

Report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive

WATER SAFETY REVIEW1. Purpose of report

To advise Committee of the outcome of water safety risk assessments that have recently been undertaken on watercourses owned or maintained by the Council and to recommend funding for a consequent phased programme of water safety measures.

2. Background

Following the tragic drowning of 13 year-old Josh Boothman in the River Erewash at Stapleford (Environment Agency watercourse) on 24 September 2016, it was decided that officers should initiate a systematic programme of water safety risk assessments on Broxtowe-owned or maintained watercourses. The tragic drowning of 12 year-old Owen Jenkins at Beeston Weir (Environment Agency/Canals and Rivers Trust) on 10 July 2017 further emphasised the importance of the task.

3. Methodology

The methodology used to conduct the assessments to determine a risk rating for each of the many sites across the borough included a number of factors:

- Firstly, what are the Council-owned/maintained watercourses – canals, ponds, brooks, wetlands, seasonal wetlands, ditches, etc.
- Secondly, from these different watercourses, what are the factors to be considered – location, environment, number of visitors, possible age range of visitors, paths, crossing points – clay bunds or bridges, interaction between walkers, cyclists, horse riders, fishermen, falls from height, disused locks, access and egress to and from the water, manmade and natural protection measures etc.

Further cross-organisational work is now being co-ordinated on a county-wide basis by Nottinghamshire County Council and this will need to include the many other publicly-accessible watercourses in Broxtowe which are owned and maintained by others. This will be the subject of subsequent reports.

4. Recommendations and financial implications

The outcome of the risk assessments, consequent recommendations and financial implications are given in the appendix.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND to the Finance and Resources Committee that £33,700 allocated in the 2018/19 capital programme for remedial measures to enhance the safety of watercourses that the Council has a responsibility for.

Background papers: Nil

Assessment outcome

A number of watercourses were considered during the assessment process which contained no water or very little and were noted, but would cause no issue as regards to water safety or the possibility of drowning.

A number of brooks were flanked by a path and, periodically, crossing points in the form of a bridge. These bridges had fencing on both sides in a 'V' shape whilst others had no fencing or fencing on one side of the bridge or fencing on one side of the brook. It was deemed appropriate to standardise the design of these bridges and associated fencing to enhance safety in order to prevent users from the possibility of falling into the water.

The Borough has seven ponds of note' the majority of which are protected from visitors by trees, bushes and/or marginal planting. Most open areas of these ponds contain at least one seat which invites visitors to that particular area.

Three locations are worthy of specific mention:

Colliers Wood pond at Moorgreen contains marginal planting on two-thirds of its bank; the rest is an open beach type area that contains two fenced platforms which protrude into the pond. The pond contains a number of ducks which attracts a lot of young visitors. However, visitors do have to make an effort to reach this pond. This pond currently has a risk rating of High.

Cookey's Pond at Bramcote contains marginal planting on three-quarters of its bank, the other quarter is provided with a sloping bank. The pond contains a number of ducks which attracts a lot of young visitors and borders with Westbourne Retirement Living Scheme so there is always the possibility that children may play near the pond whilst visiting a relative. In addition, it is close to a footpath used by school children of Bramcote Hills School. Therefore, visitors do not have to make an effort to reach this pond due to its location. This pond currently has a risk rating of High.

The **Nottingham Canal** stretches for many miles and is generally fringed by trees, bushes and marginal planting. There are a few entry points but it appears that the majority were made by dogs entering the water. At certain points there are bridges or clay bunds for crossing. Also there are some old locks which are built into stone walls and provide an opportunity for a fall from height. A number of sections of the canal contain ducks and swans which attracts a lot of young visitors. Sections of the canal are risk rated as Low, Medium and High (High at the lock areas).

General conclusions

The majority of watercourses that the Council has a responsibility to manage are safe and are used and enjoyed by a large number of visitors and where possible should be left in their natural state. This means that the use of fencing should be carefully thought out and only erected where deemed necessary. Most of the signage states "Deep Water" which gives encouragement to enter

the water and swim. These existing signs and any additional new signs will be changed to read “Danger Keep out of the Water” and a number will be accompanied with a “No Swimming” pictogram. In addition, water rescue equipment will be required at certain locations.

Please note that the assessment process has only been undertaken on watercourses etc owned and/or maintained by the Borough Council.

Specific locations

- 33 locations were considered in detail
- 17 were considered to be low risk and requiring no further measures other than signage in some cases
- 8 were considered to be medium risk
- 8 were considered to be high risk (Colliers Wood, Cookey’s Pond and 6 locations on the Nottingham Canal)

Measures required at the medium and high risk locations include:

- New/replacement signage (14 locations)
- Handrails/fencing (5 locations)
- Rescue aids (4 locations)

Financial implications

The estimated cost of all the required measures is **£33,700** and includes:

- 50 signs
- 9 rescue aids
- Various sections of fencing
- Various minor engineering works