

SUBJECT:	BOULTHAM PARK LAKE – TREES
DIRECTORATE:	COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT
REPORT AUTHOR:	STEVE BIRD - CITY OF LINCOLN COUNCIL TAMMY SMALLEY - LINCOLNSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To make Planning Committee aware of the general programme of biodiversity enhancing works proposed for Boultham Park lake and surrounds, and within that context, seek permission for the proposed programme of tree works.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In 2013 the City Council, working in Partnership with Linkage Community Trust, was successful in obtaining a grant from the National Lottery for both the restoration of key infrastructure and the building of important new features in Boultham Park.
- 2.2 Unfortunately, as the bid was developed, and given the financial cap on the initiative, it became clear that funding the restoration of the lake and its immediate surrounds was not going to be affordable at that time, as was originally hoped.
- 2.3 Although the lake work was thus taken from the bid, the exploratory work, undertaken initially as a part of the main project, has left the council in a good place to make another bid to the National Lottery for a targeted scheme based on biodiversity improvements for the lake and its surrounds, and thus permitting the overall park scheme to be completed.
- 2.4 As a part of this work extensive research has gone into what needs to be done, and the part that trees play in relation to both the health of the lake and the proposed restoration work is noted. It is this work that is reported here, seeking approval, in accordance with council policy, for the tree removals as listed.

3. Background

- 3.1 The successful partnership between City of Lincoln Council, and locally based charity, Linkage Community Trust, has been well reported in the context of the restoration of Boultham Park. It is not the intent of this report to go over the many excellent outcomes achieved in the park arising from the National Lottery grant, but it is important that members understand that the new bid submitted in relation to the lake is linked, and that it should be seen as a continuation of that original scheme.
- 3.2 The lake restoration work has always been a specialist area of work, and silt

problems are reported by the National Lottery as being one of the highest possible areas of risk for any lake restoration project. Early work, when the lake was a part of the main scheme did indeed identify, as the National Lottery had forecast, a significant number of issues, not least quantifying the amount of silt that would need to be removed, what was to be found in the silt, identifying how it would be removed, finding places to take it, and of course mitigating the impact that such extensive work would have on the wildlife in the area. Furthermore, the National Lottery were, quite rightly, keen to understand what caused the current silting, and to know what the council proposed to do to ensure that silting was not going to be a repeat problem in the future.

- 3.3 Despite extensive work on the issues, the high risks associated with the lake restoration work meant increasing cost forecasts. Ultimately this led to a position whereby it became necessary to remove the lake from the original bid, so as to let that progress.
- 3.4 As the capital build elements of the main project have come to a successful conclusion, understandably some focus has remained on the lake area, and Council staff have ensured that the National Lottery were always aware that we intended to revisit this and make a further bid for the lake.
- 3.5 Initially the Council just sought support funding for consultancy work to undertake surveys and research to assist in working-up a final formal detailed bid for a full scheme.
- 3.6 The approach to be taken was slightly different for this bid than was originally envisaged in the initial main scheme. Building on the knowledge gained from preliminary work in the initial general park bid, the Council recognised the need to identify a partner for this project who would bring with them all necessary skills associated with the environment and biodiversity. An approach was made to Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust (LWT), who were immediately keen to engage, support the work, and join the project board. For clarity, Linkage Community Trust remain a formal partner for the general park, but they are not formal partners for the lake submission.
- 3.7 In 2018 the National Lottery agreed to support the work, and granted the Council initial funding of £62,800 to work up a developed bid, along with its chosen partner LWT. They also provided case study examples of other lake projects to be taken into consideration, and suggested exploring alternative approaches other than dredging, so often the cause of increased risk.
- 3.8 Early work with specialists meant detailed analysis of the lake water and silt, and assisted in the development of a tested, but still relatively new and innovative solution. This proposal significantly reduces programme risks, financial risks, and impact on the environment. The principles have been discussed with the National Lottery representatives, and considered acceptable, so are the basis of the bid.
- 3.9 In essence, the scientific assessment of the lake water and silt showed that a very high percentage of the silt is in suspension, and organic in nature. That is to say it is not a mineral deposit, arising from the breakdown of rocks, but it is organic matter entering the lake, and then breaking down. Expert assessment suggests that a significant amount of this organic matter is leaf debris, and comes from the

trees in the park, especially those close to the water's edge.

