

# Hampstead Heath Ponds Project Communications and Engagement Strategy



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## Background to the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project

Close to the centre of London, Hampstead Heath is one of the city's most popular open spaces, attracting in excess of 7 million visits per annum. On a busy day over 40,000 visitors enjoy the wealth of facilities that include a zoo, an athletics track, an education centre, extensive children's facilities, three swimming ponds and a Lido.

Hampstead Heath is not a public park such as Regent's Park or Finsbury Park, both of which were designed and intended to have a more formal or garden-like appearance. Neither, as a whole, can it be compared with the designed landscapes that are so familiar through the influence of Capability Brown. It is better compared with a National Park, in that it has a defined area but boasts a mosaic of habitats, including woodland, grassland, scrub and open water.

There are four chains of ponds. To the south are the Hampstead and Highgate valleys that have been dammed to create the Hampstead and Highgate ponds, both valleys eventually joining to feed the River Fleet. To the north there is the Golders Hill Park chain, which has been impounded at the lower end to create ponds in the designed landscape of the former Golders Hill Mansion, and the Heath Extension chain; both eventually join the River Brent.

### Management of Hampstead Heath

The foundation legislation, the Hampstead Heath Act 1871, brought the Heath into public ownership with the following obligations:

- 'Forever to keep the Heath open, unenclosed, unbuilt upon and by all lawful means to prevent, resist and abate all encroachment on the Heath and attempted encroachment and to protect the Heath and preserve it as an open space
- At all times to preserve as far as may be the natural aspect of the Heath and to that end to protect the turf, gorse, heather, timber and other trees, scrubs and brushwood thereon
- Not to sell, lease, grant or in any manner dispose of any part of the Heath
- To drain, level and improve the Heath, as far only as may be from time to time as requisite, with a view to its use for purposes of health and unrestricted exercise and recreation.'

The City Corporation took over title ownership and the responsibility for the management and protection of Hampstead Heath in 1989, and for making it available as open space.

Under the London Government Reorganisation (Hampstead Heath) Order 1989, two trust funds were established and two statutory committees created:

- The Management Committee is the committee which is responsible for the implementation of policies and programmes of work in relation to the Heath and directs the staff in regard to their management.
- The Consultative Committee makes representations to the Management Committee about any matter which affects or is likely to affect the Heath. It is chaired by the Chairman of the Management Committee, meets at least three times a year, and undertakes a regular programme of visits to the Heath.

The amount spent maintaining the Heath is £6.2 million pounds annually.

### **The Hampstead Heath Ponds Project**

The City as the owner/undertaker has responsibility for the pond dams. They commissioned a review of the hydrology and hydraulics of the structures to determine their compliance both with the Reservoir Act (1975), and the emerging Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The 2010 Act will modify the approach to assessment of flooding risk in the case of cascades of reservoirs as seen on the Heath.

In 2009 the review found that the dams on the Hampstead Heath ponds, that are subject to current Reservoirs Act legislation (Model Boating Pond, Highgate Men's Bathing Pond and Hampstead No.1 Pond) were classified as high risk structures, which in the event of failure would present a substantial risk to downstream properties and endanger lives.

The purpose of the Project is to safeguard the integrity of the dam structures in the face of extreme flood events, so as not to exacerbate the effect of flooding on the downstream residents, whilst at the same time safeguarding the landscape and natural beauty of Hampstead Heath. The work will take place on the Hampstead chain of ponds and the Highgate chain.

In addition three of the Heath ponds, the Mixed Pond in the Hampstead chain and the Highgate Men's and Kenwood Ladies Ponds in the Highgate chain, are designated inland bathing waters by DEFRA and need to comply with the EU Bathing Waters Directive of 2006. Consequently a further aim of the scheme was to investigate measures to improve water quality.

A design team, led by Atkins, was appointed by the city in 2012 and carried out a fundamental review of the hydrology of the site. They are now working with the City and stakeholders to seek a common understanding of the base situation and where the balance of risk lies. Building on this, possible solutions will be proposed, taking full account of the views and objectives of the various stakeholder groups who represent the local community of Heath neighbours and users.

