

ASSEMBLY

2 NOVEMBER 2005

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND HEALTH

Title: Petition regarding Padnall Lake	For Decision
<p>Summary:</p> <p>A petition requesting urgent works to improve Padnall Lake (on Marks Gate estate) was received on 12 July 2005. Officers have met with the Lead Petitioner and Ward Members; and a package of environmental improvements has been put together following considerable community consultation/involvement. The majority of these improvements are being funded from the Big Lottery Fund 'Transforming Your Space' programme (£81,360) and are due to be carried out in the period January 2006 to March 2006. At the same time, works will be carried out to repair the defective silt-trap and partially de-silt the lake.</p> <p>Options for additional funding are to be explored by officers for a full dredging of the lake in 2006 / 2007.</p> <p>This report details the background, issues and planned works for Members' information and in response to the petition.</p> <p>Ward Affected: Chadwell Heath</p>	
<p>Implications:</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>Funding is in place for a comprehensive range of environmental improvements to Padnall Lake and environs; and for renewal of the filtration equipment and de-silting of the catchment pits. This part of the project has been approved by the Council's internal capital approval system known as the CPMO (Capital Programme Management Office). A new capital bid to the CPMO is being recommended by the Housing and Health Department to enable the dredging works to occur in 2006/07.</p> <p>Legal:</p> <p>Unless the present state of the lake and /or its surrounding footpaths etc. is such that danger to health or injury / flooding could arise there are no legal implications</p> <p>Risk Management:</p> <p>There are no specific risks from an Environmental Health perspective connected with the lake; though obviously as a balancing lake associated with a major trunk road it will always be subject to the possibility of certain forms of pollutants on occasion affecting water quality. Therefore, members of the public who engage in activities in and around the lake like angling should exercise care and follow normal hygiene precautions against infection. There are no risks associated with the improvement works. The proposed dredging/de-silting works will be subject to full risk assessment with the silt removed either to a registered landfill site or another suitable, authorised location.</p>	

Social Inclusion and Diversity:

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a requirement on local authorities to make an assessment of the impact of new and revised policies in terms of race equality. Existing policies have already been subjected to impact assessments. This Authority has adopted an approach of extending the impact to cover gender, disability, sexuality, faith, age and community cohesion.

As this report does not concern a new or revised policy there are no specific adverse impacts insofar as this report is concerned.

Crime and Disorder:

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a responsibility on local authorities to consider the crime and disorder implications of any proposals.

The planned improvements include lighting and gating. These are funded from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister - specifically for works to combat anti-social behaviour.

Recommendations

The Assembly is asked to note:

1. The petition and the current position with regard to the improvements planned for Padnall Lake and Green; and
2. A capital bid of £100,000 for dredging and removal of the silt build-up at Padnall Lake is to be made for the 2006 / 2007 financial year.

Reasons

Padnall Lake has to be dredged sometime in the near future. Dredging at this stage would compliment the other landscape and water quality works that are occurring in 2005 / 2006.

There is a possibility that with the improvements around the lake and then dredging the silt, that a recreational fishing lake similar to Valence House Moat could be established, allowing for greater community involvement.

Once the silt is removed, Padnall Green could be transferred to Leisure and Community Services, where the vision is to turn it into a Nature Reserve. Currently it is a difficult asset to maintain for Housing and Health Department, as it does not fall under their core objectives.

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1. Introduction and Background

1.1 A petition was submitted on 12 July 2005 expressing the following:

- concern about the “quality of water” at Padnall Lake (a balancing pond on the Marks Gate housing estate);
- requesting that repairs / improvements be carried out to the paths and area surrounding the lake (an area known generically as Padnall Green);
- asking for immediate action to use the “grant money” (Big Lottery Fund and others) to carry out the promised improvements; and
- action to protect the wildlife on and around the lake.

1.1.1 This petition had 165 signatories; the lead petitioner Ms Patricia Stern subsequently has handed in details of a further 47 names.

1.1.2 Individual additional comments were invited on the petition forms. These relate to issues of:

- anti- social behaviour – chiefly involving off-road motor bikes;
- littering of the lake itself and of its environs;
- there are requests for more formal management (e.g. like a licensed club) for angling: a popular, unregulated activity at the lake at present;
- the need to dredge (de-silt) the lake – several speak of unpleasant smells.

1.2 Padnall Lake is what is referred to as a ‘balancing lake’ or pond. Covering an area of 4000m², Padnall Lake’s primary function is as a flood storage basin as part of the local land-drainage system. The water draining into the lake comes partly from the nearby roads [principally the main trunk road, the Eastern Avenue (A12) and therefore likely to be contaminated to some extent by oil and heavy metals]; and from the Marks Gate estate. The lake transferred to Barking and Dagenham (from Redbridge) in 1994 under Boundary Commission changes. Because as a drainage facility it serves the mainly Council-owned Marks Gate housing estate, it was decided at the time of the transfer that the lake would be the responsibility of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for ongoing maintenance. The HRA continues to pay for regular maintenance like grass cutting of the banks, baiting the island for rats, regularly removing litter and larger items dumped in the lake etc.

