

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.

Local Nature Reserves (LNR's)

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.

The Senior Park Keeper is the Council's Lead Officer and attends individual group meetings in addition to the quarterly LNR Steering group meeting.

Lomeshaye Marsh Nature Reserve – The reserve has a building on site that is used as an activity centre by the LNR group. Until recently, it was operated by the Heritage Trust North West but unfortunately earlier this year they absolved all responsibility for the building and as such the Council have had to help the LNR Group with the building as well as paying some outstanding utility bills.

Liberata were asked to check the building's utilities to ensure statutory compliance but it was found that there were a number of issues that needed addressing before the building could be used again. Consequently, the building was temporarily closed until all the checks were completed and the building was classed as being safe and usable.

The building is a fundamental part when visiting groups come to Lomeshaye so it was important to get the building back open as soon as possible. This occurred in late September/early October just in time for the planned volunteer working days and some organised group visits that had been planned in advance.

The long term future for the building is unsure with usage of the facility kept to a minimum in the short term. A number of options are currently being looked at by senior management as to who will manage this facility.

Unfortunately, the funds to pay for the path reinstatement works after the flooding late last year never materialised as we weren't eligible to receive funding from the Government's Flood Relief fund. Subsequently, only minor clearance work was undertaken. We are hoping to carry out the remedial path works (the paths will be re-instated to their original condition) before the end of March 2017.

Two volunteer working weekends took place during October 2016 at the LNR where a general tidying up of the Marsh Area took place.

We have also had some correspondence with Lancashire Wildlife Trust in recent months regarding doing some partnership working with them at Lomeshaye in 2017.

Gib Hill LNI – In recent months, Neighbourhood Services have taken on responsibility for the management of Gib Hill. Although the land is under Pendle Council ownership, very little work has been done on this site in the past. We are now working with Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Gib Hill LNI volunteers to proactively manage this site with a view to obtaining funding for its development.

Japanese Knotweed

The treatment and monitoring of Japanese Knotweed (JK) is undertaken by the Environmental Action Group (EAG).

In 2013, the EAG in conjunction with Ribble Rivers Trust started to compile a list of all sites throughout Pendle that had Japanese Knotweed. During the past 3 years we have identified and treated 163 sites throughout Pendle including some sites in Burnley where the watercourse crosses the Burnley and Pendle border.

Of those 163 sites:

- 26 are clear of JK
- 29 have produced 5 or less shoots
- 57 have produced 10 or less shoots
- 51 have more than 10 shoots

Overall, the original list of sites is now showing 90-95% reduction in JK.

A comprehensive list of knotweed treatments for 2017 has been produced with associated costs. The treatment of all existing sites (including the monitoring of clear sites – these have to be monitored for 3 years once they are classified as clear!) will start in earnest in May and will continue through to October.

The EAG are doing an excellent job of keeping this invasive weed at bay and year on year the annual budget set aside to deal with JK reduces.

Pennine Lancashire Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS)

The PPS is now complete and was approved at the Council's 25th August 2016 Executive Committee meeting. The PPS will provide a strategic framework for maintaining and improving outdoor sports pitches and their associated facilities across Pendle over the next 10 years.

The full 'Supply and demand assessment of Pendle Council pitches' under the guise of the **Assessment Report** and the **Playing Pitch Strategy & Action Plan** are now on the Council's website. You can access both from the following weblink:

www.pendle.gov.uk/pps

Transfer of Services to Parish/Town Councils

Work is ongoing in terms of the transferring of services and facilities to Town and Parish Councils. Thus far, 12 play facilities have been transferred to Nelson Town Council from Pendle Borough Council. In addition, a service and maintenance agreement whereby Pendle Council continue to maintain and inspect all 12 of the play facilities over the next 2 years has also been completed.

A meeting will be sought in the near future with Nelson Town Council regarding the transfer/funding of the three parks in the town.

Neighbourhood Services Officers are involved in the Member/Officer Working Group.

Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's)

PSPO's are now in place and enforceable around dog control and smoking at the 12 play facilities transferred to Nelson Town Council last year. In addition, the dog control policies pertinent to Nelson Cemetery have also been transferred to new PSPO's for all Borough of Pendle Cemeteries.

Consultation is now ongoing regarding PSPO's for sports grounds that are due to come in to force from April 2017. These include rules around dog control and include relevant sports pitch bye-laws that will be transferred from the old Parks and Recreation bye-laws.

Green Flag Awards

The Council attained 8 Green Flag Awards in 2016 with three of these being in Nelson. These are:

- Marsden Park (9th consecutive year)
- Walverden Park (7th consecutive year)
- Victoria Park (8th consecutive year)

Applications for this year will be submitted by the end of January 2017. As Marsden Park was mystery shopped this year, it will be formally judged in 2017. Both Victoria and Walverden Park will be mystery shopped in 2017 due to them being formally judged last year.

Steven Burke Sports Hub - Phase Two

Since May 2016, we have been successful in securing approximately £20,000 towards phase 2 of the Steven Burke Sports Hub (the development of a Pump Track and junior training area/car parking). In addition to Barrowford and Nelson Committee's Capital Programme contributions of £2,000 each, £10,000 has been provisionally allocated from Bradley Big Local. The remaining £6,000 is made up of PBC and Cycle Sport Pendle (CSP) contributions.