### **Approach to the Project**

The City of London Corporation is determined that the project causes the least possible disruption to the Heath and protects the valued Heath landscapes, at the same time as safeguarding the communities who live around its borders and beyond to the necessary legal standards. Conserving the wildlife and the need for a cost effective solution are two other essential elements.

The project will conform to both the City's Vision for Hampstead Heath and the key objectives set out in the Hampstead Heath Management Plan.

## **Project Objectives**

Given the importance of the Project setting of Hampstead Heath, appropriate and sympathetic design is crucial and the following objectives have been identified for the project:

- Compliance with the Hampstead Heath Act 1871 foundation legislation including clauses relating to the natural aspect and state of the Heath;
- Compliance with the current and emerging reservoir legislation and the need to meet public safety requirements;
- An environmental led design outcome that integrates the engineering works into the landscape;
- The improvement of water quality and aquatic ecology reducing the occasional non-compliance with the EU Water Bathing Directive of 2006;
- The protection of features that contribute to the setting and potential opportunities to enhance the landscape;
- A sustainable approach that ensures the long term enjoyment of the Heath;
- Use as far as is practical of materials from sustainable resources;
- Employ bioengineering best practice and where practicable innovative methods and products;
- Compliance with relevant planning policies

### **The Importance of Communication and Engagement**

To achieve this balanced approach the support of the key stakeholders who are proactively involved in any proposed changes to the Heath, as well as the wider public, will be essential. Consequently this communication and engagement plan is central to the success of the project.

With this size of project, a certain amount of flexibility is required in the consultation and design phase however the City must proceed with the project and keep to an agreed timetable. This is set out in the final section on page 12.

The City of London aims to complete the project by 2017.

## Overview of the Communication and Engagement Plan

Effective communication and involvement is central to the success of the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project, both because of the importance of Hampstead Heath environmentally and historically and also because of the many stakeholders, from the local community through special interest groups, to the statutory agencies who are all understandably fiercely protective of the Heath.

Not only is it essential to ensure that anyone interested in the project has an opportunity to be involved and influence proposals, it is also important to be clear and open about the project, why it is necessary and its scope. It is also important to manage communications in the public domain positively and effectively.

For these reasons the communication and engagement plan has been developed to guide activities through all stages of the project. It sets out who will be engaged during the project, why, how and who by, where they will be engaged and when they will be involved. It has been designed to deliver a range of important outcomes, including:

- Inform and educate stakeholders, staff, residents and Heath users on the need and objectives for the project. Ensure these key audiences are kept informed and are provided with information and understanding of the key issues as and when required.
- Ensure communication channels with the stakeholders/residents are open; that they have sufficient information to understand the reason behind the project and are kept informed as to how they can become involved in the process. Update them on how their views/contributions are making a difference to the project.
- Ensure the wider public understand why the project is required and the benefits that will be derived, including educational benefits.
- Ensure that any concern or request for information is appropriately addressed.
- Ensure the press and media are informed and educated to promote balanced and accurate coverage. Provide regular updates and briefings and access to supporting information where possible, including any graphics, maps, photos and illustrations which may be of use.
- Ensure effects of the works are communicated to stakeholders, any interested party and the public throughout design and construction
- Seek views and feedback from Heath users throughout design and construction, ensuring all affected groups are able to see and comment on the proposals, temporary works and potential effects during construction.
- Facilitate communication using a range of techniques designed to reach and appeal to the various groups such as websites, media coverage, social media, e-newsletter, leaflets, posters, exhibitions, workshops and surveys.
- Keep a detailed log of all meetings, communications, responses and decisions made and provide feedback both internally to those involved with the project and externally to Stakeholders, any interested parties and the general public.
- Ensure views are incorporated into designs if possible and appropriate with feedback to involved groups to acknowledge their input.

