

## CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Tuesday 13 October 2020

**Title:** Lake and Country Park Update

**Contact Officer:** Compliance and Environment Officer – Angus Whitburn

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### Background

An agreed action from the last climate, biodiversity & planning meeting was to create management statements for the lake and country park. This would help officers and members understand what was needed to maintain The Lake and Country Park and project its future. The management statements would initially be drawn up with member recommendations for their vision of the country park.

It was also agreed for the estate's team to seek quotes for the required works on the river banks of The River Windrush for the budget setting in November this year.

### Current Situation

#### Management Statements, Ecology Survey

Due to the lack of any historic management documentation for the lake and country park, it creates a difficult situation to start devising any management statement. Although the concept of a management statement is reduced in its content you do still require a certain degree of information regarding plants and habitat's present in the area. For this reason, the Compliance and Environment Officer has approached companies providing Ecology survey's for their professional opinion and to provide quotes for a recommended survey relating to the purposes it is serving.

All three companies advised a Phase 1 ecology survey would be sufficient and provide information on habitats and a species list of plants. It was advised that a Phase 2 study would be an unnecessary expense for Witney Town Council's needs.

To reduce the cost of the surveys the Compliance and Environment officer got companies to quote on the south end of the lake and wet meadow. These are the areas of the park earmarked for biodiversity. To obtain the best results the Phase 1 ecology survey will not be carried out until next year, between May and August. This is when the grass and herbaceous species are in flower.

### Riverbank Erosion

The estate's team have been in contact with GeoGrow a company that works on riverbank erosion using their green retaining wall solutions. Unfortunately, due to limited information on the lake and country park, this process may be slow. The survey of the area is free however the formal design process would come in at an estimated cost of between £2,500 - £5,000. Currently, we are waiting on GeoGrow to review the information sent to them and arrange for there engineers to survey the area.

### **Green Recovery Fund**

The Compliance and Environment office communicated with Lucy Kennery form the Lower Windrush Valley Project. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of September. Lucy wished to include the lake and country park in a funding bid to the green recovery fund. Due to the time constraints on the grant apoplication process, the Town Clerk issued an agreement in principle to include our land in the funding bid. WTC will retain full control of any projects on the lake and country park and can make the decision to pull the Lake and country park out of any projects form the fund.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

### **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.

### **Financial implications**

These are included in the above report. There was a £10,000 budget earmarked several years ago, subject to the previous administration agreeing a management plan for the Lake & Country Park, in order to cover off any expenditure identified by improved maintenance regimes. This earmarked reserve still sits within the Council's general fund.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Agreeing to commission a phase 1 ecology survey for the lake and country park
2. Budget £5000 for the eventuality of the formal design process of the river bank's at the lake and country park.