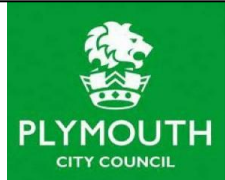


CENTRAL PARK PONDS PROJECT – SCRUTNY UPDATE REPORT



SUMMARY

In December 2024 a report was submitted to the Housing and Community Services Scrutiny Panel in response to a public petition about the Central Park Ponds project. There were five parts to the petition and the report answered each in turn. As a result of the scrutiny session the Scrutiny Panel agreed to the following:

1. To recommend developing a comprehensive communication plan to enhance communication for the park works project. This plan should include regular (at least monthly) updates via multiple channels, clear signage in affected areas, and an outline project plan so residents can understand the scheduled works and timelines.
2. The project will be added to the Panel's work programme for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

This report provides an update on the project since the December 2024 committee meeting. It includes an update on the physical works to the park but also on the linked communications plan.

CENTRAL PARK PONDS PROJECT – UPDATE

Since the December 2024 Committee meeting further works continued in delivering the landscaping elements of the project around the southern pond. A summary of the work completed since December 2024 are detailed below:

- Work was carried out around the south pond that had been suggested by park users. This included repositioning the wooden fencing above the swale that runs parallel to Coronation Avenue and removed the fencing from around Mawson's Field, allowing access to a large area for the first time in over a year.
- New steps from the stepping stones into Mawson's Field from Coronation Avenue were completed to make the muddy approach to the stepping stones more accessible.
- All of the shrub and tree planting around the south pond area was also completed and new permanent hooped fencing was installed.
- Areas of resurfacing were completed.
- A new handrail was fitted to the stepping stones to allow better access to Mawson's Field as requested by Park users.

It should be noted that the landscaping works were extracted from the main works contract and have been delivered by a separate contractor.

The main area of remaining work is the installation of the new playing pitches north of the ponds and the landscaping of Reservoir field.

DELAYS

The landscaping works around the site have been completed as planned around the southern pond but works stalled on the playing pitch works. When the report was presented to Committee in December 2024, we had assurance from the contractor that they would return to site in spring 2025 once the weather improved and there was an agreed return to site date in April. However, due to conflicting interpretation of the contract, the contractor chose not to return to site as agreed. Whilst we remain confident of our position following legal advice, discussions continue to resolve the matter and prevent a lengthy and costly formal dispute. In the meantime, we commenced the process of procuring an alternative contractor. Alternative contractors were identified, but we had to go through a compliant procurement process that took time to complete. The contract was awarded to a company who had previously worked on the site (through sub-contract) and so were familiar with the site and the park. They were able to mobilise quickly and can deliver the remaining works at pace.

FINAL PHASE OF WORKS

Work commenced on 23 June 2025 and includes:

- Moving soil from Barn Park sports pitch to Reservoir Field.
- Levelling the sports pitch
- Installing pitch drainage
- Levelling Reservoir Field
- Sowing the grass and completing the planting on the northern pond.

These works have required a diversion around a closed section in the park. This is required from a safety perspective as heavy machinery will be moving soil between different parts of the site. The works are estimated as taking 12 weeks, subject to weather conditions.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

One of the recommendations from the previous scrutiny meeting was to develop a comprehensive communications plan for the project going forward. The Communications Team developed a communications plan following the scrutiny session, but the communication plan is reliant on a project delivery programme, that in this case due to the dispute with the contractors, at certain

points didn't deliver as planned. Regular communication was maintained with the community as follows:

- Monthly updates to Ward Councillors.
- Monthly updates on the Central Park webpages.

Posters with the QR codes remained in the park so users could scan them and reach the pages quickly to get the latest update. The use of QR codes were recommended by the organisers of the petition.

At each update point, the communication was clear on what work had been completed but also updated on expected work and timelines. Initially the updates included expected start dates for the final works and then when this didn't happen the communications explained the issue with the contractor.

Since the new contractor has been appointed a detailed communication plan has been produced. This could not have been produced until a contractor programme was available. To date communications have included:

- Updates on Plymouth City Council News channels.
- Updates on the Central Park web pages.
- Announcements in Cabinet.
- New signage in the Park, including the QR code so users can find information on the works easily.

Planned communication going forward will include the following which will be published across social media and on the website:

- Key project milestones
- Completion of groundworks contractor announcement
- Start of Landscaping works

Update of signage in the park to explain that the fencing will remain in place until the grass is established.

- Spring update on landscaping establishment.
- Fences removed and project complete announcement.

The detailed communications plan was only possible once the new contractor had been secured to provide the programme detail to share with the public. As soon as the contractor was appointed Scrutiny's recommendation was fully implemented.

SUMMARY

Since the Central Park Pond project was presented to Scrutiny in December 2024, there have been unfortunate delays, which have been largely out of our control. This has meant implementing the Scrutiny recommendation in full has not been possible, until the last few weeks when a new contractor was appointed. Communications continued with monthly updates through social media and the website, which was linked to the QR codes in the park. However, a comprehensive communication plan was only possible once a contractor programme was available. This is all now in place so we can ensure we can keep park users up to date about progress during the final stage of the project.