

**REPORT FROM: NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES MANAGER**

**TO: COLNE AND DISTRICT COMMITTEE**

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## **FOR INFORMATION**

### **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 Colne.

#### **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 Colne 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.

Alkincoats Nature Reserve – In addition to the 500-600 trees of varying species that were planted previously in the extension, the LNR Friends Group, with help from Neighbourhood Services staff, the EAG, Newground and the Good Life Project planted 700 more trees sourced from Skipton Building Society's Grassroots Giving 2016 initiative, Newground and the Woodland Trust.

To provide enough space for all the above trees, the fence line within the new extension was re-aligned by the EAG prior to the tree planting working days in November.

The wildlife survey for the extension has now been completed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust. The survey (along with other information being gathered) will inform the new Management Plan for the Nature Reserve.

We have drawn up initial plans for the remaining area of the extension in co-ordination with the LNR Friends Group and will start to develop the new Management Plan for the whole of the LNR over the next 6 months. In addition, the designation documents for the extension will be submitted to English Nature in February/March 2017.

Ball Grove Nature Reserve – The wildlife survey for the extension has now been completed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust. There is further survey work to be done in the remaining two areas (areas 9 and 10) that couldn't be completed first time round by the Wildlife Trust. The survey (along with other information being gathered) will inform the new Management Plan for the Nature Reserve.

The Bull rushes in the top lodge were treated (weed wiped) with glyphosphate during November. We had intended to do this last year but for some reason this never materialised. As such, we had to wait until late in the year as this work must only be done after birds have finished nesting.

The Council received a request from the owner of Brooklands off Keighley Road, Colne to lease a piece of land to the rear of his property that is within the Ball Grove Nature Reserve boundary in September 2016. A similar request had been put forward in 2014 by the residents of Craigmere off Keighley Road, Colne. As such, the Corporate Director submitted a report to Colne Committee in early October for consideration.

Members resolved that the land would be maintained as a nature reserve but the lease would allow the meadow to be planted with approved wild flowers and other plants. Public access to the area would be maintained and the same terms as those granted for Craigmere be pursued.

Neighbourhood Services Officers and the Friends Group have met on site with Dr Bari regarding the proposed scheme and agreed a way forward. A planting scheme incorporating new trees, shrubs, plants and flowers has been developed and work on preparing the land including rotavating and digging holes for the trees is scheduled for January/February. We are looking to have the scheme complete by April/May 2017.

We have also been working with the National Citizen Service (NCS). As part of their 'Challenge Programme', a group of 16-18 year olds had to undertake a social action project.

Subsequently, on the 1st August, the group worked alongside the Park Keeper Team to create a new woodland path in the Nature Reserve. This was the start of the footpath and further work on this will be forthcoming during 2017.

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.

Greenfield Nature Reserve – A working day took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016 (including help from the Good Life Team) where tasks such as litter picking, cutting back vegetation and edging of paths were undertaken.

We are also hoping to carry out some path improvement works in the LNR before the end of March 2017.

## **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 25<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.pendle.gov.uk/pps)

**Fisher More** - The development of a 3G pitch at Fisher More High School was initially scheduled to be completed by September 2016 but due to problems with drainage and some planning issues the construction work was delayed. The contractors finally started work in November 2016 and are due to complete the works by the end of February 2017. The School is then looking to have the facility available for use from March/April 2017. They are also still pursuing further external funding avenues (Sport England and the Football Foundation) regarding the improvement of the grass pitches and the tennis/netball courts.

## **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, 9 play facilities have been transferred to Colne Town Council from Pendle Borough Council. In addition, the MUGA at Waterside which was under the ownership of LCC has been transferred to Pendle Borough Council and this will now be transferred to Colne Town Council. From the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016, Pendle Council ceased to carry out maintenance at the above sites as Colne Town Council's new playground contractor took over.

A meeting will be sought in the near future with Colne Town Council and Trawden Forest Parish Council regarding the transfer/funding of Alkincoats and Ball Grove Parks.

Neighbourhood Services Officers are involved in the Member/Officer Transfer of Services Committee meetings.

## **Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's)**

PSPO's are now in place and enforceable around dog control and smoking at the 9 play facilities transferred to Colne Town Council last year plus the Waterside MUGA. In addition, the dog control policies pertinent to Colne 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 two of these being in Colne. These are:

- Alkincoats Park (The Park has held the award for 8 years)
- Ball Grove Park (the Park has held the award for 3 years)

Applications for this year will be submitted by the end of January 2017. As Alkincoats Park and Ball Grove Park were formally judged in 2016, they will be mystery shopped this 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.

