



Hampstead Heath

Registered Charity

(DRAFT) Hampstead Heath Bathing Ponds and Lido Annual Report 2020/21

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
2020/21 Swimming Season.....	2
Implementing the outcomes of the March 2020 Swimming Review.....	7
Next Steps.....	13
List of Appendices	14

Introduction

There are three Lifeguarded natural Bathing Ponds at Hampstead Heath. The Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond and Highgate Men's Bathing Pond are open all year round, and the Mixed Bathing Pond is Lifeguarded during the Summer season.

The Parliament Hill Lido is a Lifeguarded outdoor un-heated chlorinated 60m swimming pool which also opens all year round.

This annual update sets out:

- A summary of the 2020/21 Swimming Season and the measures put in place to enable the Bathing Ponds and Parliament Hill Fields Lido to open during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- The progress towards implementing the outcomes of the March 2020 Swimming Review.
- The arrangements for re-opening the Bathing Ponds and Lido on the 29 March 2021 and the Summer Swimming season, following the Government announcement on Monday 22 February 2021 and the publication of the Roadmap out of Lockdown.
- Topics for further discussion and the next steps.

2020/21 Swimming Season

This section sets the impacts of COVID-19 on swimming at the Bathing Ponds and Lido during 2020/21.

1. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic National Lockdowns, the Bathing Ponds and Lido have had to close several times as set out below:
 - Closed: 21 March - 10 July 2020 (due to First National Lockdown)
 - Open: 11 July - 13 July 2020 (advance booking in operation)
 - Closed: 14 July - 17 July (to update online booking system)
 - Open: 18 July - 20 September 2020 (advance booking in operation)
 - Open: 21 September - 4 November 2020 (with Capped Free Flow arrangements)
 - Closed: 5 November - 1 December 2020 (due to Second National Lockdown)
 - Open: 2 December 2020 - 4 January 2021 (with Capped Free Flow arrangements)
 - Closed: 5 January - 28 March 2021 (due to Third National Lockdown)
 - Open: 29 March 2021 (subject to Government Guidance)
2. During the first National Lockdown the Heath Team implemented temporary changes in order to make the Bathing Ponds and Lido COVID-19 Secure to enable re-opening. This included: new access arrangements at the Highgate Men's Bathing Pond; installation of additional signage; temporary barriers and one-way systems tailored to each swimming facility.

Summer Season (11 July – 20 September 2020)

3. In order to prevent unauthorised access, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage at the Bathing Ponds, the Lifeguards maintained a presence during what would have been their normal opening hours.
4. Dead hedging was also installed at weaker points around the perimeters of the Bathing Ponds. Unfortunately, after finding evidence of night-time incursions, contract Security Guards were employed to undertake patrols during the evenings and early mornings.

5. A part of the COVID-19 Secure Operational Arrangements, timed swimming sessions were introduced along with a reduced bathing and facility loading caps, which were tailored to each facility. This ensured the Bathing Ponds and Lido were not overwhelmed, and that Social Distancing requirements could be maintained.
6. Ahead of opening the facilities on 11 July 2020, a number of carefully controlled test sessions were undertaken to ensure the COVID-19 Secure Operational Arrangements were sufficient and user-friendly. Swimmers with varying access requirements took part in the test sessions to ensure the arrangements provided access for a wide range of swimmers, whilst following Government Guidance.
7. Session tickets were available to purchase via an on-line booking platform ahead of re-opening on 11 July 2020. Between 14 - 17 July 2020 the facilities closed whilst changes were made to the online booking arrangements, following swimmers feedback.
8. Consequently, session ticket sales were re-launched via Eventbrite on 17 July and swimming recommenced on 18 July 2020. Swimming session tickets were available to purchase in advance and a dedicated telephone booking line was introduced to ensure swimmers without internet access were not excluded from swimming.
9. Following re-opening on 18 July 2020, the bathing and facility loading caps were carefully monitored and it was possible to gradually increase the cap on the number of swimmers at each session, whilst maintaining the COVID-19 Secure Operational Arrangements.
10. A summary of the telephone bookings received is set out in table 1.
11. Due to the complexities around introducing timed sessions and pre-booking arrangements, it was not possible for Season Tickets to be used during the summer season, and sale of Season Tickets was suspended during this time.

