

Committee:	Executive	Agenda Item No.:	16.
Date:	28 th May 2012	Status	Open
Category	2. Decision within the functions of Executive		
Subject:	Repairs to Pleasley Vale Pond		
Report by:	Director of Health & Wellbeing		
Other Officers Involved	Assistant Director of Leisure		
Director	Director of Health and Wellbeing		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor A. Syrett, Portfolio Holder for Social Inclusion		

RELEVANT CORPORATE AIMS

COMMUNITY SAFETY – Ensuring that communities are safe and secure by providing facilities and services to target those at risk of ASB.

ENVIRONMENT – Promoting and enhancing a clean and sustainable environment by repairing and enhancing the mill pond at Pleasley Vale.

REGENERATION – Developing healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities by providing accessible leisure facilities.

TARGETS

To reinstate the Mill Pond to allow the Outdoor Centre to market and sell the water based activities associated with the site.

VALUE FOR MONEY

By obtaining best value under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972

THE REPORT

Introduction

The current outdoor centre has now been operating adventurous activities for 9 years, most of which have been for children from the local communities and often targeted and specialist intervention programmes which are highly respected.

The initial operation was delivered largely from the 'Boat House' which was refurbished in 2001. Building on that success, funding was sought to expand

the offer by bringing into use the formerly derelict building known as the 'Greaseworks' which increased the capacity, facilities and space to expand the provision – the cost of this project was approximately £250k.

More recently the Authority has managed to secure external funding of a new jetty and disabled access on the site to the value of approximately £93.5k.

The centre caters for almost any size of group and offers a range of adventure & team building activities including:
Canoeing, Kayaking, Orienteering, Raft building, Abseiling, Climbing, Caving, Archery, Bush craft, Bellboating, Problem solving, Mountain biking, Team building, Forest schools/skills.

The centre can offer off the shelf traditional adventurous activities, but mainly prides itself on bespoke programmes designed around the customer needs. Such areas include:

Diversionary programmes, Corporate programmes, Health initiatives, Team building programmes, Youth initiatives, Events, Inclusion initiatives.

The facility at Pleasley Vale has been instrumental in the Council achieving its corporate aims and objectives in recent years.

Background

Work to replace the jetty on the mill pond at Pleasley Vale has recently been completed. This was funded through an Aiming High for Disabled Children Capital Grant for £93,500 from Derbyshire County Council. Executive approved this project on the 12th December 2011 the report also highlighted that mill pond levels were an issue and that further funding was required to resolve the leakage of water from the mill pond and that a further report would be brought back to Executive - contained here in.

The resultant facility will form part of the Pleasley Vale Outdoor Activity Centre, which includes a 28.5m jetty with disabled access ramp. Disabled access to the jetty and adjacent boathouse has been provided through the installation of a 1.8m wide footbridge from the car park and across the River Meden.

As previously reported, the water level in the mill pond has been exceptionally low since the summer of 2011. However, this has allowed construction of the jetty to proceed without the need to drain the pond.

The level of water in the pond continues to fluctuate, but the general trend is a steady loss of water, which has been exacerbated by recent dry weather. The water level is now at a point where it has not been possible to run water based activities on the pond since August 2011 and there is also an ever increasing threat to the wildlife and ecology of the site, which Bolsover District Council, as owners of the site, has a responsibility to protect.

Without an early resolution of the underlying issues, the benefits of the recent £93,500 investment in the outdoor activity centre will not be realised. Without sufficient water in the pond, it will not be possible to install the floating pontoon sections which are designed to allow safe access for all users (particularly disabled users) of the pond.

Whilst the pond is unavailable for use the potential for the outdoor activity centre to generate income will be significantly reduced as 70% of the centre's users have some element of water based activity as part of their programme of activities. Although it is estimated that water based activity could account for up to £46,000 per annum, there is also a potential impact upon non-water based activities as these are often booked alongside water based activities as part of a package which could result in a loss of up to £70,000 per annum.

Assessment of works necessary to prevent leakage

The existence of a leak in the pond was originally identified in 2010 and was confirmed in a report by John Short in February 2011, which found that water was flowing into a crack in the outlet pipe, presumably through the embankment material around the headwall.

As it became apparent that the pond would need to be drained to effect repairs, the pond was registered as a fishery in 2011 so that fish could be removed from the pond as and when necessary.

Later in 2011, and in order to ascertain the likely cause of the reduced water level, ECUS Environmental Consultants were engaged to undertake a survey of the pond to identify any areas where water was leaking from the pond and to provide recommendations and an estimate of the cost of necessary repairs to the pond.

A report (*'Pleasley Vale Pond – Water Supply / Loss Investigation and Remediation'*) was produced by ECUS in December 2011. The primary content of the report is the engineering requirement to prevent leakage and improve inflow. The engineering element is supported by an assessment of the potential for ecological and landscape impacts to occur as a result of the necessary engineering works, together with appropriate mitigation requirements.

Kingfisher Consulting was commissioned by ECUS to carry out a visual inspection of the reservoir and to prepare a feasibility report on possible ways in which the leakage through the dam may be curtailed.

The recommendations of the engineer were as follows:

- *The off-take channel underneath the brickwork building adjacent to the overflow (The Boathouse) is sealed with jointed solid blockwork.*
- *The outlet pipe is repaired either by excavating and replacement of the damaged section, or by in-situ lining with plastic pipe.*

- *Areas of undercutting of the crest wall are sealed with puddle clay.*
- *Joints in the masonry crest wall are raked out and filled with lime mortar, especially around the headwall to the outlet pipe.*
- *The efficacy of the above measures is checked on completion, and if the leakage is not adequately curtailed, consider low pressure grouting from the crest around the outlet pipe location. This could be cement-bentonite grout or other designed mix, taking due account of the embankment material. It is important to note that the specification and method of application of this grouting is undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced chartered engineer.*

Based on these recommendations, quotes were sought from suitably experienced companies to undertake the works. To date, two quotes have been received, from RB Allfree (£11,722) and Gould (£14,500), not including the cost of low pressure grouting.

