

ALEXANDRA PARK AND PALACE
CHARITABLE TRUST BOARD
19th JULY 2016

Agenda Item: 9

Report Title: Park Update

Report of: Mark Evison, Park Manager

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Purpose:

To update the Board on current matters relating to Alexandra Park and to seek views on the commemorative bench policy.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

N/A

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the contents of the Park update report;
- 1.2 To give the Board's views on the commemorative bench policy;
- 1.3 To give the Board's views on the cycle-route proposal.

2. Introduction/ background

- 2.1 The Park conditions section contains an update about surface water management and the repair of the gas main through the Park, this area of work progresses the Business Plan aim to manage the Park to award winning standards.
- 2.2 The report also provides an update on the progress of the Go Ape scheme, it is now anticipated that the junior course will open in August. The course will contribute to the business plan aim to increase the revenue generated from the Park whilst protecting the natural habitats and infrastructure of the Park.
- 2.3 Amendments to the policy for commemorative benches have been presented to the Advisory and Consultative Committee and the Board is now asked to give its views.
- 2.4 Finally, a proposal from Sustrans to invest in a cycle route through the Park a Part of TfL's quietways scheme is set out.

3. Park Conditions

- 3.1 Further to previous reports about the difficulties with springs and surface water last winter, a sustainable drainage consultant has assessed the site and the Park Manager's initial plans to manage existing surface water problems with minor landscape works.
- 3.2 The report includes technical designs to convey the water through swales (shallow ditches) and across paths to reduce erosion and the size of wet, boggy areas. The volume of water will not change, but it will be better directed and the flow will be attenuated by shallow pools.
- 3.3 The progress of the suggested work will depend on availability of funding, but an initial phase of work is expected to take place over the summer using the existing Park budget.
- 3.4 The new gas main was installed through the Park over the winter. The pipe covers a distance of over 600m and the very wet weather made the job more difficult and delayed remediation. We have been working with the contractors to ensure appropriate remediation takes place.
- 3.5 The contractor has laid topsoil and grass seed along the route through the golf course. Across the meadow areas the ground has been levelled but no new topsoil has been imported, to avoid increasing the fertility and encouraging more vigorous plant species to dominate.
- 3.6 Further work is due to take place on the gravel footpaths and there is a contingency for resurfacing part of the lower road. We are currently in discussion with the contractor on pricing a resurfacing scheme to eliminate the large areas of standing water that form during wet periods. This will be in addition to the landscape works mentioned above.

4. Go Ape Proposal

- 4.1 In discussion with the Trust, Go Ape have considered the concerns raised during the planning process and have proposed some minor amendments to the scheme. Approval of minor amendments by the planning authority is subject to a minimum three-week timescale.
- 4.2 A successful meeting recently took place between representatives of Go Ape, the Chair of the Friends of Alexandra Park, and a local resident to discuss the concerns and the amendments to the scheme. Many of the concerns were reduced by a fuller understanding of the scheme (the layout, the opening hours and the seasonal nature of the operation). Go Ape have agreed to work with the Trust to ensure effective communications with local residents prior to works commencing.
- 4.3 An ecologist has conducted an Ecological Impact Assessment as required to discharge Planning Condition 5. The report was drawn up in consultation with the Park Manager and contains a number of suggested mitigations to be implemented by Go Ape. Some during construction and some permanently. An 'Ecological Clerk of Works' will be appointed to oversee the construction phase - to protect nesting birds, hedgehogs etc, and deal with any issues that arise. The permanent ecological enhancements include management of invasive understory plants, construction of a stag beetle loggery, installation of bat and bird boxes and new interpretation of the value of the Park to wildlife.
- 4.4 An updated indicative programme for the scheme is as follows:

Finalise lease	Late June
Install junior course on trees	Mid-July to mid-August
Opening of junior course	Mid-August
Install foundations and poles for main course	Autumn (outside school holidays)
Opening of main course	Easter 2017

- 4.5 The timetable will be determined by progress on the Lease discussions. The fine detail of the lease is still under discussion and it is anticipated that this will be completed in the next few weeks.