Location	Number of session tickets booked via the telephone service
Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Ponds	604
Highgate Men's Bathing Ponds	139
Hampstead Mixed Bathing Ponds	87
Lido - Lane Swimming	89
Lido - Family	275
Total	1,194

Table 1 – Session tickets booked via telephone booking line

12. An online summer swimming questionnaire was released on 1 September 2020 to seek swimmers' feedback on their experiences during summer 2020, taking account of the adaptations that were necessary to comply with Government Guidance and to maintain social distancing. The survey was publicised via an e-newsletter, and the Heath's Twitter and Facebook social media feeds. A link to the questionnaire was also sent to nearly 11,000 people who had used the Eventbrite booking platform. The questionnaire closed on Friday 11 September 2020 and received 1,108 responses.
13. The questionnaire showed that the reasons people swim at Hampstead Heath were: the natural surroundings of the Bathing Ponds (79%); the benefits to physical health (84%); the benefits to mental health (93%) as a result of swimming outdoors. There was a mixture of feelings about the COVID-19 secure measures, including the advance booking system. Over 80% of respondents gave the COVID-19 safety measures a score of between seven and 10, with 10 ranked as 'excellent', while almost 60% rated the online booking system between seven and 10. Swimmers commented that the measures were too restrictive and removed the spontaneity of being able to swim without an advance plan. In contrast, swimmers commented that online booking resulted in a calmer atmosphere, in comparison to a busy summers day at the Bathing Ponds and Lido and felt it was a safe environment to swim in during the pandemic. The results of the questionnaire are attached at appendix 2.

Winter Season (21 September 2020 – 4 January 2021)

14. Due to the decline in demand for swimming during the colder months, arrangements were put in place to continue COVID-19 Secure swimming without timed sessions and pre-booking, by using Capped Free Flow arrangements. Under these arrangements entry is managed by the Steward up to the agreed facility capacity. Once capacity is reached, further entry is managed on a one in one out basis.
15. Ahead of the commencement of the Winter Swimming Season on 21 September 2020, Season Tickets were migrated to an activated wristband system and reissued to swimmers. To use the wristband, Season Ticket holders need to touch the card reader with their wristband when entering the Bathing Ponds or Lido. When touched in, the validity of the Season Ticket is confirmed and a time stamp created. The wristbands do not track the movements of swimmers and the anonymised time stamp data collected will be used to establish participation data. Where applicable, Season Tickets holders were credited for the number of days which their valid season ticket could not be used during the summer.
16. Season Tickets sales resumed between 4 December 2020 - 4 January 2021, and take-up of the wristbands has been higher than predicted. Table 2 sets out details of Season Ticket issued.
17. 2,442 season ticket wristbands have been issued, up to the 4 January 2021.

Season Ticket Type	12 Month	6 Month	1 Month	Total
All Facilities - Adult	264	39	0	303
All Facilities - Concession	86	5	0	91
All Facilities - Free Early Morning Swim for U16's & 60+	-	341	-	341
Lido - Adult	166	43	16	225
Lido - Concession	56	10	7	73
Bathing Ponds - Adult	664	356	-	1,020
Bathing Ponds - Concession	270	119	-	389

Table 2 – Season Tickets issued up to 4 January 2021.

18. Following feedback around the issue of the Free Morning Swim Season Ticket for swimmers aged 60+, the validity of these wristbands has been extended. Swimmers will not be required to renew their Season Ticket after 6 months.
19. Season Ticket wristbands can be purchased online from the City of London Corporation website. For swimmers with no online access, a paper form is available at the Bathing Ponds, Lido and Parliament Hill Office. Card payments can be made at all of these locations. Cash payments for Season Tickets can be made at the Lido and Parliament Hill Office. Season Tickets can be renewed online by completing a paper form.
20. Contactless payment has also been introduced at the Bathing Ponds since the start of the winter season allowing swimmers to turn up, pay and swim. The option for cash payment is also accepted at the Bathing Ponds and Lido. Although, it isn't possible to provide change at the Bathing Ponds.
21. Alongside contactless payment and the activated wristbands, a Heath App has been developed. This enables wristbands to be managed by the account holder and also provides the functionality for the City Corporation to message Season Ticket holders to provide a range information, such as closures and renewal alerts.
22. In order to provide additional capacity for swimming in the Autumn, the Mixed Bathing Pond was kept open to the public for an additional six weeks until 25 October 2020. This proved popular in part due to warm weather, and the Mixed Pond remained busy, especially at weekends, until it closed on the 25 October. On 28 October 2020, the Winter Swimming Club commenced their licenced swimming arrangements.
23. Table 3 sets out the number of swims at the Bathing Ponds and Lido between 18 July 2020 and 4 January 2021.

