all abilities.
90. London Youth Games – 8 November 2025: One of the highlights of our calendar, the London Youth Games is all about participation, energy, and fostering a lasting culture of sport and community. This year we welcomed over 2,000 youth runners from 32 boroughs, with Parliament Hill once again at the heart of London grassroots athletics. These races also provide perspective: many future elite athletes begin here. Mo Farah, among others, first competed at the Youth Games at Parliament Hill. Following the youth races, the London Senior Cross Country Championships ran successfully, attracting over 600 men and 400 women – one of the best-attended editions in recent years.
91. Officers are in discussions about bringing back our second major cross-country event: the International London Cross Country on the 7 February 2026. We hosted this event successfully in 2023 to great acclaim, marking the first international competition on the Heath. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, showcasing both the iconic course and the professionalism of our operational delivery. Reintroducing the International London Cross Country would reinforce

the Heath's position as one of the country's premier cross-country venues, with national and international visibility.

92. John Parum's Christmas Fayre – 20 November-18 December: This year, the fayre has been scaled down to a small children's event with the accompanying Christmas tree retail. This approach balances community enjoyment with responsible winter site management.

93. Officers continue to host and oversee filming on the Heath as a means of generating income in a balanced and managed way. Recent activity included a two-day location shoot and a music video shoot, and in December we will act as a film unit base. This provides revenue during traditionally quieter months, and further opportunities are being explored where appropriate.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

### Strategic implications

94. This report furthers strategic aims of the updated Hampstead Heath Management Strategy and the City Corporation's Corporate Plan.

### Financial implications

95. Additional costs will be borne for some of the work in the report, eg, engaging with planning consultants.

### Resource implications

96. A number of the workstreams mentioned above are new or more expansive and time consuming than when the 2025-26 business plan was developed. The business plan will be monitored to ensure that there is alignment with work volume and Officer time and capacity.

### Legal implications

97. No implications.

### Risk implications

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

Equalities implications

99. No implications.

Climate implications

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

Security implications

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

## **Conclusion**

102. This report provides Members with an update on matters relating to Hampstead Heath since the last respective meetings of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee and Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park Committee.

## **Bill LoSasso**

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