

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group - For Information	19 th November 2014
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood & Queen's Park Committee - For Decision	24 th November 2014
Subject: Superintendents Update – Queen's Park	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Information
<p>Summary</p> <p>This report provides an update to members of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group on the management and operational activities of Queen's Park over the previous six months. The report provides information and updates on activities in the Park in the following areas: ecology and environment, sport and recreation, conservation and heritage, landscape management, operational management, and visitors and community. It also discusses income generation and cost-saving initiatives, including sustainability in the Park and events.</p> <p>Recommendation(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the views of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group are received. • That the views of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group are conveyed to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Management Committee at their November 2014 meeting. 	

Main Report

Background

1. As an important destination and facility for the local community and wider London audience, Queen's Park continues to be a popular Open Space. Further details of visitor numbers to the Park and its facilities are found at Table 1. The Park has continued to face a number of challenges since the last Joint Consultative Group meeting in June 2014. The Park is now operating with a full-time equivalent of eight staff, following the deletion of a post in March 2014 following the last round of budgetary savings. From May 2014 until the end of September 2014 the Park had an additional four Fixed-Term Contract (FTC) staff. These FTCs supported the full-time Team during the warmer months when the Park experiences higher visitor numbers and is open for longer periods (from 7am until 9:30pm). Their assistance is also beneficial in supporting ancillary activities such as bands on the Bandstand, parties and other events. A member of staff who suffered an injury to his knee in December 2013 has made a full return to work and is completing his

duties fully. Since July 2014 the Queen’s Park Manager has been called upon to give operational support to the Senior Management Team at Epping Forest. They have faced a number of challenges over the previous six months, with vacancies within the Senior Management Team and long-term sickness absence.

- Queen’s Park remains a popular destination for the local community and a wider London audience. Table 1 below demonstrates how popular the Park continues to be, with 978,450 visits between October 2013 and September 2014. The system used to record movements in and out of the Park is susceptible to outside influences, such as traffic movement or equipment malfunction (battery failure). Staff have replaced a number of batteries in the pedestrian barriers this year and have reduced the sensitivity of some of the readers as it was found some picked up on vehicles driving past on the public highway. These issues would have some impact on the number of visits recorded. The facilities in the Park are as popular as ever. During the same period, the Playground attracted 194,382 visits and the Farm 100,136 visits. (The playground was closed during March 2014 and for some of April 2014 while redevelopment works took place).

