

To Note: Background to Purchase of Floating Island for Valley lake

On 13th August 2022 the Treasurer of the Buckden Village Hall Trust (BVHT) contacted the BPC Chairman and Finance AG Chairman to highlight a very urgent issue in relation to the deterioration of the condition of the Valley lake due to the drought.

The email message asked for BPC help in relation to the purchase of a floating island as part of the solution to this problem affecting an important the village asset. The Village Hall Trust had identified both this solution and potential supplier who had stock available for immediate delivery.

The email highlighted that the key benefit would be strengthening the resilience (and therefore the biodiversity) of the lake as it is increasingly stressed by the weather extremes. The stress within the lake as a result in the falling water levels appears as surface vegetation and severe algae bloom leading to falling oxygen levels. The email advised that the roots of the plants on the floating island extend to 1.5m into the water, providing shelter and sucking out pollutants. The established island will provide cover for fish and provide a natural food larder for insects and invertebrates whilst a by-product is filtering water, removing excess nutrients, phosphate and nitrates. Birds have already been seen using the vegetation as cover.

Following discussion between BPC Chairman and Finance AG lead and with the BVHT Treasurer the BPC powers and Finance Regulations were checked to establish whether in this emergency situation BPC could purchase the 4metre diameter pre-established floating island.

Cost:

1 x4m dia (12.57m²) Pre-established floating island inc all fixings and 2 anchor kits @ £2025.00

1x Carriage @ £245.00 to Cambridge

Total..... £2270.00 + VAT.....£454.00

FINAL TOTAL..... £2724.00 but VAT recoverable by BPC



4m Island in stock shown above – 2nd Image showing root establishment of island underneath.

The applicable Parish Council powers for this purchase are those “to deal with ponds and ditches”

Report from Finance Advisory Group Chairman

Further, it was established that Section 11 of the BPC Finance Regulations permits variation from the normal contracts' procedure "in an emergency" (11.1.a).

- This situation was judged an emergency as only one pre-planted floating island was found to be available within the timescale needed to be of use for the valley lake.
- Other options to support the lake were very much more expensive.

The two Councillors involved judged that purchase of the floating island by BPC was an appropriate step even though it was not practicable to seek prior approval from full Council to use General Reserves.

- The funds to be used were therefore identified from Earmarked Reserves which had already been authorised by Council for Climate Change Mitigation projects.
- That funding also support projects such as this one about simultaneously improving biodiversity.

In line with Financial Regulation 10.4 the official order from BPC was issued by the Assistant Clerk, in the absence of the Clerk. The Regulation which states that "A member (Councillor) may not issue an official order" was therefore complied with.

The 4-part floating island was installed within a week and payment for this forms part of the September Payments-For-Sanction.

Councillor Richard Salmon coordinated the installation on behalf of both BPC and BVHT, and our thanks are offered to him and the others who assisted with the installation.

Councillors are asked to note the reason for and steps taken to make this purchase in line with Parish Council powers and the Financial Regulations.

Additional funds being raised by BVHT via a go-fund-me page to support the health of the lake.

A statement (attached) for inclusion in the Roundabout magazine October edition has been agreed with BVHT about this purchase.

The statement also refers to potential opportunities for using BVHT land around the edge of the playing fields and around the lake to help provide more activities in the village for all age groups by partnership working between BPC and BVHT. In due course proposals for such matters will be worked up in GP Advisory Group using information and help from HDC specialists on outdoor activities and then brought to full Council for consideration.

Report Prepared by
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