

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 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.

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.

Lomeshaye Marsh Nature Reserve – The floods experienced in December 2015 affected a number of our green space sites including paths within the Nature Reserve. Path reinstatement works have been identified and we are currently waiting on confirmation of funding for the Council from the Governments Flood relief fund to pay for this work (the path will be re-instated to its original condition).

Four new metal entrance signs designed by local school children have also been installed at the reserve. These were financed from external funding.

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 three of these being in Nelson. These are:

- Marsden Park (The Park has held the award for 8 years)
- Walverden Park (the Park has held the award for 6 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 Marsden Park was formally judged in 2015, it will be mystery shopped this year. Victoria Park was formally judged on April 29th 2016 and Walverden Park is scheduled to be judged on the 18th May 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.

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.

Walverden Park

As a result of feedback obtained from Green Flag judges in 2015 and a number of complaints from park users regarding uneven paths and the need for railings on some of the steeper paths in the Park, we have recently carried out a number of safety improvements.

Handrails have been installed on four paths within the Park that are particularly steep and where we have had users fall in the past. We have also recently upgraded the entrance footpath from Chapelhouse Road. The footpath had crumbled away and was a health & safety hazard. The path has been re-tarmaced, edged and a new hand rail installed.

The new replacement wolf sculpture has been installed at the Park Drive/St Georges Road end of the Park. The sculpture was done by Mike Burgess who also did the sparrow hawk in the same Park and the Vicky Witch sculptures at Victoria Park. The funding for the sculpture was secured by the Friends Group from Nelson Committee's Capital Programme.

Unfortunately, the Park attracts a lot of litter. This is not all from inconsiderate users but due to the topography of the Park litter blows in from outlying streets that surround three sides of the Park.

With this in mind, we have in co-ordination with the Friends Group, planted a new hedge on the Day Street/Chapelhouse Road elevations with the aim of creating a natural green barrier which will help to catch litter but also provide a more formal boundary to this area of the Park. We also had a volunteer clean-up day at the Park in February in partnership with the 'Pick Up For Pendle' group where we managed to collect 36 bags of rubbish!

We have established a good rapport with Pick Up For Pendle (who are an umbrella group for litter picking volunteers across Pendle) and have worked with them on a number of small clean up's at green space sites. We aim to develop this partnership further in the future.

Work continues on the creation of more interpretation boards for the sub-station fencing at the Brunswick Street entrance, specifically around the history of Walverden and the local area. Again, money (£1,200) has been sourced for this work from Nelson Committee. We hope to have this completed and in situ by the summer.

Marsden Park

Due to John Harper leaving in mid-January and the sad death of Michael Wrigley (the Group's Chair) in November 2015 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 have suffered as a consequence. Nevertheless, the Friends Group has been able to carry on doing bits of work which has mainly concentrated on improvements to the marsh area.

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.

Bradley Big Local – Hodge House Play Facility

Neighbourhood Services Officers are working with the Bradley Big Local Committee to improve and refurbish the existing play area at Hodge House Playing Fields. Bradley Big Local has set aside monies from the recreational theme budget to fund the work. They are looking to extend the current playground area to incorporate more contemporary, adventurous and inclusive play equipment for a wide age range. In addition to equipment within the fenced off area, they are also looking at installing outdoor gym equipment/trim trail apparatus that could be used by all the local community not just children.

We are currently developing a scheme based on the outcome of a recent consultation with local people in Bradley which will detail estimated costs and ongoing maintenance costs. The Bradley Big Local group may have to source additional funding to pay for all the works with the level of extra funding needed easier to identify once the scheme has been pulled together.

Planning permission will be needed for any extension of the existing play area.

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