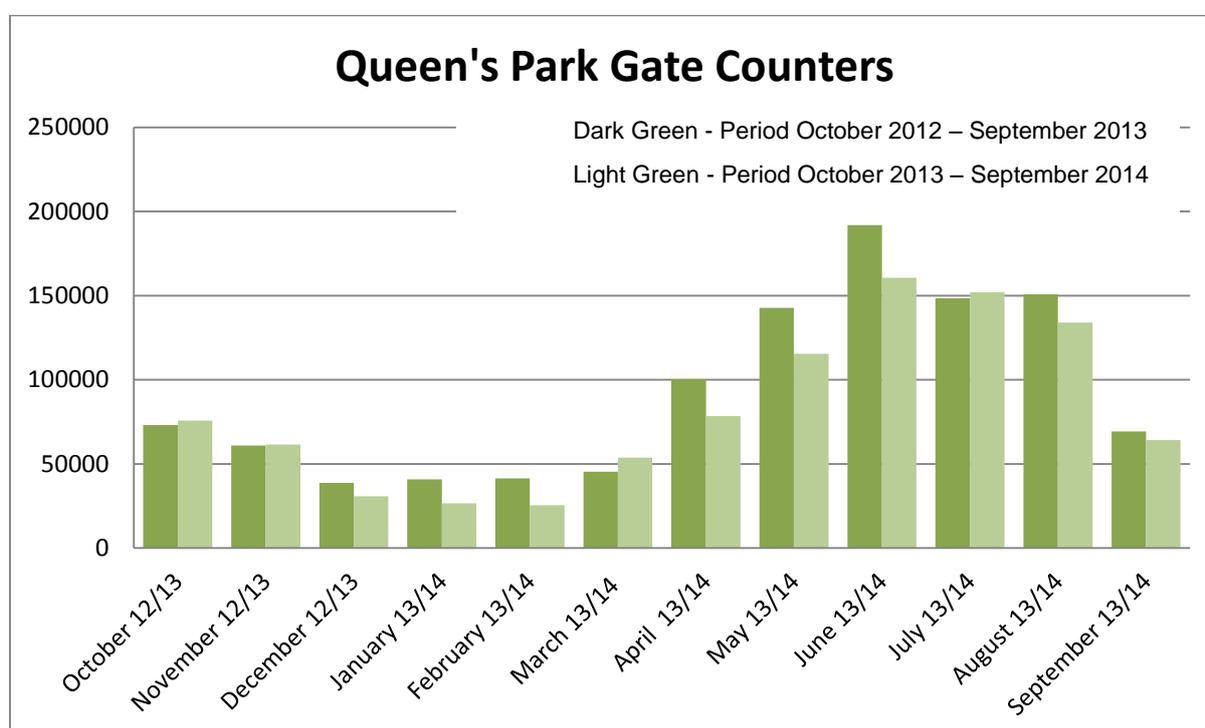


Table 1 - Visits to Queen's Park 2012/13 - 2013/14

Ecology and Environment

- Queen’s Park completed a Sustainability Audit (SAS) in May 2014, in common with the other Divisions within the Open Space Department. A verification visit was carried out in the Park during September 2014, which was undertaken by a colleague from another Open Space. These audits provide a useful check for the site, allowing the Team to acknowledge their sustainability successes and focus on sustainability objectives for the future.

The information captured in the audit is shared at a Departmental level and will support the production of a Departmental Improvement Plan, while a Local Improvement Plan will also be developed. Local objectives will be fed into the Queen's Park Staff Performance Development Framework (Appraisals) in 2015. Sustainability features as an annual performance appraisal objective, as the Department endeavours to reduce its use of utilities and makes positive changes to any operational practices that may impact on the environment.

4. Since the inception of the SAS, Queen's Park has made a number of positive changes over the years, which have had an impact on its sustainability credentials. The Park now captures grey water and uses this to water bedding, the Pitch & Putt greens and planters/hanging baskets. Electric vehicles are used extensively in the Park to move machinery, supplies and equipment, and the Park has also invested in battery-powered hedge cutters and blowers. There are benefits to the operators, Park visitors and the organisation, as these battery-powered tools are quieter to use, while their zero emissions benefit the environment.
5. A compost tumbler has been purchased (Photograph 1). This has the capacity to compost up to 650 litres of garden waste every two to three weeks, enabling the Park to produce as much as 4,000 litres of compost yearly. As we are now approaching the leaf-drop season, staff will be making additional use of the tumbler, taking further steps towards self-sustainability by reducing the need to order in compost and cutting our carbon footprint. Green waste and grass clippings continue to be collected from the Park by Brent Council.



Photograph 1 – Compost Tumbler

6. In September 2014 the lawn in the Quiet Garden was treated with fertiliser by Queen's Park staff and arrangements made with an operator from Hampstead Heath for machinery to assist in the scarification of the lawn. Queen's Park staff are working with a colleague from Hampstead Heath to improve the quality and condition of the lawn in the Quiet Garden, using his extensive turf

maintenance knowledge and experience. The use of machinery and a staff member from Hampstead Heath has avoided the need to hire in specialist equipment or use contractors.

7. A poppy meadow was seeded in the summer of 2014 as part The Centenary Poppy Campaign, a national initiative by the Royal British Legion to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the start of World War I. The bund at the bottom of the Park was seeded with limited success. Other areas were planted in the City of London, West Ham Park and Golders Hill Park.