However, as there is still approximately 2.1m (7') of water in front of the sluice gate, it has not been possible to undertake a detailed investigation below the water line, which would be necessary to accurately assess the extent and cost of repair works.

Current Position

During the recent jetty works, an attempt was made to open the sluice gate to reduce the water level to facilitate the casting of the footings for the jetty. However, it was found that the sluice gate had become detached from the lifting mechanism and was no longer operational. Subsequently, the water level was reduced over a period of three days by using a small pump.

Following discussions with the Environment Agency, the majority of the fish in the pond were removed by John Wall Fisheries for resale to other fisheries. Due to the weight of fish removed, this was carried out at no cost to the council.

Once works to repair the pond have been carried out it will be possible to repopulate the pond with fish transferred from mill pond 2, which is currently overstocked.

Following a recent report to SAMT, it was suggested that an accurate assessment of cost needed to be presented before a decision regarding funding the necessary works could be made. As outlined above, whilst there is still water in the pond, it is not possible for this to be provided.

A number of suggestions have been made as to the best way forward, particularly in order to de-water the pond to accurately identify and cost the works necessary to repair the pond. It is accepted that opening the sluice gate would be the easiest way to achieve this. However, as this will need to be repaired, additional costs would be incurred for either a camera survey (£700+) or divers (£2,000 to £3,000) to survey and hopefully lift the sluice

gate. As a result, the only viable and cost effective option would be to hire a pump to empty the pond.

Quotes have been sought for this, which would suggest that the cost of hiring a pump would be approximately £750, including the cost of fuel. Using a pump with a sufficiently large capacity, it would be possible to empty the pond within 2-3 days. It would also be possible to recover any remaining fish at the same by controlling the rate of emptying.

Refilling the pond could be assisted by extracting water from the River Meden, subject to securing an abstraction licence from the Environment Agency. An allowance for additional pump hire will need to be included. Otherwise, allowing the pond to refill naturally is likely to take several weeks despite the existence of a number of natural springs which feed the pond.

Quotes for repair of the sluice gate were sought by Bolsover District Council's Engineers. However, as the exact size of penstock required can't be determined until the pond is emptied, a range of prices were requested.

For the purpose of this report a comparison of the 1000mm penstocks (which should be the maximum size needed) is presented. Both companies agreed this was the best guess at this stage from the size of existing spindle, blind probing of the existing penstock underwater and discussions on site with the manager of Pleasley Vale Outdoor Activity Centre regarding the outlet diameter. The first quote is for traditional cast iron as existing and the second is for the more modern and corrosion resistant HDPE which is at least as strong as cast iron.

Quotes are as follows:

Ham Baker - 1000mm cast iron penstock, inc. installation: **£ 4,326**

Aquatic Control Engineering - 1000mm HDPE / stainless steel penstock, inc. installation: **£ 6,211**

Summary of costs

- Pump hire (drain / re-fill) £1,500*
- Repairs identified in ECUS report £11,722 to £14,500
- Sluice gate repairs £4,326 to £6,211

Total **£17,548 to £22,211**

- Low pressure grouting (estimate) £5,000 to £10,000

Total (inc low pressure grouting) **£22,548 to £32,211**

** includes £470 for fuel on a sale or return basis*

ISSUES/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- The facility at Pleasley Vale has been instrumental in the Council achieving its corporate aims and objectives in recent years.
- Water based leisure activities at the pond have not been taking place at the site now for some months due to the water level.
- Not only does this impact upon the elements of delivery described above, but this also reduces the income potential of the site.
- The loss of the water based element at Pleasley Vale would not only affect the direct income from the water based activities bookings but would also affect the dryside activity income which is often booked alongside the water based activity as a package.
- The loss of the income described above will severely reduce our capacity to remain a self financing activity/service.
- The Authority has managed to secure external funding for a new jetty and disabled access on the site to the value of approximately £93k – without the repairs this will become unusable.
- The level is now at a point where there is an ever increasing threat to the wildlife and ecology of the site which BDC has a responsibility for as owners of the mill complex.
- Failure to repair the pond at this stage could result in further deterioration and greater expense further down the line.
- BDC Leisure Services will as much as reasonably practicable use repairs and maintenance budgets to help meet the cost of this project.

In terms of risk, the failure to repair the pond and put it back into use as part of the activity centre will effectively close the operation/ facility

IMPLICATIONS

- Financial: The recommendations set out within this report for work to address leakage within the pond at Pleasley Vale will cost an amount up to £32,000 on the basis of the details provided within this report. It is recommended that the amounts involved are funded by way of a charge against the Transition Grant provided to Bolsover District Council in respect of 2012/13. There is a potential impact upon the income generated by all activities run from the facility as these are often booked alongside water based activities as part of a package – this could result in a loss of up to £70,000 per annum. The £93,500 in Aiming High grant for the jetty could be clawed back if the Mill Pond is not reinstated.
- Legal: Ensuring compliance with section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972
- Human Resources: None

RECOMMENDATION

In light of the urgent need to address the water loss issues on the mill pond at Pleasley Vale, the following recommendation is made:

That a sum of up to £32,000 is agreed to cover the costs of the works outlined within this report, with those costs to be met from the Transition Grant available to the Council in respect of the 2012/13 financial year.

REASON FOR DECISION TO BE GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION

In order to allow the reinstatement of the Pond at Pleasley Vale Outdoor Activity Centre.

ATTACHMENTS:
FILE REFERENCE:
SOURCE DOCUMENT: