

Committee: ENVIRONMENT

Agenda Item

Date: 4 September 2007

7

Title: SWAN MEADOW POND

Author: Diane Burrige, Director of Operations (01799 510580) Item for decision?

Summary

1. There is the opportunity to adjust the configuration of Swan Meadow Pond to make it equally attractive in both wet and dry conditions. This would enhance the area that is frequently travelled past by visitors to Saffron Walden.

Recommendations

2. That, Members consider assigning £19,000 from the capital programme in 2008/9 to undertake the reconfiguration of Swan Meadow pond to improve its sustainability and all year round appearance.

Background

3. The pond has a population of ducks, some fish and rodents. The pond starts to dry out as the water table drops. Historically Three Valleys Water have been kind enough to top it up for us on occasions' this gives a temporary benefit and but this service is no longer available.

Impact

4.

Communication/Consultation	Presentations have taken place at North Area Panel and Saffron Walden Town Council. Local residents who have expressed an interest in the pond have also been informed.
Community Safety	Safety may be improved by this revised design.
Equalities	None
Finance	£19,000 one off costs to be considered for the 2008/9 capital programme.
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None.
Sustainability	This project will aid the sustainability of the

	pond if there is a trend to have long, dry summers.
Ward-specific impacts	Saffron Walden wards.
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

5. The pond at present has an artificial appearance with shored up edges and a centre island. It popular place for visitors to the town. It is visible as visitors park at Swan Meadow and move towards the town for shopping.
6. If we have no further droughts we continue to have a problem in that the edges of the pond do require frequent maintenance to shore them up. They get eroded by both ducks and people. In general, the area is attractive but the centre island is eroding due to rodents undermining it.
7. The pond does attract some untoward attention in that debris thrown into the pond needs to be retrieved.

8. Proposal

The Councils Architect graphically has described to both North Area Panel and the Town Council how the configuration of the pond could be altered to make it more sustainable. He explained that that the pond is fed from an underground spring and whilst that is flowing it keeps the water in the pond fresh. The proposal is to change its shape from a deep bowl with vertical sides to a gently sloping configuration making it shallower so that when the water stops flowing and the water levels change there would still be an attractive area which would have the added benefit of allowing the ducks to easily get in and out of the pond. The proposal would introduce appropriate natural planting such as water irises and reeds around the shallow margins so that when the water levels do drop the area still remains attractive.

9. Timing

This type of work would need to be done in September before the water table rises and well out of the breeding season for wildlife. We would need to work in consultation with relevant advisors on wildlife issues.

10. Costs

An initial estimate for this work was provided at £14,000 assuming we can obtain topsoil direct from where it is excavated from. If at the time we move forward with the project if we need to purchase topsoil an extra provision of £5,000 should be assumed. If the project is approved for the Capital Programme a timely, updated quotation would be obtained.

Risk Analysis

13.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
If the pond were left unaltered we would continue to need to deal with concerns raised when the water levels drop.	Dryer summers are forecasted.	This pleasant area may become unattractive to visitors.	Reconfiguration of the pond will aid it to be equally attractive when the water table falls.