

18th September 2017

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport – Councillor K Caan

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

Ward(s) affected:

Sherborne

Title:

Petition – Condition of Naul’s Mill Park Pond / Boating Lake

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report responds to a petition containing 222 signatures which was submitted to Coventry City Council. The petition is supported by Councillor Kelly and requests that the Council refill the boating lake on a temporary basis and in collaboration with the community and other organisations seek funding to redevelop the lake.

The petition reads:-

“We the undersigned wish to register with the Council our concern about the state of the pond in Naul’s Mill Park. This has been left empty for 4 summers and has totally blighted our historic and beautiful park, which is a valuable green space in a deprived inner city community. Whilst acknowledging the financial problems the council faces, we request:

- a) That they take immediate steps to enable the pond to be filled on a temporary basis and
- b) Undertake to work with other organisations and the community to obtain funding to redevelop the pond in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.”

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport is asked to:

1. Approve that consultation is held with the Friends of Naul’s Mill Park, ward members, users of Nauls Mill Park and local residents to identify what is the preferred future of the pool.

2. Approve that following the consultation exercise a project be worked up that reflects the results and includes the costs for the preferred option. This can then be the subject of a further Cabinet Member report.
3. Note that the Boating Lake is currently being filled.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Petition – Condition of Naul’s Mill Park Pond / Boating Lake

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 A petition was received to request that the Council refill the boating lake on a temporary basis and in collaboration with the community and other organisations seek funding to redevelop the lake.
- 1.2 Nauls Mill Park is an attractive area of open space in Sherbourne, less than half a mile from Coventry City centre. The park takes its name from “Nauls Mill”, a mill which lay on Radford Brook during the 12th Century. In 1889 the Corporation acquired the land and in the late 1900’s the area was landscaped and opened as a public park in 1909.
- 1.3 The site contains a range of features including amenity grass land containing a good canopy of trees of various ages, shrub beds, flower beds, a children’s play area and other traditional features. A distinctive feature contained in the park is a large Edwardian model boating lake at the parks southern end. Sailing model boats was a popular pursuit in the Edwardian era.
- 1.4 The lake is roughly 3000 square metres in area, measuring 100m long and 40m wide at its widest point. The lake varies in depth to a maximum of approximately 1.2m and at its shallowest point it is roughly 0.6m. It is fed by a stream which normally runs through the park in a culvert but which can be diverted to fill the pond. A central gully runs through the lake allowing any rainwater or ground water seepage to be fed to a drain by Middleborough Road. An overflow by Middleborough Road similarly feeds excess water back into the culvert.
- 1.5 Although originally left full throughout the year, over the past 10 years or so the lake has been filled in March or thereabouts and drained at the end of November. This was to prevent people ice-skating or otherwise putting themselves at risk should the water freeze during the winter.
- 1.6 The lake is lined with concrete slabs with the joints between the slabs sealed with a flexible bitumen jointing compound. The bitumen has perished over time however and caused the pool to leak, probably washing out material from beneath the slabs, which in turn has caused the slabs to become unstable and causing some to crack.
- 1.7 In approximately 2012, the lake had begun to lose water to such an extent that the stream needed to be permanently diverted to the keep the lake full. This meant that the lake was constantly overflowing with the water circulating slowly within the lake before escaping. However during this most recent summer the lake was again filled to monitor and assess the situation.
- 1.8 In 2012 / 2013, the lake was drained and not refilled due to concerns with the effects that the leaking water may be having downstream / below ground. During the summer of 2017 however the lake was refilled to assess the extent of the leaks.
- 1.9 The increasing use of fertilisers on agricultural land upstream and its consequent run-off into water-courses means that ‘blanketweed’ or filamentous algae forms rapidly in shallow water such as that of the lake in Nauls Mill Park. Blanketweed is visually unpleasant and can lead to other problems including issues with maintenance of the lake as litter etc. tangles within it. It can block drains and hence be a causing potential flood risk.

