

**NONSUCH PARK JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
21 NOVEMBER 2016**

RESTORATION OF THE ROUND POND

Report of the: Head of Operational Services
Contact: Samantha Whitehead
Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:
Annexes/Appendices (attached):
Other available papers (not attached): Lower Mole Project – Ponds Works Agenda Item 27 January 2014

REPORT SUMMARY

To seek approval on behalf of the Lower Mole Project/Future Woodlands for a phased approach to the restoration of the Round Pond.

RECOMMENDATION S

- 1 That the Committee agree to the Phase One proposal to carry out tree works over the autumn/winter 2016 and agree in principle to Phase Two works, subject to further consultation with Nonsuch Watch and the dog walking community.**
- 2 That the formation of a pond in the Sparrow Farm Road dog free area is explored and a report on this area of Park provided to the JMC to consider at a future meeting.**

Notes

1 Background

- 1.1 At the Joint Management Committee meeting of 27 January 2014, a report was submitted on behalf of The Lower Mole Project to seek permission from members to support a bid application to SITA Environmental Trust for restoration works to the Balancing Pond and Round Pond.
- 1.2 The Lower Mole Project originally became aware of the need for restoration work to these ponds to enhance their wildlife value, via Epsom & Ewell's Ecologist, Pete Howarth's work to review the Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) in the Borough.
- 1.3 The 2014 proposal stated that work would include clearance of overhanging trees at both ponds, as well as de-silting, using machinery at the Round Pond.

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- 1.4 The minutes of the 2014 meeting stated that the Committee supported the submission of interest to the SITA Trust by the Lower Mole Project for possible pond restoration works within the Nonsuch Park. However, Frances Wright urged extreme caution with regard to any work being done to the Round Pond. As this was an historic (18th century) pond she suggested that it would be appropriate to ask the Pond Conservation Trust to carry out a survey before embarking on any clearance or tree cutting work in or around the pond. The Committee felt that they were happy to trust The Lower Mole projects knowledge and judgement in these issues. Officers suggested that the relevant groups were consulted again before any work was started.
- 1.5 After this meeting a series of emails followed between Nonsuch Watch and the Lower Mole Project and some valid points were made particularly with regards to dredging the Round Pond.
- 1.6 It was later decided as a result of this exchange that the Round Pond should be taken off the SITA Environmental Trust application.
- 1.7 Subsequently, the Lower Mole Project's bid application for the remaining ponds was unsuccessful and no works to either pond were undertaken as a result.
- 1.8 However, the Lower Mole Project are still keen to reinvigorate this project and now seek the Joint Management Committee's agreement in principle for a revised scheme for a phased program of renovation of the Round Pond.

2 Proposals

- 2.1 The revised proposal for renovation of Round Pond is set out below:

Phase 1:	During the autumn/winter 2016 after the bird nesting season in order to reduce shading, some tree cover on the south side of the pond should be removed, whilst retaining the rest of the trees and scrub as habitat.
Phase 1 result:	The return of emergent and marginal vegetation due to additional light.
Phase 2:	During spring/summer 2017 the construction of a post and rail fence around the pond, with stock fencing and a field gate for tractor access.
Phase 2 results:	To allow the pond weed and bank side vegetation to return and become established, minimal disturbance would result in a decrease in turbidity as the water clarity improves due to the sediment settling. This would enable the great crested newts to return and use the pond as an egg laying site.

- 2.2 The proposed works is in line with the recommendations set out in the Habitat Management Plan from 2005 and the update of 2015. Which states:

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“Round Pond TN37, Pond Management – This pond is very shaded, creating a good screen from people (although often visited by dogs anyway). Water here fluctuates naturally. In the period between the time of the last management plan and the present the shading has continued. This has result in the loss of the emerged and marginal vegetation. The pond itself is devoid of all vegetation and the surrounding area is also very poor. This is likely to be the result of the heavy shade and the frequent disturbance caused by dogs. In order to restore this pond, it should be fenced and some of the larger surrounding trees cut to allow more light to the pond. In addition, some of the willow immediately surrounding and in the pond itself should be pollarded. This will not only improve the vegetation of the pond but allow the continuance of the trees and their associated valuable lower plants.

There have in the past been records of Great Crested Newts from this pond, currently the pond would be regarded as having a low potential for having GCN. If the pond remains in its current state, they will almost certainly be lost if they have not been already. The recommendations for the pond will improve the situation. However, these recommendations are the minimum required and more radical management such as dredging may be required. It is suggested that during the life time of this plan this is investigated.”

