

MILL POND CAPITAL WORKS

Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee - 6 December 2022

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Officer, Finance & Trading

Status: For Information

Also considered by:

- Cabinet - 8 December 2022

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report updates the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee about a capital work plan for Mill Pond, Sevenoaks.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Making Sevenoaks District to be a place where people can enjoy clean and high quality urban and rural environments.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Cllr. Margot McArthur

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Recommendation to Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee: That the Mill Pond Capital works as detailed in this report be considered by the Committee, and its views be submitted for consideration by Cabinet.

Recommendation for Cabinet: That the Mill Pond Capital works plan along with any proposals submitted by the Cleaner & Greener Advisory Committee be considered and support for a capital bid to be developed as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process.

Reason for recommendation: The District Council owns Mill Pond, Seal Road, Sevenoaks and as the landowner we have the responsibility for its upkeep and maintenance as the pond, is fed by adjacent springs and storm water drains, which assists the road drainage in the area.

Background

- 1.0 Mill Pond, Seal Road, Sevenoaks is owned by the District Council. The land comprises of a pond, which is fed by adjacent springs and storm water drains, which assists the road drainage in the area.
- 2.0 The pond is relatively small only 0.25 acres in size. It has sloping banks, which provide good habitat for wildlife. The two islands are covered in bramble and willow trees, again providing some wildlife value but is not very aesthetically pleasing for visitors. It has a boardwalk at the ponds edge and has several benches to allow visitors to sit and watch the ponds wildlife.
- 3.0 In 2011 the Greatness Resident Association was successful in acquiring a Cory funded grant to transform this pond into a nature reserve. This include installing the silt traps, which are emptied by Kent County Council, desilting and re-profiling the pond, planting reeds and flag iris and installing the boardwalk and benches.
- 4.0 The pond is currently very overgrown and heavily silted. This is believed to have been initiated by previous, nearby building works accidentally leaching materials into the pond increasing the levels of silt. This in turn allowed more reeds and vegetation to be able to grow. As the larger amounts of vegetation dies, this creates more silt and an accelerating cycle of increased silt and increased reeds has led, in part to the Mill ponds current condition. This has had a negative knock on effect on the wildfowl that use the pond and is a concern for many local residents that visit or live close to the pond.
- 5.0 In 2021 Mill Pond suffered contamination from sewerage from the Thames Water culvert, which delayed the opportunity to de-silt the pond, as the Environment Agency would not permit disposal. This contamination was report to the Environment Agency and lengthy discussions have taken place between all parties to try to resolve the contamination issue.
- 6.0 Legal advice was sought by the Council, which recommended that the Council try to resolve these issues informally.
- 7.0 In August 2021 NRM Laboratories, which confirmed the sewerage contamination, undertook a full silt analysis but also highlighted other levels of contamination of grease and oils which included road detritus. Following a number of meetings and site visits Thames Water engineers carried out a works programme on Mill Pond that included pipe investigation and clearance and culvert cages to trap waste. Thames Water engineers also advised for further analysis to be carried out as the sewage contamination would naturally clear.
- 8.0 In September 2022 NRM Laboratories undertook a further silt analysis, which showed the silt still to be contaminated with oil, fats, grease and lead. The sewage level had reduced significantly.

- 9.0 Given the levels of contamination of the silt the Environment Agency require a specialist contractor to be appointed to clear and dispose of the silt, under a permit issued by them.

Capital Works Programme

- 10.0 The Mill Pond is designated a main river, which requires permission from the Environment Agency (EA) to carry out any works required on this waterway/asset. The exemption licence received states that as this pond falls into the classification of a ‘salmonid’ river/pond (fish, which are gravel spawners, depositing their eggs in nest cut by spawning fish in the gravel bed), requiring full licensing authority from the Environment Agency to carry out these works.
- 11.0 The appointed specialist contractor (Canvins Group) has proposed to the following schedule of works: (Bog Matts will be used to prevent damage to the ground and path and all silt removed from the pond.)

1	The site to be secured with security fencing to protect the public while work is undertaken
2	A full pumping system will be deployed to divert over the pond while works are taking place.
3	Removal of silt and decking planks.
4	Clean up of the pond and surrounding vegetation
5	Disposal of the contaminated silt under an Environment Agency licence.
6	Reinstatement of a new boardwalk

- 12.0 Our Clean & Green and Countryside Team will liaise with Kent County Council to allow large vehicles to be parked on the highway and for machinery to cross their land to get onto Sevenoaks District Council land.
- 13.0 The above works programme and on-going maintenance for Mill Pond will cost in the region of £60,000.
- 14.0 The Council is concerned that given the history of sewerage contamination events in Mill Pond from the Thames Water culvert and sewerage system, and the substantial costs to de-silt the Pond, that the same sewerage contamination event does not happen in the future, as it has in the past. Therefore, further discussions will be held with Thames Water and partners to look at other sustainable options for the Pond in the future that will include full community engagement.

Key Implications

Financial

Any service delivery projects that contain financial implications have been detailed within this report. A Capital bid is being developed and will be part of the overall Council budget setting process.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

No legal implications. Sevenoaks District Council is the land owner with a statutory duty for the upkeep of Mill Pond.

Equality Assessment

No decisions are being made within this report, so there is low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero

Members are reminded of the Council's stated ambition to be Net Zero with regards to carbon emissions by 2030. The decisions recommended in this paper directly impact on this ambition. The impact has been reviewed and there will be a decrease on carbon emissions produced in the district as a result of this decision.

The restoration and renovation of Mill Pond will ensure it operates more effectively, positively effecting flooding and surface flooding in the area. There will also be positive impacts on habitats, biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife all of which positively contribute to lowering carbon emissions.

Conclusions

Direct Services has delivered limited on-going repairs and maintenance of Mill Pond over the last 12 months, despite the challenges of the contamination issues. This report details future vital capital work improvements.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Adrian Rowbotham

Chief Officer Finance & Trading