

REPORT FROM: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OPERATIONAL SERVICES

TO: NELSON TOWN DEAL BOARD

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MARSDEN PUMP TRACK PROPOSAL

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the Nelson Town Deal Board of progress and issues around the proposed pump track within Marsden Park, Nelson.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members note the contents of the report.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

For information.

ISSUE

1 - As part of the initial bidding process for the Town Deal it was proposed that a BMX track be built through the woodland within Marsden Park. This was later replaced by a junior pump track due to the Health and Safety risks of BMX or other bikes crossing footpaths within the park.

2 - In person public consultations were held at Marsden Park on the 9th and 12th November 2022. The consultations were used to discuss all the proposed improvement schemes such as a new playground, refurbished tennis courts, creation of a Multi Use Games Area around the Bowling green, and surfacing improvements.

Consultations were also issued in paper and online for those who were unable to attend in person.

3 - The original proposed location for a pump track was on the site of the old Lido at the top of Hallam Road. Comments received about this suggested that residents felt it was too close to the houses and a narrow road, and the area would be better served as a picnic site or orchard or growing space.

4 - A new location was then proposed by council officers on the site of the informal football area in the centre of the park woodland as it was away from houses and would be substantially contained.

A specific in-person public consultation event was held at the new proposed location on the 11th of July 2024 as a drop-in event for residents to learn more about the project. This event was hosted by the council's Greenspaces Manager, Greenspaces Assistant and a member of the Council's Engineering Team.

This event was well attended by members of the public with a vast array of views ranging from extremely against through to very supportive. There was no 'key speaker presentation, instead the event offered a chance for the public to discuss the proposal amongst themselves council officers and other interested parties.

During this consultation a petition objecting to the pump track location was handed in by a local resident of over 100 signatories.

5 - The key points raised in objection centered around:

- Parking issues
- Anti-social behaviour
- Disturbance of a tranquil area
- Increased number of children riding cycles through the park
- Lack of access for emergency vehicles
- Pump tracks should not be in a park

6 - The key points raised in support focused on:

- Providing alternative activities to reduce anti-social behaviour
- Physical exercise and well being
- Skill creation
- Providing a feeder group to the large cycle hub at Barrowford

7 - A letter was then sent on the 6th of August 2024 by the Greenspaces Assistant to all the names within the petition, clarifying details of the proposed scheme complete with a QR Link to the online consultation.

8 - Following a complaint from a resident, a second letter was sent out to the same petitioners advising paper copies could be requested from Operational Services via the telephone or post.

9 - In early September 2024, a revised version of the original petition was deposited at Nelson Town Hall with 200 signatories. This was acknowledged to the lead petitioner on the 17th of September and advised all options were being considered and that officers would be in touch in due course.

10 - A counter petition was received by officers on the 28th of October with an additional 133 supporting signatories for the scheme to go ahead.

11 - As part of the petition against the pump track location, several other sites were suggested as potential locations for a pump track. These have consequently been ruled out by council officers as being unsuitable for various reasons. After listening to concerns raised though, a third location within Marsden Park has been identified by officers on the corner of Hallam Road and Marsden Hall Road. Contractors have attended the site and confirmed suitability, after initially there had been concerns around the gradient of the land. An email was sent on the 4th of November to the lead petitioner and another member of the public who has raised complaints to ask for views on this proposal. No response has been received to date.

12 - Posters will be displayed on the park noticeboards until the end of 6th of December 2024 to advise residents of the new proposed location and to invite them to contact the Parks department with any feedback. Following on from this consultation unless there are significant objections raised, planning permission will be sought in early 2025.

Town Deal Board Minutes

13 - At a meeting of the Town Deal Board held on 13th September 2024, the following statement was included as an update on the Healthy Town Parks element:

24. Public consultations have taken place on the proposed pump track and Bowling Green projects at Marsden Park? These consultations, which concluded in August 2024, generally received positive feedback from the community. However, a petition against the pump track was raised, prompting the project team to engage directly with the petitioners. This proactive engagement led to a significant change in public opinion, with many initial concerns being addressed through open dialogue and transparent communication. Plans for these projects are now being finalised and these will be advised to the next Town Deal Board meeting together with a confirmed programme of works.

14 - A formal complaint was received from a member of the public by the council on the 4th October 2024, indicating that these minutes did not accurately reflect the position of the project concerning the pump track within Marsden Park.

A response to the complainant was sent by the Assistant Director of Operational Services on the 11th of October 2024.

15 - It is agreed that the above statement is not correct and should read

Public consultations have taken place on the proposed pump track and Bowling Green projects at Marsden Park. These consultations, which concluded in August 2024, generally received positive feedback, however a petition against the pump track was raised and there were still some unresolved issues that would need to be dealt with by the Project Team. Plans for these projects were now being finalised and will be presented at the next Board meeting together with a confirmed programme of works

16 - The Greenspaces Manager meets monthly with the Raise Partnership to provide verbal updates on the progress of the parks improvement schemes. A quarterly monitoring update is provided to the PBC regeneration team concerning finances, project updates and risks / outcomes.

17 - The report to the 13th September Town Deal Board meeting, above, was written by a PBC employee within the Regeneration Team who has subsequently left the Council, and as such it cannot be ascertained how the report was written in this way. The Greenspaces team were not privy to this report prior to publication to carry out any editorial checks. Moving forward, it has been agreed that the project lead will see any reports / updates on the Healthy Town element prior to publication to ensure all is correct.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: None arising directly from this report.

Financial: None arising directly from this report.

Legal: None arising directly from this report.

Risk Management: None arising directly from this report.

Health and Safety: None arising directly from this report.

Sustainability: None arising directly from this report.

Community Safety: None arising directly from this report.

Equality and Diversity: None arising directly from this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Copy of letter sent to petitioners

Appendix 2 - Copy of further letter sent to petitioners

Appendix 3 - Copy of complaint received 04/10/24

Appendix 4 - Redacted response letter to complainant of 11/10/24

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS: None.