Sport and Recreation

8. The Park continues to provide six tennis courts, and during the summer months ran a number of coaching sessions for beginners and intermediates (for children and adults). In 2014 these courses attracted 31 participants, compared with 51 in 2013. The Park Manager invested in additional marketing material including banners and posters to promote the courses this year. A review of these courses will take place with the Tennis Coach and the Hampstead Heath Leisure and Events Manager. Consideration will be given to how the City of London can maximise their income potential in the future, with an appropriate mix of tennis courses for the community and the wider London audience.
9. The Park Manager has met with colleagues from the City Surveyor's Department to discuss maintenance issues on tennis courts 5 and 6. Currently there is £500 allocated in the 20-year Annual Work Programme for a tennis court survey in 2015/16, and provision of £26,000 for their recoating and overhaul in 2016/17. The City Surveyors Department have suggested instead that the following be carried out; a one-off provision of £40,000 for resurfacing and root barriers to courts 5 and 6, and a recurring provision of £60,000 for re-coating courts 1 to 6, all in year 2015/2016 (re-coating to take place thereafter every ten years).
10. The Park Manager will build into the Team's 2014/15 winter objectives a plan to reduce the height of hedges around the east, south and western side of the tennis courts and completely remove the hedge to the northern edge. The thoughts of the Group would be appreciated on this suggestion. These suggested works will improve the visibility of the courts for other Park users and, by removing the hedge on the north side of the courts, will reduce ongoing maintenance and open up a vista across the Pitch & Putt course.
11. During a staff member's long-term sickness absence and phased return to work, members of the Queen's Park Team have demonstrated their versatility in providing support to the Groundsman for the maintenance of the Pitch & Putt course. Winter works have taken place on the course, which remained open while fertiliser, seed and top dressing were spread and the greens scarified. An email was received from a member of the public, congratulating staff on their maintenance of the Pitch & Putt course.
12. The Pitch & Putt course and tennis courts continue to be popular facilities and require a level of management to ensure they are accessible for play by users throughout the year. Income from these two facilities from April to August 2014 was £40,307, with 5,761 games of Pitch & Putt and 6,185 games of

tennis sold during this period. During the same period in 2013 the income generated was £41,734. 5,737 games of pitch and putt were sold and 6,598 games of tennis were sold.

13. The paddling pool was late opening this season, a leak in the pool wall having been reported to the Property Service Desk (City Surveyor's Department) and quotes for repair being required. Further investigatory work identified damaged drainage pipes in the play area and further quotes were required for repair from approved contractors. Works were finally completed and a decision was made to keep the facility open until the end of September 2014.
14. Consultation continues with the Comptrollers & City Solicitors Department about the licensing of commercial and other activities in the North London Open Spaces Division and Open Spaces Department. The Remembrancer's Department will undertake some background research, with a view to seeking further legal advice. This piece of work has been delayed, due to the Comptrollers and City Solicitors Department focussing their resource on the Hampstead Heath Ponds Project. The Park Manager is currently reviewing documents that have been shared with Local Authorities across the whole of London, with the aim of achieving consistency among those who charge for commercial activities.
15. The Brent Sports Development Team ran a week-long Summer Sports Programme in the Park in August 2014. The multi-sports activities included football, rounders, mini athletics, games and relay races. Verbal feedback from the course facilitators was positive and we hope they will consider using Queen's Park again in 2015. These events were run at no charge to users or with any direct costs to the City of London.
16. A number of suggestions have been made by the local community about the installation of an outdoor gymnasium in Queen's Park. Similar equipment has been installed at Tiverton Playing Fields, which are located on the Avenue, close to the Park. The thoughts of the Group would be welcomed on this suggestion. External funding would have to be considered by the City of London before any commitment to introduce new equipment in to the Park would be made. Consideration would also have to be given to the maintenance of any new equipment installed. Local Ward Councillors have suggested there will be a programme of installing outdoor gym equipment in other Brent Council Open Spaces.