## **General Principles**

Communication and engagement for a project of this kind need to be as participative as possible, trying to reach and involve everyone who will be affected by, might think they will be affected by, have an interest in, something to contribute to, or can influence the project.

This can include groups and individuals from the stakeholder groups, the wider community, including traditionally hard-to-reach groups, staff, relevant national and local special interest, client and consultant teams, statutory consultees, local, regional and national government authorities and agencies and politicians.

The key communication principles are:

- Open, honest and transparent
- Listening, understanding and being responsive
- Educational, timely and targeted
- Use a wide range of communication techniques to be inclusive and reach as many groups as possible

By following these key principles it is possible to develop trust and credibility and resolve issues as well as ensuring everyone involved has a clear understanding of the approach proposed and the resulting benefits.

## **Our Chosen Approach**

In order to have meaningful consultation with groups who are directly affected by the project, the Ponds Project Stakeholder Group (PPSG), was set up in July 2012. This is a body of people with knowledge and interest in Hampstead Heath established as a group to provide views and advice to the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee in relation to the Ponds Project within the context of the Hampstead Heath Act 1871 and relevant reservoirs legislation.

Each member of the PPSG represents a wider group including residents associations and Heath user-groups, and the PPSG members are expected to act as a conduit of information back to their constituents. The PPSG plays a central role, but this needs to be supplemented by the wider communication process set out below. The City of London has also appointed a Strategic Landscape Architect to champion the natural aspect of the Heath and work with the PPSG and wider community, to inform the design process.

A wide range of regular, ongoing proactive activities are planned and a range of media is to be utilised throughout the project both communicating to key stakeholders and the community, such as a public website, leaflets, posters, exhibitions, media coverage and also gathering their views via workshops, regular group meetings and surveys.

Everyone who wants to will be given the opportunity to see and comment on the proposals, temporary works and potential effects during construction and there will be community and stakeholder meetings, consultations and other events throughout the project, including those required to obtain planning permission and other consents, with specialist input and involvement from the Design Team as appropriate.

## Key Messages

The chosen key messages are designed to explain the reasons for the project, progress and the benefits it will bring. Many of these key messages will be applicable to more than one group. Some, or all, of these messages will be used in publicity material and support materials produced for the project.

### Primary Messages

- The project is both to improve the safety of the dams to protect local communities downstream and, whilst doing so, to ensure the maintenance and, where appropriate, enhancement of the natural landscape of the Heath
- To meet the Vision and Mission set out in the Hampstead Heath Management Plan and adhere to the principles of the 1871 Hampstead Heath Act.

### Supplementary Messages

- The conservation of the natural aspect of Hampstead Heath is a priority
- The design of the modified dams must be sympathetic to the landscape
- This is essential work that needs to be done for the safety and protection of residents and businesses in the area
- It is in everyone's interest to carry out the project with minimal disruption to the Heath and the surrounding communities but it is a major project which will require a significant amount of work
- Hampstead Heath will still be open to visitors with only the essential areas not accessible while the works take place
- The project will bring long lasting benefits to the Heath including improving water quality and creating new habitats for wildlife
- This project is led by the City of London's duty of care as the responsible body and is following the advice of the Panel Engineer
- The project will bring about educational opportunities
- The existing ponds on the Heath are all man made and all have existing dams, some of which are several metres high
- Wherever possible materials from the Heath will be used to strengthen existing dams, creating new habitats for wildlife and reducing traffic movements.
- The City of London encourages everyone to take part in the opportunities provided to share their views on the project.

## Target Audiences

A wide range of groups and individuals need to be included in the development of the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project. Views will need to be sought from the general public and Heath users throughout the works and statutory approvals will need to be obtained.

Those who need to be involved, range from the official statutory consultees who have to be consulted on planning applications, through the key stakeholder and special interest groups, to business, neighbours and users of the Heath and the wider communities.

