

Public to have say over park's future

By **TOM PORTER**

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A DATE has been set for a public consultation on plans which could shape the future of Wanstead Park for generations to come.

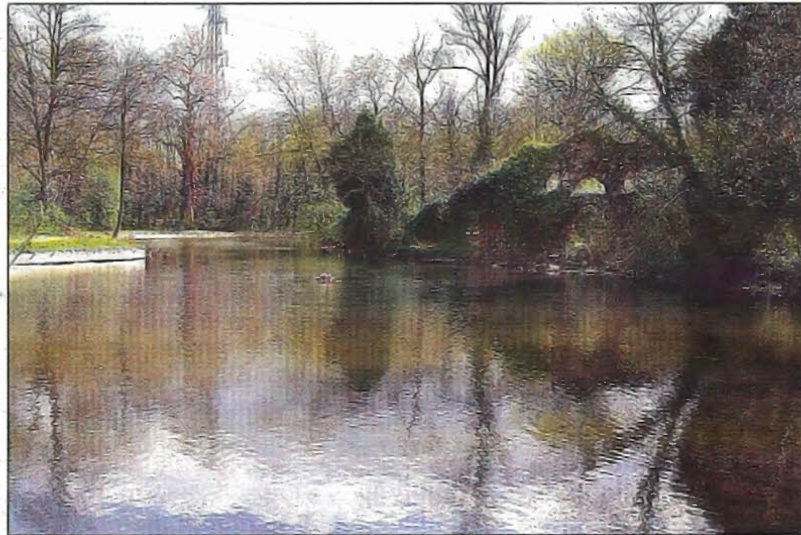
Last year English Heritage placed the historic park on its 'at risk' register after a survey discovered the landscape was declining and in urgent need of new investment.

The City of London Corporation, which is responsible for the park, has hired planning consultants Chris Blandford Associates to develop long-term regeneration plans.

Paul Thomson, Superintendent of Epping Forest, said: "Being on the 'at risk' register has presented us with the ideal opportunity to focus our attentions on Wanstead Park and to seek funding.

"We are really looking forward to working with local residents and organisations to develop the best way forward for this important and fascinating area of Epping Forest."

One of the immediate priorities is to start



The Grotto in Wanstead Park

(EL1603-40065)

restoration work on the Grotto – a Grade II listed building which has been awaiting new plans and funding for years.

The Epping Forest conservation team has started work to clear vegetation to allow experts to access the site, which is currently fenced off, and explore what can be done to improve the feature.

Paul Donovan, a member of the Wanstead Park Community Project, said: "I am glad the corporation is considering restoring

the Grotto, they have let a lot of the park's historic buildings run to disrepair so this is definitely a step in the right direction.

"I think they need to consider Wanstead Flats as a living park. This means not just regenerating the buildings and paths, but also fostering the ecology and environment. I think that this will help bring more people into the park.

"For too many years the corporation has seen the park as the back end of Epping Forest, so I am glad

we are finally moving in the right direction.

"The corporation is accountable to us, and it is good that it is becoming more of a partnership and less of a master and servant relationship."

● **Formal public consultations will take place between February 14 and 28.**

To register an interest or to be notified about the consultation e-mail wansteadparkproject@cityoflondon.gov.uk.