



REPORT FROM: Neighbourhood Services Manager

TO: Barrowford & Western Parishes Committee

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**Parks, Recreation and Green Spaces Update
FOR INFORMATION**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of current Parks, Recreation and Green Spaces work and upcoming plans/developments for Barrowford & Western Parishes.

ISSUE

To keep members up to date on what is going on in terms of Parks, Outdoor Recreation and Green Spaces, we provide six monthly reports to all Area Committee's detailing current work in addition to outlining future plans and proposed developments.

The Green Spaces section of Neighbourhood Services provides strategic, outreach and developmental work in relation to Parks, Playing Fields, Local Nature Reserves, Play Facilities, Countryside Access and Open Spaces. We continue to work closely with Environmental Services, in particular the Landscape Maintenance section to ensure that the above sites/areas are managed and maintained proactively and in line with strategic aims and objectives in general.

The report provides detail on generic Parks, Recreation and Green Spaces related work that impacts all area committees across Pendle in addition to Barrowford & Western Parishes specific developments/issues. This list is not exhaustive of all work ongoing but highlights the most significant ones at this present time.

Park Keeper Service

Unfortunately, one of the Park Keeper's, John Harper, left the authority in mid-January and as such we have been down to only the Senior Park Keeper and one Park Keeper. This has made life difficult in terms of having a presence in our Parks from the Service.

We have recently advertised for a new Park Keeper and successfully appointed Marcus Orrell who started work in early May. We are extremely happy with him and feel that he will be a fantastic addition to the team in terms of bringing in new ideas and continuing to work alongside the many volunteer groups we work with across our green space sites.

Local Nature Reserves (LNR's), Environmental Action Group (EAG) and Japanese Knotweed

LNR's come under the remit of Neighbourhood Services and as such we are endeavouring to take a more proactive approach in terms of supporting the LNR's and their respective Friends Groups and strategically managing and maintaining the LNR's in co-ordination with these groups.

We have met with all the individual LNR Friends Groups/representatives and have established a good working relationship with them over the last 12 months. The Senior Park Keeper attends individual group meetings in addition to the quarterly LNR Steering group meeting.

Annual budgets (be it fairly minimal) have been put in place for each LNR (starting from April 2016). These have been taken out of existing overall Parks budgets and are not new budgets.

The treatment and monitoring of Japanese Knotweed is undertaken by the EAG. A map has now been produced highlighting all known cases of knotweed (Public and privately owned) in Pendle. We have written to all private landowners informing them of their legal requirement to deal with knotweed on their land. A number of these have replied asking us to treat the knotweed on their land. We are still waiting on a few to come back to us.

We are also dealing with knotweed that needs to be treated in Burnley located on the border of Burnley and Pendle. The water course crosses over in to Burnley then meanders back in to Pendle. This will need treating as untreated areas can affect the effectiveness of land further downstream (in Pendle) that have been treated. We are working in co-ordination with Burnley Council to treat these areas with a view to producing a comprehensive list of knotweed treatments for 2016/17. The treatment of new and existing sites will start in earnest in May and will continue through to October.

Pennine Lancashire Playing Pitch Strategy

Three Pennine Lancashire Authorities (Pendle, Burnley and Rossendale) have come together to develop a joint Playing Pitch Strategy. The primary purpose of the Playing Pitch Strategy is to provide a strategic framework which ensures that the provision of outdoor playing pitches meet the local needs of existing and future residents within the three Local Authorities areas.

The Strategy document, associated assessment report and GIS Map have now been completed. The Strategy is scheduled to go out to public consultation soon and will last approximately 6 weeks.

Once the consultation has been done and any necessary changes made, we are hopeful that the Strategy will be approved and ratified by September 2016.

Green Flag Awards

The Council has 8 Green Flag Parks in Pendle with two of these being in Barrowford & Western Parishes. These are:

- Barrowford Park (The Park has held the award for 8 years)
- Victoria Park (The Park has held the award for 7 years)

Applications for this year were submitted at the end of January 2016. As Barrowford Park was formally judged in 2015, it will be mystery shopped this year. Victoria Park was formally judged on April 29th 2016.

Steven Burke Sports Hub - Phase Two

We continue to work with Cycle Sport Pendle (CSP) and representatives of a local BMX Group on a potential phase two for the Steven Burke Sports Hub. Revised draft plans for phase two will include the development of a BMX Pump Track through the refurbishment of the existing off-road track, a multi-purpose tarmac area that can be used as car parking for the Cycle track and/or the new Pump track, for events and as a safe bike skills learning area for toddlers and young children. In addition, some access/traffic movement improvements have been included, e.g. passing places.

The estimated costings for phase 2 currently come in at circa £125,000.