Groups specific to Hampstead Heath include:

- Hampstead Heath Consultative and Management Committees
- PPSG with representatives from Heath users and local resident groups
- Staff and volunteers
- Other advisory and user groups, including: Sports Advisory Forum, Sexual Activity Working Group, Swimming Facilities Forum,
- Other neighbours and residents, including: Lissenden Gardens Residents Association, Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association, Queen's Crescent Community Association, LB Camden's relevant Neighbourhood Fora
- Affected Local Authorities, including the London Borough of Camden
- Wildlife and Science groups, including: The London Natural History Society, The Hampstead Scientific Society, RSPB
- Other recreational groups, including: Heath for Feet, Camden Cycling Campaign, Kennel Club, Hampstead and District Ramblers, London Orienteering Klubb, Highgate Harriers, Hampstead Rugby Football Club, London Heathside Athletics Club, The Camden History Society
- Religious and ethnic groups
- Business interests, including British Military Fitness
- Local, regional and national politicians
- Local schools and youth groups
- Hard to reach groups
- Pressure groups
- Individual members of the public

The bodies that have to be consulted on relevant planning applications are:

- Defra
- British Waterways
- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Department for Transport
- Environment Agency
- English Heritage
- Garden History Society
- Health and Safety Executive
- Highways Agency
- The London Borough of Camden and other Local Planning Authorities including Greater London Authority and Local Highway Authority
- Natural England

- National Amenity Societies, including Ancient Monuments Society, the Council for British Archaeology, the Georgian Group, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Victorian Society and Twentieth Century Society
- National Air Control Transport Services and Operators of Officially
- Safeguarded Civil Aerodromes
- Rail Network Operators
- Sport England
- Theatres Trust
- Thames Water
- Any other regulatory or advisory publicity/consultation requirements.

## Methods of Communication

A range of different methods of communication will be used to reach our various target audiences.

Central to our approach is the project website:

[www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/pondsproject](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/pondsproject), which is publicised on the Heath and in literature relating to the project. This website is updated regularly with the latest news. Documents and reports with background information to the project are found here.

Regular electronic communication such as the e-newsletter, emails, Facebook and Twitter, will be balanced with more traditional methods of communication such as posters, exhibitions, and leaflets. The regular Ham & High column by the Chairman of the Heath's Management Committee will be a key regular channel of communication as well as press releases at milestones throughout the project. Leaflet drops to the communities around the Heath will be utilized to inform people of the consultation timeline and as a call to action of how they can give their views.

The Heath will be used as a communication tool. Signs will be placed at busy spots and will be regularly updated with clear and useful information. Self-guided walks of the ponds will be sign posted informing people of the project at the specific sites. We will also make use of public events already taking place on the Heath for consultation and to publicise the project. When there are designs to consult on, a mobile exhibition will be developed and will move around key locations near the ponds. In addition we will continue to hold 'pop-up' or 'speed' consultation events every two weeks on the Heath.

Hampstead Heath staff will also be essential to the communication process, both as experts on the Heath and as on-the-ground ambassadors for the project. Staff who will be working closely to the project will be kept fully briefed should they need to respond to questions from the public. Other staff will be made aware of the project and why it is necessary and be briefed throughout the duration of the project. A staff workshop similar to the Ponds Project Stakeholder Group Workshop will be held at each stage of the project. The Heath's volunteer group, Heath Hands will also be engaged in the process and asked to give out leaflets and information at events.

Communication channels will be kept open between City of London and campaign/pressure groups to ensure they have the most accurate information on the project.

