

Committee(s)	Dated:
Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group – For Discussion Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee – For decision	10 June 2015 20 July 2015
Subject: Application to operate Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies at the Queen's Park Bandstand	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Discussion

Summary

This report outlines the opportunity to generate future income by permitting the use of the Queen's Park Bandstand for Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies, licensed under the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005. The significant heritage of this listed structure and the idyllic surroundings of Queen's Park make it very desirable as a venue for such Ceremonies.

Queen's Park currently hosts a number of musical events on the Bandstand during the summer months and also makes the structure available for hire for children's parties, providing cover from inclement weather. With support from within the North London Open Spaces Division, there is the potential for the Queen's Park Team to host Ceremonies at this desirable venue, while still providing daily access to public visitors by restricting the number of Ceremonies and carefully managing the booking process.

In order to use Queen's Park Bandstand as a venue for these Ceremonies, a licence must be granted by the local authority, in this case the London Borough of Brent (LBB). The cost of a three-year licence (allowing up to 50 attendees per Ceremony) is £600, together with £1,100 for the necessary public advertising (payable in year one).

The estimated net income over the three-year period (2015 – 2018) is £12,702.40.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of the report.
- Endorse the use of the Queen's Park Bandstand for Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies for the initial licence period of 36 months, for subsequent approval by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.

Main Report

Background

1. Queen's Park is a well-used and much loved Victorian park that receives an estimated 1,000,000 visits per annum. Located within the Queen's Park Ward, within the London Borough of Brent, it provides valuable green space for the enjoyment, leisure and well-being of the local community and wider London.
2. Members of the Queen's Park Joint Consultative Group (QPJCG) have previously suggested there is an opportunity to use the Bandstand in Queen's Park for Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies.
3. Informal enquiries have been received from members of the public in recent years, hoping to use this structure for Ceremonies.

Current Position

4. In February 2015, the Queen's Park Manager met with a representative from the LBB to explore the possibility of using the Queen's Park Bandstand as a venue for Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies.
5. There are currently fourteen venues in the LBB that are licensed for such Ceremonies, none of which is an Open Space.
6. This informal meeting with the LBB confirmed that the Queen's Park Bandstand would be a suitable venue for Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies, should the City of London Corporation wish to submit an application for venue approval.
7. A licence would provide an opportunity to generate income from the use of the structure, contributing to the budgetary savings required by the Open Spaces Department, while also supporting the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of Queen's Park and its facilities.

Options

8. **Option 1 (recommended)** – To approve the outlined proposal to apply for a licence and, subject to approval by the LBB, to use the Queen's Park Bandstand as a venue for Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies, presenting a new opportunity for income generation for Queen's Park.
9. **Option 2 (not recommended)** – Not to approve the proposal to apply for a licence to use the Queen's Park Bandstand as a venue for Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies, thereby preventing further income to be generated for Queen's Park.

Proposals

10. Option 1 seeks to gain the approval of this Committee to endorse the use of the Queen's Park Bandstand for onward approval by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.
11. If granted, the licence would be for an initial period of three years (36 months).
12. All Ceremonies would take place on the Bandstand structure in Queen's Park.
13. Access to the structure would be across mown amenity grass and up a number of steps on to the Bandstand. It is likely that some alterations would have to be considered, to facilitate access by disabled persons or wheelchair users.
14. The nearest toilet facilities are located at the café building a few hundred metres from the Bandstand. Additional toilets are located by the Children's Play Area.
15. As a condition of the formal application process, the City of London must satisfy the LBB that the structure meets current health and safety provisions and has sufficient fire precautions.
16. Due to the size of the structure, it is recommended that Ceremonies do not exceed 25 attendees.
17. Each Ceremony should not last longer than two hours; which would allow enough time for attendees to arrive, the Marriage/Civil Partnership vows to be exchanged, and for post-Ceremony refreshments and photography to take place in agreed locations within the Park.
18. Staff would be required to handle the set-up and strike down of the event and to support the smooth running of the Ceremony.
19. A non-refundable deposit of 20% would be required for each booking, which will dissuade people from cancelling booked dates. As well as preventing any unnecessary inconveniencing of public visitors to the Park, it would avoid the loss of income from another potential hirer on that date. Bookings will only be confirmed once the deposit has been received and the Terms & Conditions agreed by both the hirer and the City of London.
20. There will be no vehicular access to the venue and on-site car parking would not be provided. There is sufficient on-street parking nearby and good access to public transport.
21. The three-year Wedding and Civil Partnership Venue licence fee is £600.00.
22. The LBB requires that public notice of the application will be given by advertisement in a local newspaper, with a period of three weeks for any objections. This cost would be £1,100.