1.3 The lake has a rather artificial look about it through its bank construction with concrete revetment blocks. The north side of the lake is a more formal, relatively intensively managed landscape, associated with the residential areas (the beginning of the Marks Gate estate) that define the northern boundary. The south side of the lake has a more informal ‘semi-natural’ character (including an orchard area of pear trees) and grassed-mounds that shelter the lake from the A12 which defines the southern boundary. A small elongated island lies in the centre of the lake at its eastern end: the banks supported by upright timber posts. There are a variety of aquatic plants around the lake; at times, concentrations of wild-fowl; carp (some of reasonable size) live in the lake; and it is popular with local people for fishing and as an informal recreational facility.

- 1.4 In October 2001 the Lake and Watercourse Management Plan commissioned by the then Department of Leisure & Environmental Services carried out an engineering survey of the lake and recommended the introduction of higher aquatic plants and reeds (to improve both the visual quality of the lake, increase habitat diversity and improve water quality); bank-side planting (also to improve the visual quality); and repairs to the island to assist the waterfowl. The report also commented on the phenomenon of the lake acting effectively as a settling lagoon, leading to a growing problem with siltation and suggesting that if funds were available, the lake should be dredged to remove the build-up of silt.
- 1.5 Following this report, the project to improve Padnall Lake as a recreational facility for the local community was taken on board by Marks Gate Agenda 21 Neighbourhood Partnership. The suggested improvements form an important part of the Neighbourhood Action Plan for the Padnall Green part of Marks Gate.
- 1.6 An opportunity arose in March 2002 to bid to the Lottery's New Opportunities Programme (now called Big Lottery Fund) under the Transforming Your Space (TYS) strand. The Neighbourhood Renewal Steering Group on behalf of the Barking and Dagenham Partnership took the lead in deciding areas within Barking and Dagenham to be included in the bid – with three areas successful in obtaining TYS funding: Parsloes Park; Goresbrook Park (replaced by Old Dagenham Park); and Padnall Green (principally the lake). Groundwork East London was appointed to carry out the necessary consultation and project manage the improvement packages to be delivered. The Padnall Lake project began in March 2003 and works are to be completed by March 2006.
- 1.7 The progress of the project throughout has been reported back to the Marks Gate Agenda 21 Neighbourhood Management Environment Sub-group (which has acted effectively as the steering group for the Padnall Green project); and regular updates have been given to the Wellgate Community Forum.

2. Current Position

- 2.1 In addition to the £81,360 Lottery (TYS) funding, Groundwork East London were successful in obtaining a further £36,000 from the Gate It (ODPM) and £7,000 from SRB6. This SRB funding has already paid for improved lighting in the area.

The following works are to be carried out.

2.2 Lake

Aim: to improve the quality of the water and create a more 'naturalised' bank. Stone gabions will be used to create planting zones along the beaches to allow emergent vegetation to be planted. Coir rolls will be attached to the island banks. Stone gabions will be used to create a reed bed around the outfall.

2.3 Footpaths

Aim: to create a recreational route around the lake that is Disability Discrimination Act compliant. Existing footpaths will be widened and resurfaced in a material that is both appropriate to the setting and provides a safe walking surface. Motorcycle barriers will be installed to deter illegal motorcycle use.

2.4 Orchard

Aim: to create a social focal point. A new fence and signs will be erected to help protect the area from dogs and motorcycles. More fruit trees will be planted. Seats and litter bins will be installed.

2.5 Mounds

Aim: to reduce the impact of the A12 and increase biodiversity. The south side of the mounds will be planted with native trees and shrubs which will tie in with existing native hedgerow.

2.6 Vehicle access to allow dredging and other maintenance

Aim: to create a vehicle access off the A12 for maintenance and dredging purposes. The existing gate off the A12 will be retained and the access road will be reinforced to withstand loadings of the dredging machinery. Where necessary lamp standards will be relocated to allow access to all necessary areas for maintenance of silt traps / filters and for dredging / de-silting.

2.7 Existing trees

Aim: to ensure the continued survival of the existing tree stock and maintain public safety. All mature and semi-mature existing trees will be surveyed by an arboriculturalist. Any necessary works to dead, dying or diseased trees will be carried out. Non essential crown lifting and thinning work will be carried out to improve visibility and increase light levels. Some lopping of trees required also to allow access for future dredging.

2.8 New planting

Aim: to improve the spatial structure of the site and increase biodiversity. New trees and shrubs will be planted across the site.

2.9 Northern (Marks Gate estate) residential boundary

Aim: to soften the interface with the lakeside amenity landscape and the residential boundaries. Shrubs and climbers will be planted in front of blank walls gables and fences where appropriate.

