

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group	20 November 2013
Subject: Superintendents' Update	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Discussion
Summary	
<p>This report provides an update to members of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group on the management and operational activities since June 2013 in Queen's Park. The report provides information on progress on projects and other initiatives including sustainability and ecology, sports and recreation, landscape management, operational management and visitors which have taken place over the last six months.</p>	
Recommendation(s)	
That the views of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group be received.	

Main Report

Background

1. Over the summer period essential works have been carried out across the park to ensure it is continued to be maintained to a high standard and deliver high quality facilities. A number of events took place in the park including the annual Queen's Park Day event and four outdoor films. Further consultation has taken place with the community on the Conservation Management Plan with positive comments being received.
2. The Constabulary and Queen's Park Manager was seconded to West Ham Park in August 2013 and is currently providing assistance and support to the Parks and Gardens Superintendent until the vacant West Ham Manager position is filled.
3. Queen's Park continues to be busy and well used by the community for various activities and recreation. Between the period October 2012 and September 2013 the Play Area had 290,400 visits and the Children's Farm 118,141 visits. During this same period the park received 1,104,000 visits. Gate counters are located at entrances to the park and facilities to record visitor numbers. Table 1 shows a comparison between October 2011 - September 2012 and October 2012 - September 2013.

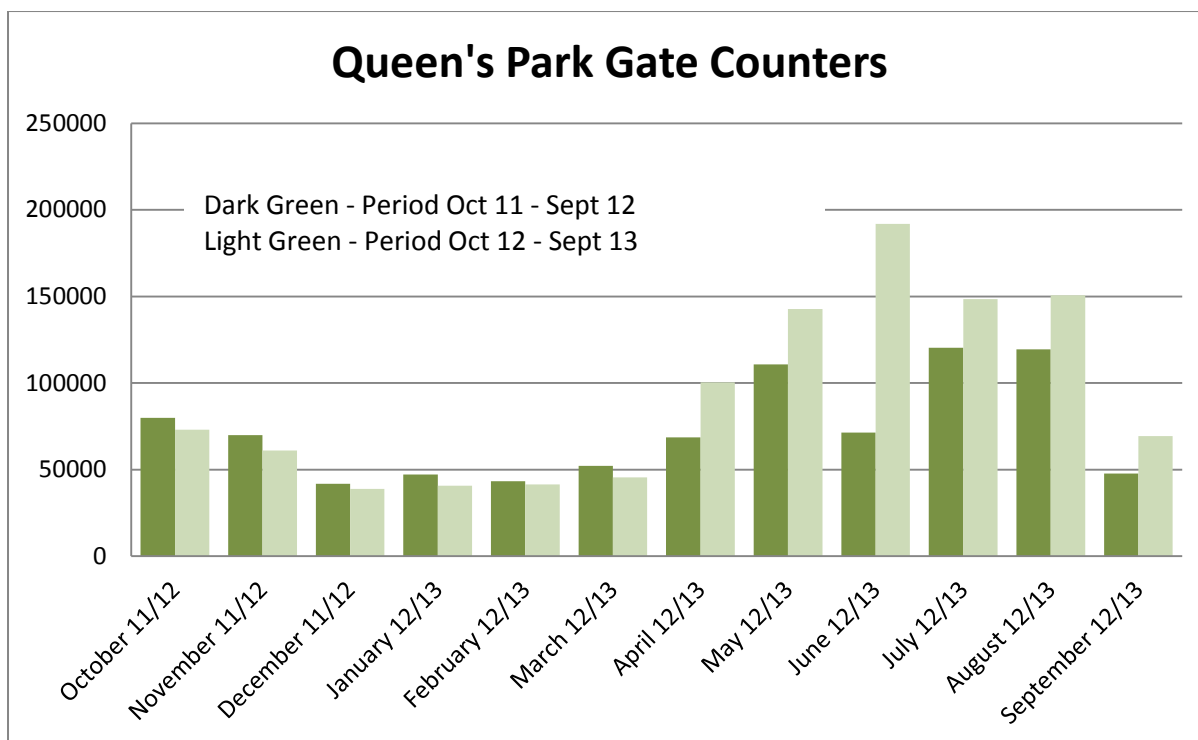


Table 1 Visits to Queen's Park 2011/12 - 2012/13

Ecology and Environment

4. The Quiet Garden is a popular area in the park for relaxation and contemplation, with the new perennial planting receiving favourable comments and adding biodiversity value of the park along with the now well-established beehives.
5. Lawn maintenance will take place over the winter period; a contractor will come on to site to spray the lawn for weed, worms and moss. Staff will assist with the maintenance in-house, carrying out works including scarification and aeration, and in the spring seeding will take place. Maintenance of the Quiet Garden lawn will then take place on an annual basis as part of the Annual Work Programme. Queen's Park staff will be supported by experienced staff from across the Division, especially those with turf maintenance expertise.
6. Summer bedding is in the process of being removed from the Quiet Garden and these beds will lie fallow until the spring when the 2014 summer bedding will be planted. The park still obtains its seasonal bedding and hanging baskets from West Ham Park Nursery, these continue to be of a high quality.
7. Maintenance work will be carried out on the shrub border between the main body of the park and the Quiet Garden with shrubs being cut back. The Gardener will be supported by another member of staff who has recently completed his RHS Level 2 in Horticulture.

8. New planting has taken place in the Children's Zoo around the pond. A variety of grasses have been planted;
