

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 2 November 2021

Title: Lake & Country Park Update

Contact Officer: Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer –
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Background

The lake and country park has been a large area of land with limited management. This has led to a decrease in its biodiversity and interested user groups.

Current Situation

Enhances phase 1 survey

The Phase 1 habitat survey has now been completed and officers are in possession of the report. The report has been completed to a good standard and will help to inform the best management of the lake. The report breaks down the country park into smaller areas of which describe their vegetation contents. Facilitating Nature believe that the site is important for biodiversity in the context of the Lower Windrush Valley and with the correct management, it could do much to enhance its biodiversity interest. Facilitating Nature has offered a site visit at no extra cost to walk through some of their findings with officers.

To progress from this point officers have asked Facilitating Nature what other surveys they would suggest, including the creation of a full management plan. The phase 1 survey identifies areas to increase biodiversity but without a method. A natural next stage would be to obtain management plans to help a series of works to increase biodiversity.

Forest School

The Lake and Country Park does have considerable limitations when it comes to offering a Forest School. Parking is a major consideration. The parking around the country park is limited from the industrial estate. Potential organisers of a forest school in this area could be put off by this factor. The next is the lake available space that currently isn't popular for recreation purposes. From research and communication with current forest schools, it's recommended an area that is close by to area's children can explore and play. Although the lake is a large environment, areas of trees and safe woodland to explore are limited.

The set-up of a forest school is traditionally limited and is more factored by using the natural environment around a location. The set up of the forest school would include good grounds

preparation to ensure the area doesn't become overgrown, a sign with all information, posts to fix a tarpaulin and maybe some sawn of tree benches.

An area of land that is suitable has been identified. With some suitable posts installed it would create a good section to erect a tarpaulin and with some better maintenance, a perfect climbing tree is located close by. The area is situated near the bridge leading to the wet meadow. This also situates it close to the start of the nature reserve, another area of interest for education groups.

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.

The area identified for the forest school is near to an area that floods, no guarantees can be made that it wouldn't be flooded in the future. If the creation of an education area was to progress it would be recommended it was designed so flooding wouldn't affect it.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

Rotary has offered to help fund an education environment at the lake and country park. A simple installation of wooden posts and information signs wouldn't have a substantial cost but an idea of the level of finish still needs obtaining from the Rotary society.

There is still a budget available to help with the management of the country park wear further surveys or a management plan may need to be created. This fund is also available for bank maintenance work which is currently on the works team's schedule.

Recommendations

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

1. Progress with creating a design and plan for an education environment including input from the Rotary Club.