

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: Highgate
REPORT TITLE BBQs in Waterlow Park and BBQ ban petition	
REPORT OF Director of Recreation	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Culture & Environment Scrutiny Committee	DATE 14 th July 2025
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>This report provides a response to the petition 'Ban BBQs in Waterlow Park', which was launched by the Highgate Village Green Preservation Society on the petition platform Change.org. At the time of submission the petition had 1,067 – now at over 1,400 signatures.</p> <p>The report outlines the context of decision making on BBQ use to date.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p> <p>The following document(s) has been used in the preparation of this report:</p> <p>BBQ-report-Feb-2020-final.pdf BBQ Working Group – Waterlow Park Trust</p> <p>Contact Officer: Gabi Howard, Park Services Manager 4th Floor, 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG 020 7974 5451 gabi.howard@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>It is recommended that the Committee take no further action.</p>	

Signed: 
Oliver Jones

Date: 3rd July 2025

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report provides a response to a petition received by the Council on the 28th April 2025 calling to “Permanently ban charcoal barbecues in Waterlow Park”. The full petition can be found [here](#).
- 1.2. The signed petition relates specifically to Waterlow Park which is located in Camden’s Highgate Ward at the boundary with Haringey and Islington. The petition, and this report, are submitted to the Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee for consideration in accordance with the Council’s Petition Scheme.
- 1.3. The action available to the Committee, in line with the Council’s Petition Scheme, are as follows:
 - That no further action is necessary;
 - That a further report should come back to Committee;
 - That the matter should be referred to the relevant decision-making body or officer of the Council with a recommendation on what to do.
- 1.4. It is recommended that the Committee take no further action.

2. Context for Waterlow Park

- 2.1. Camden is proud of its inclusive approach to our parks and open spaces, including barbecuing. Since 2014 we have allowed people to barbeque in our parks, increasing access and use of our green spaces by all our communities, particularly those without a garden (two in five of our residents’ homes do not have access to private outdoor space, the third highest in the country).
- 2.2. Waterlow Park is the largest park managed by Camden Council and is located in the north-east of the borough at the boundary with Islington and Haringey Councils. The park is within the Highgate ward of the Council. Park byelaws do not prohibit barbecuing in the park.
- 2.3. The Park was gifted by Sir Stanley Waterlow in 1889 to the people of London as a “garden for the gardenless” and is held in Trust by the Council. More information on the Trust is available from Charity Commission as registered charity 1048153¹. The park is managed by Camden via the borough’s term contracts and the park byelaws do not address BBQ use.
- 2.4. The Council takes independent views about the management of the Park via a group of local representatives called the Trust Advisory Group (TAG). More information on the group, terms of reference and agreement with the Council are available at: <https://waterlowparktrust.org.uk/advisory-group/>

¹ <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/1048153/charity-overview>

- 2.5. In recent years, Waterlow Park has been increasingly popular park for BBQs, which has chimed well with its origins as a “garden for the gardenless”. Engagement with BBQs users in 2023 and 2024, highlighted some of the benefits of this approach. A total of 81% of visitors said they did not have access to a garden or open space. Many people were celebrating cultural events, including Sizdah Be-dar, Eid Al-Adha, and Ukrainian Independence Day. Most people surveyed were aware of [Camden's barbeque guidelines](#) and our responsible approach to barbequing in our parks.

3. Context for BBQs in Camden Parks

- 3.1. Camden is the only London borough that allows informal BBQs in parks. As a result of the increasing popularity, the impact and cost of managing BBQs have increased and officers have been monitoring our approach.
- 3.2. Earlier this year saw the sunniest April for the UK since records began in 1910, with 47% more sunshine hours than the long-term meteorological average, according to provisional Met Office figures. The UK saw just over half the rainfall it would usually expect in April, with 56% recorded. Warm weather has largely continued and wildfire risk must be continuously monitored and reviewed. As a result, the Council has had to temporarily suspend BBQs twice this year already to help contain the risk.

