

THE ASSEMBLY

9 APRIL 2003

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

PETITION – HOOKS HALL POND, THE CHASE LOCAL NATURE RESERVE	FOR DECISION	
<p><i>Article 2, paragraph 15 of the Constitution requires petitions which contain more than 50 signatories from separate households to be reported to the Assembly together with details of action taken or proposed.</i></p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>To report the receipt of a 338 signature petition regarding a licence between the Council and Eastbrook Angling Club to fish at Hooks Hall Pond. The petition is headed:</p> <p><i>I / we the undersigned demand that the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham renew the tenancy / lease / licence to the members of the Eastbrook Anglers Club of Hooks Hall Pond!</i></p> <p>Many of the signatories of the petition are not residents of the Borough.</p> <p>The matter to which the petition refers has been the subject of wide consultation and negotiation in an attempt to agree a compromise between the three principal parties involved; namely the Eastbrook Angling Club, London Wildlife Trust and the Council, including the length of a trial period of operation.</p> <p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <p>The Assembly is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) note the receipt of the petition and that wide consultation has been carried out on the future use of the Pond;(ii) note that a compromise on the use of the pond and a trial period of operation has been agreed, subject to ratification;(iii) note that, if the compromise arrangements and the trial period of operation do not go well, a further report will be presented to the Executive to resolve this issue; and,(iv) agree that the Lead Petitioner be advised accordingly.		
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1. **Background**

- 1.1 Hooks Hall Pond (also informally known as Curzon Lake) is situated within The Chase Local Nature Reserve at Eastbrookend. For a number of years it has been fished under licence by the Curzon Club (Angling Section), but over the last two years or so the Section broke away from its parent club and reformed as Eastbrook Angling Club. Officers experienced considerable difficulty in knowing who to deal with in this transitional period, for whilst the “new” Eastbrook Angling Club portrayed itself as the legitimate successor to the Curzon Club (Angling Society), the Curzon Club was unwilling, initially, to relinquish the licence in its name. On advice from the Solicitor to the Council, the matter was resolved by revoking licences to both organisations, which presented the opportunity to review the future use of the Pond. The Club in both its forms has a history of working with disabled anglers to encourage their involvement and participation in the sport.
- 1.2 In the summer and early Autumn of 2002, Officers of the Parks & Countryside Ranger Service consulted with the Eastbrookend Support Group as to possible future management options for Hooks Hall Pond. The Support Group is a user forum for Eastbrookend Country Park and The Chase Local Nature Reserve and includes interested parties such as the Eastbrook Angling Club and London Wildlife Trust.
- 1.3 Following the consultation process and considering other angling facilities within the Borough, along with balancing the needs that are coming out of the London Bio-diversity Action Plan, an officer decision was made to designate Hooks Hall Pond as a conservation area, and to assist the Club members in merging with or moving to an alternative club(s) or lake(s). This decision was taken under the Scheme of Delegation in accordance with the Council’s Constitution.
- 1.4 Once the Eastbrook Angling Club was notified of this decision, new representatives of the Club contacted the Council, outlining concerns that not all of the relevant information had been given to them by their previous representative, the person with whom Officers had been dealing.
- 1.5 The original officer decision was therefore suspended, and a wider process of consultation was put in place, with a view to the matter being placed before the Council for a decision
- 1.6 Members were advised, through a Briefing Note circulated in the November 2002 edition of Member Matters, of the situation regarding the licence to fish Hooks Hall Pond.

2. **Current Position**

- 2.1 The wider consultation process is underway, with articles appearing in The Citizen and the Barking & Dagenham Post, and questionnaires distributed to, and returned by, interested organisations and individuals.
- 2.2 Representations have been made to the Council on behalf of the Club by both of the Borough’s MPs, who have been informed that the Club is being allowed to continue to use the pond whilst the wider consultation is carried out.

2.3 A meeting has also taken place between the Eastbrook Angling Club, London Wildlife Trust and Council Officers to try and reach a compromise between the parties that will allow angling and nature conservation to continue side by side. There was initial agreement on most of the points discussed, but it took longer to come to an agreement on the length of time for which the revised arrangement should be trialled.

2.4 In mid-March it was finally agreed that a trial period of two years, from 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2005, should be adopted, subject to approval by the Eastbrookend Support Group, which next meets on 16 April 2003. If the agreement is ratified, then the results of the wider consultation will not be required, as the involved parties will have reached agreement on a way forward.

3. **Proposal / Options**

3.1 In view of the compromise agreement now negotiated between the parties, and subject to the approval of the Eastbrookend Support Group on 16 April 2003, a trial, 2 year agreement will be entered into, to terminate on 31 March 2005.

3.2 If problems or difficulties are experienced during the trial period, then in view of the history of this case, a report will be presented to the Executive to consider the next steps, including the long-term future use of the Pond.

4. **Financial Implications**

4.1 Eastbrook Angling Club were paying a licence fee of £150 per annum.

4.2 As licence fees for angling on the Borough's lakes come up for renewal, it is normal practice for the fee to be reviewed by the Council's Property Consultants to bring it in line with market rates for similar facilities in the area.

5. **Consultation**

5.1 Consultation has been held with those organisations mentioned above, the Council's Access Officer and Legal Services. The public consultation has been through articles in The Citizen and the Barking & Dagenham Post.

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

Petition