



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
Rushey

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Cabinet

21 June 2010

CAR PARK IMPROVEMENTS AT WATERMEAD COUNTRY PARK

Report of the Strategic Director, Development Culture and Regeneration

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the outcome of the consultation to resurface the car park off Alderton Close at Watermead Country Park, seek approval on the capital finance costs to undertake the works and to update Members on the water safety signage.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Watermead is a popular park to the north of the City with an estimated 108,500 users per annum, of which 72% currently travel to the park by car spending on average 1-2 hours on site.
- 2.2 The current car park is surfaced in a loose stone material which is prone to become displaced causing the surface to be uneven with pot holes which is a health and safety hazard and not suitable for park users with mobility issues. The proposal to resurface the car park with tarmac was originally not approved as part of the 2008/09 capital program and the option to introduce a pay and display system to fund the works under prudential borrowing (spend to save) was considered. Extensive consultation was undertaken with an overwhelming desired outcome to resurface the car park but not to introduce a pay and display system, which was considered would be detrimental to encouraging visitors to use the park and would displace parked cars outside of the official car parking area causing problems for local residents. The funding was then reconsidered as part of the 2010/11 capital works program to include water margin boundary improvements and water safety signage and an allowance of £140,000 was made in the 2010/2011 parks improvement budget.
- 2.3 It is anticipated that 53 car park spaces can be accommodated using the current footprint of the existing car park with recommended spacing's of 2.4 m including 5 reserved disabled spaces with a 3.65m space each.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS (OR OPTIONS)

- 3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Note the outcome of the consultation to improve the car parking facility and the view towards paying for car parking
- (ii) Approve funding of the resurfacing of the car park and bird feeding area in tarmac making it DDA compliant and easy to keep clean, extend the hand rail barrier around the bird feeding platform off the car park, creating a physical barrier between the land and the waters edge and encourage a vegetation margin along the bank along the east shore line (parallel with the car park) by installing coir bank rolls planted with wetland species of yellow flag, loosestrife, reed canary etc. and improve facilities for cycle storage and cycle route information on site, to encourage travelling to and around the site on bicycle and to promote the National Cycle Network Route 6 which goes through the park and links the City Centre to settlements around North-west of Central Leicestershire.

4. REPORT

- 4.1 The car park which services the city access point to the park which spans both the City and County is surfaced in a rolled stone material giving a natural look, which was an original design feature to fit in with the theme of a Country Park.
- 4.2 This car park is very popular and attracts a high volume of vehicles on a daily basis. Due to this volume of traffic, vehicle tyres displace the loose fill surface and when combined with heavy rainfall the surface can become uneven and potholes appear, which are a potential health and safety risk for park users.
- 4.3 Parks have received numerous comments and complaints from members of the public and local Councilors' representing the views of their constituents regarding the surface being uneven and the dirty nature of the material, which when damp, will stick to individuals shoes and transfer into the users vehicles.
- 4.4 There are no recorded accidents in respect to the surface of the car park or insurance claims against the City Council, however, the surface does pose a potential health and safety risk and a suitable control method would be to resurface the car park in a tarmacadam material, which would provide a more durable level, hard surface.
- 4.5 Due to the large volume of waterfowl on site the car park and bird feeding area are constantly covered with large quantities of bird faeces which cannot be swept either by hand or by using a mechanical sweeper due to the nature of the loose stone surface.
- 4.6 Members will recall the recent tragic accident on the park in January 2010 that resulted in the death of two men who walked out onto the frozen lake. Improving the demarcation between the car park, the bird feeding area and the water's edge may help to prevent similar accidents in future winters.
- 4.7 The Parks and Green Space service included the project to edge the existing stone car park and re-surface the car park using tarmac in it's 2008/2009 capital bid proposals in a bid to improve access and site management.
- 4.8 Funding was not available at the time and it was suggested to undertake an options appraisal to resurface the car park and introduce a pay and display system for the site

under the spend to save option with the income generated from the car park repaying the loan over a given period of time.