Opening Period	Number of Swims
18 July – 20 September 2020	124,776
21 September - 4 November 2020 & 2 December 2020– 4 January 2021	35,396
Total Swims	160,172

Table 3 – Number of swims 18 July 2020 - 4 January 2021.

Children's swimming access

24. Following Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) Guidance in relation to minimising risk, swimmers aged 8-15 were not able to swim at the Bathing Ponds during summer 2020. However, dedicated family sessions were available at the Lido to enable children to swim when accompanied by an adult.

Water Quality Testing & Pollution

25. The Environment Agency (EA) has responsibility for monitoring and protecting designated bathing water across England. Normally, during the summer months the EA test the water quality at the Bathing Ponds weekly and post the results on their website. Due to COVID-19, the EA significantly reduced their testing regime on inland bathing waters that normally meet 'good' or 'excellent' standards, which includes the Bathing Ponds on Hampstead Heath.
26. The City Corporation undertook independent water sample testing on 24 June, 1 July and 16 July, ahead of reopening the Bathing Ponds, as the EA had yet to resume its testing programme. The EA subsequently resumed monthly testing in late July.
27. On 17 September 2020, following a sewage surcharge, the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond was closed. The surcharge was reported to the EA and Thames Water, who maintain the foul sewer network. Thames Water used specialist root cutting equipment to clear the blockage that had caused the sewer to surcharge. This work took place on 17 - 18 September 2020. Thames Water reported an 80% blockage of the sewer comprising of tree roots, north of the Ladies' Bathing Pond Meadow. The section of sewer was subsequently surveyed to ensure there were no further defects that required immediate action. Following the incident Thames Water established a programme of works across the sewer network.
28. As of 12 March 2021, Thames Water confirmed they have completed further patch repairs, and that further sewer lining works will be undertaken in March 2021.
29. Following this pollution incident, the City Corporation commissioned daily tests at the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond and the results of these tests plus the results from the Highgate Men's Bathing Pond and Hampstead Mixed Bathing Pond are available at: <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets/Green-Spaces/hampstead-heath-water-quality-report.pdf>. The learning from these incidents has been embedded into the Safe Systems of Work for the Bathing Ponds.

30. Swimming at the Kenwood Ladies Bathing Pond resumed on 26 September 2020 following satisfactory water quality test results. Unfortunately, the Bathing Pond was closed again between 4 - 9 October 2020 due to unsatisfactory water quality test results.
31. Water quality testing continues to be undertaken on a weekly basis. Further information around this pollution incident, and the actions taken in response are set out at: <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/where-to-go-at-hampstead-heath/kenwood-ladies-pond>

Lido Leak

32. Investigations into a leak at the Lido have been on-going for a number of years. A number of non-invasive investigations and fixes to resolve the leak have been attempted but proved un-successful.
33. Further, more invasive investigative works to detect and fix the leak, commenced on 16 January 2021. Following excavations, leaks were detected on one of the pipes connecting the deep end outlets to the plant room filters. Works to replace and update the pipework and flanges have been completed and following checks, the filtration system is operating correctly. Re-instatement works are due to be completed on 15 March 2021. This project has been successfully undertaken during a challenging period. The City Surveyors Department have been instrumental in supporting and arranging these works. The Contractor worked through difficult weather conditions and maintained COVID-19 Secure working arrangements.

Implementing the outcomes of the March 2020 Swimming Review

This section sets out our progress towards implementing the outcomes from the March 2020 Swimming Review.

Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work

34. Extensive reviews of the Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work for the Bathing Ponds and Lido were undertaken during the First National Lockdown, to inform re-opening on 11 July 2020. The reviews took into consideration the outcomes of the March 2020 Swimming Review and the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Advice. In addition, COVID-19 Secure Operational Arrangements were developed and incorporate industry guidance from Sport England, Public Health England and the RLSS.
35. Further reviews of the Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work are in progress and will be completed before re-opening on 29 March 2021.
36. Procedures to record assisted rescues, lifesaving rescues and incidents at the Bathing Ponds and Lido in real time are being developed, ahead of the commencement of swimming on the 29 March 2021, to inform decision making.

Preventing unauthorised access

37. During the summer months, a variety of safety signage was installed around the ponds. A targeted approach was implemented to discourage swimming in the non-Lifeguarded Ponds and to engage with members of the public around the associated dangers.
38. At the Model Boating Pond, large banners were placed on Heras fencing panels at strategic locations. Whilst at the Vale of Health Pond signage was placed on wooden stakes within the pond and the Constabulary engaged with people taking part in un-authorised swimming.
39. A range of fencing repairs have taken place along the Highgate Chain and further works are being progressed along the Hampstead Chain.
40. Volunteers from Heath Hands have worked with staff on a variety of habitat and wetland management projects from the Annual Work Programme around the Ponds and assisted the Ranger Team make landscaping improvements within the Kenwood Ladies' Bathing Pond.

Lifeguard Training

41. All Lifeguards have completed RLSS COVID-19 training sessions and the Open Water Training Programme. External validation will be undertaken during April/May 2021. Equality and Inclusion, Transgender Awareness and Unconscious Bias training also forms part of the Lifeguard's Personal Development Objectives.
42. In preparation for re-opening on 29 March 2021, Lifeguards will receive intensive refresher training around use of the rescue equipment and rescue craft. As well as resuscitation protocols and the COVID-19 Secure operating arrangements.

Additional Lifeguards

43. In accordance with the HSE advice received in October 2019, additional Lifeguards have been employed, and since re-opening on 11 July 2020 a minimum of 3 Lifeguards have been on duty at each facility to allow for breaks and rotation of duties to maintain alertness.
44. At the Bathing Ponds the introduction of meaningful breaks away from the water has greatly improved staff morale and has enabled the Lifeguards to maintain their alertness.

Operational Issues

45. A new City of London website was launched in July 2020, which included new swimming information pages. Social Media and a swimming mailing list have been used to regularly provide updates on matters relating to the Bathing Ponds and Lido. A designated email address, HH-swimming@cityoflondon.gov.uk, has also been set up so the public can get in touch with specific questions on swimming.

Additional Heath Rangers

46. In response to the outcomes from the March 2020 Swimming Review, Stewards have been deployed at the Bathing Ponds to ensure the primary role of Lifeguards is focussed on bather safety. As a result of COVID-19 it has proved more efficient to keep this role within the Swimming Team.
47. The Stewards role includes managing and facilitating entry to the Bathing Ponds, providing information, supporting swimmers with the payment arrangements, responding to incidents within the facilities, liaising with other Heath staff and the Emergency Services, cleaning and assisting with the operation of the Bathing Ponds.
48. The role of the Stewards has been instrumental to successfully implementing the COVID-19 Secure Operational Arrangements and making sure swimmers feel welcomed and safe, especially over the summer months.

Contactless Payment Technology

49. Contactless payment technology has been successfully introduced at the Bathing Ponds and had been in operation since September 2020. Wi-Fi has also been installed and has improved the speed and stability of the internet connections to support the contactless payment technology.
50. The Wi-Fi connection at the Ladies' Bathing Pond has also improved the mobile signal which is critical for communications with the Emergency Services.

Applied Charges

51. At the Bathing Ponds, applied charges have been implemented since opening on 11 July 2020. As set out in the March 2020 Swimming review, the swimming charges for the Bathing Ponds and Lido have been included in the annual review of the Heath's fees and charges which took place during Winter 2020/21.
52. Following consultation, the Hampstead Heath Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee agreed to increase the majority charges by 1.3% from the 1 April 2021. However, the Bathing Pond Concession Season Tickets prices have increased to align with 40% discount on the adult price. Cash payments options have been retained at the Bathing Ponds and Lido.

