

SPECIAL COMMUNITY SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

27 JUNE 2012

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

GRANTHAM CANAL DREDGING PROJECT

1.0 THE PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Committee for a referral to the Policy, Finance and Administration Committee for £22,454 to contribute towards a scheme that will dredge part of Grantham Canal.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Community and Social Affairs Committee approve a sum of £22,454 from the Corporate Priority reserve towards the Grantham Canal Dredging project, subject to approval from the Policy, Finance and Administration Committee.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) refer to areas of unique importance in relation to national heritage of wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms. SSSI's are rare and only cover approximately 6% of the land area in England and as such they are designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- 3.2 Locally we have the Harby to Redmile SSSI, taking the route of the linear canal and the Kinoulton Marshes SSSI, where the canal is incorporated into a SSSI on adjacent offside land. The particular interest of the site relates to the aquatic vegetation and the towing path grassland, along with the associated habitats such as the emergent vegetation, trees and hedgerows.
- 3.3 British Waterways (The landowners of the Grantham Canal SSSI and also Members of the Grantham Canal Partnership) have agreed to support the development of a funding application to dredge the Harby to Redmile SSSI. The aim of the project is to reverse the decline of the designated SSSI by increasing the number of submerged and floating plant communities located on the Grantham canal between Harby and Redmile.
- 3.4 Work will involve dredging the canal to reduce the amount of silt collected which currently creates the following problems :-
- Reduces the flow of water through the channel
 - Reduces water depth and bed stability
 - Increases turbidity and release of nutrients into the water columns
 - Promotes the succession of open water to swamp vegetation
 - Reduces the ability of certain plants to grow; can smother submerged aquatic vegetation
 - Can under certain conditions, facilitate a decrease in oxygen resulting in fish death
- 3.5 Grantham Canal Partnership will undertake to dredge a 1 km length of waterway and will ensure that all dredged areas are repopulated with Grass Wrack Pondweed (one of the main submerged plants in decline along the waterway).

4.0 **KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The canal is not a navigable waterway and as such British Waterways has no statutory funds available to undertake this work. British Waterways Ecologist has specified works to a specialist dredging contractor who has supplied an itemised price for the works.
- 4.2 British Waterways have approached the Veolia Environmental Trust who have indicated that they would support an application from Leicestershire Wildlife Trust or the Canal and Rivers Trust.
- 4.3 The canal is used for recreational purposes such as angling. The dredging work will offer an improvement to the recreational facility as once dredged, the canal will have a greater capacity to hold water.
- 4.4 Once dredged the canal will have a greater capacity to hold water and therefore offer opportunities to canoeists and anglers to use the waterway for recreational purposes. The Grantham Canal Partnership consult have consulted with these service users and provide opportunity for feedback/comments via their website

5.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Melton Borough Council's vision to *'enhance the quality of life for everyone in the Borough of Melton to achieve a sustainable, prosperous and vibrant community - a place where people want to live, work and visit'* directly links to this project.

6.0 **FINANCIAL & OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Veolia are only able to fund a maximum of 80% of the project costs and the applicant would need to contribute 10% under the rules set out by HMRC, to release the landfill tax contribution. This results in a shortfall in the contribution required to undertake the project. British Waterways have approached the Council and a revenue contribution of £22,454 has been requested from the Council to make up this shortfall in order for the project to proceed.

7.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

- 7.1 SSSI's are designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and consequently the law protects the interest features of an SSSI from development, damage or neglect.

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which has been prepared in accordance with the principles outlined in the CIPFA SOLACE publication.

8.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

- 8.1 There are no direct community issues arising from this report.

9.0 **EQUALITIES**

- 9.1 There are no direct equality issues arising from this report.

10.0 RISKS

- 10.1 A portion of the grant will be allocated towards costs such as Environment Agency consent, compensation for loss of land due to the reuse of any silts on adjacent agricultural land, silt sampling, volunteer expenses and any costs associated with the re-population of plant species. The amount contributed by Melton Borough Council will be fixed and conditional therefore limiting any risks involved.

11.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 11.1 The works will have a positive impact on climate change by promoting the growth of plants. Powered crafts are not allowed to use the canal which means that floating plants are less likely to be disturbed whilst repopulating this stretch of water.

12.0 CONSULTATION

- 12.1 The Grantham Canal Partnership have consulted with users and provide opportunity for feedback/comments via their website.

13.0 WARDS AFFECTED

- 13.1 All wards

Contact Officer: Harry Rai
Date: 19 June 2012
Appendices: None
Background Papers: <http://www.granthamcanal.org/>
Reference: X: C'ttees, Council & Sub-C'ttees/CSA