- 2.3 To help Officers and Members fully understand the implications of the proposed works, further advice has been sought from Epsom & Ewell’s Ecologist, Peter Howarth who states:

‘With regard to the proposed improvements to Round Pond which include fencing and felling of some surrounding trees, the site was surveyed as part of the management plan and these works were suggested as an initial phase. This initial phase although aimed at improving the pond only involves the felling of trees and therefore does not require any further survey. The installation of the fencing could involve affecting any remaining Great Crested Newts; however there have not been any recent confirmed records and the current condition of the pond would make their presence unlikely. I am strongly of the opinion that the minimal chance of any negative effects on the newts would be outweighed by the positive effects of improving the pond’

- 2.4 When this project was last visited in January 2014, there was much debate as to the benefit of pond management, a series of email exchanges between the Lower Mole Project, Peter Howarth – Ecologist and Nonsuch Watch, resulted in the Round Pond not being included in the bid for funding at that time, until further survey work had been carried out.

- 2.5 However, in an email dated 5/4/14, Nonsuch Watch stated the following:

“I have already brought back a newt expert to look again at the Round Pond and he felt that there should be some cutting of the trees so that the water could receive enough light to support water plants. However, he did agree with our feeling that there should not be any dredging of this pond. As the Ponds Conservation Trust has advised, this could be harmful especially to a

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pond as old as this one, which may have archaeological importance as well as ecological value. This pond appears on a map of 1731 and is possibly much older. "

- 2.6 The second phase of the proposal may need some further consideration, as fencing off the Pond could have an impact on wildlife and dogs who currently enjoy use of this area of the park.
- 2.7 Communication about fencing off this area would need to be carried out with Park users prior to any works being undertaken and perhaps alternative locations suggested. The Balancing Pond is an option but there may also be merit in exploring the creation of new pond elsewhere in the Park. Sparrow Farm Road Dog Free area would be an ideal location as it holds water naturally and therefore does not tend to get used as a dog free picnic area.
- 2.8 If this idea was to be pursued, the decision would need to be taken as to whether this area should be relieved of its dog free status and turned into a dog socialisation area which could house a pond suitable for use by dogs to divert them away from more sensitive locations and separate grant funding would need to be sought by either the Lower Mole Project or Officers to carry out these works.
- 2.9 If this is an idea that the Joint Management Committee would like to consider, then it is suggested that a further report on the Sparrow Farm Dog Free area is brought to a future meeting.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 Phase 1 would require 2 people tree felling for two days at a rate of £140 each per day. Total £560 plus the additional cost of removing the waste brush and timber would require 2 people with a chipper for 1 day at an estimated cost of £420. Total cost of work £980.00
- 3.2 It has been agreed by Future Woodlands (Nonsuch Park based woodland management company) and the Nonsuch Voles (Nonsuch Park based volunteer group) that they would carry out Phase 1 free of charge. Future Woodlands will fell the trees and the Nonsuch Voles will help break down and burn the brush on site.
- 3.3 Phase 2 will require the Lower Mole Partnership to bring their expertise, tools and large volunteer group to erect a 200m post and rail fence, with stock netting and a field gate for tractor access.
- 3.4 This cost will total in region of £5000 which the Lower Mole Project will seek to recover through grant funding applications.
- 3.5 There is no direct cost to the JMC although Operational staff may be required to assist with the project implementation.

4 Risk Assessment

- 4.1 There is a risk that if the Round Pond is not restored there will be a further deterioration in the quality of the habitat and environment.

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- 4.2 There is a risk that If Phase two of the works are implemented without robust consultation and communications with the dog walking community that there will be disgruntlement amongst park users.
- 4.3 There is a small risk that if Phase two of the works are implemented without further surveying of the site prior to installation of the fencing there could be disruption to the existing habitat.

5 Conclusion and Recommendation

- 5.1 The success of this method of pond restoration has been demonstrated by similar work at Field Pond in Horton Country Park. This pond used to be used by the EEBC Countryside team for children's pond dipping sessions but there had been a noticeable decline in species found over the years and the water was usually turbid. During 2014 it was decided to reduce the tree cover and fence it, this has resulted in clear water and a marked increase in diversity.
- 5.2 After balancing the opinions of all groups over the course of this project, it is the Officer's recommendation that the Committee should agree to the Phase One proposal to carry out tree works over the autumn/winter 2016 and agree in principle to Phase Two works, subject to further consultation with Nonsuch Watch and the dog walking community.
- 5.3 It is also recommended that the formation of pond in the Sparrow Farm Road dog free area is explored and a report on this area provided to the JMC to consider at a future meeting.