The Hub has been recognised as a 'Centre of Excellence' in the joint bid to the Department of Transport's Access Fund between LCC and Blackburn with Darwen for East Lancashire. Pendle is a partner local authority within this bid which potentially could bring significant active and public transport investment in to East Lancashire.

### **Alkincoats Park**

The café re-opened on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016 under new ownership. The café has consistent opening hours and the first 7 months have gone extremely well. As a result of this, Beryl and Eileen approached the Council about expanding in to the redundant old Bowls Room next door to enable them to develop as a business in the future.

Subsequently, plans for the refurbishment were drawn up and costed by Liberata in November 2016 and a meeting was held with the Corporate Director and Green Spaces Manager in early December. It was agreed that the Council would support this proposal and contribute some budget towards the works in addition to the owners taking on a 10 year lease agreement for both rooms within the building. The agreement will be similar to the one developed for the café owner at Ball Grove Park and terms are currently being negotiated.

The refurbishment work started the week before Christmas and was due to be completed by the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2017. Some internal decoration will be carried out by the proprietors the following week with the intention of re-opening the café on the 14<sup>th</sup> January.

The Pavilion had experienced a number of incidences of vandalism over the past 6 months including the locks for the café and the Bowling Academy being glued on a number of occasions and the new hedge plants at the side of the building being uprooted on an almost daily basis during July and August.

Around this time, the café were fortunate enough to receive some free CCTV as a donation from a local company in Colne. The CCTV was installed at the pavilion at the end of September by Fresh Fire & Security (FF&S). In total, four cameras were put up in the four corners of the building with ongoing monitoring of the cameras being done by FF&S.

Within approximately two weeks of the cameras being installed, the perpetrator was caught on CCTV gluing the locks and identified by Council Officers. As such, the person was questioned by Police and in co-ordination with the Bowling Academy and local Councillors a way forward in terms of his punishment was agreed. A restorative justice approach was asked for and this has been forthcoming with the person in question helping the Bowling Academy maintain the greens and the surrounding area over the past two months.

Path improvement works (re-tarmaced and edged) on two sides of the second bowling green were completed in September 2016. This has improved safety and accessibility around the whole bowling green area.

Work has been ongoing for approximately 6 months on the creation of a compost area at the bottom end of the Park behind the old Park lodge. This has mainly been done by the Park Keeper

Team and the Good Life Project and has consisted of clearing out dense vegetation and developing natural hedge rows.

The compost heap will be used for storing and recycling green waste from the Park as well as any grass cuttings and green waste from the Bowling Green area. EAG will be building three bays for the waste and completing the project in January 2017.

Picnic benches have been installed at the top end of the wildflower meadow and next to the existing one near the café (there are now 2 benches outside the café). This was done in co-ordination with the Friends Group and the Café.

In addition, a new noticeboard has been affixed to the side of the pavilion which will be used jointly by the café and the Bowling Academy.

The Bowling Academy continues to be a fantastic resource and is relentless in their efforts to provide two first class bowling greens within the Park. It is fair to say that the success of the café and the Bowling Academy have brought about a real resurrection of this part of the Park.

Colne Town Council held an event in the bandstand area at Alkincoats Park on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2016 to celebrate the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

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 January, April, August and December and will consist of environmental and conservation tasks such as litter picking, replenishing woodland paths, shrub work and cleaning of parks furniture. All these working days will be organised in co-ordination with the Friends of Alkincoats Park Group and will be advertised to volunteers from other organisations and the general public via email, social media and posters.

We also have a number of small events planned for the Park (others may be added). These are:

- Woodland Walk – March 24th
- Bat Night – May 31st
- Kite Flying Event – July 24th
- Bug Hunt – August 1st

## **Ball Grove Park**

The Winewall entrance scheme has now been completed. All three beds have been planted up with perennials. We have transferred the large boulders from Trawden Recreation Ground and strategically placed these along the edge of the grass to stop cars parking in this area and churning up the grass.

