

Title of meeting:	Culture Leisure and Sport Decision Meeting
Date of meeting:	23 March 2012
Subject:	Reintroduction of Angling at Baffins Pond
Report by:	Head of Cultural Services
Wards affected:	Baffins
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Cabinet Member for the reintroduction of angling at Baffins Pond.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **It is recommended that permission be given for angling to be reintroduced at Baffins Pond but within a strict set of conditions.**
- 2.2 **That a licence is prepared by Asset Management Service and a licence fee agreed to enable the Portsmouth and District Angling Society to fish at Baffins Pond.**

3. Background

- 3.1 Fishing at Baffins Pond ceased in 1994 due to very poor water quality that lead to a series of fish deaths. Since this time the City Council has been striving to improve the water quality.
- 3.2 In Partnership with the ponds stake holders; the Environment Agency (EA), Baffins Pond Association (BPA) and Portsmouth and District Angling Society (PDAS), the City Council has employed the following techniques to improve the Pond's water quality:
- 3.2.1 Cease angling and fish stocking - 1994
 - 3.2.2 Control resident wildfowl populations - early 1990s
 - 3.2.3 Dredge pond to remove silt - 1996
 - 3.2.4 Set up systems to reduce algal blooms including installation of sonic devices – from 1997/98
 - 3.2.5 Enhanced cleansing regime to prevent accumulation of debris - early 1990

- 3.2.6** Installation of water supply to enable topped up in dry weather - early 1990s
- 3.2.7** Creation of wetland areas to sustainably improve the ecological balance of the pond – 1994, 2008 and 2012
- 3.2.8** Systematic removal of carp by PDAS

3.3 The EA have a remit to oversee and promote angling in the UK, hence their interest in having fishing reintroduced at Baffins Pond. They have been entirely responsible in their approach to this as they have not expected us to enable fishing to be reintroduced until they were confident that water conditions improved sufficiently to enable fishing to take place with minimal risk to water quality.

It is considered by the EA that the creation of the wetland planting areas has had a significant influence on improving and sustainably maintaining good water quality. The EA now feel that with the increased areas of wetland planting, along with the other improvements that the City Council has established, angling could be reintroduced to the Pond subject to specific requirements being met.

3.4 The following requirements have been developed in conjunction with the EA, BPA, PDAS, and the Hilsea Lines Countryside Officer, and subject to the approval of the Cabinet Member these requirements will be included in the licence:

- 3.4.1** PDAS to be responsible for all costs associated with angling at Baffins Pond including the licence fee as agreed with the Asset Management Service.
- 3.4.2** Aim to reintroduce angling at the start of the coarse fishing season - 16 June 2012.
- 3.4.3** Fish refuges - prior to angling recommencing the PDAS to set up 2 fish refuges, the location of refuges to be agreed with EA and PCC. A further 3 refuges to be established prior to any fish restocking.
- 3.4.4** Fish restocking - no restocking to take place in the first year of angling, thereafter restocking to be done only in accordance with a restocking plan agreed with the EA Fisheries Officer and PCC, and only after 5 fish refuges have been established.
- 3.4.5** Carp removal - the PDAS to continue with a programme of carp removal by undertaking a minimum of 4 fish-outs at the optimum time of year.
- 3.4.6** Fishing stations - the maximum number and location of fishing stations to be decided by PCC in consultation with PDAS. It is anticipated that there will be no more than 10 stations and in the first year of angling only half the final number will be permitted.