- 4.9 The only car parks within Leicester's parks where a charge is made currently are Victoria Park and two of the car parks at Abbey Park, these were introduced as office workers were traditionally parking here and walking into work in the town to save paying town centre parking fees. Charging park users whilst visiting a park may conflict with the parks and green space strategy which is to encourage more users to the parks and to improve customer satisfaction and could displace our customers elsewhere.
- 4.10 Local traffic management was carefully considered as once a fee was introduced for car parking, vehicles would be displaced into the surrounding roads, predominantly the long drive down to the car park and Alderton Close, consideration would need to be given to introduce a series of restrictions and regulatory measures to control this via the introduction of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), which would need to be consulted with the local residents.
- 4.11 In addition to any TRO the car park would need to be added to the off street parking schedule by placing an order and advertising the charges both on site and in the Leicester Mercury, and any objections received investigated and responded to.
- 4.12 As part of the consultation process to consider the resurfacing and the pay and display option the following organisations were consulted:
- Watermead Joint Advisory Committee (Members from City, County and Charnwood)
 - Rushey Ward Community Meeting, 07.04.09 & 09.07.09
 - Older Peoples Forum
 - Disabled access Forum
 - LCC consultation WEB site
 - Local Access Forum
 - Park users
 - Local residents
 - Friends of Watermead Country Park
 - Article in Leicester Mercury
- 4.13 144 usable questionnaires were received of which 80% stated that they would be unwilling to pay to use the car park. The overall consensus was that parks should provide free access to all and that the City Council should be encouraging more people to use its parks and green spaces and that the introduction of a pay and display system would discourage visitors and encourage displacement of cars into the surrounding roads around the park. The detailed results from the survey were put onto the City Councils consultation website and fed back to the Rushey Ward Community meeting on the 09 July 2009.
- 4.14 It is proposed to resurface the car park and bird feeding area in tarmac making it DDA compliant and easy to keep clean, extend the hand rail barrier around the bird feeding platform off the car park, creating a physical barrier between the land and the waters edge and encourage a vegetation margin along the bank along the east shore line

(parallel with the car park) by installing coir bank rolls planted with wetland species of yellow flag, loosestrife, reed canary etc.

- 4.15 A risk assessment has been undertaken in respect to water safety signage and it is proposed to install a number of strategically placed water hazard signs (see App 1). The signs give appropriate water danger information (DEEP WATER, NO SWIMMING) using best practice pictorial signage as recommended by ROSPA.
- 4.16 The specification of the signage allows the all year round warning signage to be 'unlocked' to fold down to reveal WARNING THIN ICE signage. This warning signage could be activated and deactivated as the extreme weather conditions require, it is best practice to display this type of hazard information only when the hazard is a present danger.
- 4.17 The signs specification is a metal fabrication in colour on A3 size boards mounted on 2m poles at positions identified from site risk assessments which identify the optimum locations for clear impact to service users.
- 4.18 It is recognised that more people are taking the opportunity to travel to the park on foot and on bicycle with cycling numbers having doubling along the riverside corridor since 2001 with an 81% increase in citywide cycling between 2004 and 2009. We want to encourage this form of transport which meets the One Leicester priorities by enhancing the cycling facilities on site and recognising the National Cycle Network Route 6 (NCNR6) which goes through the park and links the City Centre to settlements around North-west of Central Leicestershire by:
- 4.19 Additional cycle racks (6 dispersed around the car park in pairs). Locations will be visible with high 'natural security' i.e overlooked to aid security.
- 4.20 Installation of information boards to highlight the cycling routes and the destination signage for the NCNR6 north and south and provide general helpful information, bike hire, cycle training, bike projects etc.
- 4.21 Park & Bike promotion from Watermead Car Park to City Centre (Specific flyer & webpage).
- 4.22 The above proposed works would improve safety and the visitor experience to the park and support the retention of the sites Green Flag status, whilst making the car park and bird feeding areas more defined from the extensive water body.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial Implications

The scheme costs and funding are summarised below:

Cost element	
Resurfacing of the car park, bird feeding area and joining pathways including introduction of kerbing and marking out of car parking spaces	£134,466
To extend the barrier rails around the bird feeding area (42m)	£4,200
To reinforce the vegetation margin along the shore line using coir	£7,250

bank rolls	
To introduce 12 interchangeable water safety signs (agreed funding from Risk Management)	£3,480
To introduce additional cycle storage racks, improved cycling signage and information boards and promote the park and bike scheme.	£4,000
Total Cost	£153,396
Funding	
Capital Programme 2010/11	£140,000
Risk Management – agreed funding	£3,480
Parks Revenue budget	9,916
Total Funding	£153,396

Martin Judson, Financial Services

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Planning permission is not a requirement as there is no change of use for the site, however if the scheme was to be developed further it would need to be passed by Development Control due to a change in the flood plain.
- 6.2 The existing surface is non DDA compliant. The resurfaced car park would provide an even surface suitable for individuals with mobility issues with a number of reserved disable parking spaces.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph references within the report
Equal Opportunities	Yes	DDA compliance, improvements for visitors with mobility issues.
Policy	No	
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	Improved access
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	Yes	Free access to facilities and improved level walking surfaces.
Corporate Parenting	No	
Health Inequalities Impact	Yes	Encourage access to parks with known health and wellbeing benefits.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None.

