

PRESS RELEASE

Date: 16 August 2010

VICTORIA PARK – UPDATE

Newbury Town Council is continuing to work on a variety of fronts on Victoria Park, as leaseholder responsible for maintenance and feels it is useful to circulate the following update:

- Following concerns relating to subsidence and lack of water in the Park, quotes have now been received from four hydrogeological surveyors to establish the cause and we intend to appoint one of them as soon as possible. Advice has also been sought from the freeholder West Berkshire Council and from local solicitors.
- In the meantime Costain, as a gesture of goodwill, is working on re-instating the watering supply to the Bowls Club. We are also in discussion with Costain on whether as a further goodwill gesture they will execute any immediate health and safety required repairs to the footways as they have to the pavements on Park Way.
- The dewatering that is being executed by Costain is due to be dramatically scaled down in September and may stop completely in November. Any full subsidence rectification works to walls, football pitch and bowls club surface will be undertaken after the dewatering has ceased.
- The Bowls Club and the Friends of Victoria Park continue to express their concerns at the levels of water in the park and the Council will keep in discussion with them on future steps.
- Separately, Costain have now declared that they have found room on the existing Parkway site for their recycling operation, so no longer have a request to use Victoria Park. We know that this was of some concern to many residents, so are pleased to be able to allay any fears they may have had.

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- Following several failed attempts by Costain to effectively reinstate the grass area adjacent to Park Way following the installation of a new pipeline, Costain have agreed to bring the area back up to an acceptable standard, but due to the current dry weather will not start the work until later in the year.
- Due to the current condition of the football pitch through lack of adequate water to maintain a sound and even substrate all games and practice sessions have been cancelled until the playing surface has fully recovered.
- The recent announcement by central government that most Playbuilder funding is to be withdrawn means that the recently announced £100,000 Playbuilder and Aiming High funding towards a new skate park and playground is under threat. The Council will continue to seek other funding sources.
- The Council had a stall at the recent very successful Waterways Festival in the park, where another opportunity was taken to consult with park users on the plans for a new skate park and playground.
- The Council has been pleased to receive praise for the summer bedding and hanging baskets in the park. Work is now underway on the Grounds Maintenance Contract, which is due for renewal next year, to ensure continuing excellent maintenance and displays.
- We have recently received concerns that the drains in Victoria Park appear blocked and may not cope in heavy rain. The drains are not actually connected to sewers, but are soak-aways. As such, their current status is very effective, even more so given the current low water table.
- Discussions are underway with West Berkshire Council tree officers in relation to further maintenance required on various trees in the park. In particular there is concern that one of the large horse chestnuts adjacent to the canal may have to be felled. An independent survey has been commissioned to ensure this is really required.
- The Council is considering replacing felled trees with fruit and nut trees, as part of the wider pilot project proposed to set aside a small part of Victoria Park for public edible crop initiatives.

- The Council has been pleased to see the active use of the new pedalos and kayaks on the pond and encourages everyone to visit the park, playground and kiosk over the remainder of the summer. There will be the added attraction of a funfair over the Bank Holiday weekend.

Council Leader, Ifor Sheldon, said, "Victoria Park is the 'Jewel-in-the-Crown' of the Town's open spaces and a very important 'green lung' in the middle of Newbury. It is very important that as custodians of the Park, we do everything we possibly can to ensure it is able to be used and enjoyed by everyone now and in the future".

END

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