

Heath Ponds – an appeal for your help

As our close friends and neighbours, who share our love of Hampstead Heath, Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association members may be as concerned as Heath & Hampstead Society members are about the City's proposals to build large new dams and embankments on the Heath ponds. These massive structures – up to 18 feet tall – would radically alter and disfigure large parts of London's greatest open space – our precious Hampstead Heath.

Our small Heath ponds are being treated as if they were vast reservoirs and these over-engineered plans will completely change the landscape in direct contravention of the Hampstead Heath Act of 1871.

The City's proposals have been justified by what we believe are grossly exaggerated claims of 'risk to life', with talk of an instantaneous collapse of all the existing dams in an imagined storm of biblical proportions, leading to 1,400 deaths.

The risk assessment criteria are not evidence based but 'invented' by experts using computer models.

The Environment Agency says: "few catastrophic failures (of reservoir dams) have occurred in Great Britain, and since 1925 there has been no loss of life due to dam disasters in the UK." AECOM Technology Corporation, who peer-reviewed the City's plans, have questioned many of their assumptions, in particular: "assuming an instantaneous breach of an embankment dam is felt to be unrealistic." Moreover the City admits in its Hampstead Heath Management Committee Reports that the proposed new dams will not stop flooding in the future "in the area downstream after the work is complete."

The public, who are to have this protection forced upon them, have never been asked whether they want it. And at a recent public meeting held by Camden Council's Development Management Forum a large audience was almost unanimous in its opposition to these proposals.

After two years of fruitless negotiations with the City and its engineers, the Heath & Hampstead Society now feels it

has no alternative but to seek a judicial review to try to stop this proposed mutilation of the Ponds Landscape.

We have consulted Leading Counsel in environmental and reservoir safety law, who, after an extensive review of all the papers believes that we have a "well arguable case" that the City's legal advice is wrong. We are also aware of support for that view from others in the legal profession.

Our legal costs will be in the order of £90,000. Under the Aarhus convention governing legal disputes relating to the environment in the public interest, we expect to have legal protection limiting to £10,000 the amount of our opponents' (the City's) costs, should they be awarded against us.

We hope that RA members share our view that these plans must be challenged and will wish to show support by donating to our Judicial Review Appeal Fund. We ask you to be as generous as possible, but all contributions however small will be gratefully received. Details about how to donate can be found on our website together with more information – www.heathandhampstead.org.uk.

The City of London plans to fell 162 healthy mature trees on Hampstead Heath as part of its Ponds Project including all but one of the trees you can see pictured of the Stock Pond nature reserve. More information and a link to the petition against the planning application can be found at www.ProtectOurPonds.org.uk.

HELEN MARCUS
HEATH & HAMPSTEAD SOCIETY



Rothenburg, the Suburb's inspiration

Inspired by Raymond Unwin's interest in the planning and architecture of German medieval hill towns, the Trust, along with members of the Residents Association and led by Richard Webber of the Highgate Society, ran a study trip to the Bavarian town of Rothenburg in May.

Unwin used elements of the Rothenburg townscape to inform parts of his new Suburb in Hampstead. He was influenced by the Austrian town planner Camillo Sitte, who mentioned Rothenburg in his own writings, and he was also impressed by German developments in modern town planning, particularly Garden Cities.

Germany was early to promote Garden City planning in Europe and Unwin was as influential in Germany as the country was to him. His 'Town Planning in Practice' was first published simultaneously in London and Leipzig.

Many illustrations from Rothenburg were introduced into Town Planning in Practice.

These photos were given to the participants on the trip, who searched out the depicted views to see how they had changed. Unwin's attraction to the arrangement of streets, squares, arcades and gateways of Rothenburg have apparent and notable influences around the Suburb.

Our group was welcomed to Rothenburg on 20 May by members of the local tourist board and civic conservation professionals. The three-day trip featured walking tours and informative talks around the town, including a Nightwatchman's tour and briefings from Michael Knappe, the town's Conservation Manager.

The group of 20 participants, comprising mostly of Suburb residents, were granted exclusive access to conservation projects,

and climbed scaffolding to see repairs to a medieval timber framed house and a timber roof in the main square.

The trip concluded with a well-attended evening lecture by the Trust's Architectural Adviser, David Davidson, which had attracted the attention of several local newspapers, city councillors and townspeople.

Following the success of this visit, the Trust has been contacted by a group of German students and a group of townsfolk keen to foster links between the Suburb and Rothenburg, and to learn about the Trust's conservation work.

David Davidson said of the study tour on his return that "Throughout our stay we were made very welcome by everyone we met. I would recommend a visit to Rothenburg to all residents."



New parking restrictions

Residents should be aware that new parking restrictions have been proposed and are likely to be introduced shortly in the vicinity of The Market Place. In particular these will affect Kingsley Way, Northway, Ossulton Way, Hill Rise and Greenhalgh Walk whose junctions with the A1 are currently administered by Transport for London (TfL) rather than Barnet. These sections, currently marked with red line restrictions, have been unenforceable for some time due to inaccuracies in TfL's Traffic Management Order (the legal instrument used to create a parking restriction).

It appears that the problem of the defective TMO will be resolved by Barnet taking control of the sections in question and replacing the red lines with double yellows which will carry a twenty-four hour parking restriction. Double yellow lines are less restrictive than red lines

which prohibit stopping for any purpose so in theory controls in these areas will be slightly relaxed. However as the existing red lines cannot be enforced residents would be wise to expect more rather than less rigorous control under the new regime.

In addition to taking over the former TfL sections, Barnet will add a length of single yellow line in Kingsley Way and Northway. This will carry a prohibition between 7-9.30 am and 4-6.30 pm Monday to Friday. The Council's plan indicates that in Kingsley Way this will operate on both sides of the road but that parking should continue to be available outside the shops for most of the day. In Northway it appears that the line will operate on the east side of the road to a point roughly halfway between Café Toulouse (on the opposite side) and the bridge over Mutton Brook.

GARY SHAW

Open House London

The 2014 Open House London event takes place on the weekend of Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 September. Hundreds of buildings and sites, not normally accessible to the public will be open, free of charge, in celebration of London's architecture and heritage.

Hampstead Garden Suburb will again be taking part in the event, through the support of the RA, the Trust and the Free Church. Almost alone among London boroughs, Barnet declined. We will be welcoming visitors to St Judes and the Free Church on both days, whilst the Friends Meeting House will be open on the Sunday. In addition there will be two Guided Walks of the Suburb on Sunday afternoon.

Full details of the event across London are shown in the Open House London Programme, which is to be published on 15 August. This will be available free to residents from the Community Library and the Trust offices.

Residents wishing to ensure that they have a 'priority' copy of the Programme by publication day should order one directly from Open House London, by 8 August, either online at www.openhouselondon.org.uk/guide, or by post from Open House, 18 Ensign St, London E1 8JD.

The cost of the Programme ordered directly from Open House (or bought from associated Booksellers and Galleries) will be £7.50.

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