Reports containing information on phase 2 and asking for member's approval/support of the scheme in addition to a £2,000 contribution towards the Council's match funding pot have been taken to Nelson and Barrowford & Western Parishes Committee's. Nelson Committee resolved that the proposed plans be approved and supported and that subject to match funding from Barrowford & Western Parishes Committee £2000 be allocated from their 2015/16 Capital Programme.

Initially, Barrowford & Western Parishes Committee approved the proposals in principle but could not commit £2000 towards the match funding pot as they only had £300 left in their Capital Programme but a further report was taken to the March 2016 Barrowford & Western Parishes Committee where they agreed to commit £2,000 towards the project from their 2016/17 Capital Programme. As such, we are hopeful that Nelson Committee will allocate the promised (albeit from last year's budget) £2,000 from this year's budget.

We were aware that although some consultation had been undertaken with local people this had been mainly with the local cycling fraternity (who are obviously keen on this proposed facility). As such, we carried out some further public consultation during January and February 2016 in the form of hard copy surveys and online questionnaires. This was for anyone to comment on and put forward their views but in order to ensure that local people who would be directly affected by this development were consulted, we also produced, printed and delivered approx. 350 paper based questionnaires to residents in Barrowford and the Bradley Ward in Nelson (who live within close proximity to the proposed facility).

Approximately 1,500 A5 leaflets were also delivered to a significant number of properties in Barrowford and Nelson. We obtained a very good response with 192 people completing surveys. The majority of people (178) who responded were in favour of the proposals with only a small number (13) against it. A short analysis report was produced and has been used to hone the plan/scheme in addition to it being used as evidence for funding bids in the future that appropriate consultation has taken place.

We are now looking to submit a number of funding bids over the next 6-9 months to potential funders such as:

- Lancashire Environmental Fund
- BIFFA
- Sport England
- Big Local (Bradley)
- British Cycling

In view of the transfer of services (which may include Parks and Sports facilities in future years) to Town/Parish Councils and the fact that the Council is trying to reduce costs, senior management have intimated that the future governance of the proposed facility (and indeed the existing cycle track) by an 'independent group' should be considered.

Subsequently, we will endeavour to start looking at potential options, e.g. Social Enterprise, Cycle

Development Pendle Partnership (CDPP) taking on the whole facility, etc. that could be pursued in terms of the future management of Phase 2 and the existing cycle track at Swinden.

Barrowford Park

The new coin operated public toilet at the Bowls Pavilion has been operating for a couple of months now but unfortunately at the end of April the toilet was vandalised as someone tried to smash the lock/coin box to extract the money within. As a result, the toilet is not working properly and as such the toilet has been locked and is out of operation. A quote has been obtained for the replacement of the damaged equipment but as yet no decision has been made on progressing the matter.

We have been working with the Bowling Club to provide more storage as a result of them losing the room that is now the coin operated toilet. We have an informal agreement with the Club in terms of them helping us out with maintenance during the Bowling season whereby we provide them with a mower to cut the grass. Subsequently, a new lockable container for storage of the mower and petrol can has been installed next to the pavilion.

Ten fruit trees were planted in the picnic area adjacent to the Cemetery in March 2016. This work was done in co-ordination with the Friends Group.

The Lake management improvement report has been completed by Stillwater Management Consultants. The report is fairly comprehensive and provides recommendations on what we can do to improve the lake's aesthetic, infrastructure, ecology and the surrounding area in both the short and long term but did not outline costs.

As such, we asked them for costs on some of the main recommendations which included the following:

- The treatment of the lake with calcium carbonate (to improve water quality/aesthetic)
- A design brief and drawings for the lake based on the author's recommendations for the lake and adjoining marsh area
- Silt depth survey

The consultants came back to us with costs for the above:

- Supply and apply Calcium Carbonate treatment to lake - £980
- Design brief for lake/marsh area improvements (including estimated costs) - £465
- Silt Depth Survey - £320

In addition, they advise about lake side interpretation and education (which is something we have talked about previously) helping our cause. We can do this work in-house and are looking to replicate something akin to the fish pass sign (lectern style) also within the Park.

The Friends Group agreed to the proposed works. They are also keen on commissioning Mike Burgess, the sculptor who has done all the wooden sculptures in Victoria Park for the Vicky Witch Trail, to design a Kingfisher to be positioned on the side of the lake (opposite side to the shelter/bowling green near the wood chip path). Costs are currently being obtained for this.