 - *Carex oshimensis* 'Evergold'
 - *Glyceria maxima variegata*
 - *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola'
 - *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigerescens'
 - *Pleioblastus* var
 - *Spartina pectinata* 'Aureomarginata'
 - *Stipa calamagrostis*.
9. The suggestion for this planting came from our visiting inspecting vet. The new planting would break up the area, add another dimension and colour and hide the fencing at the rear of the pond. The Gardener planted this area with the support of one of the keepers.
10. New wooden planters have been installed adjacent to the Children's Paddling Pool. Discussion needs to take place internally with regard to the planting scheme in these beds, taking in to consideration their location.
11. Hazel trees will be planted in the first phase of the Children's Play Area redevelopment where the new play equipment has been installed.

Sports and Recreation

12. The Park Supervisor will be arranging for a contractor to spray the tennis courts over the winter, treating them for moss. This has been a problem in the past and will be carried out annually as part of the park's Annual Work Programme, thus avoiding the need to close courts for any period of time due to slippery surfaces.
13. The tennis huts on the courts will be painted by the park keepers; this will be carried out as a winter project.
14. Tennis coaching sessions were arranged over the summer period by the City of London, 45 people participated in these courses between May and August. This generated an additional £3,157 of income. Additional marketing needs to be carried out by the park to encourage children to get involved in these courses as they are currently under-represented in the tennis bookings
15. Winter maintenance work is being carried out on the Pitch and Putt course. It will remain open over the autumn/winter period with temporary greens being introduced whilst work is carried out. Maintenance work has included scarification, aeration, top dressing and re-seeding.
16. Queen's Park Rangers have made the decision that it is not currently cost-effective for them to hold soccer camps in the Park during school holidays.

The Park Manager will approach them again in 2014 to see if they wish to reconsider holding soccer camps during the school holidays.

17. In August 2013 Brent Council Sports Services arranged activities in for teenagers.
18. The park is signed up to the Spice Time Credits project, this allows holders of credits to purchase a game of tennis or pitch and putt at off peak times. Since the launch of this scheme the park has taken eight Time Credits for tennis or pitch and putt.
19. Tennis court usage and pitch and putt are both popular facilities in the park and continue to be used regularly. Between the period April 2013 and September 2013 the park has sold the following number of games;
 - Adult Pitch and Putt 2534
 - Concession Pitch and Putt 1045
 - Adult Tennis 3008
 - Concession Tennis 1077
20. The income generated from tennis and pitch and putt between these periods is £46,500.
21. The tennis coach arranged a number of coaching sessions during the school holidays. This use of the courts generated £1,600 in court usage.
22. No local schools made formal arrangements to make use of the park this year for their sports days and a marked running track. It was noticed that some came along and used the green space informally for events.

