

A Report for Members of Aldborough Parish Council

Aldborough Pond – Risk Assessment

Written by Jane Wisson – Parish Clerk

Extraordinary Council Meeting - August

1. Introduction

The Village Pond and wildlife area had been established for use by the village and had been developed utilising a grant from North Norfolk District Council which requires the pond to be maintained as a wildlife area.

As an asset of the Parish Council, and with a duty of care for villagers, it had been identified that a risk assessment had to be completed to ensure that the Parish Council mitigates all aspects of its responsibility and is covered under its public liability insurance.

2. Report on current activities.

The previous clerk and chairman had worked on a risk assessment detailing various activities that they felt needed addressing. After meeting with residents this risk assessment had been adopted but without all parties in agreement. The village has been split over this action for several months which has increased frustration, anger and dis-trust on both sides.

The villagers had worked on providing information to the parish council and felt that these examples were not being looked at regarding their validity. The Volunteer co-ordinators held up an example risk assessment as particularly good which was the Boughton one written by a Neboosh trained individual.

The previous parish clerk has left the Council and the new clerk has advised both parties that it would be in all their interests if the risk assessment is carried out by an independent – Neboosh trained consultant.

The clerk has secured the services of a consultant – free of charge who has produced a report on the pond, which includes several recommendations.

For information – the consultants only criteria for the report were to ensure that the two elements required by the insurance company were included in the recommendations as these are a requirement and **must be** implemented.

For noting – the current risk assessment has **not** been provided to the consultant and the current clerk did stipulate that she did not want to be informed on when he would be visiting to do his assessment, although had been informed that it would be within a two-week period.

The consultant used by the now clerk was the same Neboosh trained consultant that the volunteer group had held as an example of good practice for the risk assessment at Boughton. This had not been disclosed to Councillors or volunteers when commissioned.

It is noted that there are other ponds in North Norfolk that may not have had any of these actions undertaken, however, when risks are identified it is the parish council's responsibility to act on ensuring its public duty of care and therefore 'no action' is not a possibility.

The risk assessment identifies 6 recommendations that need to be considered, of those two must be implemented due to the requirements of the insurance company, R3 & R4. The third recommendation which the consultant feels should be implemented is R1 which is to install signage at the entrances to the wildlife areas indicating the ponds existence and that children should be under adult supervision – an offer from village cares could be utilised for this purpose.

Any activities associated with the pond area will need a risk assessment (R6) and the volunteer group should ensure that works are carried out in a safe manner – a risk assessment should be undertaken, and a copy given to the Parish Council to keep on file, this should include the need not to lone work in the area, right protection equipment and a log of activities.

The other two activities can be considered by the parish council, and a decision made on the needs of the area – they could be notified and could be reviewed in due course.

See Table A.

The clerk is currently seeking prices to provide the parish council with a clear understanding of costs.

Options

OPTION 1

Maintain the current risk assessment which has been completed and agreed at a full council meeting.

OPTION 2

To accept the independent Nebosh consultant led risk assessment –and implement recommendations that have been notated above with the other two being reviewed after a 6 month period.

Recommendations

As Parish Clerk my recommendation is to adopt the new Nebosh trained consultants risk assessment, implement the three key actions for the parish council as a priority and to minute the outcomes of the other 2. A copy of the volunteer's risk assessment must be lodged with the parish council once completed within 1 month of this report, which ensures that the volunteers are aware of safe working practices. The other two actions can then be considered and outcomes minuted with a review to be held within 6 months to ensure validity of outcome.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Table A.

Aldborough Pond – Risk Assessment					
Recommendation	Action	Risk Factor	Timescale	Cost	Implemented
R1	Install permanent signage at the entrances to the wildlife area that harmonises with the habitat and indicates the presence of a pond and the need for adult supervision of children.	High Priority	ASAP – dependant on sign maker		
R2	<p>To discourage/prevent persons approaching and accidentally entering or falling into the pond it is recommended that the existing natural barrier of wetland flora and fauna should be maintained and not removed. However, consideration should be made for a small area to be left clear to allow egress from the pond should someone accidentally fall in.</p> <p>It is considered unlikely that young children (toddlers) will enter the pond unsupervised. Older children (5 -12) might venture into the pond and therefore a natural boundary as detailed above would likely discourage them</p>	Medium Priority			

	getting too close to the water. Younger children feeding waterfowl or wildlife are likely to be supervised.				
R3	The pond edges are generally undefined, it is recommended that, where possible, a clearer delineation between the pond edge and wetland flora is established.	High Priority	Within 6 weeks		
R4	Install a level marker at the deepest point in the pond to indicate maximum water level.	High Priority	ASAP – dependant on sign provider		
R5	Should a person fall into the pond, after negotiating the perimeter wetland shrubs, although relatively shallow, the depth of the water and vegetation could prove difficult for a child to extricate themselves from. Consideration should be made for the provision of a 'reach-pole' or 'throw-line'.	Medium Priority			
R6	Volunteer Team to produce Risk Assessments for any work conducted on and around the wildlife area and pond.	High Priority	Within 1 month		

