



WELLS CITY COUNCIL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT A MEETING OF THE OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE, WHICH MEMBERS ARE SUMMONED TO ATTEND, WILL BE HELD AT WELLS TOWN HALL ON THURSDAY 6TH MARCH 2025 AT 7:00PM

Please note this meeting will be recorded for the purpose of minute-taking.

Steve Luck
Town Clerk/RFO

27th February 2025

Town Hall
Market Place
Wells BA5 2RB
01749 673091
e-mail: townclerk@wells.gov.uk

Committee Members:

Cllrs: T Butt-Philip, D Denis, S Eden,
N Kennedy, D Orrett (Chair), S Powell,
G Robbins, P Welch

AGENDA

Wells City Council has declared a climate emergency. Each agenda item must consider the impact on any policy and decision.

- 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interests, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 12th May 2022.
- 3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE OUTSIDE SPACES & ESTATES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6th FEBRUARY 2025**
To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting.
- 4 MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**
Public speaking time is normally restricted to 15 minutes in total, at the discretion of the Chair.
- 5 OUTSIDE SPACES**
To receive any update from the Outside Spaces Officer.
- 6 RECREATION GROUND WALL**
Report for discussion (attached, pages 3-6).
- 7 RECREATION GROUND TREE UPDATE**
Report for discussion (attached, pages 7-8).
- 8 PORTWAY ANNEXE**
To receive any update from Cllr D Orrett.

9 WELLS IN BLOOM

To receive any update.

10 BISHOP'S BARN

To receive any updates.

11 CLIMATE EMERGENCY

- i. Cllr Denis to present Climate Emergency Working party meeting notes (attached, page 9).
- ii. Proposal from Cllr Denis. Seconder Cllr D Orrett
Wells City Council will develop an Environment Strategy with Aims and Objectives based on the need to ensure resilience to predicted climate changes, and will work with volunteer groups and other organisations, such as Somerset Wildlife Trust, to introduce wildlife friendly, sustainable measures in the newly adopted green spaces, as well as the existing areas such as the Recreation Ground and Portway Annexe.

Adopting a more sustainable approach to managing our green spaces will improve biodiversity through Wells green spaces and gardens to meet the aims and objectives set out in the Neighbourhood Plan.

12 ANY MATTERS OF URGENT REPORT

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 7pm, Thursday 3rd April 2025

EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Note: If it is necessary for matters to be considered in confidence it will be proposed by the Chairman that a resolution be passed under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as amended, excluding the press and public, in order that confidential items can be discussed.



ITEM 6

Wells City Council

Author	Matt Johnson
Presented By (if different)	Matt Johnson
Subject	Wells Recreation Ground Wall
Date of report	28.02.2025
For consideration at	Outside Spaces and Environment Committee
Date of consideration	6.03.2025

Current situation

The entrance way from south street to the recreation ground was removed on the instruction of the Town Clerk due to the design being non-compliant with accessibility legislation and it being a significant trip hazard.

On reviewing our property file, I could find no design or installation documentation regarding its installation or design. The ramp itself was non-compliant as it had no edge protection (handrails) and had a significant step at the end leading into the recreation ground directly onto the grass surface. Over time this surface had worn away and the step was in the region of 300mm.

Given that an accident was reported to the Town Clerk the decision was made to remove the ramp and continue the low boundary wall up to the hedged area.

The wall and drop are consistent with the existing wall that forms the external boundary to the recreation ground and given that it offers no entrance way to the recreation ground any member of the public that are stepping over the wall to access the recreation ground are doing so at their own risk.

This report looks to provide options to committee for consideration, and clarify the actions to date, including those associated with planning and land ownership, which were raised at the last committee as part of the debate on the subject following questions from the public.

Land Ownership and Planning Consent

The land associated with Wells Recreation Ground, is within the ownership of Wells City Council. Previous to its transfer it was the ownership of Mendip District Council.

The title has been registered with Land Registry accordingly, however, this has been applied retrospectively, as the previous solicitor instruction did not complete all of the required action. The new Town Clerk has resolved this matter.

There were previous concerns associated with planning permission for the additional structure, due to the space being within a conservation area there is a high likelihood that planning permission should have been obtained. The New Clerk has requested planning advice on this matter and is awaiting response from the planning portal.