Conservation and Heritage

23. There has been further consultation on the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) at Queen's Park Day with positive comments being received. One of our members assisted with the consultation event on the day. No negative feedback on the management or future management proposals for the park was received.
24. Further consultation needs to take place with statutory stakeholders and local groups.
25. Due to the Park Manager providing a supporting role at West Ham Park as the interim manager, a final draft of the CMP has had to be delayed and will now be presented at your next Consultative Group meeting in 2014.
26. The Park retained its Green Flag Award and has achieved this continuously since the Award scheme was introduced in 1996.
27. The park will make an application for the Green Heritage Award in 2014 as part of the Green Flag Award Scheme.

Landscape Management

28. In the early hours of 28 October 2013 as predicted St Jude's storm moved across southern England. Damage to trees was caused to a lesser extent than other open spaces, however this included;
 - Two London Planes in the Children's Play Area, both required hanging limbs to be removed from the canopy
 - Ash close to the playground which lost the top of the main stem
 - Ash in the Woodland Walk had a broken limb hanging above the public highway
 - A willow in the Pitch and Putt area lost part of its crown. This tree had been damaged some weeks earlier and had been attended to by the Arboricultural Team from Hampstead Heath.
29. The Park escaped largely unscathed compared to other sites across this part of north London where whole trees were uprooted or snapped at the trunk.
30. For the Arboricultural Team it has been a busy six months at Queen's Park. The park's entire tree population was inspected by September 2013. There are two dead/dying trees which have been identified for removal and a number of dead branches throughout the park.
31. The Forestry Commission and the Arboricultural Team have been carrying out a walk over inspection of the Oak population to assess for Oak Processionary Moth caterpillars. Fortunately none have been found to date.
32. London Plane trees have been monitored in the park on a regular basis for Massaria disease. A number of branches have been found to have been infected across the site and have been removed.
33. The Ash tree next to the Café has now been removed after a number of years of monitoring due to being infected with the basal decay of '*Ganoderma*' & the trunk & upper canopy decay of '*Inonotus hispidus*'.
34. It is suggested that the Ash which was located outside the café be replaced with a Wild Service Tree '*Sorbus torminalis*'. Other suggestions have included a Walnut '*Juglans regia*', A section of the decayed upper canopy of the ash tree which has been used by nesting birds has been installed in to the canopy of another ash tree in the woodland walk, to maintain its ecological value.
35. Two weeping willows on the Pitch and Putt course had suffered previous storm damage during September 2013. These will be phased for re-pollarding, followed by the other two 12 months later.
36. Two lime trees on the southern end of the Bandstand field have been reduced due to basal decay issues & also having lost a neighbouring lime in 2012 which would have shared the wind dampening as a joint canopy.
37. Staff will continue to monitor the Elm tree near to the eastern entrance to the woodland walk that was damaged by a dog. If it does not come into leaf next spring it will be taken out and replaced.

38. At the direction of the Manager, following consultation with the Superintendent, the park remained closed for the duration of the 28 October 2013 to enable staff to assess the risk and ensure there was no continued danger to park users.
39. With regard to the redevelopment of the Children's Play Area, further work has been carried out by Land Use Consultants Associates to provide a detailed survey, demolition proposals and planting and an update on the schedule of works and costings. It has been decided to break phases 2 and 3 into smaller projects which financially would be more achievable and would make fundraising within the community attainable. It is hoped work will start on the next phase early 2014.
40. Additional maintenance work will be required on the paddling pool in the Children's Play Area. It is suspected that there is a leak under the liner. The City Surveyor's Department will be consulted on this before works commence with a view of them being completed early 2014.