23. In Year One, a 2-hour exclusive hire ceremony package would be priced at £720.00 (incl VAT) for weekday bookings and £960.00 (incl VAT) for weekend bookings. Charges in the first year would be considered introductory and would be reviewed at the end of the first year. Should the popularity of these ceremonies increase, consideration can be given to increasing the charges following the annual review.

24. Staffing cost is estimated at £177.40 per Ceremony, based on two Keepers working 2 hours and one Manager working 3 hours.

25. In Year One, it is suggested that a maximum of six Ceremonies be held on the Bandstand. Three Ceremonies could be held during the week (Monday to Friday) and three Ceremonies held on either a Saturday or Sunday. On this basis Year One projected net income is £775.60. Projections for Years One, Two and Three are shown in the table below. Figures are based on static venue hire costs over a three-year period.

	Estimated number of ceremonies	Estimated venue hire income	Estimated staff costs	Estimated expenditure (licence fee, advert and setup costs)	Net income generated
Year 1	6	£5,040.00	£1,064.40	£3,200.00	£775.60
Year 2	8	£6,720.00	£1,419.20	£0.00	£5,300.80
Year 3	10	£8,400.00	£1,774.00	£0.00	£6,626.00
	TOTAL				£12,702.40

Table 1 - Income Projections

26. It will be the responsibility of the couple to arrange the legal formalities of the occasion, including the hire of a Registrar to conduct the Ceremony. Therefore this element would not be included in the venue hire.

27. Booking fees and venue capacity will be reviewed annually by this Committee and the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee.

28. A detailed policy, together with the booking Terms & Conditions would be discussed with each couple making a booking, to ensure there is a clear understanding by all parties of what will be provided.

29. Ceremonies will take place during Park opening hours and will be concluded at least one hour before the Park closes.

30. There will be no refreshments offered as part of the package. The couple will be able to celebrate their civil partnership post-ceremony with an alcoholic drink. These refreshments will be provided by the couple. The erection of any structure including a gazebo or similar would not be permitted.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

31. This proposal links to the Open Spaces Business Plan strategic objective (2014/15) to generate income; *“improving our use of resources through increased income generation and improved procurement.”*

Implications

32. **Financial** - an initial outlay of £1,700 will be required for the licence application and the associated advertising costs. Spend for this will be taken from the Superintendent’s Local Risk Budget. In Year One a budget of £1,500 would be utilised from the Local Risk Budget to purchase furniture and ancillary items for the Ceremonies.

33. **Legal** – The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 allow Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies to take place in premises that are a seemly and dignified venue for the proceedings.

34. The hosting of Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies at Queen’s Park must not negatively impact on its primary purpose as a public open space for exercise and recreation.

35. **HR** – Resource would be utilised from the Queen’s Park Team to support the set-up and smooth running of the Ceremonies. Casual staff could be used, which would reduce the staff costs associated with these events.

36. **Property** – An increase in usage of this structure may see an increase in wear and tear. This will require monitoring with the support of the City Surveyors Department. Any additional maintenance costs arising could be met from the extra income generated from the Ceremonies.

Conclusion

37. Queen’s Park is a desirable venue for Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies, and the use of the Bandstand offers the opportunity to generate additional income from them.

38. Measures will be needed to ensure the City of London has a robust booking procedure in place.

39. Careful management of the Ceremonies on the Bandstand will avoid conflict with new and existing Park users.

40. There has been a steady demand for children’s parties on the Bandstand over the previous two years. It is envisaged that the demand for Marriage and Civil Partnership Ceremonies on the Bandstand will steadily grow. By offering this service to the community and wider London, we will promote the use of the City of London’s Open Spaces as a whole.

Appendices

None

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