

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>	<b>Item no.</b>
Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee	11 <sup>th</sup> July 2011	
<b>Subject:</b> Management Work Plans for The Orchard and South Meadow	<b>Public</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Superintendent of Hampstead Heath	<b>For Discussion</b>	
<p><b><u>Summary</u></b></p> <p>This report presents detailed work plans for The Orchard and South Meadow.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>That the views of the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee be received on the detailed compartment management plans for The Orchard and South Meadow.</p>		

## **Main Report**

### **Background and current position**

1. In order to manage the Heath, it is necessary to prepare detailed documents stating how each area will be managed, in line with established policies. Such documents will then feed into the annual work programme. Management work plans are being prepared for key areas of the Heath; they will last for ten years, and will be reviewed thereafter, although alterations may be necessary sooner if unforeseen events arise.
2. Plans for the Upper Vale of Heath, the Viaduct Pond, Seven Sisters ponds, Third Hedge and Springett's Wood have previously been presented to the Management and Consultative Committees. This report presents two more plans, for the Orchard and South Meadows areas.

## **Proposals**

### ***The Orchard Management Work Plan:***

3. The Orchard is visually unusual, with its coppiced hazels and exceptional lines of beech trees. It makes a fine entrance to the Heath, contrasting dramatically with the adjacent urban environment.
4. The Orchard is attractive and provides valuable habitat for flora and fauna, and no major changes to the existing management practices are recommended. The area should continue to be managed largely as it has been over the past few years, with refinements to benefit the biodiversity and the historical aspect.
5. The Orchard requires regular coppice management to maintain open sunny areas, of particular benefit to the grass snake population.
6. Re-introducing fruit trees should be considered in the long term. A few fruit specimens are recommended to be planted in 2012.
7. The sycamores in a line towards the southern edge of the compartment should continue to be gradually removed.
8. The existing patch of wood anemone should be allowed to flourish and opportunity should be taken to establish further patches within the area.
9. Detailed proposals are listed in Section 3 of the Work Plan, which is attached as Appendix 1.

### ***South Meadow Management Work Plan***

10. South Meadow is also a visually distinct area, much of it being a complex mixture of trees and glades, contrasting with the extensive areas of uninterrupted woods and grasslands more typical of the Heath. It contains almost 50 veteran trees. It is particularly attractive.
11. The vision of the management plan is to retain the current character.
12. Grassland in the glades will be mown in order to keep these areas open. A fringe of bramble will be retained around the edges of the glades, but not allowed to expand further into the grassland.
13. Many of the trees are well-shaped, in contrast with many of the trees on the Heath, which are closely spaced and have narrow crowns. In order to maintain the good form of the best trees in South Meadow, it will

occasionally be necessary to fell competing trees in order to provide neighbouring ones room to develop. Felling one sycamore and one oak is proposed, with the need for further very limited removal being kept under review. Holly is becoming abundant in many areas, and it is proposed to reduce the quantity of this.

14. Bramble is an important habitat in itself, especially for birds, and provides seclusion and protection from people and dogs. It is the natural habitat of shade, and on the Heath its removal often leads to bare ground developing, with consequent dangers of erosion and compaction. It is proposed to retain bramble under trees except along footpaths or where there are patches of bluebells. The latter will be dead-hedged to reduce trampling.
15. A review of the veteran trees will be carried out and management work implemented to promote their survival.
16. Detailed proposals are listed in Section 3 of the Work Plan, which is attached as Appendix 2.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

17. All activities included within the management work plans will be undertaken using the Heath local risk budgets. There is a reputational risk in not pro-actively managing the natural aspect of the Heath. Left unchecked the mosaic of diverse habitats for which the Heath is renowned would be lost to secondary woodland cover.

### **Legal Implications**

18. The City has a duty under section 16 of the Hampstead Heath Act 1871 to preserve the natural aspect and state of the Heath.

### **Strategic Implications**

19. The proposals link to the theme in the Community Strategy to protect, promote and enhance our environment.
20. They also link to the Open Spaces Department Plan through the Strategic Aim to 'adopt sustainable working practices, promote the variety of life (biodiversity) and protect the Open Spaces for the enjoyment of future generations', and the Improvement Objective to 'ensure that measures to promote sustainability and biodiversity are embedded in the Department's work'.

21. These works also fulfil a number of Essential Actions in the Part 1 Management Plan, including:

*Retain and enhance the Heath's habitats and natural resources to enable continued quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the natural world by its visitors.*

*Manage the Heath's ponds to enhance their nature conservation value*

*Manage the Heath's woodlands and scrub to enhance their nature conservation value and improve their distinctiveness*

*Manage the Heath's hedgerows to enhance their nature conservation value*

*Balance the interests of recreation and ecological value/landscape character, including the value of sensitive habitats, through careful management techniques including dead hedging and judicious planting.*

## **Conclusion**

22. Ten-year management work plans are presented for two areas of the Heath: The Orchard and South Meadow.
23. The establishment of the aims and practices for managing these areas will feed into the annual work programmes for the appropriate years. The management work plans are subject to review at the end of the 10-year period, and sooner if unforeseen events occur.

## **Appendices:**

*Appendix 1: Draft 10-year Management Work Plan for the Orchard*

*Appendix 2: Draft 10-year Management Work Plan for South Meadow*

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