

**Decision Session - Executive Member for  
Environment**

**3 July 2017**

Report of the Corporate Director of Economy & Place

**Osballdwick Beck Channel Improvements**

**Summary**

1. Hull Road Park is a traditional 25 acre park alongside Osballdwick Beck in Tang Hall, the park comprises semi natural woodland areas, tennis and basketball courts.
2. Osballdwick Beck runs in an east-west direction through the park and forms its southern boundary, the watercourse has been artificially canalised in the past and flows are dictated by a series of weirs, see annex 1. The large areas of standing water have relatively little aesthetic, amenity and biodiversity interest.
3. £60k funding has been allocated through the CYC capital process for renewal works to the beck, a range of potential improvements are identified in the Options section of the report and further details on each suite of options are discussed further in the Analysis section.

**Recommendations**

4. The Executive Member is recommended to:
  - 1) Approve Option 2 - the renewal and reinstatement of the current watercourse layout and associated structures through silt removal, weir and sluice gate renewal and works to masonry channel sides and associated structures. Work would then move to feasibility studies and work with key partners such as the Friends of St Nicholas Fields to explore the potential for a second phase of works to enhance the watercourse in the park.

Reason: Significant works are required to remove silt and vegetation from the site. This will provide an improved amenity for

users of the park. Phase 2 works to develop re-naturalisation of the watercourse could deliver further improvements where feasible and funding allows.

## **Background**

5. Hull Road Park is an extensive park in the Tang Hall area of the city, a range of formal and semi naturalised areas provide recreation and amenity benefits for visitors.
6. Osbaldwick Beck flows from east to west through the park forming its southern boundary, Osbaldwick Beck carries flows from the Osbaldwick area of the city through to the River Foss and has a catchment extending as far as Murton and Holtby to the north west of the park.
7. Osbaldwick Beck has been channelised and managed through the park for many years, historic mapping can be seen at annex 2, the measures provide paved and formalised river bank sides and river levels are managed through a series of weirs.
8. The watercourse is heavily silted up and vegetation has encroached and self seeded on the islands and siltbanks through the park, extensive routine maintenance is required to reinstate the condition of the watercourse through the park.
9. Downstream of the park Osbaldwick Beck flows through the St Nicholas Fields nature reserve managed by the Friends of St Nicholas Fields. A recent funding bid has provided monies for the development of the York's Becks Project where monitoring and renewal of riparian vegetation is planned to increase and preserve the habitats of Osbaldwick Beck and Tang Hall Beck in the area within and surrounding the nature reserve.
10. The Environment Agency has assessed Osbaldwick Beck as part of the monitoring, assessment and improvement plans required by the EU Water Framework Directive. The assessments have identified that Osbaldwick Beck is in a moderate status for a range of biological indicators which has impacted on the watercourses requirement to be in 'Good Ecological Status'. It is recommended that any opportunities should be sought for the improvement and modification of in channel structures and the implementation of soft engineering measures to complement Water Framework Directive needs.

## **Consultation**

11. Consultation has been held with CYC Public Realm, Friends of St Nicholas Fields and the Environment Agency to identify the high level options for the scheme. Further detailed consultation with these groups will be required to deliver the works detailed in option 1 and the further investigations to identify if wider solutions can be developed as detailed in option 2.

## **Options**

12. Two potential options are provided below with further assessment made on each in the Analysis section:
  - 1) Renewal and reinstatement of the current watercourse layout and associated structures through silt removal, weir and sluice gate renewal and works to masonry on channel sides and associated structures.
  - 2) Delivery of Option 1 maintenance improvements, exploration of a possible second phase of works to reintroduce a naturalised line of watercourse, creation of increased habitat and re-establishment of riparian vegetation throughout. Phase 2 would follow a feasibility study and work with partners to design phase 2 options, further funding opportunities would need to be considered.

## **Analysis**

13. Option 1 – Osbaldwick Beck has existed in its current channelised and heavily engineered form for c. 100 years, no significant problems are experienced with this layout but it similarly does not look to use the watercourse as a benefit as it flows through Hull Road Park.

**Advantages:** The existing layout presents very little maintenance liability on CYC, the layout performs well in times of flood risk and provided significant flood storage in the Boxing Day 2015 floods – see Annex 3 – this could be further enhanced through silt removal and reinstatement of the weirs and sluice gates.

**Disadvantages:** The heavily modified and engineered channel does not exploit opportunities to use the beck to enhance

the features and attractions at the park. This is further compounded by opportunities to link to wider initiatives such as Water Framework Directive enhancements or the work being progressed in St Nicholas Fields.

Costs for removal of the silt will be considerable and options for disposal as landscaping areas outside of floodplain in the park will be developed.

14. Option 2 – The re-naturalisation of Osbaldwick Beck would provide a watercourse with renewed and enhanced interest to users of the park and an important habitat for wildlife. Flood storage potential could similarly be enhanced.

**Advantages:** The works would introduce a variety of flora and fauna into the park and provide a new attraction for the park. The works would enhance and work in close partnership with the activities being carried out by the Friends of St Nicholas Fields. Further opportunities for enhancement could be identified through the Water Framework Directive and works programmes being developed by the EA.

**Disadvantages:** The flood storage potential in the park is essential to manage flood flows in Osbaldwick Beck. The current layout of the watercourse provides a high level of storage and this would need to be carefully designed into the works to ensure betterment. Maintenance liabilities would be considerable and management and maintenance of the improved habitat and marginal vegetation would place an additional burden on CYC.

All of the measures identified in Option 1 would be delivered to return the watercourse to its original state before further enhancements could be developed. Wider funding would be required to achieve the additional outcomes.

## Council Plan

15. Improved provision of flood defences and the development of renewed and improved public parks supports a prosperous city for all and safer communities for residents, businesses and visitors.

### Implications

16. All implications are considered below:
- **Financial** – existing funding is in place for the development of Option 1, further consultation to develop phase 2 approaches under Option 2 will require further funding to be sought, CYC will work with all partners to develop any required funding strategies
  - **Human Resources (HR)** – there are no HR implications
  - **One Planet Council / Equalities** – there are no One Planet Council/Equalities implications
  - **Legal** – there are no legal implications
  - **Crime and Disorder** – there are no Crime and Disorder implications
  - **Information Technology (IT)** – there are no IT implications
  - **Property** – consultation has began with Public Realm regarding the approach to the works and the outputs to be delivered

### Risk Management

17. All risks relating to the works and their delivery will be considered and managed throughout; no risks exist at this stage of the scheme.

### Contact Details

**Author:**  
**Steve Wragg**  
**Flood Risk and Asset**  
**Manager**  
**Highways**  
01904 553401

**Chief Officer Responsible for the report:**  
**Neil Ferris**  
**Corporate Director of Economy & Place**

**Report**  **Date** 23.06.17  
**Approved**

**Wards Affected:**

**All**  tick

Hull Road, Heworth, Osbaldwick, Fishergate, Guildhall

**For further information please contact the author of the report.**

**Annexes:** Annex 1 Hull Road Park Watercourse Works Site Plan  
Annex 2 Hull Road Park Watercourse Works Historic Maps  
Annex 3 Hull Road Park Watercourse Works Flood Mapping