

REPORT FROM: Neighbourhood Services Manager

TO: Nelson Committee

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Parks, Recreation and Green Spaces Update

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of current Parks, Recreation and Green Spaces work and upcoming plans/developments for Nelson.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the report is noted.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) To keep Members informed of Parks, Recreation and Green Spaces work across Nelson.

ISSUE

To keep members up to date on what is going on in terms of Parks, Outdoor Recreation and Green Spaces, we endeavour to 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 Nelson specific developments/issues. This list is not exhaustive of all work ongoing but highlights the most significant ones at this present time.

Mayoress' Charity – Friends of Parks Groups

The new Mayoress of Pendle, Barbara Whalley, has chosen the Friends of Pendle's Parks as her charity for the current mayoral year (May 2017 – May 2018).

Funds will be raised throughout the mayoral year for improvement projects the individual groups want to undertake.

This is a real coup for our Parks and a recognition of all the great work the Friends Groups and volunteers do to help keep our Parks looking as good as they can be.

A number of events have already taken place where collection buckets have been passed around and donations made to the charity. At the end of the year the total amount raised will be divided equally amongst the eight Parks Friends Groups (with Marsden Park, Victoria Park and Walverden Park included) and the Philip Wright Crown Green Bowling Academy (who are based in Alkincoats Park) for them to make improvements in their respective parks.

In addition, Pendle Movie Makers were asked to produce a short film by the Mayoress highlighting the good work that the Councils Park Keeper Team, their partner organisations, e.g. The Good Life Project, the Friends Groups and volunteers do through our regular volunteer working days. This resulted in a 12 minute film being made that will be shown at any charity events the Mayoress has during the year. The film has also been forwarded to Council Officers and the respective Friends Group for them to watch and use at their discretion.

Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's)

PSPO's are now in place and enforceable around dog control and smoking at the 12 play facilities in Nelson.

The PSPO's for sports grounds have been agreed by all Area Committee's and are currently with legal. These should be in place and enforceable before the end of 2017. These include rules around dog control and include relevant sports pitch bye-laws that have been transferred from the old Parks and Recreation bye-laws.

In terms of Nelson sites, Edge End Playing Fields, Hodge House Playing Fields, Ringstone Crescent and Swinden Playing Fields will be dogs on leads with no more than two dogs per person.

The Steven Burke Sports Hub (at Swinden) will be dog free.

Work is also ongoing in relation to the development of PSPO's for Parks across the borough. Proposals and options for PSPO's in relation to Marsden, Walverden and Victoria Parks and the Hard Platts were taken to the June 2017 Nelson Committee meeting for discussion.

It is the Council's intention to consult with the general public and relevant organisations/groups that use the Parks via an online survey and detailed correspondence with partners, including the Town and Parish Councils in the coming months.

Green Flag Awards

The Council attained 8 Green Flag Awards in 2017 with three of these being in Nelson. These are:

- Marsden Park (10th consecutive year)
- Walverden Park (8th consecutive year)

- Victoria Park (9th consecutive year)

Applications for next year need to be submitted by the end of January 2018. As Marsden Park was formally judged this year, it will be mystery shopped in 2018. Both Victoria and Walverden Park will be formally judged in 2018 due to them being mystery shopped this year.

Steven Burke Sports Hub - Phase Two

So far, we have been successful in securing approximately £60,000 towards phase 2 of the Steven Burke Sports Hub (the development of a Pump Track and junior training area/car parking).

In the last 6 months we have secured funding from the following sources:

£30,000 – Lancashire Environmental Fund

£10,000 – Newground

The Newground funding is £5,000 capital with £5,000 worth of officer time to help with community engagement in the locality.

The total cost of the project is circa £130,000 but we have broken the larger scheme down in to smaller chunks to enable us to progress with the development of the pump track first. We have the requisite funding available to complete this element of the project and as such a tender is currently out for the design and build of the track.

Dependent upon the tenders coming back within the budget and the working group being happy with the design, we are aiming to get the track work completed by the end of October 2017. This will tie in with the removal of the temporary pump track that is currently located within the Steven Burke Cycle (as per an agreement we have with British Cycling). The new BMX arm of Cycle Sport Pendle will then transfer its training sessions from the temporary track to the purpose built one.

Swinden Playing Fields

Over the past 5 years, there have been a few break-in's at the pavilion with two instances causing substantial damage and high cost to repair (these were primarily copper theft related). In addition, with the advent of Cycle Sport Pendle using a section of the building as their base and increased usage of the site due to the Steven Burke Sports Hub, it was felt that increased security measures were needed to stop further incidences happening in the future.