- 3.10 This scientific assessment has some positive outcomes. It means that we know the cause of a large part of the sediment, and also that it is organic, and so can, over time, be broken down. If it were mineral in nature then it would have to be dredged out, and would potentially contain heavy metal contaminants which would be both difficult and very expensive to handle.
- 3.11 Based on the scientific analysis, the project therefore has two issues to address:
 - a) How to remove the existing organic sediment
 - b) How to mitigate against new organic sediment entering the lake.
- 3.12 The expert hydrologist has suggested that the solution to the existing sediment problem is one which is being used in the Serpentine Lake, Hyde Park. Careful and well-designed aeration of the water means that slowly the bacteria of the lake will increase in activity and breakdown the sediment, such that it becomes so soluble it will be washed away in the course of the natural movement of the water.
- 3.13 This is a slow process and will take many years, as indeed the build-up of silt has taken to develop. It does however also have a number of advantages: It does not disturb the wildlife/biodiversity in the way dredging does, it improves the overall health of the water for the flora and fauna, thus improving biodiversity in the lake, and it is much lower cost to install. The risks are therefore very low and the benefits considerable, explaining why it is now the preferred route.
- 3.14 This does not however fully address the issue of new sediment deposits entering the lake. Permitting these to continue whilst trying to address existing sediment levels would of course be a poor strategy and a significant weakness in any bid. As we know that the lake edge trees are a key contributor to the problem, then it is clear that some action has to be taken to remove a level of this tree cover.
- 3.15 The starting point for this work has been a survey and assessment of the trees around the lake. This independently undertaken survey has assessed all the trees, and established a database, including a review of their health and condition.
- 3.16 Based on this survey the consultant was asked to suggest a need for tree removals based on four criteria:
 - a) Trees that are unsafe- for whatever reason. Anything that poses a risk to park users is not acceptable.
 - b) Trees that are diseased, and therefore likely to spread disease to other trees and/or become dangerous.
 - c) Trees that are close to the lake edge and contributing significantly to leaf litter/organic matter deposits
 - d) Trees that are damaging park infrastructure or required to be removed to permit park infrastructure repairs (this is anything from rebuilding the lake edge through to footpath repairs).
- 3.17 The initial survey looked at over 300 trees in the immediate area of the lake and recommended removal of 74 for a range of reasons compatible with the above.

- 3.18 The Council's own officers, ever mindful of the core environmental focus of the project and naturally keen to reduce removals as much as possible, reviewed the list in detail and negotiated options that have seen the removals required reduced to 37. Still a significant number, but it is believed that this number will meet the project requirements whilst limiting impact.
- 3.19 As some trees on the original list were taken out on suggestion that alternative methods of working might be achievable to retain the tree, it is possible that, when on site, this isn't possible and a tree might need removal where it was hoped it could be retained. It is hoped that this won't be the case, but the request does, by necessity, seek some delegated authority for cases where alternative methods either can't be actioned or are not reasonably practicable.

