

Committee(s)	Dated:
Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee - For Information	9 November 2015
Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee - For Decision	23 November 2015
Subject: Landscape improvement works at the Swain's Lane entrance into Parliament Hill Fields, Hampstead Heath.	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	For Information

Summary

This report informs Members on the proposed landscape improvement works at the Swain's Lane entrance into Parliament Hill Fields, Hampstead Heath. The intended works will be undertaken by the in-house teams from across the North London Open Spaces and external funding will be sought to finance elements of the work. The scheme will bring the rural feel of the Heath to the entrance.

Recommendation(s)

- That the Members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee note the proposals to improve the hard and soft landscaping works at the Swain's Lane entrance into Parliament Hill Fields.
- That the views of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee be conveyed to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee at their meeting on 23 November 2015.
- That the Members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee support the proposals.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Corporation has a duty under the Hampstead Heath Act 1871 to maintain the natural aspect of the Heath. An aspirational goal in the Hampstead Heath Management Plan for Parliament Hill Fields (B14) is to:

"Improve the natural appearance of this area and enhance it as the major gateway to the Heath. This will include the entrances from Highgate Road, Gordon House Road, Savernake Road and Nassington Road".

2. During the past seven years the following works have been implemented in the Parliament Hill Fields area to bring a rural feel to the southern entrance gateways onto the Heath :
 - Installation of wrought iron country estate railings at Savernake Road entrance.
 - Replacement of municipal metal fencing at Gordon House Road entrance with rustic timber estate fencing.
 - Hard and soft landscaping works at the Bull Path entrance.

Current Position

Swain's Lane Entrance

3. Swain's Lane is a busy entrance which is well used by residents, school children and people arriving at the Heath by bus. The entrance is next to a café and is directly in line with a zebra crossing.
4. Local residents have been complaining about the "*neglected and now unsightly appearance rats in the undergrowth ... the area being used on occasions as a latrine by some members of the public*".
5. Once inside the entrance the visual effect is gloomy due to dense shrubbery (that used to screen the demolished toilet block), the heavy tree canopy and the shrubbery running up to Meadow Lodge. There are also large areas of worn and compacted grass desire lines.



Map 1: Location of Swain's Lane Entrance

6. Appendix 1 show photographs of the existing municipal features and their condition and Appendix 2 is a plan of the existing layout of the Swain's Lane entrance.

Proposals

7. The proposal is to create a key welcoming point onto the rural Heath, as at present there is no genuine sense of arrival or a welcome for visitors. Advice was sought from a Landscape Architect and key staff on how best to design the entrance. Initial verbal comments were sought from members of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee during their walk on 4 July 2015 and members of the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee on their walk on 11 September 2015.
8. The following hard and soft landscape improvement works are proposed, which will form part of the 2015/16 Annual Work Programme:
 - Remove metal railings and replace with riven wood post and rail (figure 1, Appendix 1)
 - Remove galvanised rails and replace with two wooded removal posts (figure 2, Appendix 1)
 - Crown lifting and removal of overgrown and mature shrub planting. This will visually open the entrance and create views onto the Heath (figure 3, Appendix 1)
 - Plant native planting around gas infrastructure (figure 4, Appendix 1)
 - Removal of metal railings and gapping up hedge with native species (figure 5, Appendix 1)
 - Replacement of two concrete bollards with wooden bollards (figure 6, Appendix 1)
 - De-compaction and renovation of worn grass desire lines (figure 7, Appendix 1)
 - Cut back shrubbery and replant Berberis and Forsythia hedging with native plantings near Meadow Lodge (figure 8, Appendix 1).
 - Planting of new trees (oak, lime, plane) and removal of laburnum.
9. It is intended that the works will be carried out by the Division's in-house multi-skilled staff, including the Arboricultural, Gardening, Keeping and Technical Maintenance Teams.

Request for New Toilet Facilities

10. The Superintendent was approached by a Local Residents Association with a request to build new toilet facilities at the Swain's Lane entrance. The Superintendent's Local Risk Budget will be reducing over the next two years due

to the Service Based Review, and a series of projects have been identified to increase income and make operational efficiencies.

11. The Superintendent explained that the City was not in a position to be building additional facilities; rather, the requirement is to reduce the costs of the operational property associated with Hampstead Heath.
12. There are currently public toilet facilities near the Staff Yard, Athletics Track and children's play area in the Parliament Hill Fields Area.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

13. The works support the City of London Corporate Plan 2015-19 – KPP5 *“increasing the impact of the City's cultural and heritage offer on the life of London and the nation”*.
14. The design supports the Aspirational Goal B14 in the Hampstead Heath Management Plan Part 1 – Towards a Plan for the Heath 2007-2017.

Implications

15. It is estimated that the costs of the soft and hard landscaping will be £2,400.00, which will be met from the Superintendent's Local Risk Budget. Discussions will take place with local residents' groups to help sponsor the soft landscaping or contributing an element of the project.
16. There are no legal or property implications.

Conclusions

17. The works will improve the entrance to this important gateway into Parliament Hill Fields and will simplify and create a more coherent rural natural landscape, as defined by the Hampstead Heath Management Plan.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Photographs of the area - September 2015.
- Appendix 2 - Plan of existing layout.
- Appendix 3 - Plan of proposed hard and soft landscaping works.

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Appendix 1

Figure 1 – Remove metal railing and replace with wood post and rail.
(Note 1, appendix 3 - proposed layout).



Figure 2 – Remove galvanised rails and replace with wooden posts.
(Note 3, appendix 3 - proposed layout).



Figure 3 - Crown lifting and removal of overgrown shrubbery.
(Note 4, appendix 3 - proposed layout).



Figure 4 – Plant native shrub plantings to hide gas infrastructure
(Note 5, appendix 3 - proposed layout).



Figure 5 – Removal of metal railings and gapping up hedgerow with native species
(Notes 6 and 7, appendix 3 - proposed layout).



Figure 6 – Replacement of two concrete bollards with wooden bollards
(Note 9, appendix 3 - proposed layout).



Figure 7 - De-compaction and renovation of worn grass desire lines.
(Note 14, appendix 3 - proposed layout).



Figure 8 - Cut back shrubbery and replant Berberis and Forsythia hedging
(Note 15, appendix 3 - proposed layout).