Conservation and Heritage

17. In January the Park Manager submitted an application for the Green Heritage Award. The aim of Green Heritage Site status is to promote the value of – and best practice in – the care and upkeep of historic sites. This can give added benefits to a site, by generating community interest and securing a long-term future for the site, so that it will be valued and cherished by all who use it. This was the first time the Park had applied for the Award. The Park was successful in receiving the Heritage Award along with the Green Flag Award, which it has now received for the 18th year. A plaque will be placed outside the Queen's Park Café promoting the success of the Green Heritage Award. To celebrate our success in receiving the Green Flag, a new flag pole

has been installed outside the café, from which the Green Flag Award is now flying. The flag was previously flown outside the Children's Farm and hidden from the view of many visitors to the Park.

18. A summary document is currently being prepared as part of the Conservation Management Plan. The document is currently in draft form and will be available to the public in early 2015.

Children's Play Area

19. Funding opportunities are still being considered by the City of London to complete the redevelopment of the Children's Play Area. Members of the Queen's Park Area Residents' Association, have been supportive in moving this project forward, engaging with local Councillors, in the hope that Ward Working Funding could be used with match funding from the Queen's Park local risk budget, contributing to the larger items of play equipment in the next phase. Local businesses will also be approached, asking them to consider making a donation towards smaller items of play equipment.
20. The planting in the Play Area, along with the picnic lawn, has been well received by visitors, with positive verbal comments received.
21. The annual RoSPA report on the Play Area was carried out immediately after the completion of the works for the second phase and the overall feedback from the inspector was good, reflecting the improvement works. There are still some tasks to be completed in the facility and repairs to be carried out on equipment.
22. Items of equipment in the sandpit area have had necessary repairs carried out over the summer, although further damage/wear and tear has occurred recently to an item of well-used play equipment. Consideration will need to be given to future replacement, funding for which would be from the Park's local risk budget. This is a popular area of the playground.
23. The planters adjacent to the paddling pool are now maintained by a local vegetable co-operative, Field to Fork. They are a small group of local people who love food and are committed to working towards a more sustainable system of food production.
24. Transition Town Kensal to Kilburn will maintain the vertical planters, locating them in suitable locations in the Park.

Landscape Management

25. Tree disease is still very much a focus for the Arboricultural Team. The programme of containment and eradication of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) launched in the summer of 2013 by the Forestry Commission has had mixed success. This year has seen further advances by the pest and there is now an infestation at the Regent's Park Zoo, which is just over two kilometres from the southern perimeter of Hampstead Heath. A pheromone trap supplied by the Forestry Commission was installed in Queen's Park earlier this year to survey for male moths.

26. We are preparing ourselves for next spring and will have as many staff as possible trained up to spot the signs of OPM, before any infestations can develop. Most importantly, we will need to work closely with other tree management professionals and the Forestry Commission's OPM Management Team, to optimise the chance to control the spread of this moth throughout the woodland.
27. Those familiar with the control of OPM on sites where the pest has become well established are sanguine about eradication, and are now resigned to costly and time-consuming management operations. We hope that we can identify and eradicate these caterpillars before they get a foothold.
28. Queen's Park has no arboricultural certificated staff, so is reliant on the full-time Hampstead Heath Tree Team carrying out tree inspections and tree safety works. There are a number of staff who have received basic tree-inspection training and have been very proactive in passing on information about potential tree problems.
29. The Park Manager has worked with the Park Supervisor to develop an Annual Work Programme for the Park. This programme will pick up on the general maintenance of the Park and a number of projects. These tasks have been summarised as follows:
 - Amenity grassland areas are provided and maintained for recreation.
 - Areas of formal gardens are maintained.
 - Litter picking and bin emptying is carried out on a daily basis.
 - Maintenance of sporting and recreational facilities.
 - Supervised bathing at the paddling pool.
 - Management of play facilities including maintenance of playgrounds.
 - Daily cleaning and regular inspection of public toilets.
 - Path maintenance.
 - Cleaning and maintenance of benches.
 - Maintenance of fences.
30. A copy of the Annual Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1.

