

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Park	Dated: 3 February 2026
Subject: Five-year Business Plan (Highgate Wood)	Public report: For decision
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes • provides statutory duties • provides business-enabling functions 	
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Spending is and will be as per approved annual and supplemental budgets
If so, how much?	Spending is and will be as per approved annual and supplemental budgets
What is the source of Funding?	<u>Multiple</u> -Local Risk -City Surveyor's Department -Capital Funding -Climate Action Strategy -External Funding -Charity income
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes, where spending is planned
Report of:	Katie Stewart, Executive Director Environment
Report author:	Bill LoSasso, Assistant Director (Superintendent), North London Open Spaces

Summary

This report provides an updated draft of the first five-year Business Plan for Highgate Wood. As previously noted to this Committee, this mandated new and longer-term planning effort will be refined over the course of the next two years.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Review and approve the Highgate Wood five-year business plan provided at Appendix 1

Main Report

Background

1. As previously reported to the committees, the City of London Corporation is now developing five-year Business Plans at its Natural Environment Charities on a rolling five-year basis. The five-year Business Plan will state the Charity's planned workstreams for Highgate Wood over a five-year period and will show how and when the various workstreams will be resourced and delivered.
2. Business planning for NLOS is complex and has become increasingly so in recent years due to multiple factors, including NLOS's complex multi-site structure and reporting relationships, recent staff reductions, having a large number of staff who split their time across more than one site, and the practice of workstreams being conceived, funded, and delivered variously by NLOS and other City Corporation departments and initiatives that nevertheless require NLOS resource to deliver (e.g. City Surveyor's Department programmes and the Climate Action Strategy).
3. The development of a five-year Business Plan will support central planning, delivery, and reporting on these numerous workstreams across four sites for our NLOS sub-division, as well as better time management for Officers.
4. The five-year Business Plan will be updated annually to reflect changes in priorities and resources. This review will typically occur annually but may occur by exception at other times to capitalise on new opportunities or respond to arising circumstances.
5. The five-year Business Plan for Highgate Wood lists proposed workstreams to deliver on the charitable obligations and strategic themes of the Highgate Wood Management Plan. It also illustrates how these workstreams further relevant goals of the Corporate Plan and Natural Environment Strategies. The plan sets out the specific priorities and activities for Highgate Wood, and progress against them will be reported.

6. The five-year Business Plan is an important planning and communication tool. It allows the Charity to articulate its priorities in a resource-constrained environment, and to plan with as much predictability as is feasible what workstreams it believes are reasonably achievable given these resource constraints. Workstreams planned for years beyond the current year will necessarily be tentative and will be refined as clarity on our year resources and circumstances becomes clearer.
7. In principle, once the workstreams for a given year are established, any new area of proposed work will require consideration to how new resources can be secured or to which existing workstream(s) will need to be paused, ceased, or deferred in order to include anything new in the plan.
8. The five-year Business Plan is not an exhaustive itemised list of NLOS's workstreams. Including an itemised list of the day-to-day "business as usual" activities that take up the majority of Officers' time would be impractical. This "business as usual" work is guided by an Annual Work Plan that guides the day-to-day activities of officers and sets out cyclical tasks that are planned and delivered on an annual or seasonal basis. This includes activities such as litter picking, cleansing, grass mowing, patrols, and the voluminous other critical tasks that are performed regularly as part of the day-to-day running of Highgate Wood.
9. This five-year Business Plan currently focuses on 2026-27 and 2027-28. The plan will be further developed over time as greater clarity on future years' resources becomes available, Officers complete the project prioritisation process as needed, and Officers develop estimates on the resourcing needed to deliver sought workstreams.
10. Estimating the resourcing devoted to workstreams, both at Highgate Wood and across all four of NLOS's open spaces, is complex and will evolve and be refined over time. To illustrate the complexity, these estimates must reflect that fact that while many Officers work exclusively at Highgate Wood (e.g., Rangers working exclusively at Highgate Wood), other Officers at NLOS work across multiple or all of the open spaces within NLOS's purview.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

11. The Highgate Wood five-year Business Plan will further the Highgate Wood Management Plan, the Corporate Plan's strategic outcomes, and the four Natural Environment Strategies, as further detailed in this report.

Financial implications

12. Activities in the five-year Business Plan will be planned to meet the existing local risk of Highgate Wood.

Resource implications

13. Officers managing Highgate Wood are operating in a resource-constrained environment. The five-year Business Plan will support better alignment of workstreams within available resourcing to better articulate what is and is not possible to be delivered by Officers in any given year.

Legal implications

14. The City Corporation as the charity Trustee is responsible for ensuring that the Highgate Wood charity fulfils its charitable purpose, which is: "The preservation in perpetuity by the Corporation of London, of the open spaces known as Highgate Wood, Highgate and Queen's Park, Kilburn as public parks or open spaces, for the perpetual use thereof by the public for exercise and recreation." The five-year Business Plan will assist the delivery of the Highgate Wood Management Plan and provide a clear framework for decision-making, including resource allocation which is in the best interests of the charity. The Plan will support Members of this Committee to exercise their duties responsibly on behalf of the City Corporation.

Risk implications

15. Activities within the Business Plan are assessed within the Highgate Wood Risk Register.

Equalities implications

16. The Highgate Wood Management Plan strategic themes are committed to increased engagement, diversity, and accessibility, which the five-year Business Plan will support delivery of. Activities within the Business Plan have or will have equalities impact assessments where relevant and appropriate.

Climate implications

17. Several of the activities within the five-year Business Plan are specifically to address climate-related issues.

Security implications

18. Relevant security risks are assessed with the Highgate Wood Risk Register.

Conclusion

19. The five-year Business Plan is being developed to prioritise workstreams at Highgate Wood. This Plan will be further developed by Officers over time. The plan lists proposed prioritised workstreams to deliver on the strategic themes of the Highgate Wood Management Plan and illustrates how these workstreams further relevant goals of the Corporate Plan and Natural Environment Strategies. The plan allows the charity to articulate its priorities for Highgate Wood in a resource-constrained environment and agree with confidence the activities that will occur in Highgate Wood in any given year with as much predictability and forward planning as is feasible. In principle, if any new areas of potential work are identified throughout the lifespan of the five-year Business Plan that are not already included in the plan, consideration will need to be given to how new resources can be secured or to which existing workstream(s) will need to be paused, ceased or postponed to accommodate any new work.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Five-year Business Plan for Highgate Wood

Background Papers

- None

Bill LoSasso

Assistant Director (Superintendent)
North London Open Spaces
Environment Department (Natural Environment Division)
bill.losasso@cityoflondon.gov.uk