**Paper for the Annual General Meeting of Monken Hadley Common Trust**

**On Monday 28 October 2024**

**Report from the Curators**

**1. Management Plan 2024-29**

In February the Trust published its five-year management plan for the Common, which is available on the Trust’s website. Since then the curators, working with our conservation volunteers, have endeavoured to maintain the Common in accordance with the principles, objectives and goals set out in the plan.

**2. Conservation Volunteer activity**

2.1 We currently have a team of more than 20 volunteers and are continuing with two work groups each week, on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. We have welcomed several new recruits. The enthusiasm, energy and commitment of the volunteers have been essential in keeping the Common in good order. Tasks have been varied, although management of the incursion of brambles onto grassland, over paths and into ditches has been a recurring activity.

2.2 In the past year volunteer groups have:

* Removed litter from the Common, some of which is distasteful
* Maintained the auxiliary spillway at Jacks Lake, cleared the stream below the lake at its southern end and cleaned and repointed the weir.
* Removed blockages of branches, logs and fallen leaves from the main watercourses and ditches
* Kept the main pathways clear of fallen trees and branches and strimmed grass around gates and to maintain roadside verges
* Felled some smaller dead trees near paths or boundaries
* Kept the war memorial area tidy and attractive
* Cleared the west boundary ditch in front of Mount House school
* Removed and disposed of invasive weed from the pond in front of Gladsmuir.
* Maintained the wooden sleeper bridges in the woodlands
* Recoated the volunteers’ tool shed in the grounds of Church House and removed accumulated rubbish nearby by skip
* Washed down four sets of white gates and repainted those at the Camlet Way entrance to the Common
* Applied preservative to wooden gates near JCOS school and to benches beside the bridle path
* Moved and stacked fly-tipped rubbish from the woodland beside Bakers Hill, the car park and elsewhere for local authority collection

During the year the volunteers enjoyed a pre-Christmas drinks and buffet and a summer get-together and review meeting which were kindly hosted by Sue Sullivan at her house.

**3. Summer classical concerts**

This summer a local singer, Ilona Domnich, has once again organised and staged short open-air concerts at Jacks Lake, featuring both professional musicians and some of her students. This year there has been a closer partnership with the Trust, which has supported her by attracting sponsorship for the series. There were three events this year in June, July and August and members of the volunteers and Hadley Angling and Preservation Society were involved in setting up and packing away equipment and in stewarding. Attendance is influenced by weather conditions but all three were performances of high standard in an enchanting setting. They were a valuable opportunity to raise the Trust’s profile, with proceeds supporting the Trust and the World Heart Beat music academy. For a significant number of those attending it was their first visit to Jack’s Lake. The Trust organised a small thank you event for those involved in September. It is envisaged that more such concerts will take place in 2025.

**4. Liaison with LB Barnet**

4.1 With limited regular sources of income, the Trust is aware that the long-term upkeep of the Common and future larger projects will be dependent on membership fees and attracting donations and grant funding, including support from the local authority.

4.2 To strengthen relations and improve understanding of the Common and the Trust, this spring the treasurer and curators invited first the ward Councillor for Barnet Vale, Richard Barnes and then the Councillor for East Barnet Ward, Edith David, to visit. In the course of these walks we discussed our thoughts on projects that we might put forward for funding under the Community Infrastructure Levy. Following her visit Councillor David:

* Advised us of a source of funding from the local authority for new litter bins at Jacks Lake to replace the rusted tanks used for this purpose. Our application was successful and in September volunteers and a HAPS bailiff installed six new bins.
* Put us in touch with Mark Sumner, Public Rights of Way Officer at LB Barnet. Mark visited the Common with us in May and we made the case for improving the surface of the bridleway from the railway bridge to Games Road, which is the responsibility of the local authority. Improvements by contractors for the local authority were done this summer. We are pleased with the overall results and will monitor and provide feedback to Mark on how well the new surface withstands heavy rainfall.

**5. Management of traffic and parking**

5.1 The wooden bollards beside Camlet Way installed in 2023 appear to be continuing to deter motorists parking on the verges or attempting short-cuts across the grassland to avoid congestion at the junction of Camlet Way and Hadley Common Road. This year we have installed some additional bollards close to the white gates at Camlet Way, to prevent off-road parking. We have improved the surface of and entrance to the car park at Bakers Hill to encourage motorists to park there rather than on the woodland verge. We will soon install new bollards alongside Bakers Hill to further discourage parking beside the road and have put up notices giving advance warning of this.

