



Lindfield Preservation Society

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Ms Jo Reid
Business Unit Leader - Wastes, Landscapes and Leisure
Parks and Open Spaces
Mid Sussex District Council

Lindfield Pond Management Plan 2022 - 2031

Dear Ms Reid,

Thank you for sending Mid Sussex District Council's draft plan for comment. A management plan for the pond is certainly welcome, but it is surprising that the draft does not address, or for that matter even mention, the parlous state into which the pond has been allowed to descend. The first step in any plan for the pond is surely to restore it – urgently. Only then does routine maintenance, as described in the draft, become relevant.

Accordingly, we suggest the following alterations to the draft:

1.0 Description of Pond / 2.0 Objectives of Pond Management Plan

The draft begins by describing the pond correctly as “an important historic landscape feature in the architecturally important village of Lindfield” (1.1), but then pivots to stating its “principal function... as a balancing mechanism for Lindfield's surface water drainage... Secondary is its purpose as a visually attractive historic feature” (2.0). We submit that these priorities are inverted.

The draft concedes that no water quality survey has been carried out since 1995 (3.0). Twenty-six years of subsequent run-off, largely from the High Street, can be expected to have deposited significant amounts of silt and traffic-related pollutants in the pond. In the absence of any understanding of the extent of this pollution, it is untenable to propose surface water drainage as the pond's main purpose for the future.

Moreover, we live in a time of severe environmental degradation, with water companies attracting heavy fines for their cavalier attitude to polluting waterways. Against this background, the priority of the plan must surely be to protect the pond's health and historic character. Section 1 (Description) should make this clear.

Section 2 (Objectives) should be expanded to address the current state of the pond. It is a matter of considerable concern that, more than four months after the collapse of part of the pond wall, no visible progress has been made in restoring it. The draft also concedes that no dredging has taken place for thirty years. While this state of affairs is shameful, it also presents an opportunity. Section 2 should set out urgent steps for rescuing the pond, with target dates and persons responsible, including:

1) Restoration of the entire roadside wall. The collapsed section could be the tip of the iceberg and a sticking-plaster solution will not do.

Nor will it do passively to assign this to West Sussex County Council, who have formal responsibility for the roadway. Section 4 states that "the power to manage the pond... is vested in Mid Sussex District Council", a point reinforced in Section 5. Management often enough involves enlisting the support of parties who are not under the manager's direct control.

2) Thorough water quality survey to assess current levels of pollution and to inform a healthy restoration.

3) Dredging to remove decades of silt accumulation.

4) Controlling the surface water run-off from the High Street, e.g. through a filtration system, to combat the reintroduction of silt and pollutants.

5) Rebalancing the ecology of the pond by encouraging the right plant life and an appropriate fish population.

While Section 9.0, "Maintenance Schedule" touches on some of these issues as "2022 tasks", this does not provide the sense of urgency or focus that will be needed to get the job done.

The rest of the draft (Sections 6ff) seems a sound approach to routine maintenance. It is premised, however, on a situation in which only routine maintenance is required. This is most definitely not the case at Lindfield Pond. Unless Mid Sussex District Council undertakes an urgent and comprehensive restoration of the pond, the Management Plan will be reduced to warm words.

Recent years have demonstrated this point clearly enough. Whatever the Council's policy objectives might have been, the continuing deterioration of the pond speaks for itself. "Little and often" would have been a better approach to maintenance than waiting for things literally to collapse, which is where we are now. The voters of Lindfield have been long-suffering about this, but it would perhaps be unwise to presume too much about their patience. It is also high time to rescue what should be an asset for the whole of Mid Sussex.

Yours sincerely,

Gil Kennedy

Chairman