Income and Expenditure (11 month review)

53. Table 4 sets out the income and expenditure at the Bathing Ponds and Lido for the period of April 2020 - February 2021.

Bathing Ponds and Lido	£
Employee Costs	£983,477
Operational Expenditure	£301,731
Total Expenditure	£1,285,208
Income (Online booking fees and VAT have been deducted)	£533,505
Funding allocated from the Heath Local Risk Budget	£751,703

Table 4 - Income and expenditure at the Bathing Ponds and Lido for the period of April 2020 - February 2021

54. Further analysis of income and expenditure for the Bathing Ponds and Lido will be undertaken at the end of the current financial year to fully assess the impact of COVID-19 on income and expenditure and the Hampstead Heath Charity.

Support Scheme

55. An outcome of the March 2020 Swimming Review was to consider the establishment of a Support Fund. A further report was discussed and agreed by the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee in September 2020, and a Support Scheme was approved, which comprises of the following elements:

- Concessions and Free Swimming - A comprehensive range of concessions which provide a 40% discount of the adult ticket rate are available. Concessions apply to people in receipt of State Benefits including: Universal Credit, Job Seekers Allowance, Personal Independence Payments and Housing Benefit as well as people with a Freedom Pass; Disabled Card; Students and Under 16's.
 - A free morning swim until 9.30am is available for under 16's and 60+.
 - During the Summer 2020 free Carer access was introduced to enable swimmers to be accompanied where required. Swimmers or Carers can apply for a free wristband using the Season Ticket application form.
 - Officers continue to engage with Local Authorities and other Partners, such as the NHS to make them aware that free and concession swimming opportunities are available on Hampstead Heath.
- Working with Partners (Health Connections) - Officers have established connections with the local Clinical Commissioning Group, GP's, Social Prescribers, Heath Hands and Global Generation. This group has an emerging vision of a river of connections flowing through Camden from Hampstead Heath to Kings Cross, much like the river Fleet.
 - In partnership we are working to map facilities and opportunities that are available to establish a framework to support the healthy growth of our communities and particularly different groups who experience more exclusion or disadvantage than others.
 - In addition, the Heath Team will continue to work with a number of groups to facilitate free and discounted swimming. In 2020, this included play schemes, schools and migrant and refugee children, who were able to swim at the Lido.
- Volunteering - By volunteering on the Heath with our volunteer partner, Heath Hands, individuals are able to access day and season tickets for a range of activities, including swimming.

Property

56. A Capital Project relating to safety, access and security issues across the three Bathing Ponds and the Parliament Hill Fields Lido has approved funding of £755,000 from the City of London Corporation Capital Works Programme. Stakeholders will be engaged throughout the development and implementation of the project.
57. The City Surveyor's Department Cyclical Works Programme funding for 2021/22 is being prioritised towards safety related projects across the Bathing Ponds and Lido.

Updating the Swimming Regulations

58. The review of the Swimming Regulations has yet to be undertaken. Officers propose to commence the review during 2021/22.

Lido Fence Planning Application

59. The Planning Application and historic building consent for a temporary fence and perimeter lighting at the Lido was modified during 2020, following discussion with the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee. The installation of a temporary fence for the summer period was not required, in part as a result of the introduction of Social Distancing measures related to COVID-19 during 2020. Therefore, only planning consent for perimeter lighting was progressed and subsequently approved. Officers are looking into other methods to protect the Lido from un-authorised access, including additional planting, re-locating electrical boxes and security patrols of the perimeter.

Looking forward to the 2021 Summer Swimming Season

The Bathing Ponds and Lido will re-open, after the Third National Lockdown on 29 March 2021, this section sets out the arrangements for the return of swimming at Hampstead Heath, in accordance with the latest Government Guidance.