- 3.4.7** Fishing times - the times that fishing will be permitted each day will be set out by PCC. No night fishing will be permitted.
- 3.4.8** Fishing baits - floating baits will not be permitted, only loose natural bait such maggots or maize will be allowed. The quantity of bait used during each fishing session to be agreed between PDAS, PCC and EA.
- 3.4.9** Water quality - it will be a condition of continued fishing that healthy water conditions are sustained. To monitor water quality the Hilsea Lines Countryside Officer will undertake Dissolved Oxygen (DO) water tests. The water tests will be carried out each week when the island checks are done between April and October. The weekly DO test results will be circulated to EA, PDAS and BPA. The EA will provide a minimum DO threshold that will indicate that water quality has dropped to a potentially critical level.
- If this DO threshold level is reached fishing will immediately be suspended until the cause has been identified, fishing will only be allowed to resume when the DO levels have recovered. If there is any water quality related health concerns or fish deaths then fishing will be suspended until such time as the cause has been identified and resolved. If poor water quality becomes a regular occurrence the continuation of fishing will be reviewed.
- 3.4.10** Fish deaths - if fish deaths should occur the PDAS must satisfy PCC that they have adequate arrangements in place for the timely collection and disposal of dead fish. The PDAS must not rely on PCC or EA to do this on their behalf.
- 3.4.11** Algal blooms - at any time should there be a significant bloom of blue-green algae then fishing will be suspended until the cause of the bloom has been identified and has dissipated. If blue-green algal blooms become a regular occurrence the continuation of fishing will be reviewed.
- 3.4.12** Wildfowl welfare - the PDAS will have sole responsibility for ensuring that all tackle is removed from the water. Anglers will be required by PDAS to ensure they make every effort to retrieve snagged or broken lines. The PDAS must satisfy PCC that they have adequate arrangements in place for the minimising of abandoned tackle. The PDAS will be responsible for rescuing and arranging treatment for wildfowl caught up in tackle, and PDAS must satisfy PCC that they have adequate arrangements in place for dealing with wildfowl ensnared by tackle. The PDAS will be responsible for payment of any vets bills associated with the treatment of wildfowl harmed as a consequence of fishing activities. Should arrangements put in place by PDAS prove to be ineffective in preventing repeated incidence of wildfowl being harmed by fishing activities then the continuation of fishing will be reviewed.

3.4.13 The PDAS will be responsible for patrolling and monitoring all fishing activities.

3.5 The PDAS regard Baffins Pond as a valuable urban angling location due to its central location with close proximity to a large population. As a result of this the PDAS have proposed to use the pond as a training location for inexperienced anglers and particularly young people. The PDAS anticipate that this training will reduce the likelihood of tackle being snagged, and the training of young anglers should help boost their future membership numbers.

3.6 The EA are fully supportive of arrangements to suspend fishing if water quality does deteriorate and also to permanently stop fishing if poor water quality becomes a regular occurrence.

The EA are also supportive of us requiring the fishing club to have effective arrangements in place for dealing with abandoned fishing tackle and entangled wildfowl. The EA do appreciate that fishing could be suspended or even stopped altogether if the fishing club can't control these issues effectively.

3.7 Baffins Ward Councillors have been fully informed of developments at Baffins Pond, including our work towards enabling fishing to be reintroduced. They have been consulted on the contents of this report.

3.8 The BPA have been included in our discussions with the EA and the fishing club and they are supportive of our proposals to reintroduce angling to Baffins Pond. They are very much partners in our management of the pond.

4. Reasons for recommendations

4.1 Baffins Pond was one of the original angling venues of the PDAS. When angling ceased in 1994 the PDAS hoped that angling could return. The EA have contributed over £60,000 towards the improvements at Baffins Pond with the expectation that angling would be reintroduced if the water quality improved sufficiently – we have now reached that point.

4.2 Angling at Baffins Pond will provide Portsmouth with another sporting activity. Baffins Pond would be the only fresh water fishing location on Portsea Island.

4.3 Angling at Baffins Pond would provide young people of Portsmouth the opportunity to learn the sport of course fishing without the need to travel too far.

4.4 The licence fee will provide additional income for PCC (although the fee will be quite minimal).

5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

5.1 In discussions with the Equality team it has been agreed that a Preliminary EIA is not required as this is a reinstatement of a previous service.

6. Head of Legal, Licensing & Registrars' comments

- 6.1** All councils have the power, under the section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, to secure the economic, social and environmental well-being of their residents. Sports and recreation (which would include angling) are considered to have a key role in health improvement, social inclusion, regeneration, community safety and educational achievement. The manner in which the Council elects to exercise these powers is at its discretion, and the recommendations in this report would facilitate the use of these powers.
- 6.2** Under Part 2, Section 3, of the City Council's constitution the Portfolio holder for Culture Leisure and Sport has the authority to approve the recommendations set out in this report.

7. Head of Finance's comments

- 7.1** It is being recommended that angling is reintroduced at Baffins Pond. A licence will be issued to the Portsmouth and District Angling Society (PDAS) to allow them to fish at the pond. This would result in a small licence fee being paid to Portsmouth City Council.

As a result of granting the licence, the PDAS will be responsible for all of the costs associated with angling at the pond. This would include ensuring that all of the requirements as set out in the body of the report are met. The PDAS will also ensure that the terms of the licence are enforced. Therefore it is forecast that there will be no additional costs falling to the Parks and Open Spaces revenue budget as a result of approving the recommendations as set out in this report.

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Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Head of Cultural Services

Appendices: None

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
None	

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Sport on 23 March 2012

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Signed by: Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Sport