As such, following on from the successful installation of CCTV at Alkincoats Park (another of our buildings), we commissioned Fresh Fire & Security (FF&S) to install cameras around the external façade of the pavilion in June 2017. In total, five cameras were put up with ongoing monitoring of the cameras being done by FF&S. CSP are contributing to the ongoing monitoring and maintenance costs associated with this initiative.

We have also worked with CSP on upgrading a section of the building to enable them to grow as a club and run indoor training during the winter when the weather does not allow them to use the cycle track. A number of walls have been knocked through and two rooms made in to one. The club have been very proactive in developing the facility and have painted the aforementioned rooms and corridor sprucing up a previously dour area in to a bright white dry training area for their members.

Victoria Park

The bandstand and its surrounding area continues to flourish with it being used on a more regular basis with the following free events/activity taking place over the last 6 months:

- Make Music Day UK event on the 21st June. This was our second Music Day event and although it was kept fairly small in scale again because of the great weather it attracted a decent turnout and we received lots of positive feedback.
- The Pendle Youth Orchestra also performed in the Park's bandstand on the 5th July as part of a practice session. Again we were extremely lucky with the weather which made for a pleasant night for the people who came along to listen.
- Stage Door Youth Theatre performed the final night of their run of Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream on the 16th July.
- Mission Outdoor Service on the 23rd July and 3rd September.

We are looking to have similar events in 2018 and are actively encouraging local people to use the bandstand and its surrounding area on a casual informal basis as well as for more formal events/activities.

Victoria Park Pavilion Community Interest Company (CIC) continues to work closely with us on the Vicky Witch Trail and other events/activities. It is a huge asset to the Park and has gone from strength to strength in terms of attracting customers to the café but also as a community hub where a number of different users/groups meet and/or utilise the building.

They will be working in partnership with Whitefield Community Association again to hold the second annual Whitefield Tea in the Park event on the 9th September. This event was very successful last year and will involve use of the bandstand area for live performances and the majority of the attractions including a Bouncy Castle, Birds of Prey, Dogs in Need, Archery, Arts & Crafts, etc.

We have made further security improvements to the building including reinforcing the existing grilles, replacement of an old door with a more robust one and the installation of new electronic roller shutter on the store room door at the back of the building.

We successfully organised a Circus Skills event at the Park on the 11th June. This took place on the Bowling Green area behind the Pavilion and was run by Circus Sensible. It gave families the opportunity to try out a variety of Circus skills in an interactive and fun style workshop. The event was free and due to the dry weather attracted a good attendance.

At the end of August, we also organised and ran a successful Bat Night in the Park. This was attended by a good mixture of adults and some children.

As part of 2017's Green Spaces Team's Events Programme, we organised three volunteer working days in the Park in March, May and July. Work included litter picking, cleaning of parks furniture, weeding of the car park flower bed, cutting back shrubs and overhanging branches near to footpaths, etc.

Lighthouse Tai Chi has run 4 Summer Tai Chi in the Park sessions on the old bowling green area behind the pavilion. These started on the 1st August and ran until the 22nd August. These were free to attend and were hugely successful attracting lots of interest with the sessions attracting an average of 96 people per session!

We have a number of projects to progress in the Park over the next 6 months including improvement works to the old Bowling Green area behind the pavilion and improving the Surrey Road/Cricket Ground entrance to the Park to make it more attractive and welcoming.

We are also aiming to demolish the two 1970's Eastern Bloc style concrete shelters in Victoria Park. The shelters are not in keeping with the rest of the Park and attract anti-social behaviour as a result of their design. The shelter closest to the Cricket Ground/Seedhill would be removed along with the plinth it sits on and the land made good, e.g. the area made grass and blended in with the surrounding environment.

The other shelter closest to the more contemporary bridge would be demolished and made good with a view to replacing with something more modern and which would be designed to enable good sightlines from all angles thus reducing the opportunity for anti-social behaviour to take place in the shelter.

In relation to the Vicky Witch Trail, we are looking to refresh this during the Autumn/Winter by installing two more feature benches within the storytelling area with longer term ambitions to develop a magical fairy style garden in the Sunken Garden area in 2018.

Walverden Park

The new drainage that was installed in February 2017 has proved to be successful as flooding on the lower half of the Park has improved significantly.

As a result of tree inspections undertaken by the Council's Tree Officer (and in accordance with the most recent tree survey for the Park), we removed four trees within the Park in June 2017 as a result of them being diseased and potentially causing a serious health & safety risk to park users.

A series of free outdoor Cricket coaching sessions took place between April and September on Walverden Park's MUGA. These sessions were part of the Lancashire Cricket Board's (LCB) 'Chance to Shine' Street Cricket initiative in partnership with Pendle Council.

The sessions were organised and run by qualified Lancashire County Cricket coaches between 5pm and 7pm every Wednesday night for youngsters between the ages of 8 and 15.