Operational Management

41. The City Surveyor's Department has been instructed to carry out necessary repairs to the notice boards at entrances and in and around the park, prior to signage and inserts being replaced. Resources from the City Surveyor's Annual Work Programme will be used to fund these maintenance works.
42. The Children's Farm has seen the addition of a new enclosure. In the forthcoming spring, this will become the home for three giant rabbits. The enclosure was built with the support of the Hampstead Heath Maintenance Technician. The enclosure has been built to be fox proof following advice from our visiting vet.
43. The duck/goose pond liner was replaced by staff as the old liner was leaking. Other works will be carried out in the farm over the winter period, these include; works to the aviary, repainting the interior and exterior and replacing the Perspex screen.
44. In the summer, seven new chickens and four new Khaki Campbell ducks were introduced to the farm.
45. The Animal Attendant has been given the opportunity to spend time with the Hampstead Heath Education Team with a view to developing structured school visits to the park and Children's Farm. This was a development opportunity for the Animal Attendant. Following this short secondment feedback from the Education Team was positive. It is planned to begin formal educational sessions in the early spring following consultation with local schools. In the future, in line with the Hampstead Heath Education Team, consideration may be given to charging a nominal fee for pupils attending the park for formal educational sessions.
46. A formal booking system for the educational sessions will need to be considered and can be administered by the Animal Attendant with the support of our Support Services Officer.

47. No serious Health and Safety injuries or accidents have occurred since June 2013. In the summer a casual member of staff was verbally abused and grabbed whilst asking a team of football players to vacate the park at closing time. Police were informally advised of this occurrence. Other accidents which have occurred have not been through any fault of the City of London Corporation or its employees.

Visitors and Community

48. The park hosted four outdoor films over the summer. These were Stand by Me, The Usual Suspects, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon and Roman Holiday. Although weather conditions for each event weren't perfect, in total the films generated £3,200 of income for the park. These events are organised by 'Where is the Nomad' which is a sister company of a local independent cinema, The Lexi. The Lexi is a social enterprise and 100% of its profits go towards improving the quality of life for the people of Lynedoch Village in Stellenbosch, South Africa.
49. It is suggested that the park hold four outdoor films in 2014 and the Consultative Groups views are sought on this proposal.
50. Through hiring the bandstand for children's parties this year the park has generated an additional £1,900 income.
51. Queen's Park Day was held on 15 September 2013. Unfortunately the poor weather conditions had an impact on visitor numbers at this event with 7,000 people attending this year; the average annual number being around 14,000 visitors. The event is organised by a team of residents (volunteers) from the Queen's Park Area Residents Association with the support of further volunteers who assist in the setting up and taking down of the event.
52. It has been suggested that the Queen's Park Residents' Association will reintroduce the Book Festival in 2014 in the Park.
53. Bands played on the bandstand over the summer and children's entertainment was provided free of charge by the Play Area in August. It is estimated that an average of 500 people per event attended the children's entertainment events due to the glorious weather we experienced over the summer period.
54. Local schools continue to make use of the park and its facilities. Over 2,000 schoolchildren have been recorded attending the park, including the Quiet Garden and Children's Farm. Schools visiting have included; St Luke's, Malorees, and Kensal Rise.
55. Staff from other City of London Open Spaces Department visited the Park in early November 2013. Annual visits to other open spaces are arranged across the Department, giving staff the opportunity to meet with colleagues and share ideas. Previous visits have taken place in the past at the City of London Cemetery and the City Commons.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

56. The management and provision of Queen's Park provides a vital retreat, enabling people to escape the daily pressures of living and working in London. The park fulfils many of the themes within the City's Community Strategy, but specifically providing "A World Class City which protects, promotes and enhances our environment". "A World Class City which is vibrant and culturally rich". "A World Class City which supports our communities".
57. It will also contribute to the Department's Strategic Aims and Objectives 2, (Involve communities and partners in developing a sense of place through the care and management of our sites) and 3, (Deliver sustainable working practices to promote the variety of life and protect the Open Spaces for the enjoyment of future generations).

Implications

58. There are no financial implications arising from this report, the operational requirements which have been highlighted in the report will be met from the Superintendent's local risk budget. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Conclusion

59. It is acknowledged that Queen's Park continues to be a popular Open Space within the community, serving a wide and diverse audience. The staff that work in the park take great pride in the service they provide to the community and are actively engaged in a number of initiatives to ensure that the management of the site is sustainable and operates within the financial limits set down by the City Corporation.

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