

SIMPASTURE PARK FOOTBALL PITCH DRAINAGE

AGENDA ITEM No. 9

MEETING: POLICY & RESOURCES

DATE: 4TH DECEMBER 2024

REPORTED BY: WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGER

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the proposed improvement of the drainage of the sports pitch at Simpasture Park, as agreed at the July Meeting of the Recreation Committee.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 At the July Meeting of the Recreation Committee, Members considered a request from the team using Simpasture football pitches that the Council considers undertaking pitch drainage works to increase the time that the pitches are playable.

2.2 It was agreed at the meeting that:-

- i) Following the request from Simpasture football team, officers to complete initial feasibility investigations of the drain under the MUGA, using contactors to attempt to clear it, and to use a CCTV camera to survey the drain under the MUGA.*
- ii) Following receipt of the outcome of these surveys, officers to seek options and quotes for the required drainage improvements.*
- iii) Officers consider the funding of the project, make initial budget provision of £20,000 in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, and research external funding opportunities.*
- iv) A further report on findings and costs will be reported to the Committee in due course.*

2.3 This report is intended to provide an update to the Council on the outcome of the initial feasibility survey to determine the effectiveness of the current drainage system and provide indicative costs to potentially improve the drainage to the football fields.

3.0 Current Situation

3.1 During the particular wet winter in 2023/24, the football teams at Simpasture were unable to use the pitches for much of the season due to severe waterlogging.

3.2 To a lesser extent this wet weather affected all sites including the Oak Leaf and Moore Lane pitches, however Simpasture was particularly impacted due to the clay substrate and ineffective drainage system.

3.3 This resulted in the pitch being very waterlogged and having standing water of the field for much of the winter. It also resulted in the larger grass cutting machines not being able to access the area for much of the playing season, to the point during parts of the growing season works staff resorted to cutting the worst affected areas with pedestrian mowers.

- 3.4 Initial investigations show that the drain is operating but blocked with silt. This pipe travels from the sports pitch, goes under the current position of the MUGA and tennis court area, and joins the surface water drain beyond the structures indicated.
- 3.5 The pipe under the MUGA and tennis court is flowing but is significantly blocked with silt. There is therefore scope to clear the existing pipes up to the inspection chamber, but full clearance is not guaranteed as its impossible to predict more significant blockages beyond the viewed area under the MUGA. If this length of pipe is to be cleared out there is also a risk that the clay pipes could be damaged during the process. For this reason, it is proposed that the drain is diverted and this section of the drainage system decommissioned.
- 3.6 The alternative option is to divert the channel as it meets the tennis court and diverting to the north of the courts and reconnecting with the inspection chamber beyond. Both the clearance of the existing pipe or the diversion would be at additional cost, but it is thought the diversion of up to 70 metres is the most practical solution to minimise the risk of blockages.
- 3.7 Beyond the MUGA, towards the field, herring bone drainage has been identified from arial photographs showing the course of the original drainage which was probably installed in the 1960's. Please see Appendix 1 for a photograph with the drainage system highlighted.
- 3.8 Contractors were therefore contacted with a specification to replicate the drainage coverage as highlighted in Appendix 1.
- 3.9 The specifications included 1,000 metres of trench, 250/300mm wide, to a maximum of 450mm depth following the natural fall of the land, inserting a 25/85 diameter drainage pipe, and back filling with 30/40mm gravel and relaying the turf.
- 3.10 At the July Recreation Committee it was agreed to make initial budget provision of £20,000 in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, with a view that options should be explored for external funding opportunities. Two Durham County Council Councillors have previously indicated they may wish to contribute to the scheme via their Neighbourhood Budgets.
- 3.11 Any drainage works would need to take place over the summer months to both avoid the football season and to complete the works over the driest period to minimise the risk of damage. The pitch will also need time to reinstate after the work has been completed.

4.0 Policy Implications

- 4.1 This report complies with the Council's Strategic Aim 2:-

"To manage the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner"

5.0 Staffing Implications

- 5.1 None.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 A provisional sum of £20,000 was added to the 2024/25 to 2028/29 Medium-Term Financial Plan as agreed at the July Recreation Committee Meeting, and allocated to the 2025/26 financial year.
- 6.2 This provisional sum has subsequently been included in the draft 2025/26 Capital Programme Budget.
- 6.3 No external funding has been identified or confirmed at this early stage, but as highlighted earlier two Durham County Council Councillors have previously indicated they may wish to contribute to the scheme via their Neighbourhood Budgets.
- 6.4 Initial indicative quotes have been sought and received to install the 1,000 metres of herring bone to a prescribed standard set out in paragraph 3.9.
- 6.5 It should be noted that the prices are an estimate at the time of the quote, but are subject to potential substantial change regarding the materials required, particularly if the project is delayed until next summer.
- 6.6 The current estimate to complete the main herring bone drainage system is £21,140.
- 6.7 In addition, the drainage channel will need diverting around the tennis courts to rejoin the inspection chamber. This would be an additional 70 metres.
- 6.8 The additional 70 metres of drainage and reconnection to the inspection chamber is likely to cost an additional £5,000.
- 6.9 Therefore realistically it is suggested that a budget of £28,000 will be required to complete the full drainage works, a shortfall of £8,000 on the current budget provision, pending the seeking of external funding opportunities.

7.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

- 7.1 None

8.0 Equal Opportunity Implications

- 8.1 None

9.0 Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications

- 9.1 The park is increasingly becoming waterlogged for prolonged periods of the year. This can be attributed to climate change and therefore it should be considered that these problems may only get worse and more frequent in the future.
- 9.2 With this in mind, it would be prudent to consider a suitable drainage scheme which may also assist in taking water into the surface water drainage system and reducing surface water flooding risk in the surrounding residential area.

10.0 Risk Assessment

10.1 It is not considered that the matter contained in this report poses a risk to health and safety of staff or to the financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

11.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

11.1 Is any personal or sensitive data required for this proposal which may have any implications for GDPR? **NO**

12.0 Recommendations

12.1 It is recommended that: -

- i. Members receive the report,
- ii. Members provide direction to officers in how to proceed in regard to the funding of the project e.g. the seeking of external funding to offset the budget shortfall or consideration of additional budget provision via the 2025/26 Capital Budget.

Works and Environment Manager