60. Season Ticket wristbands will automatically be extended by the number of days a valid Season Ticket was held during the time the Bathing Ponds and Lido were closed during the Third National Lockdown. Ahead of re-opening, Season Ticket sales resumed on 10 March 2021.
61. Initially, when the Bathing Ponds and Lido open on 29 March 2021 Capped Free Flow arrangements will be put in place.
62. Ahead of the commencement of the 2021 Summer Swimming Season, Officers will review the success of the Capped Free Flow arrangements during the first month of operation, which will include the Easter Bank Holiday weekend. If Social Distancing measures can be effectively maintained, the Bathing Ponds and Lido will continue to operate with Capped Free Flow for the Morning Session (last entry at 09.30) from 1 May 2021, with pre-booked sessions operating during peak hours.

63. Sessions can be re-booked and paid for using Eventbrite or a dedicated telephone booking line (020 7332 3779). Arrangements have been put in place for 2021 to allow Season Tickets to be used during the summer season. Season Ticket holders will be able to pre-book, without making a payment, by using Eventbrite or the dedicated telephone booking line and will be asked to bring their Season Ticket wristband when attending a session.
64. The dedicated telephone booking line will be in place during the mornings to assist swimmers who are not able to make a booking using Eventbrite. There is a risk that the telephone booking line could be overwhelmed if swimmers who can book online attempt to use this service, which will impact on swimmers who rely on the telephone service.
65. During 2021, there will be trial of an extended summer season at the Mixed Bathing Pond. The Pond will be Lifeguarded from 29 March - 31 October 2021. This will significantly increase the capacity for swimming on the Heath. The trial will be reviewed in November 2021 to inform the arrangements for 2022.

Discussion Topics

This section sets out a number of discussion items, and Officers welcome feedback and suggestions.

Reintroducing Swim Tests at the Bathing Ponds

66. Swimmers aged 8-15 swim are able to swim at the Lido where family and all-comers sessions are available. However, in order to provide further opportunities for swimmers aged 8-15, it is proposed to re-introduce swim test at the Bathing Ponds.
 - It is proposed that specific sessions are set aside to facilitate free swim tests. The swim tests could be booked on-line or via the dedicated telephone booking line. Views and feedback are sought on the proposal to allocate specific sessions for swim tests to take place. The swim test sessions could be programmed for weekends and during school holidays.

Free Morning Swim for Under 16's and 60+

67. A range of feedback has been received in relation to the Free Morning Swim arrangements.
 - Views are sought in relation age eligibility for the free morning swim and the timing of the free morning swim.

Free & Discounted Swimming

68. We welcome feedback on underrepresented groups and organisations, who would benefit from free and discounted swimming.

Season Ticket

69. The impact of the National Lockdowns has meant that some Season Tickets no longer align with the summer and winter swimming seasons.
- We welcome feedback on proposals to re-align the Season Tickets with the Swimming Seasons and to have a 7 month Summer Season Ticket and a 5 month Winter Season Ticket. It is proposed that the 12 month Season Ticket would be retained.

Conclusion

70. Significant progress has been made towards implementing the Outcomes of the March 2020 Swimming Review, and this has been critical to maintaining safe access for swimming during a very challenging year. Over 160,000 swims have been facilitated across the Bathing Ponds and Lido. We are delighted that these arrangements have also provided opportunities for children and families to swim at the Lido.
71. Further analysis of income and expenditure for the Bathing Ponds and Lido will be undertaken at the end of the current financial year. We will continue to assess the impact on the Heath Charity, and work towards securing the long-term sustainability of swimming on Hampstead Heath.
72. The Lifeguards have felt confident in being able to support swimmers accessing the Bathing Ponds and Lido in a safe and welcoming environment. This has positively impacted their moral and wellbeing. Carefully easing the COVID-19 Secure Operating Arrangements and continuing to manage the Bathing Load remain critical as we welcome swimmers back to the Bathing Ponds and Lido in 2021.

Next Steps

Taking account of the feedback from the Swimming Associations and the Hampstead Heath Sports Advisory Forum an updated report will be presented to the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee on the 19 April 2021. A further report will then be presented to the Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park Committee on 26 May 2021.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of Swimming Survey Feedback.

Bob Warnock

Superintendent of Hampstead Heath

12 March 2021

This is one of
14 green spaces
managed by the
City of London at
little cost to the
general public.

DRAFT