4. BBQ suspension April 2025

- 4.1. Due to the warm weather, wildfire alerts and the impact of the very large BBQ gatherings on the park and council services, BBQs at Waterlow Park were suspended from the 10th April.
- 4.2. The following press statement was issued: “Camden’s parks are vital spaces for our residents. Two out of five of our residents do not have access to a garden at their home and our parks offer beautiful spaces to relax, socialise and exercise. We want everyone to enjoy themselves and this means we will keep our policy of allowing barbecues in our parks in the summer under regular review. We will not be allowing barbecues in Waterlow Park, which has seen large BBQ parties that have disturbed other users of the park. During the coming weeks, we will be keeping other parks under review.”
- 4.3. “No BBQ” banners were put up in the park and the first few weekends of the suspension which were supported by additional security, communications were cascaded to ward Councillors, Trust Advisory Group and Park Friends Group, colleagues and contractors.
- 4.4. BBQs have continued to be allowed at other Camden managed sites, although currently they are suspended due to recent heat health and wildfire alerts, prolonged warm weather and the very dry conditions.

- 4.5. BBQs have remained suspended at Waterlow Park throughout given the wildfire risk and to allow time to assess the impact and consider the ongoing work of the TAG BBQ working group.

5. 'Ban BBQs in Waterlow Park' petition

- 5.1. On the 5th April, a petition 'Ban BBQs in Waterlow Park' was launched by the Highgate Village Green Preservation Society (HVGPS) on the petition platform Change.org. [Petition · BAN BBQs IN WATERLOW PARK - United Kingdom · Change.org](https://www.change.org/p/ban-bbqs-in-waterlow-park)
- 5.2. Officers have also received emails from members of the local community opposing the petition and requesting that BBQs be allowed again in Waterlow Park. There has also been a number of representations in local media.
- 5.3. The petition submitted included 1,067 signatories, a break down of those signatures is below, however it should be noted individuals' connection to the park/ local area are not sought via the platform.

Location provided	Number of signatures
Non-UK	53
Outside-London	142
Other London borough^	489
Camden*	131 (12%)
Islington and Haringey	244
Blank or n/a	8
TOTAL	1,067

* N.B responses "Highgate" are counted in Camden although the area is shared with Haringey.

^ Responses listed as London have been allocated to Other London Borough.

Let's bring barbecues back to the park

□ I WAS at Waterlow Park barbecue area on April 5, the last Saturday before the ban, and my experience of the day is in striking contrast with what was reported by your paper which said the park was "deluged by thousands of people as soon as the sun came out".

"Thousands of people" wouldn't come close to fitting in the small barbecue area, so were you describing the number of visitors over a period of time? If so, it feels a little misleading.

It was a glorious spring day at Waterlow Park. The designated barbecue area was full of families and children, couples, friends.

I'd guess about 200 people, gathered around their respective portable standing barbecues, only one disposable in sight, which was carefully placed on a patch of earth, so as not to scorch the grass.

The loudest voice calling for the ban of barbecues at Waterlow was the Highgate Village Green Preservation Society, who include such hand-wringing lamentations as "the visual pollution of information signs" in their online petition calling for the ban.

I don't argue that some of the complaints are reasonable. However there is little – bar the 50 odd tiny barbecues (on the very busiest days) – that distinguishes this activity from any other popular pastime.

And the problems that commonly arise from well-attended events are demonstrably manageable.

Where Green Party councillor Lorna Russell saw "smoke pollution, public urination and defecation, traffic, road rage and parking issues on Swains Lane", I saw a beautiful scene: Londoners gathering with their friends and families to enjoy the outdoors in what was bequeathed to the people of London, by Sir Sydney Waterlow, as – "a garden for the gardenless".

I challenge Cllr Russell to look again, with a less biased eye, to see not only the occasional problems, but the bigger picture, the joy.

And to take it upon herself, as a public servant, to solve the problems through effective management, and to bring the barbecues back to Waterlow Park.

CHETANYA ALEXANDER
Address supplied

SIZZLE KICKS

Council to halt barbecues in the 'gardenless' after thousands descend on historic park

CAMDEN is to halt barbecues in a historic park after it was deluged by thousands of people as soon as the sun came out, according to a report in the Evening Standard.

The report, published in the Standard, says that the park was "deluged by thousands of people as soon as the sun came out".

The report also says that the park was "deluged by thousands of people as soon as the sun came out".