4. The Tree List Replanting

- 4.1 This survey is concerned only with the trees around the lake, and reaching to the near boundaries adjacent the lake. It is not park-wide, where clearly there are many thousand more trees, not least in the woodland area adjacent the river Witham.
- 4.2 Attached is a plan drawing showing tree locations and those proposed for removal, and an associated list. Many are self-sown lake edge trees, and where formal stone edge lake repairs are hopefully to be undertaken. Where natural lake edges are to be retained, every effort has been made to retain the trees.
- 4.3 There are no rare tree species identified, and it can be seen that the large beech trees, at the woodland end of the park, are being retained in full. Only one large beech is to be lost at the Rookery Lane end of the park. This is regrettably due to a disease infection, and the tree would have to be removed in the near future regardless of the progress of this project.
- 4.4 The Council has a policy of replanting for any tree removed. This is on a one-for-one basis, and it is proposed that this be actioned as quickly as possible, and as a part of the overall biodiversity improvement plan for the park. It is hoped that this will take place in the winter of 2019/20, subject to the success of the NLHF bid.
- 4.5 Furthermore, the above will be a minimum commitment, as officers are investigating opportunities with the partner for this project, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, to increase the number of trees planted in or near the park, subject to scheme budget being available.

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1 Let's drive economic growth

A thriving economy requires a great environment to live, work and take recreation. Boultham Park has been transformed in recent years, and this environmentally focused project, if supported by the National Lottery would enhance the biodiversity in the park, and protect the natural setting for current and future generations to enjoy.

5.2 Let's enhance our remarkable place

A key plank of the corporate strategy for Remarkable Place, the Boultham Park

project has delivered well for local people in recent years. The new bid, focused on the lake, is a biodiversity based bid that has the support of Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust as a partner, and advisor. Their advisory role is to ensure that any losses in the environment, such tree, are only countenanced where there is a clear need and it delivers a wide long term environmental benefit.

6. Organisational Impacts

6.1 Finance

The costs of tree works are a part of the budgeting work for this project, and thus covered by overall project management encompassed by the Lincoln Project Management Model. The project overall is managed by a specific project board, which includes a representative from accountancy.

6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

All aspects of council work are governed by established procurement policies, and the National Lottery also has its own procurement rules that it requires the council and partners to obey. Compliance is monitored by the project board and by the National Lottery's project staff.

6.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

The tree works proposed here have no direct specific impact on equality, diversity or human rights. However, it is worth noting that the project overall gives full consideration to these requirement in all regards.

6.4 Human Resources

N/A

6.5 Land, Property and Accommodation

The park is wholly owned by the council.

6.6 Significant Community Impact

The lake bid is based on a proposal that has gone through several consultation exercises. Feedback has been gleaned and encompassed within the proposal where possible. Tree removals have been openly discussed at all community

events, where understanding of the issues has brought acceptance of the reasoning for the request.

6.7 Corporate Health and Safety Implications

All open spaces, including the park, are regularly reviewed for safety. Some tree removals are required on safety grounds at times, and some, as identified above, are required regardless of the ultimate outcome of the bid.

7. Risk Implications

7.1 (i) Options Explored

Trees have been identified as a key contributor to the silt in the lake, and also that, those growing out of banks/lake edges have in places been instrumental in causing bank damage. They are also, in places, a barrier to undertaking infrastructure repairs.

The trees have been considered on three separate occasions, by three separate individuals, in the context of the required work, so as to maximise the retained trees.

The tree works requested here are a key part of the lake bid project, and as such any changes or refusal will jeopardise the bid to the National Lottery for the overall project.

7.2 (ii) Key Risks Associated with the Preferred Approach

Understandably public opinion initially starts from a position of wanting to protect trees, so can lead to questions and uninformed media attention if press coverage arises before the purposes of the tree removals are made clear. Adverse publicity could arise from those who are not fully understanding of the reasoning behind this request; which is of course ultimately to improve the natural environment in the park.

Trees are an important living asset in the urban landscape, and the council is proud to be the custodian of, and invest in, the many thousands of trees in the city. Indeed most of the trees in the urban landscape have, at some time, been planted by, or cared for by, the local authority.

8. Recommendation

8.1 Planning Committee is asked to support the removal of the 37 trees listed, should the bid to the National Lottery be successful.

8.2 Planning Committee is asked to delegate authority for the removal of up to a further 9 trees, to the Portfolio Holder for Remarkable Place, should the need arise, where he is satisfied that it is in the interests of the park and the project.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? Two

List of Background Papers: None

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