5. Commemorative Benches

- 5.1 The policy on Commemorative Benches needs updating. Proposals were reported to the Joint meeting of the Advisory and Consultative Committees on 30th June. The content of that report detailing a revised approach is below. An update on the discussion will be provided at the Board Meeting.
- 5.2 The Board are asked to consider any advice from the Joint Advisory and Consultative Committees meeting and to give its views on the commemorative bench policy.
- 5.3 The report to the Advisory and Consultative Committees on 30th June is as follows:

- 5.3.1 Under the present system, an existing Park bench is replaced with a new bench and a commemorative plaque is added. Around eleven benches have been dedicated in the past three years. The current costs for supply, delivery and installation of a Park bench and commemorative plaque is £950.00.
- 5.3.2 There is an intention to consolidate the numerous styles to a standard design in future. This will eventually mean replacing dedicated benches. At the same time the Trust is also considering introducing a ten-year policy for commemorations. This system is in place at other Parks such as, Lee Valley Regional Park. However, the contact details of those who donated benches many years, or even decades ago are often missing. How to manage this sensitive issue will be discussed by the Trust at a future Board meeting.
- 5.3.3 A suggested approach is to offer the option of renewing existing commemorations when they reach their tenth anniversary. The donors will be offered the option of renewing the dedication and paying for a new bench. If the details of the donor cannot be found, the plaque will be removed and after a certain time period, potentially six-months, the bench will be allocated for a new dedication. In future new donors will be made aware of the ten year renewal from the outset.

6. Sustrans “quietways” cycle network

- 6.1 The Trust was approached in early Spring by Sustrans. This is a UK charity that enables people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of their daily journeys. They work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in. Sustrans are working with Transport for London’s cycle Quietways schemes.
- 6.2 The scheme includes the existing cycleway through Alexandra Park. This route currently enters the Park at Gate 4, North View Road and passes on the western side of the Palace and exits onto Dukes Avenue.
- 6.3 Some of the surfaces on the current route are currently in poor condition and this scheme would offer Capital Funding to improve those sections.
- 6.4 Another option for consideration is re-routing the cycleway into the Park at Newland Road to provide a traffic free section that avoids Newland Road and North View Road. This would entail construction of a new hard-surfaced route along a section of the southern boundary of the Park.
- 6.5 The expectation is to start construction in mid -2017, although a small scheme could happen sooner. The timescale is dependent on the scheme details (such as lighting, surfaces, consultation and so on).
- 6.6 The plan of local Quietway routes is at **Appendix 1**.

- 6.7 We have been assessing the opportunities and impacts of such a route, but our advice is that any decision in relation to what would be a permanent route through the Park, should be considered within the Strategic Vision work.
- 6.8 This matter was presented to the Joint Advisory and Consultative Committee meeting on 30 June. The Board are asked to consider the advice of the committee and the executive team.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Council's Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report, and has no comments.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.2 As mentioned in the main body of the report the drainage improvement work will be funded from the current Park budget. The final stages of remediation to the route of the gas main will be funded from the contingency of that project.
- 8.3 Once the Go Ape lease is signed the Trust will begin to collect rent on the basis of the illustrated schedule agreed in December 2014.
- 8.4 Donation of Commemorative benches provides incremental improvement to the Park infrastructure at no cost to the Trust.
- 8.5 The Sustrans-TfL proposal could result in significant capital investment to enhance the cycle routes through the Park. However the maintenance and upkeep would be the Trust's responsibility. Depending on the exact final specifications the improved routes could have the benefit of being easier and cheaper to maintain in the long-run.
- 8.6 The Council's Chief Financial Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report, and has no comments.

9. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Plan of local Quietways cycle routes