



**NON-CONFIDENTIAL**

<b>Meeting</b>	Community Services Committee
<b>Date</b>	13 January 2020
<b>Report by</b>	Carl Cheevers – Town Clerk Phil Wright – Projects and Community Manager
<b>Report title</b>	Batford Springs Boardwalk and Reedfen Projects
<b>Business Plan theme</b>	Outstanding Commons & Green Spaces

**1. Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Reedfen habitat and Boardwalk project.

**2. Recommendation**

- 1.2 The Committee is asked to note this update on the Reedfen habitat and Boardwalk project.

**3. Background information**

- 3.1 The Batford Springs Local Nature Reserve Management Plan 2017 – 2022 contains six Key Development Projects to improve the Nature Reserve. Two of these six Key Development Projects are:

- Creation of a Reedfen habitat; and
- Creation of a visitor Boardwalk in the central wet woodland.

- 3.2 During 2018, a single planning permission was obtained which encompassed the creation of both the new Reedfen habitat and the Boardwalk, and a preferred contractor was identified through a tender process. A grant funding application was completed, but then withdrawn and the project put on hold upon discovery of a leak from the River Lee into the chalk streams. This pause was to allow time to investigate solutions to the leak.

- 3.3 An ecologically friendly solution to the river leak has been agreed by the Environment Agency and HTC wish to implement this repair. The river repair, creation of the reedfen and delivery of the boardwalk have interdependencies making it most desirable that they are progressed simultaneously. Just one example is that the river repair requires ten tonnes of soil that would be excavated during the creation of the reedfen. The reedfen and boardwalk can be delivered independently from each other, but this would increase costs, and HTC would have to discharge all planning conditions for both in order to go ahead with just the reedfen.

- 3.4 In order to discharge all the planning conditions, HTC need an appointed contractor to produce materials for the Local Planning Authority to examine. The preferred contractor is aware that they are the preferred contractor as a consequence of winning the tender process, but they have not yet been appointed due to the lack of funding for the boardwalk.
- 3.5 The Boardwalk is intended to make the wet woodland area accessible by all, whilst at the same time channelling people and dogs along its route in order to protect the natural habitat and plant species from damage and destruction. Visitors to the Nature Reserve will be able to view the trees, the new Reedfen habitat, and the chalk springs from the safe, accessible platform provided by the Boardwalk.
- 3.6 Both the reedfen and the river repair have funding. The reed fen will be funded through an external grant from the Harpenden Trust. In 2019 a grant funding application for the Boardwalk was unsuccessful and this aspect of the works remains unfunded.
- 3.7 The works should be carried out between October and March to minimise impact on bird nesting.
- 3.8 HTC staff wish to complete all three of these projects, achieve the agreed objectives in the Batford Springs Local Nature Reserve Management Plan 2017 – 2022, and continue to improve the area for local people. In pursuit of this aspiration, HTC staff will submit a bid to Council in March for Councillors to consider releasing the required funds for the boardwalk from HTC's capital receipt.

#### **4. Resource implications**

- 4.1 Batford Volunteers have secured funding for creation of the Reedfen habitat from the Harpenden Trust. Budget for the river repair already exists. Funding for the boardwalk will be sought from the capital receipt. The cost of the Boardwalk project is c£95k.

#### **5. Other implications**

<b>Other Implications</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Legal	Planning permission from the LPA has a number of conditions that must be discharged before works commence. Environment Agency permits exist for all three aspects of this project.
Environment and biodiversity	A new Reedfen habitat within the nature reserve will be a new haven of increased biodiversity. A boardwalk will provide accessibility through the wet woodland area whilst protecting the environment.
Crime and Disorder	None
Risk/Health & Safety	All works are subject to contractor risk assessments.