Knee rail fencing has also been installed around the edge of the car park to stop cars driving over the grass in to the main park. The fencing had been put in place to work in co-ordination with the barrier that was moved closer to the car park a couple of years ago. Unfortunately, we have had an issue arise with the residents of Spring Grove Barn regarding the barrier being locked. The lady who lives in this property has had health problems over the last 6 months and the couple are concerned that if an ambulance needs to access their house via the Winewall entrance at night that vital time will be lost trying to open the barrier. They are also worried that the lock will freeze in cold weather and this could waste time, etc.

As a result, the lock has been temporarily taken off and the barrier is closed shut but not locked. We have met with them a couple of times to discuss the issue and explained that we need the barrier to be locked in the long term as we are concerned about travellers accessing the Park and/or other anti-social behaviour taking place, e.g. joyriding in the Park, drug dealing, etc. We

have every sympathy with their situation but thus far we have found no solution. The Friends Group, the café owner and the residents at the White House within the Park all want the lock put back on the barrier.

We are looking at all the legalities of this case and are working to provide a solution to this predicament we find ourselves in. We are due to meet the people concerned in early January 2017 to discuss a way forward. For the time being, the barrier will remain unlocked until a solution is found.

The café continues to thrive and has had a very successful first year with the café proving to be a very popular place. The owner negotiated a new 10 year lease agreement in July 2016 with the Council and has plans to develop the café further. We are also looking at getting a defibrillator for the building in partnership with the café in 2017 similar to the one we have at Holt House Playing Fields.

As a result of a resolution by the Council's Executive in 2016, the Council signed up to Keep Britain Tidy's 'We're Watching You' dog fouling campaign.

Due to the on-going problems we have had with dog fouling at Ball Grove, we chose it as one of our pilot sites. The scheme started on the 21<sup>st</sup> November for a period of 5 weeks initially (up to and including Christmas week). The signs are really clever and have slogans that are designed to play with people's conscience. They glow in the dark and have some fairly scary eyes which are very disconcerting along with three different messages. We used approximately 12 signs around the Ball Grove Park site in addition to some bin stickers.

The success of the scheme will be reported to Senior Officers and members in January 2017. We are hopeful that the same reduction experienced elsewhere will happen in Pendle. We have had a few problems with the signs not having enough charge initially so the glow in the dark mechanism wasn't as effective so we may extend the time we use the signs at Ball Grove for another 5 weeks as we have not had the full effect from the signs and the site does have a recognisable problem with dog fouling.

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

One of the working days will concentrate on improving the fishing pegs around the lake in co-ordination with Burnley & Pendle Anglers Association. If successful, we hope to organise further working days in and around the lake in the future.

### **Holt House Playing Fields**

A couple of historical drainage issues pertaining to Holt House and Alkincoats Park have reared their heads in recent months. The main issue relates to the bridleway path that runs from the Park (where it starts) to the entrance to the Nature Reserve at the top end of Holt House. As a result of the stormy weather experienced in early September 2016, the bridleway path flooded and severely damaged the path structure. The path was left in a very unsafe state with large rivets in the centre of the stone path. Emergency work was undertaken by EAG to stone up the gaps but due to it not being the first time this has happened, it was felt that a more long term solution was needed.

At around the same time, the Council had also been contacted by Colne & Nelson Rugby Club asking for help regarding two large sinkholes that had appeared on one of their match pitches and

their training pitch. The sinkhole on the main pitch was close to an area of the ground where previous drainage issues had occurred and the land became extremely boggy in wet weather.

Subsequently, a site meeting between Council Officers, the Rugby Club and Engineering Services (including the Council's Drainage Officer) took place to look at the issues and agree a way forward in terms of alleviating and/or providing a solution to both problems.

It was highlighted that some work had taken place in 2009 regarding the bridleway flooding with drainage pipes that took the water in to the Park installed at intermittent sections down the hill.

On inspection, it was clear to see that these pipes were blocked and the drainage channel in the Park overgrown with vegetation. It was agreed that EAG would carry out preparatory works relating to the bridleway drainage works including cutting back overgrown vegetation, cleaning out two culvert areas and digging out the drainage channel and the drain cover on the Park side.

The next steps are for the drainage pipes that lead in to the park from the bridleway footpath to be jetted and cleaned out. Finally, a long term scheme with associated costs for improving the drainage off the main path and installing new drains further up the path at Holt House is being developed by the Drainage Officer. We hope to have this ready by the end of January with a view to undertaking the works before the end of the financial year.