Although take up was slow initially, numbers increased and the sessions were deemed to be a success. We are hoping to work with the LCB in the future on other initiatives.

As part of 2017's Green Spaces Team's Events Programme, we have run two volunteer working days in the Park in February and May. These consisted of environmental and conservation tasks such as litter picking, weeding, shrub work and cleaning of parks furniture. A further working day will be held in the Park before the end of the year.

The 'Cue the Games' event took place in the Park on 23rd July 2017. This was jointly organised by the Cue Foundation and In-Situ and included traditional games, a BBQ, a five-a-side football tournament and other community activities.

Following on from the improvements made to paths in the last couple of years, we are hoping to upgrade the Day Street/Chapelhouse Road entrance path, which is uneven and in a poor state, over the winter months.

Marsden Park

The monthly conservation working days (on a Saturday morning) where members of the public are welcome to help the Friends Group carry out small conservation tasks in the Park re-started in February 2017 after a short gap. The group (which includes a member of the Park Keeper Team) concentrate on improvements to the marsh area in the main but also cut back shrubs and overhanging branches near to footpaths, dead hedge and litter pick.

A new interpretation board remembering the open air pool including Michael Wrigley's (the former Chair of Marsden Park's Friends Group) memories of it and the Park in general was installed in spring 2017. In addition, a small area of the sensory garden has been set aside for a memorial garden area that will be planted with bright and colourful herbaceous plants and shrubs. This is due to be planted in autumn 2017.

Some new knee rail fencing and drop down bollards have been installed close to Marsden Hall and the car park area in early June to stop unauthorised vehicular accessing the top end of the Park. This work was done as a result of a number of incidents whereby cars had driven in to the ornamental garden area of the Park causing damage and mischief. We also had a series of people using the scenic park backdrop as a place to photograph their cars. Again, cars were accessing the ornamental garden area to do this and as such putting pedestrians using the Park in danger.

We have also had some near misses in terms of thieves trying to steal stone flags from the occupation path/bridge area.

With the advent of the new scheme, this will stop vehicles being able to drive in to these prohibited areas of the Park.

We have also installed some knee rail fencing on the grassed area near to the Blind garden entrance on Hallam Road. Again, this is to combat unauthorised vehicles accessing the Park and driving over grassed areas on the periphery of the Park.

In June, we organised and ran a successful Bat Night in the Park. This was attended by approximately 10 people. In addition, a Bug Hunt for children was run by the Park Keeper Team at the end of August (during the summer holidays).

We continue to have rot issues with the wooden boardwalk that serves the marsh area. Some more repair work took place in June that cost circa £850. We have had to replace rotten joints on a regular occurrence over the past 2-3 years and it is starting to become a serious cost issue. There are concerns about the long term viability of the boardwalk and it is looking increasingly likely that we will need to start looking at capital funding to potentially replace the structure completely.

Bradley Big Local (BBL) – Hodge House Play Facility

The play area improvement scheme at Hodge House Playing Fields has been completed. Neighbourhood Services Officers have been working with the Bradley Big Local Committee to improve and refurbish the existing play area at Hodge House Playing Fields in addition to a new extended section that includes more contemporary and adventurous play equipment. There is also an inclusive roundabout that can be accessed by children in a wheelchair. This element of the project was completed in July 2017.

In addition to equipment within the fenced off area, BBL have also been successful in securing further funding which will allow them to install 11 pieces of outdoor gym equipment/trim trail apparatus alongside the perimeter of the play area that can be used by all ages. This work is due to start in September 2017 and should be completed within 2-3 weeks dependent upon the weather.

Thomas Street Bowling Club

We ran two volunteer working days at this site in July 2017. These concentrated on the top green area closest to Meredith Street. The paths around the green have become hard to manoeuvre around due to overhanging vegetation as most bowling matches/casual use tends to take place on the lower green.

As such, we are aiming to tidy up the top green area and as part of the two days we cleared the footpaths of vegetation, moss, litter, etc. and cut back overhanging shrubs and plants. We are hoping to do more work on site over the winter months in partnership with Environmental Services Grounds Maintenance Team and the Bowling Club.

Lomeshaye Marsh Nature Reserve

The reserve has a building on site that is used as an activity centre by the LNR group. We are starting to work a lot closer with Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside Wildlife Trust and have established good contacts with their regional lead. This has resulted in them using the study centre building at the reserve as a base for some of their projects and courses. An 'introduction to bats and surveying' training session was held on the 17th August 2017 with a further session on an 'introduction to plants' scheduled for mid-September. Both these sessions were free and available to anyone interested.

We are hoping to develop our relationship with the wildlife Trust further in the future and with the possibility of the Nature Reserve gaining funding via the European Structural & Investments Fund to make improvements to the area and possibly extend it, the future of the reserve is certainly looking bright.

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