- 1.10 The blanketweed in the lake used to be controlled with chemicals, however the constant throughput of water into the lake means that any algaecides used are diluted and become ineffective. As algaecides are not only expensive but their over use may have undesirable environmental effects, the constant dosing of waterbodies with chemicals should be avoided. There are also environmental considerations associated with the use of herbicides. A more environmentally friendly alternative would be to use of barley straw, however this would not be effective for the same reasons as it relies on naturally occurring bacteria in the straw being kept within the water body rather than being flushed out by the throughput of water.
- 1.11 Repairs to the pool have been undertaken in the past. In 2007 a Sika flexible concrete sealant was applied to the worst area of the walls and some of the slabs in the base. This was at a cost approximately £25,000 and in 2010 the sealed area was extended at a further cost of approximately £60,000
- 1.12 Unfortunately movement of the slabs, possibly due to the routine draining of the lake, caused the sealant to crack and consequently fail. Similarly seepage through the sealant at the base of the walls (when dry) suggests that there is still a problem with groundwater.
- 1.13 Alternative repairs have subsequently been sought and some outline costs identified.
- 1.14 The latest estimate (2016) for a comprehensive repair is costed at £104,500. This does not address any underlying faults and is only a cost to apply a seal to the base and sides of the lake.
- 1.15 A consultant has offered to conduct a full study of the problem however including analysis of the pool using CCTV and Ground Penetrating Radar and to prepare a report with a fully worked up solution. This is costed at £13,600.
- 1.16 The future of the lake effectively comes down to 8 options (ordered by their estimated cost, high to low):
1. Restore the lake to its original condition: Excavate and relay a new concrete base. Re-secure coping stones and other stonework. Replace missing features including decorative urns.
 2. Create a new wildlife pond on site of the boating lake. Excavate existing concrete base; create natural watertight base using puddled or bentonite clay. Remove coping stones and re-profile sides as appropriate. This could even include de-culverting the stream, however this would be a major undertaking.
 3. Remove water feature entirely. Excavate and remove concrete base and sides and fill in with soil. Landscape as necessary. Stream to be permanently culverted.
 4. Transform into a new facility. A skateboard bowl for example would require the base and walls of the lake to be re-laid with appropriate concrete (and with drainage included via the central gulley) and skateboarding features installed.
 5. Carry out minimal repairs and use a butyl or similar liner to enable the lake to be permanently filled with water.
 6. Remove water feature entirely. Remove coping stones and similar features. Perforate concrete base. Fill in remaining basin with soil and landscape as necessary.

7. Almost nothing. Fill with water and drain periodically to scrape out blanket weed / remove rubbish etc.
 8. Nothing. Leave it dry and clear of leaves, rubbish etc. periodically.
- 1.17 No funding exists for any of the options listed above. A S106 agreement associated with the housing development on the adjacent site may become available at some point in the future and could provide some contributory funding.
 - 1.18 Funding could also be obtained from grants from (for example) Landfill Tax organisations such as WREN, BIFFA or Veolia, however the maximum sum of these grants is £50,000. Organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) or Esmee Fairburn Trust which offer larger grants may also be interested in the lake and hence be willing to consider funding its repair / restoration.
 - 1.19 Most grant funding organisations will only fund schemes which are primarily focused on providing specific benefits – for example the HLF will favour a design focussing more on restoring / preserving heritage than biodiversity whilst the landfill tax groups or the Esmee Fairburn Trust may prefer a more biodiversity focussed scheme.
 - 1.20 In all instances close working with the local community is paramount. It is therefore proposed that a consultation is held with the Friends, ward members, users of Nauls Mill Park and local residents to identify what is the preferred future of the lake. A project can then be properly worked up that reflects the results of the consultation and includes the costs for the preferred option.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 The option to do nothing has been rejected as the lake will continue to deteriorate and become increasingly unsightly and the subject of complaint.
- 2.2 It is important that future options for the future of the pool are explored and it is recommended that consultation is held with the Friends, ward members, users of Nauls Mill Park and local residents to identify what is the preferred future of the lake.
- 2.3 It is also recommended that following the consultation exercise a project be worked up that reflects the results and includes the costs for the preferred option. This can then be the subject of a further Cabinet Member report.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 There has been no consultation on this matter

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 To be agreed subject to approval of a recommendation within this report

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Corporate Services

- 5.1 Financial implications

The financial implications of future options for the future of the pond at Nauls Mill Park will need to be carefully considered as part of a more detailed report to Cabinet Member. This could include use of S106 monies and grant funds to carry out any reparation / improvement works. Any ongoing maintenance costs would need to be managed from

within existing resources.

5.2 Legal implications

None at present

Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's Plan?

Parks and green spaces are highly valued by the citizens of Coventry. Nauls Mill Park is well used by local residents for informal recreation, sports as well as a venue for events and activities and in doing so helps improve the quality of life of Coventry citizens and also helps address health inequalities.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Risk will be managed through the existing Place directorate risk profile.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Continued maintenance of the site and support to voluntary groups will be delivered using existing resources.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

No equality impact assessments have been undertaken.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

No direct impact

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The Greenspace Service will continue to foster close partnership engagement particularly with the Friends of Naul's Mill Park.

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Place

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