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 apply for funding for smaller amounts. We are concentrating on securing funding for the Pump Track element first with a couple of funding applications for different amounts submitted recently to:

- Lancashire Environmental Fund (£30,000)
- Newground (£10,000)

CSP have recently been successful in securing £9,595 from East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group's Prescription for Well-being programme. Although this will not fund the building of the Pump Track, it enables CSP to run a BMX section and hold regular sessions on the hub. The funding has been used to make a small BMX track loop within the velodrome area of the hub, the purchase of a stock of BMX bikes (approximately 10) and will pay for coaching recruitment and training of new and old club volunteers.

We intend to submit a further funding application to Sport England's Community Asset Fund in early 2017.

Victoria Park

The bandstand improvement works were completed in May 2016 in time for the UK Music Day event on the 21st June which utilised the bandstand. This was our first live music event and although it was fairly small in scale because of the great weather it attracted a good turnout and we received lots of positive feedback.

The Pendle Youth Orchestra also performed in the Park's bandstand in 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.

We are looking to have similar events in 2017 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.

Unfortunately, Trash the Dog from the **Vicky Witch Family Sculpture Trail** was vandalised during the summer. Consequently, it had to be taken out and we had to commission a replacement. The new one was installed in October 2016.

We are aiming to install two more feature benches within the storytelling area in spring with plans to develop a magical fairy style garden in the Sunken Garden area in 2017.

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.

An example of this was the successful Whitefield Tea in the Park event in September 2016 which was organised by Whitefield Community Association and the Pavilion CIC. This was a family community event that attracted local residents and included activities/attractions such as a Bouncy Castle, Birds of Prey, Dogs in Need, Arts and Crafts, etc. The organising committee are looking to run this event again in 2017.

Unfortunately, the pavilion was broken in to at the end of July via a small window at the back of the building. A laptop, £200 cash (the float and petty cash) and the tips jar for the volunteers was stolen plus the stock in the ice cream freezer was ruined as a result of the intruders leaving the freezer open.

Subsequently, we have worked with the Pavilion CIC to improve the security of the building including the erection of more grilles, the bricking up of a door and two windows and the installation of new electronic roller shutters on the front and rear doors. There have been no further incidences pertaining to the building.

We have a number of small scale projects lined up for the Park in 2017 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.

Walverden Park

The park suffers from poor drainage in certain areas of the Park, specifically on the path and banking which runs adjacent to and above where the wildflower/storytelling area is. We have worked with the Council's Drainage Officer to investigate the source of this problem and provide solutions.

Fortunately, we seem to have identified the problem. The drainage network that caught water coming off the top field (at the Brunswick Street side of the Park), specifically the pipe that runs parallel to the path directly below the top field banking, has been damaged by tree roots.

As such, the drainage has not been working properly and a new drainage pipe will be installed in addition to other minor works.

The Engineering section has developed a scheme and we are due to complete the necessary work in early 2017. The EAG have already completed a small part of the scheme by digging soil off the top of an existing land drain to improve water flow through existing drainage in to Pendle Water at the lower level of the Park.

The new wolf sculpture was pushed over recently in an apparent attempt to steal it. Luckily, little damage was done to the sculpture and the sculpture was re-installed on to its concrete base with more robust and secure fittings by the Park Keepers.

The history of Walverden and the local area interpretation board has now been installed on the sub-station fencing at the Brunswick Street entrance. We are going to put a further interpretation board next to this which will feature photos and memories of users of the Park in 2017.

As a result of the tree works done over the last 2-3 years in the Park in accordance with the Tree Management Plan, we are starting to see the fruits of our labour in that there has been a real improvement in the understory and herb layer regeneration and the amount of light.

We have recently taken down four trees within the Park as a result of them being diseased or them naturally coming to the end of their life.

Following on from the improvements made to existing paths last year, we are hoping to upgrade the Day Street/Chapelhouse Road entrance path, which is uneven and in a poor state, in the coming months.

As part of 2017's Green Spaces Team's Events Programme, we will be running four working days in the Park. These will be in February, May, August and November and will consist of environmental and conservation tasks such as litter picking, shrub work and cleaning of parks furniture. All these working days will be organised in co-ordination with the Friends of Walverden Park Group and will be advertised to volunteers from other organisations and the general public via email, social media and posters.

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 have re-started after a short gap. They have concentrated on improvements to the marsh area in the main.

Following Michael Wrigley's death in late 2015, approximately £750 was given to the Friends of Marsden Park as a result of donations made at Michael's funeral. The Friends Group approached the Council to discuss potential projects for Marsden Park and decided that it would be used to contribute towards two small projects that would be a fitting legacy for Michael's work as the chairman of the Friends Group and to remember his life spent living in and using Marsden Park (Michael used to live in the Park as his dad was the Park's Superintendent for Nelson Town Council).

A new interpretation board remembering the open air pool including Michael's memories of it and the Park in general is due to be 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.

We continue to have rot issues with the wooden boardwalk that serves the marsh area. Some repair work has recently taken place that has cost nearly £1,000. 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

Neighbourhood Services Officers are working with the Bradley Big Local Committee to improve and refurbish the existing play area at Hodge House Playing Fields. A scheme has been developed which includes a refresh of existing equipment plus a new extended section that will include more contemporary and adventurous play equipment. There will also be an inclusive

roundabout that can be accessed by children in a wheelchair. In addition to equipment within the fenced off area, they are also hoping to install some outdoor gym equipment/trim trail apparatus alongside the perimeter of the play area that can be used by all ages.

To enable Bradley Big Local to achieve all their aims, further funding is being sought from other sources. In the meantime, the Council have submitted and been granted planning permission for the extension of the existing play area. As such, it is now dependent upon BBL to secure the funding needed to move forward. Once the funding has been secured, the works will be put out to tender.

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