5.2 On 7 October the curators accompanied the secretary to a meeting with the head and bursar of Mount House School to discuss options for improving the arrangements for parking coaches at school drop-off and pick-up times. We expressed our continued willingness to consider options they might put forward. The head has since emailed local councillors and other stakeholders to try and establish a dialogue with the local authority on this issue.

5.3 Some of the vehicles using the Common as a through route are too large for the roads. The curators have been in email correspondence with local councillors, Barnet and Enfield, around a proposal to limit vehicle size through the Hadley Road gates. The matter is outstanding.

**6. Management of woodlands**

We are continuing to use the services of both conservation volunteers and professional tree surgeons to manage dead or diseased trees in a dangerous condition. We have:

* Reduced or felled trees in dangerous condition, including some near roads or schools, having first gained relevant permissions from LB Barnet.
* Responded to owners of neighbouring properties who have expressed particular concerns about trees close to their boundaries, taking action where necessary
* Inspected trees near schools and places of high footfall for Oak Processionary Moth nests. We have put up notices where these have been identified, but in keeping with practice in other wooded areas we are no longer removing identified nests as a matter of course.
* Inspected trees near paths and boundaries. In August the curators inspected trees throughout the woods with our arboriculturist. We identified some 80 trees that we considered would need attention or close monitoring and prioritised these according to assessed urgency. We are currently awaiting a quote for dealing with the most urgent cases.

**7. Parkgate Road/Parkgate Crescent flood alleviation scheme**.

7.1 Throughout the year we have kept in touch with LB Enfield about their scheme to divert surface water onto the Common for gradual release and to create a new bund to improve the pedestrian route around the area.

7.2 We understand that LB Enfield has a deadline of 31 March 2025 to complete the project. However progress has been slow. The curators met with representatives of LB Enfield and with Kevin Barton of Robert Bray Associates (landscape architects identified by LB Enfield to advise MHCT about the project), twice, on 7 May on-line and in person on site on 18 July. Kevin’s brief is:

* To review design information to confirm that the design and project plan for the works take full account of any risks to the Common and the Trust and that these risks are satisfactorily mitigated
* To review the proposed up-front payment to be made to the trustees and confirm whether it will be sufficient to cover future liabilities.
* To visit the site at practical completion to confirm that these mitigations are delivered in the scheme as built.

7.3 We are still awaiting Kevin’s report. LB Barnet has given planning permission for the scheme, but we understand that approval under S38 of the Commons Act 2006 is still awaited. We have commented on a draft easement for the works provided by LB Enfield lawyers. Although we have no wish to be obstructive, we have not felt able to approve a commencement of tree felling for the project before relevant approvals have been granted.

7.4 As a condition of planning permission LB Enfield has made some trial archeological excavations in the works area. These did not reveal anything of historical significance. The only finds were all from topsoil in one of the trenches dug and comprised a chip of Refined Whiteware (1800 – 1900+), much of a twentieth century pressed green glass sauce bottle and a copper gas pipe fitting.

**8. Jacks Lake**

We have this year continued to monitor the area of weakness in the embankment at the southern end of Jacks Lake. High levels of water in the lake throughout the year prevented any further attempts by HAPS at remediation of the bank. In October we arranged an inspection by the Rothen Group, specialists in waterway maintenance and repair. They demonstrated an understanding of the problem and advised on options for solutions. We await their report and a price for these works and remediation of the auxiliary sluice. It is hoped that it will be possible for these works to be done next spring. The Trust will need to explore options for funding.

**9. White Gates**

9.1The curators have sought advice on a repair and maintenance plan for the five sets of white gates at the main entrances to the Common. Following a high quote for a full survey by one company that has worked on them in the past, in September the curators met a representative of Barnes Joinery (a local firm who have also worked on the gates in the past) to assess work needed.

9.2 In our discussion he felt that the gates were in generally sound condition and that our cleaning and repainting work had been effective. He considered that now many areas of minor damage could be resolved with a high performance filler and that the work could be done by volunteers. The kissing gate at Games Road and at least two of the posts on the gate at the Crescent however require replacement. We await his report on his visit and indicative quotes for the joinery.

**10. The Pound**

For the longer term, the curators have given some preliminary thinking to the feasibility of better marking the site of the old animal pound on Hadley Common Road, which is a significant feature in the history and heritage of the Common. We could request quotes for a structure to replace that which was reconstructed with support from Spike Milligan in the 1970s. Alternatively the Trust could itself purchase materials with conservation volunteers then building a fitting structure. This could possibly be linked to a specific fund raising project, or grant application.