The contractor who is doing the jetting of the drainage pipes on the bridleway will also be carrying out some exploratory investigation work on the two sinkholes and the drainage issue on the main Rugby pitch. Until this investigation is done, we are unsure of the scale of the problem and what work will be necessary.

Pendle Parkrun continues to be successful attracting an average of 67.5 runners of all ages and abilities per week (this figure has increased by 5.5 runners per week since I last reported in May 2016). Provided below are some official statistics from the Pendle parkrun website:

Number of different runners who have completed Pendle parkrun: 1,635  
Number of runs completed by the 1,635 runners: 9,315  
Total hours run: 189Days 17Hrs 7Min 58Secs  
Total distance run: 46,575km

The third generation route that was introduced on their second anniversary in May 2016 has been welcomed by all runners. The above route change and the fact that the parkrun team have been working closely with Pendle Leisure Trust and Trawden Athletic Club on the Couch to 5K programme (their most recent collaboration started on the 11<sup>th</sup> October and ran through to before Christmas) has seen parkrun achieve its aim of attracting more beginner runners and increasing participants.

The floor painting work inside the Football Changing Rooms was completed in August 2016. The floor looks so much better and is definitely more durable and less slippy than the previous paint used.

There have been no further problems with the defibrillator located on the external façade of the changing rooms and thankfully it has not been used thus far.

As highlighted in the Ball Grove Park section, we have started to use Keep Britain Tidy's 'We're Watching You' signs at three pilot sites. It has been identified that there is also a big problem with dog fouling at Holt House specifically the area behind Colne FC's stadium (where the path runs in between the farmer's field and the ground) and on rough land between the edge of the postage stamp Football pitch and down to the entrance near North Valley Residents Association on Birtwistle Avenue. As such, we have identified this site as a hot spot area and will be running the



'We're Watching You' campaign and increasing patrols of this area by the Environmental Crime Team in the near future.

We have been working with Colne Football Club in an advisory capacity in relation to their aims of developing the stadium and two junior pitches that are included within their lease agreement. They are looking to apply for external funding to build new changing facilities and a clubhouse and improve existing stands within the ground in addition to more formal car parking spaces. They also want to improve drainage and the pitch quality of the two junior pitches.

The recently approved PPS documents have been sent to the Club which detail the strategic justification and need for such improvements. They are currently working towards submitting a planning application for the car park and drainage works and are in the early stages of developing a much larger scheme for the stadium improvements.

At one of our site meetings with the Club, some tree works behind one side of the ground were identified (approximately five trees were overhanging the stands/outer edge of the pitch). These were carried out in late November 2016 by the Grounds Maintenance Team.

We will endeavor to continue to support Colne Football Club in their long term future plans.

### **Trawden Recreation Ground**

We have been working with Trawden Celtic Football Club over the last 6 months in relation to improving the pitches and facilities at Trawden Recreation Ground. The Club are also looking to develop and increase the number of teams they have and have enquired about gaining more ownership (via a lease, licence or transfer) of the Rec to enable them to access external funding.

The Club contacted us about their ambitions and we met with them to discuss a way forward. Once the PPS had been approved, we provided Trawden Celtic with the PPS documents and detailed the information relevant to the Club in terms of the pitch quality assessments. The Strategy document identifies all the pitches (5-a-side, 7-a-side, 9-a-side & 11-a-side) as poor quality and as such recommends it as a possible site for the FA Pitch Improvement Programme.

Subsequently, a meeting was set up in November 2016 to meet a representative from the Lancashire Football Association (LFA). At this meeting, the LFA were shown the site and Trawden Celtic and the Council put forward their ideas and plans for the long term.

The LFA have intimated that the Recreation Ground would be eligible for the FA Pitch Improvement Programme in the first instance and advised the Club and Council jointly to apply for this in the short term.

Trawden Parish Council is also interested in taking over the playing field and has had discussions with Pendle Council around this as part of the Transfer of Services to Town & Parish Councils work.

Following on from the meeting with the LFA, it was decided that discussions needed to take place with Trawden Forest Parish Council. As such, representatives from Trawden Celtic attended the Trawden Forest Parish Council meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016 to inform them of progress so far, the ambitions and proposals for the Club and the Recreation ground and whether the Parish Council would work with them to pursue the development of the facility in the long term.

The Parish Council were receptive to the Club's ideas but said they would await the outcome of the FA grant application and then meet again.

The club are also going to meet the Trawden Show Committee and talk to Trawden Athletic Club about their involvement.

## **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