



**159 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

No Declarations of Interest were noted and no Requests for Dispensations made.

**160 Presentation on the Kings Pond Draft Management Plan Review – Public Consultation Results**

The Town Clerk presented the results from the Public Consultation on the Draft Kings Pond Management Plan which ran from 17<sup>th</sup> October to 27<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

**161 Questions to the Council from Members of the Public**

The representations received in writing prior to the meeting were published with the agenda and responses, which had been prepared in advance, were read out by the Chair as follows, before opening-up for representations made by those in the room:

1. Tim Pinchen – Chair Watercress & Winterbournes Steering Group:  
*Response: We thank Mr Pinchen for his submission; I understand he has supplied the Town Clerk with a presentation relating to this scheme and provided contact details as well as advice on potential independent project managers*
2. Peter Desmond Thomas  
*Response: We thank Mr Desmond Thomas for his submission in respect of deferring any decision and this will be considered by Members. Legally we cannot undertake such a vote, as suggested, as part of the election process, which has to strictly adhere to specific legislation in what can and cannot be included in the polling stations.*
3. Ms Sandra Hardman  
*Response: We thank Ms Hardman for her submission as detailed in the report paper the petition received has been considered as part of the overall consultation evaluation process. The petition did not state if any of the signatories had completed the consultation survey, so to avoid duplication they have been considered separately. The petition itself is not published on the Town Council website as the author did not ask signatories to sign if they were happy for their personal details to be published.*
4. John Quincey:  
*Response: We thank Mr Quincey for his submission and members will take on board his comments in respect of the EA when they come to consider the resolutions before them. The public session at this evening's meeting is an extended one in order to give everyone time to make representations but once the public participation session closes, the Council will move on to debate the item of business which is for councillors only.*
5. Maggie Thirlway:  
*Response: We thank Ms Thirlway for her submission. CALA have confirmed that the single silt trap referred to the correspondence which was sent in from Ms Thirlway was not installed as it was not required. The Town Clerk contacted CALA homes Contracts Manager who replied to confirm as follows:*

*As part of our build strategy a site-specific Surface Water Management Plan has been prepared and being implemented to cover construction activities to mitigate the risk of pollution to the river.*

*As part of the proposed drainage strategy all proposed outfalls to the river Wey are fitted with high performance 'Downstream Defenders' manufactured by 'Hydro-International' to prevent silt/sediments, hydrocarbons & heavy metal discharges to maintain water quality into the River.*

6. Anthony Furnival

*Response: Q1 National legislation or contracting authorities' decisions cannot impose the automatic exclusion of apparently advantaged parties and, more specifically, of project consultants—but must provide such candidates with the opportunity to prove that competition has not been distorted as a result of their previous involvement in the project*

*—See government guidance document “Applying Exclusions in Public Procurement, Managing Conflicts of Interest and Whistleblowing”.*

*If this were to be considered it would be part of the evaluation process not at the selection of bidders' stage*

*Response Q2: This evening's motions confirm that if the decision is made to undertake feasibility that an independent project manager will be appointed to write and carry out the invitation to tender process.*

*The following response was given to questions 3, 4 & 5.*

*The scope of any feasibility has yet to be determined or agreed by the Council so we cannot make such a commitment at this time.*

*Response Q6: Please see the proposed resolution that any appointment of a project manager is independent of the Council*

7. Andrew Kuttner:

*Response Q1a: Mr Kuttner was thanked for his submission, people are entitled to make their own inference as to why the response rate was low.*

*Response Q2b: All paper responses were included within the results and as has been stated the petition submitted has also been considered as part of the evaluation process.*

*Response Q2a: This will be for Members to decide this evening whether to spend funds on feasibility studies.*

*Response Q2b: CALA has been contacted and they have responded to say that they are comfortable that they covered off the risk of slit build up arising in Kings Pond & feel that there is no reason to make any contributions for the dredging at this time. REDROW have not yet been contacted.*

***Response Q2b: This would form part of any technical and financial assessment for the dredging option if Members resolve to approve this.***

***Response Q3: Details of how best to dredge and disposal of silt would form part of any technical and financial assessment if approved by Members.***

Representations from members of the public received on 17<sup>th</sup> January but not circulated to Councillors was read out and answered as follows:

8. Stephen Gough: Has the silt in Kings Pond been fully analysed to see if is capable of being used as a fertiliser? Have multiple recent quotes been obtained for the cost of dredging the pond?

