

**Committee: Open Spaces**

**Date: 3 October 2023**

**Title: Canal Management Plan**

**Purpose of Report**

Members to consider the Canal Management Plan regarding future maintenance of the canal and any recommendations within.

**Recommendation:**

Members resolve to recommend to Full Council to accept the Canal Management Plan and to agree to the purchase of approximately 25 metres of pre-planted coir rolls in netting to start stabilising the canal bank.

**Background:**

1. At the Town Council Meeting on 21 December 2021, Minute No: 1105 Budget 2022/23, Members had agreed to set aside £10,000 per year for canal maintenance as part of the budget. There is currently £20,000 held in Earmarked Reserves for canal maintenance.
2. At the Recreation Ground Users Group meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023, the Chair of the Angling Association described the work they have undertaken on the canal.
3. The Angling Association have tried to improve the water quality of the canal but found that there is a major issue with oxygenation and dead silt. They had purchased an aerator at a cost of £1,000, but this was vandalised within days of being installed.
4. To improve the silt situation, the Angling Association sought advice and at that time, had spent £800 on an oyster shell product which claims to change the pH level and turbo charge the nutrients in the silt. The Angling Association were planning to get a water quality report for the next ten years. At the time, they also asked if the Town Council would purchase and install a disabled peg.
5. Further discussion about the maintenance of the canal led to a draft Canal Management Plan being produced by the Recreation Manager with the assistance of the Countryside Manager.
6. The draft plan was then circulated to the members of the Recreation Ground Users Group at their meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023. The Angling Association were asked to review the contents and make additions or recommendations in time for this Open Spaces Meeting. Having reviewed the Canal Management Plan, the Chair of the Angling Association stated they support the plan as it stands and had nothing to add to it.

**Report:**

7. The Canal Management Plan at **Appendix 8A**, describes the maintenance work that needs to be carried out over a four-to-five-year period to improve the water quality and the site itself. This information is further supported by a fishery/habitat survey, at Appendix A of the plan, that was carried out in February 2023 by an independent company under the instructions of the Angling Association. This is only one solution to improving the water quality.
8. At Appendix B of the Canal Management Plan is a report that shows the different depths of the canal at different 'peg' points along the length of the canal. This was also provided by the Chair of the Angling Association to officers.
9. Members may choose to recommend to Full Council to accept the Canal Management Plan.
10. If Members agree to support the Canal Management Plan, **Appendix 8B** is a report explaining how the canal banks could be stabilised using coir rolls. The canal is approximately 200 metres in length, and this would be broken down to approximately 25 metres to be repaired in each year over a four-year period.
11. To carry out this work, three quotes were obtained, which include a choice of various items. However, the grounds team would only need the pre-established coir rolls, which are in the region of £850 plus delivery charges as the other items can be sourced from Herne Hill.
12. If Members agree with the purchase of coir rolls, the grounds team are keen to get this work underway in the next couple of months. Once suitable materials from Herne Hill have been collected, the team can carry out the initial installation of the stakes before installing the coir rolls. It is estimated that the work on the canal bank will take four days to complete although this may take longer depending what is under the water.
13. Members may agree to go ahead with the purchase of approximately 25 metres of pre-planted coir rolls in netting to stabilise the canal bank.

**Julie Earp**  
**Deputy Town Clerk**  
**September 2023**