



Wimbledon Park Lake Reservoir Safety and Desilting Project

The lake in Wimbledon Park dates to 1765 when it was created for the first Earl Spencer as the central feature of a landscaped park in front of the family's mansion house located on the high ground up what is now Church Road towards Wimbledon Village.

Responsibility for design was given to Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, who was, then and still now, acknowledged as one of England's foremost landscape architects. 'Capability' Brown spent some 20 years transforming the formal Renaissance gardens into a more natural landscapes, including building a dam across the valley to convert a marshy stream and surrounding bog into an impressive 30-acre lake.

The lake passed into public ownership in the early 20th Century, when it was purchased by the forerunner of Merton Council. Since then the lake has been used primarily as a reservoir and for leisure purposes including swimming, water sports and angling. The council has a Statutory and legal obligation to maintain the reservoir under Section 10 of the Reservoirs Act, 1975.

Over the 250 years of its existence the lake has acquired substantial quantities of silt and the time has now arrived when de-silting needs to take place. This process is required both to restore the depth and quality of the water and to manage the risk of flooding downstream.

In anticipation of what will be a complex, multi-layered operation, the Council has established a Technical Steering Group to co-ordinate and deliver the required remedial works and improvements to the lake to meet its statutory obligations and duties (reservoir safety, flood risk, amenities, heritage protection and biodiversity), as well as seeking out opportunities to enhance the lake as a key component of the landscape in line with the Wimbledon Park Masterplan.

The Group is composed of representatives from the Merton and Wandsworth Council's own experts in ecology and flood risk, as well as representatives from landowners, leaseholders and organisations with specific technical knowledge and skills for such specialist works, including the Environment Agency and Historic England.

Much of the initial work will be centred on the establishing the scope of the project and the commissioning of a number of studies to enhance further the understanding of the lake's physical and ecological infrastructure as well as land forms and matters of a historical nature.

It is intended that all surveys will be made publicly available through the council's website once they are complete and signed off for publication.