## Communication and Consultation Timeline with Activities

### **Jan 2012 – Throughout duration of HH Ponds Project**

*Inform Heath users and communities around Heath on project stages and reason for development.*

- Brief Ponds Project Stakeholder Group (PPSG) - Monthly;
- Brief Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee (HHCC) – every meeting;
- Posters on the Heath - Quarterly;
- Press Release – Key Milestones;
- Newspaper adverts – Key Milestones
- Leaflet Drop – twice yearly;
- Pop-Up Consultation - Fortnightly;
- E-newsletter – Bi-Monthly;
- Twitter - Weekly;
- Facebook - Weekly;
- Information Stands – At all main events

### **March – April 2013: Completion of Fundamental Review**

*Communicate the results of the fundamental review and how this will impact on the project to PPSG, HHCC, HHMC and wider public*

- Press Release; Email to HH Staff; Website; Twitter- 14 March
- Brief PPSG – 18 March
- Brief HHCC – 8 April
- Responses to PPSG questions – 12 April
- Report to HHMC – 9 May
- E-newsletter – May

### **May 2013: Review of long list of all options and refine to a long list of technically feasible options**

*The Design Team uses information provided by PPSG, HH Staff and wider public in first phase of consultation (which took place in January/February 2013) to produce a matrix of all options which is then reviewed by the PPSG and HH Staff. SLA and Atkins then work with PPSG and HH Staff to refine this list of feasible options.*

- Workshop with PPSG and HH Staff led by SLA – 18 May

### **June 2013: First review of Constrained Options Report**

*The Design Team produces a Constrained Options report following the May workshop which is then issued to the City and to the PPSG for review. As well as being reviewed by Stakeholders this report will be communicated to Heath users and the wider public for their comments back on the options to inform the design team in narrowing this to a short list.*

- Issue Report to PPSG and HH Staff; Press Release; Website; Facebook; Twitter;
- Posters on Heath; Newspaper adverts – 8 June
- Brief PPSG – 17 June

### **July/August/September 2013 : Second and third review of constrained options**

*The Design team enter into a cycle of producing and refining their Constrained Options following the comments received from PPSG, HH staff and wider public. PPSG and HH Staff are engaged through workshops and regular briefings.*

- Workshop with PPSG and HH staff led by SLA – 13 July
- Brief PPSG – 22 July

Email to HH Staff – 22 July  
Workshop with PPSG and HH staff led by SLA – 14 September

### **October- November 2013: Arrival at two or three preferred options**

*The Design team produce a report detailing the two preferred options per chain which will be taken to public consultation.*

Brief PPSG – 14 October  
Email to HH staff – 15 October  
Brief HHCC- 28 October  
Brief HHMC- 11 November

### **November 2013– February 2014: Public Consultation**

*A full public consultation on the preferred options takes place between 26 November 2013 and 17 February 2014. This will be advertised in advance.*

Press Release; Newspaper adverts; Posters on Heath; Website; Facebook;  
Twitter: E-newsletter; Leaflet Drop; Exhibitions; Surveys – From mid-October

### **February 2014: Analysis of public consultation**

*The Design team analyse the results of the public consultation and produce a report which details the preferred option. This will be communicated to the PPSG, HH staff, Heath users and to the wider public.*

Brief PPSG and HH Staff; Press Release; Posters on Heath; Website;  
Facebook; Twitter: E-newsletter – February date TBC

### **February – April 2014: Design Phase**

*The Design Team work up a design in preparation for the planning application.*

Brief PPSG and HH Staff; Press Release; Website; Facebook; Twitter; E-newsletter – April TBC

### **May – November 2014: Planning phase**

*The Design Team submit their detailed design to Camden Council for planning permission. During this time there will be a period of statutory consultation as required by planning law.*

Brief PPSG and HH Staff; Press Release; Website; Facebook; Twitter; E-newsletter – May TBC

### **January– March 2015 : Detailed Design and Preparation for Construction**

*A final detailed design is worked up and the Design team work with the appointed Contractor to prepare for the construction phase*

Brief PPSG and HH Staff; Press Release; Website; Facebook; Twitter; E-newsletter – March TBC

### **April 2015: Work starts on site**

*The construction of the scheme begins (phasing to be agreed). During the construction period there will be regular communication with Heath users and the communities who live in the surroundings updating them with progress and any information they may require such as restricted access to areas.*

Brief PPSG and HH Staff at regular intervals; Press Release; Website;  
Facebook; Twitter; E-newsletter – April – end of project TBC