Given the proposed options being presented this evening, it is suggested that whichever option is determined as the most viable by committee, further advice should be sought, and if required, planning permission applied for in advance of any further works.

Options for consideration following initial committee feedback

Option 1 – As is

Applying for retrospective planning permission if required and leaving the wall in place, if determined required.

At present there is an entrance to the park within thirty meters of the removed access to the recreation ground that is a viable alternative. It is a flat and level path and provides fully compliant access to the recreation ground via a tarmac path and is the natural access used by pedestrian's coming from south street.

This option would present the lowest cost option to the council given the expenditure that we have already put into the removal of the access from the carpark into the recreation ground.

As an approximate cost given that we may or may not need to apply for retrospective planning permission my estimation would be in the region of under £2000

Option Two – Reinstall access via steps

Apply for planning permission for proposed works.

Remove the installed wall and re-open the access from the carpark to the recreation ground and install compliant steps.

This would re-open the access to the recreation ground and provide safe access to the grass area. The steps would need to be combined with either a tarmac/hard surface pad or a path which would link with the existing pathway to allow the public to access the recreation ground without the ground damage occurring from the previous installation and require regular maintenance.

All of the other main access ways to the recreation ground are flat and level and allow wheeled access this would be the middle ground approach to re-opening the access way to ensure that it is safe whilst trying to keep any further incurred costs to a minimum.

As an approximate cost given this would need to be designed, planning permission sought, costed and tendered my estimation is that costs would be in the region of approximately under £5,000



Option Three - Reinstall access via ramp

Apply for planning permission for proposed works.

Re open the access way and install a fully compliant DDA accessibility ramp to allow direct access to the recreation South Street Carpark.

Given the nature of the regulations the opening will have to be reopened, and a ramp designed that complies with all of the requirements that are set out within the ramp will require a gradient of between 1:12 and 1:20 have an access width of 1200mm, it will require a top and bottom landing at a minimum of 1200mm x 1200mm.

Hand rails will need to be provided on both sides that are between 900- 100mm and the surface on the ramp is required to be non-slip and suitable for the outdoor conditions.

Given that users of the ramp will be accessing an area of the recreation ground that is known to be wet and can become boggy my recommendation would be that we would need to create a path that would interconnect the entrance ramp directly to the main path that enters the park directly from South Street.

Given the complexities of this option, it would present the highest cost option of the three. It would need to be designed and installed in conjunction with the correct tender process to ensure that we obtain best value for the council as well as ensuring that it is built correctly.

As an approximate cost given this would need to be designed, planning permission sought, costed and tendered my estimation is that costs would be in the region of approximately £10,000 given the high level of ground works and sub base required.



Officer Recommendation:

Whilst it is recognised that communication on this matter should have been more forthcoming, and that planning permission should have been applied, officer recommendation looks to take account of the cost associated with the noted options, the impacts to all users of the space and the feedback received to date.

There has been a mixture of feedback, both positive and negative, and as such, any future alterations should be supported by clear communication from the Council.

It is the officers recommendations to committee to:

1. Note the content of this report, its findings and the actions required by Council associated with planning consent regardless of the options chosen.
2. Given the associated costs of the work proposed, office recommendation would be to proceed with Option one, noting the lessons learnt and ensuring that future projects follow due process, engagement and relevant permission.



ITEM 7

Wells City Council

Author	Matt Johnson
Presented By (if different)	Matt Johnson
Subject	Wells Recreation Trees
Date of report	28.02.2025
For consideration at	Outside Spaces and Environment Committee
Date of consideration	6.03.2025

This report is to provide definite information to committee following some concern of ambiguity. The report is a factual report outlining the actions to date and outcomes as a result of those outcomes and advice from third parties where applicable.

The recreation ground is very lucky to have a number of very mature trees within its boundary, due to the historical nature of the town and the park being within a conservation area all of the trees within its boundary are subject to tree preservation orders. The TPO reference for the recreation ground is M1079

Initial Tree Safety Survey

At the point of transfer of the recreation ground to the City Council an initial basic tree safety survey was undertaken to fulfil our requirements to our insurers and ensure the trees were in a safe condition and did not pose a risk to the public. This survey was conducted from the ground and is simply a visual inspection of the trees from a safety perspective. Given some of the recommendations and the TPO protection on discussing this with the tree officer a more detailed survey was requested prior to any submission for tree works.