***Response: This is the 3rd time Mr Gough has asked this question. He originally asked it on 28th November and was furnished with a response by the Town Clerk on the 29th November and again on the 9th January when he wrote to The Finance and Administration Manager who provided the same response. The position has not changed in the last 10 days.***

**Original response. 29th November**

***The Council has yet to determine whether to proceed with progressing the option to take the pond off-line or indeed to undertake dredging and this will depend upon the outcomes of the public consultation which recently closed. As a result, the only analysis we have of the water is slightly further downstream conducted by the Environment Agency,***

***No specific testing has yet been undertaken of the silt or water in the pond itself and no invitations to tender have been issued for any works, so quotations for dredging are not available. The indicative price for dredging quoted in the draft management plan was based upon the volume extracted when the pond was last dredged in 1997 uplifted to today's prices.***

The following Representations were made in person at the meeting:

9. David Dodd:
1. Would the Town Council consider re-running the consultation with better publicity to allow the whole town to respond and not on Survey Monkey which he felt is not fit for professional surveys.
  2. Would the Council change the terminology and remove the wording “*off-line*” to “*removing Kings Pond*” or “*getting rid of Kings Pond*”?
10. Maggie Thirlway:
1. Survey Monkey was totally inappropriate; not suitable for those without on-line access, the survey was biased. Should a more professional survey be considered?
  2. The draft plan has referred to people such as herself as a “*lunatic fringe*”, which is not true.

*Members responded that they were not aware of such terminology within the content of the draft management plan.*

11. Mr John Quincey:

1. Councillor Burns is generally in line with my view. We should not proceed with an engineering survey on the weir until the Environment Agency agree to fund the work as it is their preferred option. Mr Quincey added that he has made an offer to the Town Clerk to introduce her to the relevant director of the Watercress Line who has in principle agreed to using land at the Butts to deposit of the silt.

*Councillor Boxall replied to thank Mr Quincey for his offer. She confirmed that the Town Clerk will contact the CEO of the Watercress Line who is her established contact to look at this offer.*

Mr Quincey confirmed that the Clerk should not approach the CEO as she is new in post and would know nothing about it.

12. Mr Stephen Gough:

Kings Pond is a jewel. He deals in facts and felt that no facts had been presented in terms of any analysis of water quality, costs for carrying out dredging, any analysis of the silt itself or its volume. Data was distinctly lacking. He was an angler and the fishing management fraternity had so much knowledge and experience of water management and maintenance.

*Councillor Hill made the following points:*

- *advised that there is a misunderstanding of what is being determined this evening with Members having 6 resolutions before them to look at next steps and allocation of funding*
- *He did not recognise that the terminology “lunatic fringe” as ever having been used by councillors.*
- *Off-line does not mean disposing of the pond.*
- *The Town Council has to have all of the options before it to be able to consider the best options going forward and feasibility studies were a crucial element to the process*

13. Sara Whitwell:

Wished to express her feeling for the pond and how important it was to her having grown up in Alton over the past 40 years. She raised the following questions:

- 1, Why can the Council just not dredge the pond and if it was down to money then the council should look at fundraising activities such as a coffee hut and she was sure that, if asked, many residents would make donations in support of dredging works
2. When will we get the data from the feasibility studies

She then read a poem written by her late father “My Alton”

*Councillor Burns thanked her for her representation and for sharing her late Father’s moving poem.*

14. Anthony Furnival on behalf of a friend who suffers from mental health issues and was unable to attend:

Read a statement asking councillors to consider what the pond meant to people and to be aware that the pond helps people through hard times and that they need to be aware of the positive impact it can have on those with mental health issues.