The Lifestyle Festival had previously stated that they would finance some improvement works to the Park and we agreed that the Lake was our main priority. The Festival organisers are supportive of the above way forward but have also intimated that they want to pay for the improvement of the existing woodchip paths around the lake (as their main priority). The paths become boggy and unusable in wet weather and it is difficult for parents with buggies and wheelchair users to access the marsh area and this part of the Park. Costs are therefore being

sought to change the paths on both sides of the marsh area boardwalk to tarmac. The aim being to improve accessibility and to improve the quality of the Park's path network. Hopefully, (dependent upon the scale of costs) the path works will be completed before this year's Lifestyle Festival.

The short term lake work outlined above has been ordered. We have asked the consultant to provide us with a number of options for the main lake/marsh area improvements. We are also looking to make improvements to the existing boardwalk and will incorporate this in to future design plans.

The Barrowford Lifestyle Festival takes place again this year in the Park on the 2nd July. The original date of the 9th July has recently been changed.

Victoria Park

The Lake management improvement report has been completed by Stillwater Management Consultants. The report provides recommendations on improvement works for use with future management planning. We are now in the process of analysing the report and will look to source costs associated for any improvement works identified.

We are continuing to develop and improve the **'Vicky Witch' Family Sculpture Trail** launched last year. The trail has been a huge success and has captured the imagination of young children and their families whilst improving health and encouraging users to look after their Park.

A new sign directing people to the storytelling area of the trail has been installed as a result of feedback obtained from some users who had previously missed this part of the trail due to lack of signage. This area has been given the name of 'Boggart Wood' in reference to the Bargvest the Boggart sculpture located close by. The sign is a beautiful oak carved design. In addition, we have just installed a further three wooden sculptures within the wood. These are further additions to the 'Boggart Family' and again these have been met with positivity from users, etc.

As part of the improvement of this section of the Park/Trail, we have also installed two new feature benches within the storytelling area that refer to the Vicky Witch Trail. These have a caterpillar, a spider, bees, butterflies, etc. carved in to the fabric of the seat. We hope to install two more later in the year. These have been created by Mike Burgess the sculptor who did the original sculptures last year.

The railings around the bandstand were dismantled and taken down in February 2016. This is something we have wanted to do for quite a while as they were not needed. The gate to the bandstand was left open for 6 months prior to us taking them out as a test to see if any vandalism arose from this but it didn't.

This was done in co-ordination with the Friends Group and is in accordance with actions set out in the Park's Management Plan that we have to update on an annual basis for the Green Flag Awards. The old railings are being stored at our Fleet Street Depot and we are looking to re-use them at another site in the future. The taking down of the railings has been a positive move and feedback has been great.

We are hoping to encourage more use of the bandstand in the future and we want people to utilise this excellent facility a lot more. By taking away the railings we are also opening up the area.

In addition, we have ordered works to spruce up the bandstand (painting/repairing the leaking gutters/staining the decking floor/power washing the stonework) in May to make it look more appealing and aesthetically pleasing.

One of the first events to utilise the bandstand has been pencilled in for the 21st June. We are working in partnership with Victoria Park Pavilion Community Interest Company (CIC) to put on a low key music event as part of UK Music Day celebrations taking place across the country. Between us, we hope to run an event during the afternoon and early evening providing a diverse mix of music on the bandstand.

We have also been approached by In-Situ (an arts organisation based in Brierfield) who has secured some funding to run a programme during the coming summer to clear and transform a section of river running through Victoria Park with the aim of improving and increasing access to nature for the local communities.

The project starts on the 18th May. As members will be aware, since the flooding experienced in December 2015 in the Park, the river bank has become a bit of an eyesore with debris strewn along the water course banking's. The project will incorporate a small section of the river (at the Seedhill end of the Park) and as such will include the tidying up of the river bank and making this area a more pleasant place to spend time in.

In addition, the rest of the river bank that runs through the Park was cleaned up extensively at the end of April. We had thought that the Environment Agency would do this after the floods but due to them having more significant priorities they intimated that it would be a long time before they could initiate a clean-up. As such, we took it upon ourselves to organise a specialist contractor to carry out this work – I'm sure you'll agree that it looks a lot better for the work!

Victoria Park Pavilion Community Interest Company (CIC) continues to work closely with us on the Vicky Witch Trail and other events/activities and are active members of the Friends of Victoria Park Group.

Transfer of Services to Parish/Town Councils & Dog Issues Working Group

Work is ongoing in terms of the transferring of services and facilities to Town and Parish Councils and the implementation of recommendations from the Dog Issues Working Group, specifically the implementation of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) at the Council's Cemeteries and the 47 play facilities that have recently been transferred to Town/Parish Councils.

Neighbourhood Services Officers are involved in both Member/Officer Working Groups.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: None

Financial: None

Legal: None

Risk Management: None

Health and Safety: None

Sustainability: None

Community Safety: None

Equality and Diversity: None

APPENDICES: None

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