Detailed Tree Survey

A second detailed tree survey was undertaken this time by Alltree, in conjunction with the MTL group. MTL have a high level of experience locally and have a good working relationship with the county tree officers. The recommendations from the second survey were discussed with the tree officer and work was allowed to continue under a five day notice for immediate safety concerns and an application was made by MTL on behalf of Wells City Council for the additional works that fell outside of its scope.

Tree Works

Below is a summary of the tree works carried out by MTL based on the detailed tree survey of the recreation ground. Where the work was required due to a safety concern, it was completed under a five day notice submitted to Somerset council.

Any works that were not immediate safety concerns such as the London plane avenue work, an application was made to Somerset council's tree officer by MTL. Works were then undertaken at the point that permission was given.

Item No	Item	Work Description
T1,2,3,5,6,8,9,10	Large Leaved Lime	Crown Lift 5m over rd T6 remove two low secondary branches over rd
T7	Large Leaved Lime	Fell and stump grind
T11	Large Leaved Lime	Reduce height by 3m and lateral extent by 2m
T14	Common Lime	Remove major dead wood
T18	Common Lime	Remove major dead wood
T19	Common Lime	Remove major dead wood
T30-33	Common Lime	Remove basal epicormics, crown lift to 7m T33 remove major dead wood
T36	Common Lime	Remove dead branch, remove basal epicormic on trees T34,35,37,38,39,40,41
G44	Thuja/ lawsoncyprus	Crown lift to 5m, remove upswept branch at 4m prune back from building.
G45 G47	Thuja/ lawsoncyprus	Fell dead and leaning trees, reduce wind damaged cypress by 3m and remove rubbing branch, remove one dead 1 dying tree, remove cypress at west end of group.
T50, 51	Thuja	Remove major dead wood over bench seat
T72	Foxglove Tree	Remove dead/dying growth
T78 -T87	London plane avenue	Prune from buildings to clear by 3m and remaining specs on trees not covered by the five day notice.
T77	Rowan	Fell and grind stump

Summary

As you can see from the above table all of the work carried out in the recreation ground were of a safety nature with the exception of work on T78-T87. This was due to the trees in question directly contacting on the neighbouring properties and a gap of three meters being recommended.

All of the trees in the recreation ground are now maintained and monitored by the MTL group to ensure continuity and ensure that they are maintained in as healthy and safe condition as possible.

Recommendation:

1. Committee note the report and its contents, particularly:
 - a. The conservation area and the associated constraints for works.
 - b. The external advise from both Somerset Councils Tree officer to which , Wells City Council are bound.
 - c. The independent expert advice sort.

Agenda Item 11(i)

Climate Emergency Working Party Meeting Notes

Meeting held 18 February 2025

Present- Cllr D Denis, Cllr G Robbins, Cllr G Folkard, Madeleine Milnes,

DD opened meeting to inform that Jamie Mochrie has decided to step back due to other commitments. It was agreed that DD would seek advice from Town Clerk re co-opting another member of the group.

DD presented the final report for the Annual Parish Meeting on 7 March which states the Aims and Objectives for 2024-2025.

We considered the role of the CEWP in relation to Wells City Council and WEN and DD summarised that the CEWP has led on strategy for carbon reduction and efficiencies in the Council and is responsible to WCC through a standing item agenda on Outside Spaces. It works as a partner organisation with other environmentally minded organisations in Wells to be part of WEN.

It was agreed that this CEWP should continue to set goals that are SMART and these will be:

1. Review current WCC policies such as No Plastics and make them fit for purpose.
2. Review the Website regularly to ensure it is current and relevant and attractive.
3. Work with other neighbouring councils through the LCN to achieve SMART KPIs.
4. Reach out to other towns in East Somerset to compare models of good practice.
5. Ensure WCC Strategy planning incorporates Climate Emergency Resilience.
6. Develop a relationship with the Junior Schools in Wells to understand what input would be valued.
7. Work with WEN on Ecoweek 2025.
8. Work with SWT Act to Adapt Plan for Wells.
9. Continue to meet 3 times a year.
10. Rotate the Chair within the Group.

Next Meeting to be held 5pm 12 June 2025, Wells Town Hall Meeting Room 1.