15. Anthony Furnival:

Advised that in his opinion that it is far too early to move to feasibility; we need to consider up stream issues at source, which includes dishwashers discharging and water run off from Brick Kiln Lane as well as what happens downstream; should also consider onsite weir management (although acknowledged that now with regular clearing the situation is much improved). He also felt Aquamaintain have a vested interest in proposing something that is lucrative for them and may not be the best option. Alton Town Council needs to look at the bigger picture (which is bigger than just Kings Pond itself)

***Councillor Burns thanked Mr Furnival for his comments but advised that the Council is constrained in so much as those areas for which it has riparian responsibility with other stretches of the River Wey falling under other organisations responsibility***

16. Mike Onslow:

Wished the Council to allay his fears and answer the rumours he had heard about plans to reduce access to the pond or the proposed introduction of car parking charges.

***Councillors confirmed that there were no plans to reduce public access to the site, nor to introduce parking charges.***

***Councillor Hill advised that EHDC charge for parking in Alton but that Alton Town Council does not.***

17. Andrew Kuttner:

1. Expressed the view that he felt so few people completed it as they felt it was a *done deal* so would be a complete waste of time.
2. Shame Pam Jones isn't here to explain herself about the £40,000 and the Pump Track
3. He also requested the Chair to re-read the response given to Mr Gough (Councillor Boxall duly complied)
4. Asked "why did Councillor Burns lie" to the BBC about the water and stated that all councillors should resign.

***Councillor Burns said she did not feel that she lied, she was relaying the information that was given to her by the Environment Agency.***

18. Janet Haines:

Wanted to give her personal comments that she and her husband both very much enjoy walking in Flood Meadows, which she felt was far more enjoyable than walking around

King's Pond, stating that she was very much in favour of returning the pond to something more natural.

19. Dr June Chatfield;

As an Environment Scientist who had lived in Alton since 1979, Dr June gave a detailed representation on the health of the River Wey and Kings Pond including Chalk Stream indicators, algae and fresh-water fungi and that biodiversity down the river works well however there are clear indicators of the deterioration of the water quality. King's Pond is an interdisciplinary site and there are a number of interdependency issues. She gave details as to how the population has greatly changed from the 2000 people living in Alton in the 1800's to 5,000 in the 1900's rising to the current figure of 20,000 residents now (see her article on the on-line Herald 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023). She acknowledged that there is a lot of data to be gathered as well as looking at case studies from elsewhere to ensure we are fact driven in what we do.

20. Mr. Andrew Joy:

Paid tribute to Alton Town Council for drawing the community together through this process over several months and allowing people to air their views. We have a river and a pond. This is a man-made situation which is part of our furniture. Yes, it is dynamic and from time to time we do things to maintain it. We need to look how we look at it in the future and strike a balance between the amenity and character and other factors. It is the Jewel in our Crown. People coming off the train should be coming to the pond. Do we want to change for something better – so the question is to retain as it is or make better?

21. Jane Powell:

Thank Councillors for clarifying that the petition will be considered. She asked if individual property owners had been consulted as the proposals may affect their property values. Do we know the scale of costs to understand if it is as expensive to maintain the pond in an off-line capacity or if we had half the pond that we have today. What is going to be about the silt that is already there and how soon will the investigations begin?

*Councillor Burns confirmed that all of these points will be considered at a later date but emphasised that no decisions have been made. The motions before Council this evening are around technical and financial considerations.*

22. Roger Baker:

Felt the Council should be focusing their attention on the River Wey upstream and looking nearer the source asking how we manage springs which do not produce water at certain times during the year? The springs which are active at Flood Meadows through the summer just go into the overgrown watercress beds; the ponds should be increased to maintain a clear supply of high-quality spring water rather than the contaminated water from Will Hall Farm. Please look at the whole of the river in an integrated way – its doesn't do any favours to Alton to have the river dry up for months and creating a reservoir in Flood Meadows could be the solution.