2.10 Southern (A12) boundary

Aim: to reduce the impact of the noise and visual impacts. The existing native hedgerow will be managed and reinforced where necessary.

2.11 Other

Aim: to improve the amenity qualities of the space. Seats, litter bins and dog bins will be installed. Educational and interpretative signage will be installed. Restoration of existing railings will be investigated.

2.12 These works have been arrived at following considerable community consultation including:

- Survey carried out in May –June 2004
- Workshop held on site with children from Marks Gate Junior School in July 2004
- A series of Workshops for interested members of the community (including young people) held in July-August 2004
- Young People’s Work-day in October 2004: installing a nature trail
- Party at the Lake and Community tree planting at the lake both in October 2004
- Over 200 members of the community actively participated in this period of consultation. Others kept fully informed by newsletters.

After this period of consultation these final plans / priorities for the Lake / Green were passed into the hands of Groundwork East London’s Landscape Architects.

2.13 The funding breakdown for the project is as follows:

Big Lottery Fund (TYS)	£ 81,360
Gate It	£ 36,000
LBBD Parks and Green Spaces Capital	£ 25,000
LBBD Housing and Health Capital	£ 25,000
LBBD Lakes Management Revenue	£ 50,000
SRB6	<u>£ 7,000</u>
Total	<u>£224,360</u>

3. Report Detail

- 3.1 The petition calls for immediate action to use the “grant money” to carry out the promised improvements and to repair the paths etc. As 2.2 to 2.11 inclusive above details, these works are planned and will be carried out from January 2006 to March 2006. The works will address issues like curtailing the use of motor-cycles around the lake area; and by providing bins, seating and other improvements will improve generally the area for recreational purposes (e.g. fishing). Several of the environmental improvements will assist in protecting the local wildlife: e.g. waterfowl benefiting from works to the island; aquatic planting helping with water quality etc.
- 3.2 The lead petitioner Ms. Stern has become a member of the Marks Gate Agenda 21 Neighbourhood Partnership Environment Sub-group alongside Ward Members; and has been involved since the submission of the petition, in a number of meetings with all concerned parties; so is completely up-to-date with these works and the proposed time-scales / timetable.
- 3.3 It is fair to say, therefore, that the one issue remaining outstanding from the petitioners’ point of view is the dredging of the lake to remove the build-up of silt.
- 3.4 In order initially to address this problem, as part of the current package of works, LBBD Borough Engineers department are to fund and carry out the renewal of the silt-trap at the main western inflow; also de-silting the catchment-pit in that area. The cost of this work is £15,000.

- 3.5 The larger task of dredging the rest of the lake and removing the build-up of silt to land-fill has been estimated to cost a further £150,000. There are two stages in getting this done: firstly the works described in 2.6 and 2.7 above need to be carried out to allow future access on site for the machinery needed to carry out the dredging and for vehicles to remove the silt (completion by March 2006). It will then be necessary for a full dredging operation to take place including the removal of the silt to registered land-fill.
- 3.6 The petition holder states that due to the lake not being regularly de-silted that wildlife such as herons and bats have moved away from this site.
- 3.7 £50,000 is available from the Lake Management revenue budget as a contribution towards the cost of de-silting the lake. A new capital bid from Housing and Health is recommended to ensure that money is made available for the dredging to occur as soon as possible.
All other external funding avenues have been explored, but none have been found to be suitable for this work.
Efforts are being made to find alternative places to dispose of the silt: as the land-fill charges / taxes constitute a third of the potential cost of the project. Options include the Marks Gate Cemetery extension scheme; and discussions with Redbridge Council about using immediately adjacent land that remains in that Local Authority's ownership.

4. Consultees

4.1 Councillors

Ward Members: Cllr Ron Curtis; Cllr Terry Justice; Cllr Nadine Smith
Lead Member for Housing & Health: Cllr Liam Smith
Chair of Wellgate Community Forum: Cllr John Denyer

4.2 Officers:

Gavin Flynn - Project Officer (Transforming Your Space programme)
David Dare – Engineering Manager - Regeneration and Environment Department
Rob Williams – Health Improvement Unit Manager - Housing and Health Department
Jim Ripley - Head of Landlord Services - Housing and Health Department
Alan Aubrey - Head of Leisure and Community Services - Regeneration and Environment Department
Robin Hanton – Solicitor to the Council
Colin Rigby – Finance Manager – Housing and Health Department
Lee Russell and Russell Sawers - Central Finance and CPMO

4.3 External organisations

Sarah Axtell (Groundwork East London)
Rev. Roger Gayler (Chair- Marks Gate Agenda 21 Neighbourhood Partnership)

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- Marks Gate Agenda 21 Meetings: full Board and Environment Sub-group 2003 to present
- Lake and Watercourse Management Plans – May 2001
- Basic Wildlife Survey of Padnall Lake (WWT Wetlands Advisory Service) – October 2004