

## HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS



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<b>Agenda Item:</b>	Lakeside Flooding Options
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> of May 2025
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Operations Manager – Angus Whitburn

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### Background

Lakeside allotments have been prone to flooding in the wet seasons. When the site does flood it can destroy cultivated land, damage crops and make the site unusable. The allotment site has historically flooded in the wet season but in recent years the flooding has become more common.

The site is split over Flood Zones 2 and 1 detailed in the environmental agencies' flood maps, as the site isn't suitable for development it is designated and used as an allotment site.

At Hall, Cemeteries & Allotment meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2021 the committee approved the commissioning of a topographical survey to determine the extent of the bund required to prevent flooding of the site. At the Hall, Cemeteries & Allotment meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2021 this information was presented to the committee. The cost of the works were prohibitive so it was resolved that officers look at possible remedial works to alleviate flooding issues.

The work proposed was to drive sheet piles and trench sheets to form a barrier to the flood water and raise the bank levels by 450mm. This would be 40m on the south side of the site, 60m along Queen Emma's Dyke and 100m on the north side. There was still a risk with this scope of work as it couldn't prevent the site from flooding as the water would enter through the west side. Plus there was the added risk that any water entering the site would then be trapped by the same defences.

From the last update to the committee on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2021 no remedial works have been made to the site to prevent flooding. This is because the only solution to the issue is what was proposed.

### Current Situation

Lakeside reps have raised multiple causes of the flooding with officers, however, most have been previously explored and addressed or are non-factual. The ditch running along the north side was claimed to have been blocked for the flooding in November 2024. However, it had been cleared in October 2024 and was still clear post-flooding.

The ditch will not prevent the allotments from flooding, as it is level with Queen Emmas Dyke. From the information available the ditch only appears to take the rainwater from the hotel gutters and drain toward Queen Emmas Dyke. The ditch does cause issues when Queen Emma's dykes levels rise, the water then diverts down into the ditch, and then over into the allotments. To prevent this issue it would require a levy or barrier to be built. Although the original proposed works indicated raising this bank by 450mm it would in fact require closer to 1000mm to bring it level with the hotel and residential homes neighbouring the allotments.

It has also been raised that there is an unmaintained ditch running alongside the entrance road of the site, found on the south side. Officers have inspected and researched these claims but no evidence can be found. If there were to be a ditch there would be outflow and none can be found the only evidence of a ditch once existing is the ground is slightly below the level of the road. However the roads construction is the probable cause of this.

The only solution to the problem is the development of a levy or barrier system that surrounds the site. The scale of these works is excessive and the cost would be prohibitive. But more troublesome is the logistical and operational issues surrounding trying to achieve these works. As previously raised by officers in 2021 around 60 plots would have to be reduced and cleared, furthermore, a work area would have to be made by felling trees and removing vegetation. Additionally, the banks on the east and north sides of the allotments which are most subsepitable to flooding would require some sort of protection to stop flood water passing through the ground.

## **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Biodiversity – If any of the works detailed in the report were to be undertaken, permission would need to be gained from the Environment Agency.

## **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Lakeside allotments will continue to flood, if no action is taken this could lead to bad press for the council and damage the relationship between the Allotment Association and the Council. Contradictory to this, if it is made public that excessive money is getting spent to protect an allotment site as opposed to residential and business properties in Witney this could also generate bad press.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

The allotment sites are an important provision by the council. They can offer the residents of Witney with small or no garden, extensions to their outdoor space for cultivation purposes. The loss of allotments for any period of the year would be detrimental to these residents.

### **Financial implications**

- There is a deferred grant for the allotment sites available of £190,703.00
- The works proposed in November 2021 were quoted at £100,622
- Before the construction of a levy or barrier system approval from the environment agency will need to be granted, this application currently costs £1000.00.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Consider if the value of the allotments permits such scale of work, and whether an acceptance that the allotment will flood needs to be understood.
2. If the committee would like to proceed with the proposed works delegate officers to produce a final costing and plan of works for a future meeting.