

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**HIGHWAYS & NEIGHBOURHOODS
AND
PEOPLE
CABINET MEMBERS**

SILICA PARK LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To outline the background to Silica Park becoming established as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).
- 1.2 To outline the measures taken to improve both the LNR and water safety over the preceding years.
- 1.3 To report on the recent water safety incident at the Silica Park Local Nature Reserve.
- 1.4 To propose a number of recommendations to maintain and improve safety at Silica Park LNR and elsewhere.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The site was designated as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in 2008 following consultation with Natural England. Some initial funding for the site was provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Coversands Heathland Project.
- 2.2 At the same time as the designation, the site was also recognised as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) by the regional independent panel on biodiversity.
- 2.3 A key point in the designation as a LNR is that the site must be accessible to the public and be available for environmental educational purposes.
- 2.4 To comply with the designation criteria the whole site was risk assessed. This assessment and indeed all the previous assessments indicated the need for water safety equipment, water safety signage, surfaced footpaths delineating where people could go and a public presence on site.
- 2.5 Prior to the formal designation all of the above issues were addressed. However, it soon became clear that because of the levels of vandalism

to the water safety equipment and signs that they would need to be replaced on a regular basis. Since 2008 the equipment has been totally replaced on six occasions.

- 2.6 Since designation the site has been the subject of considerable volunteer activity undertaking a range of tasks including checking and recovering the water safety equipment. All the water safety equipment is checked once a week and on occasions, twice a week.
- 2.7 This is supplemented by local people who report missing equipment.
- 2.8 The council in conjunction with the fire brigade, police and key officers of the council, have formed a water safety group. The group, working with the water safety volunteers, risk assess all accessible ponds within our area. The Silica site was assessed in 2010 and the site has been assessed again more recently.
- 2.9 In addition to the specific works undertaken in the LNR the council has been active in a range of other areas, as follows:
 - It has actively risk assessed with the fire brigade and worked with local landowners who own areas of water accessible to the public
 - It has run campaigns about various aspects of water safety
 - It provides an extensive learn to swim programme across its leisure venues under the 'Swimlincs' brand. 'Swimlincs' is a learn to swim programme for people of all ages. It covers the essential areas of swimming and other key water skills.
 - It operates free swimming for all children of school age and funds third party providers to participate in this scheme so that all areas of North Lincolnshire are covered
 - It has established a water safety group bringing together key staff and agencies to improve water safety within our area.
- 2.10 On Tuesday 7 August 2012 at approximately 1.50pm there was an incident involving two young boys swimming in the pond at Silica Park LNR. It is reported that the two young boys appeared to be alone. A lady with a child was also on the edge of the water. It appears that a man approached the pond and shouted to the boys to come out of the water as it could be dangerous.
- 2.11 The two boys seemed to ignore this and the man again shouted to them, and one of the boys was seen to make his way out of the water shouting he could not see the other boy. By this time, the lady had gone into the water and was bringing the 7 year old boy out of the water.
- 2.12 An ambulance was called, and once on scene they requested the Police to attend, and then immediately conveyed both the lady and the young boy to Scunthorpe Hospital.

- 2.13 Concern over water safety at the site has led to a specific and unique planning condition that requires the council to further improve the water safety equipment on site and ensure that it is kept up to standard. The Childrens Campus will add a positive value to young people living there and the wider environment. The campus will be overseen by North Lincolnshire Elected Members in line with their Corporate Parenting responsibility and monthly rota visits carried out to ensure this is running to plan. Their presence on site will encourage wider scrutiny of the whole area and in particular the nature reserve and water safety.
- 2.14 Young People living at the campus will have access to water safety advice and guidance, swimming lessons (if they cannot already swim) and will have the added value of being able to volunteer and work with rangers to add a positive value to the upkeep of the LNR
- 2.15 The design of the campus will allow for a redesigned access to the LNR and therefore it is hoped have a positive impact upon community safety in general. A gated entrance, lighting and more frequently used access may prevent the footfall through the park for the wrong purpose and that has led to some of the current community safety issues. The police will work with officers and children to build out crime and enhance community safety as the site develops.
- 2.16 Children living at the campus will play a role and be encouraged along with the rangers to volunteer to take a shared responsibility for the presentation of the site and associated contribution toward the safety and wellbeing of the wildlife.
- 2.17 The recent incident at Silica LNR has highlighted the need for continued education in our schools and communities about not swimming in open water. This is where our new efforts will be placed through the water safety group meeting. These are being increased in regularity to deliver this work.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 There are no options to consider.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 There are no options for analysis.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 There are no additional resource implications associated with this report.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

- 6.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Water Safety Group has undertaken risk assessments in connection with the Silica Park site and the council has put in place specific safety measures in response.
- 7.2 Humberside Fire Brigade and Humberside Police were further consulted following the recent incident and have helped inform the development of the enhanced water safety measures that are proposed for the site.
- 7.3 Elected Members consult with young people as part of undertaking their Corporate Parenting responsibilities.
- 7.4 The recommendations contained in this paper are based upon feedback received from these consultations.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Cabinet Members note the enhanced water safety measures that will be incorporated into the Childrens Campus development.
- 8.2 That the Water Safety Group continues to meet on a regular basis.
- 8.3 That in future, copies of the Water Safety Group minutes are placed in the group offices for information.
- 8.4 That the water safety education programme is continued in schools.
- 8.5 That the free swimming programme for all children of school age continues during the school summer holiday periods.

**DIRECTOR OF PLACES
AND
DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE**

Church Square House
SCUNTHORPE
North Lincolnshire
DN15 6XQ
Author: Tim Allen
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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report
None