Above, the CNJ April 10 page 1 report and, right, crowds in Waterlow Park on the day



6. Previous community discussions regarding BBQs

- 6.1. In 2019, TAG requested to the Trustee that a BBQ zoning approach be implemented in the park (previously BBQs were allowed parkwide). Officers responded via:
- Stickers on maps on noticeboard to illustrate BBQ zones
 - Chalk stencils on park paths promoting the BBQ zones
 - Large scale posters and AO size board boards in the park promoting BBQ zones and guidelines, leaflets and online communications
- 6.2. A BBQ working group was established in 2020 to review 2019 and make recommendations for managing BBQs in the future. [BBQ-report-Feb-2020-final.pdf](#) The key recommendations (and delivered) were:
- 7pm to become the cut-off time for barbecues.
 - Restrict the barbecue season from the 20 March to 30 September.
 - Internal barriers at the Swains Lane and Dartmouth Park kept closed
 - Suitable overflow general refuse bins to be installed
 - staff on site are fully briefed on zones, safety, rules and how to deal with people who are in breach of them.
- 6.3. BBQs were suspended during COVID due to social distancing regulations and to avoid any risk putting extra strain on local and emergency services.
- 6.4. Over the last few years BBQs have been suspended on occasion in response to London Fire Brigade requests due to wildfire risk, and in response to Heat Health Amber alerts and Wildfire alerts via risk assessments (heatwaves and periods of drought).
- 6.5. During 2023/24 work was undertaken to enhance contracted services to handle the larger amounts of rubbish, public toilet cleaning and clearer and targeted communications.
- 6.6. Officers have continued to work with the 'TAG BBQ working group, which met 3 times in 2024, with the aim of making a recommendation to the Waterlow Park's trustee who is Oliver Jones, Director of Recreation (please see previous comment) on behalf of Camden Council.
- 6.7. To date the group has been unable to come to a unanimous single recommendation but has made recommendations and officers have actioned the following in response:

- BBQ rules posters improved 2025 highlighting toilets, website updated. Volunteer litter picking stations
- Regular security patrols requested for busy weekends
- Additional hours from Toilet cleaning staff arranged
- Support requested from Parking enforcement team, support confirmed
- Persian influenced design of BBQ checklist postcard. Overflow area/s not formalised but flexibility will be used during busy cultural events
- Networking and promotion of postcard via websites and social media
- Improved maps on large posters for 2025. Signboards at Swain's Lane and Dartmouth Park Hill gates instead of just in the BBQ areas.



6.8. Allowing BBQs in Waterlow Park has always been divisive issue amongst park user groups. The TAG working group has made efforts to be balanced and take into account different viewpoints. However, the scale of the very large gatherings and BBQs in April 2025 put a strain on resources and the park environment. People dropping off equipment and some cars blocking Swain's Lane caused disruption and there was a report of an Ambulance being blocked. The group highlighted these issues on the last meeting and questioned whether the issues caused by Barbequing in the park would be manageable going forward.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Given the ongoing engagement with the TAG BBQ working group, which is democratically representative of the differing views, officers recommend that this is the correct avenue for discussing and agreeing the best approach for BBQs going forward, including options to best manage the operational challenges that we are aware of. As a result, officers recommend that there is no further action taken on this petition at this stage, but that the issue continues to be considered within the TAG BBQ working group and TAG, and that the views raised in the petition continue to be fed in the Working Group's consideration

8. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

8.1. The existing controls around BBQs in the park are forecast to cost the Council £14,000 pa. Costs are predominantly driven by security patrols, additional toilet

cleaning and extra waste management collections. The allowing of BBQs also increases park usage around seasonal events such as Sizdah Bedar, putting further upward pressure on expenditure. Overall, these costs are unbudgeted and a pressure on the service and Charity.

9. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

9.1. Legal comments have been incorporated.

10. Environmental Implications

10.1. It is currently not possible to produce an estimated figure for the contribution of outdoor BBQs to total air pollution emissions in Camden, due to the lack of reliable activity data and emission factors. It is unlikely that BBQs in Waterlow Park and in other public greenspaces in Camden contribute significantly to overall air pollution in Camden.

11. **Appendix 1** – The Petition

REPORT ENDS