Operational Management

31. The focus for the Queen's Park Team and Divisional Management Team over the next three financial years will be identifying areas of potential income generation and reduction in expenditure. Some suggestions have come forward from the local community; one has been to hold a Beer Festival in the Park and another suggests changing the ambience of the café on summer evenings to cater for a restaurant clientele, with a view to increasing turnover. Another suggestion is to licence the Bandstand for Civil Marriages. The

thoughts of the Group would be welcome on these and any other potential income-generating initiatives they consider would be suitable for the community and Queen's Park.

32. The Park has had a small number of filming requests this year, which have generated £750.00 income to date.
33. The Bandstand is hired for small parties and this has generated an income of £1,540.00 during 2014.
34. Redundant machinery has been taken from site and will be sold at auction, with the monies raised reinvested in the Park.

Visitors and Community

35. The Park continues to hold and support events throughout the year. Queen's Park Area Residents' Association organised Open Gardens and Studios in June 2014 and the Park held a number of activities on the day, including photography sessions and vertical planter building.
36. 'Where is the Nomad' held four cinema screenings over the summer, for which 2,500 tickets were sold. Feedback from attendees was positive. Due to the success of these outdoor screenings the Park Manager would like to hold a fifth screening in 2015 and the thoughts of the Group would be welcome. Two screenings could be held in early summer, with a further three later in the summer.
37. The Queen's Park Area Residents' Association has not yet confirmed if a Book Festival will take place in 2015.
38. Queen's Park organised ten children's entertainment shows and six bands on the Bandstand. The Park Manager has recently been approached by the local Brent Brass Band, who are interested in playing on the Bandstand in 2015. The Park Manager is keen to encourage acoustic musicians, avoiding the need for amplified sound.
39. Queen's Park Day was held on 14th September 2014 and was attended by an estimated 14,800 visitors. The annual event is a community favourite and its organisation is carried out by volunteers. The Park entered a Team in to the Tug of War (photograph 2). It is hoped next year, the Team will fare better.
40. The Queen's Park Community School contacted the Park in the summer and we were able to support a number of sessions with seven Duke of Edinburgh Award students. Each student competed 10 hours in the Park, working with various members of the Team.
41. The Park has also supported a number of work experience sessions with special educational needs students.
42. On Mondays during August (excluding Bank Holiday Monday), the Hampstead Heath Education Team attended the Park and held family fun events, which included Wild Play, Music and Play, and Green Machines.



Photograph 2 - Queen's Park staff get ready to take the strain.

43. School visits to the Children's Farm have included a Montessori School, Princess Frederica's, College Green Nursery and Malorees Infants. Further work needs to be carried out by the Park Management Team to engage with local schools formally, and to develop outdoor education sessions and formal visits to the Farm.
44. The Park Supervisor is working with the Animal Attendant on the purchase and installation of an appropriate donation box for the Children's Farm. Income will help support this facility and its longer term sustainability. It is planned to have a donation box installed at the Farm by December 2014.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

45. 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".
46. It will also contribute to the Department's Strategic Aims and Objectives 2014 - 2017, by providing valued services to London and the nation and widening its offer to Londoners.
47. The Park's activities continues to deliver the Open Spaces Departmental values of; Quality, Inclusion, Environmental, Promotion and People.

Implications

48. There are financial implications arising from this report, these will be met from the Superintendent's local risk budget, however, external funding will be

sought for specific improvement projects. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Conclusion

49. Queen's Park continues to offer the community and wider London audience a high quality Park for exercise and recreation. The Team appreciate that the next three years will bring new challenges which they must face together and work with Stakeholders to continue to provide a high quality Open Space. There are a number of projects that will require a joined up approach, working with colleagues from within the Division.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Queen's Park - Annual Work Programme 2015

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