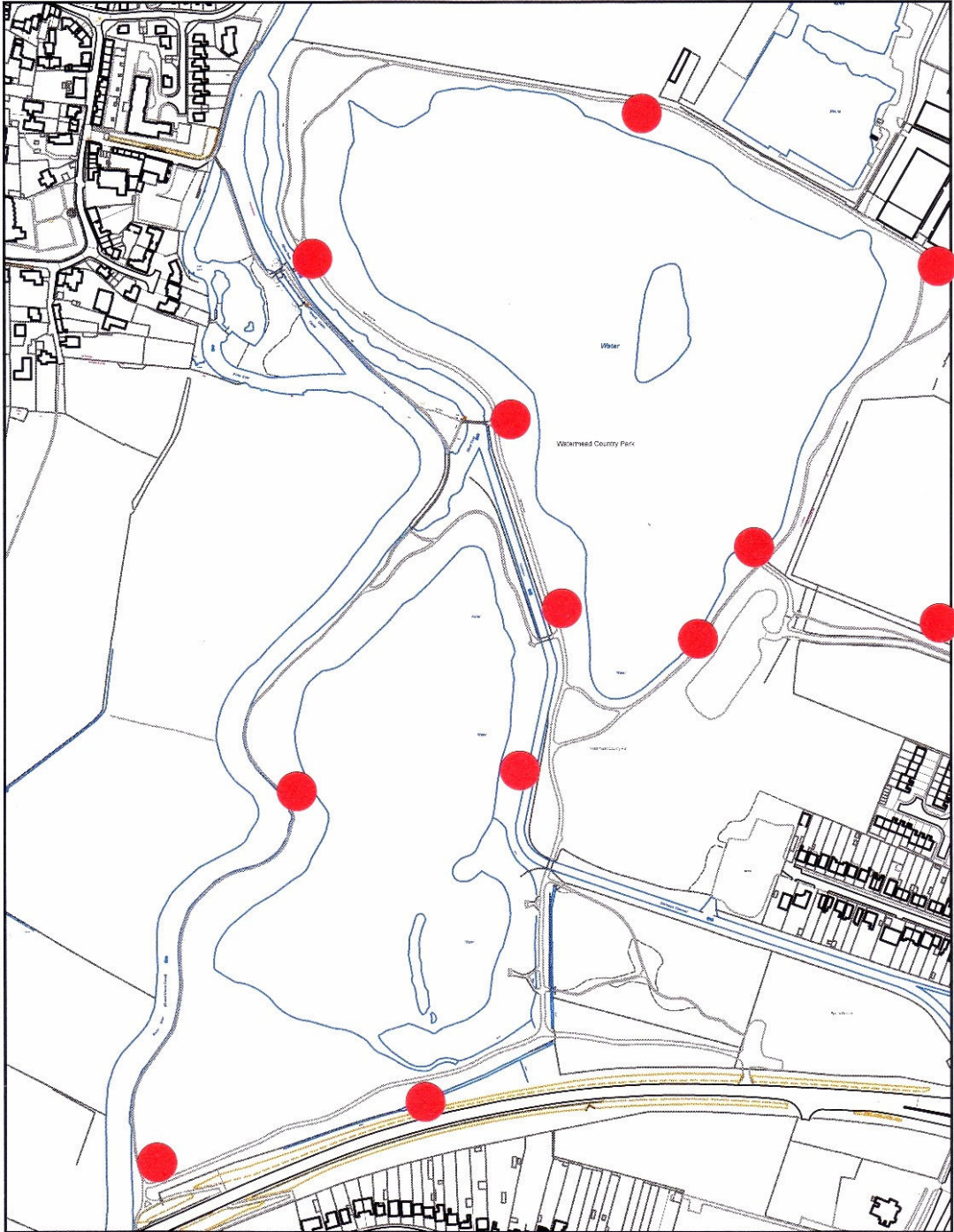
9. CONSULTATIONS

Martin Judson, Head of Finance
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10. REPORT AUTHOR

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Key Decision	Yes
Reason	Is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising more than one ward
Appeared in Forward Plan	Yes
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)



Watermead Country Park

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18/01/2010



App1