*Councillor Boxall confirmed that it is a winterbourne stream; but appreciating the comments*

23. Dean Phillips:

I commend the recommendations, however, do not let the tail wag the dog. We should review a further management plan, options as well as further consultation.

24. John Smith:

Speaking as a resident for 70 years and former councillor as well as a past Town Mayor. Noting to the audience that these people in front of you give their time voluntarily and don't deserve abuse.

There is room for two different views here. There has to be room for both an open expanse of water to walk around and for a Flood Meadows type of environment. ...I feel deeply about this; Councillors - you cannot win, you are between a rock and a hard place. Kings Pond gives so much pleasure so please do consider keeping the body of water. Visitors shouldn't feed the ducks but it gives them a lot of pleasure.

25. Colin Jamieson:

Regardless of what happens there is a real water quality issue at Kings Pond. We usually turn to the Environment Agency, who are often conflicted between the amenity and wildlife. Please do not just take the information from them but from others who may have a more balanced view.

26. Steve Hunt:

This is a really complex matter and a complex balance. I respect the Council in going ahead and looking at this subject. The shape of the pond in the future and what it is going to be; the biodiversity and the people that use and love the pond. We need a plan based on fact. Surveys are always difficult, referencing EHDC who have just concluded their consultation on the Local Plan, where respondents were also on the older end of the age range. We tend to think of the internet as a young person's thing but it is no longer that way.

27. Emily Young:

I am also a parent with young children. I do not allow my children to feed the birds as it is not good for them but there are plenty of other things they can do. However, I don't let my children too near the waters-edge. The banks are not safe as they are eroded. The water is murky and brown, the island is collapsing into the pond. I read both management plans and a lot of work has gone into the plan. Personally, I am not in favour of dredging, mechanical diggers would effectively destroy the habitats for at least a year. I am in favour of a feasibility study.

***Councillor Boxall thanked everyone for their contribution this evening and concluded the public session; handing over to the Chair of Open Spaces, Councillor Burns for the next agenda item, which Members then proceeded to debate.***



**162 Kings Pond Draft Management Plan. Review of Consultation – next steps and funding**

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor Suzie Burns, it was proposed to add a Motion 7: To put the revised draft management plan and result of studies back out to public consultation.

**RESOLVED to add a motion 7 to read:  
To put the revised draft management plan and result of studies  
back to public consultation  
5 in favour, 2, against and 1 abstention**

On the proposal of Councillor Lewis Jones, seconded by Councillor Sharon Cullen it was:

**RESOLVED to**

- 1. Set aside £250,000 to create an ear marked reserve for Kings Pond future works, made up of £170,000 Neighbourhood CIL and £80,000 from Alton Town Council Reserves**

All in favour

On the proposal of Councillor Matthew Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was:

**RESOLVED to**

- 2. Conduct a technical and financial assessment of the dredging option**

All in favour

On the proposal of Councillor Richard Platt, seconded by Councillor Suzie Burns it was:

**RESOLVED to**

- 3. Conduct a technical and financial assessment of removing the outlet weir so as to enable an offline option to be considered further**

7 in favour and 1 against

On the proposal of Councillor Sharon Cullen, seconded by Councillor Lewis Jones it was:

**RESOLVED to**

- 4. Defer consideration of the technical and financial assessment of the offline option until the outcome of the technical and financial assessment of the removing the outlet weir is known.**

All in favour

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor Richard Platt it was:

**RESOLVED to**

- 5. Funding of up to £25,000 to be set aside to fund the approved technical and financial assessments**

All in favour

On the proposal of Councillor Lewis Jones, seconded by Councillor Annie Lancaster it was:

**RESOLVED to**

- 6. Appoint a Project Manager (fee up to £2,500) to design and run the invitation to tender process for the approved technical and financial assessments bringing the results of the tender process to the first Full Council meeting following the Annual Meeting of the (new) Council in May**

All in favour

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor Suzie Burns it was:

**RESOLVED to**

- 7. To put the revised Draft Management Plan and results of studies back to public consultation**

5 in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention

The meeting finished at 9.18 p.m.