

Agenda Item 26

Executive Board

6 June 2007

MB/C10/851



Imperial Recreation Ground

Summary

Imperial Recreation Ground is a former landfill site on the edge of the Exe Estuary. Leachate from this site has been found to be contaminating the estuary. It is necessary to carry out remediation works to this site to comply with Environment Agency regulations. (Remediation prevents chemically contaminated land from harming the environment and restores property to safe and usable conditions).

A "dig and dump" solution has previously been proposed but was rejected when the tender prices were returned that were higher than the available budget.

The Council is now exploring alternative solutions, and it has been agreed that the remediation of this site would be programmed to fit in with that of the Visitor Centre proposed for this site, although the programme for the latter is uncertain, and that the necessary site investigation and design works would be carried out in 2006/07.

During the past 12 months, a firm of specialist land remediation Consultants have been employed to review previous studies and to recommend any further action which may be necessary. As a result, a programme of additional site investigation has been designed, and the specifications and tender documents to procure this investigation are being produced at the present time. It is intended that this site investigation will be carried in summer 2007.

Recommendation

That the Executive Board note that additional site investigations will be carried out in summer 2007, and that implementation of the proposed solution is planned for 2008/09.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

The timescale indicated is believed to be a realistic estimate of the time required to complete this project.

b) Alternative Options

The option of "doing nothing" is not acceptable to the Environment Agency and could lead to EDDC being prosecuted.

The "dig and dump" option has previously been rejected on cost grounds.

The only remaining option is to continue to carry out the further investigations as recommended by the specialist Consultants. The programme is considered to be realistic given the current level of resources.

c) Risk Considerations

If the works are not carried out, EDDC is at risk of prosecution by the Environment Agency and the effluent will continue to contaminate the Exe Estuary, a site of international environmental importance.

It is considered that the risk of the remedial works for this site not being carried out in advance of the works on the Visitor Centre is low. In any event, it would be possible, although not desirable, to run the two schemes concurrently.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

A total capital budget provision of £1,150,000 has been made for this scheme. No firm estimates of the likely out-turn costs have been made at this stage.

e) Date for Review of Decision

Not applicable.

Main Body of the Report

Background

The purpose of this project is to carry out works to restore the site to the standard required by the Environment Agency.

Imperial Recreation Ground is situated in Exmouth alongside the estuary of the River Exe, situated at grid reference SX9981SE and is shown on Figure 1. A large portion of the estuary is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar site (a wetland site designated to be of international importance) with the remaining identified as local or national nature reserves. The estuary is home to many sensitive species of *Zostera* (eelgrass) and migratory birds. Additionally, the site is used for recreational purposes, and the surrounding estuary is popular with dog walkers, wind surfers and jet skiers at varying tidal levels.

Imperial Recreation Ground was utilised as a municipal landfill after the Second World War (WWII). Large portions of the site were reclaimed land from the Exe estuary, and the site was initially used for relocation of rubble from buildings damaged and demolished after WWII. Thereafter the site was used as a municipal landfill, and waste largely consisted of metal, ceramic, glass and smaller amounts of household type materials. The site was identified as part of EDDC's contaminated land strategy which was required by Part IIa of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (Part IIa EPA). The site came to the attention of the Environment Agency because hydrocarbon contamination in the Exe estuary was identified along with physical contamination and some heavy metals. These contaminants were believed to be originating from the landfill.

Part of the site has been selected for possible redevelopment as a visitors centre, which may comprise a mixed use building with parking.

EDDC has commissioned a number of studies and investigations of the site over the past few years, in order to identify the scope and nature of the problems, and how the site can best be remediated. Investigations to date have assessed the volume and extent of the landfill, as well as the possible impacts to site users, and the wider environment. It has been assessed that the site is unlikely to pose any harm to existing site users. There is a continued issue with water quality in the Exe estuary related to contamination at the site. Remedial efforts, regardless of the decision to redevelop the site, will need to be progressed in order to protect this very sensitive environment. However, in 2006 it was decided that the full extent and nature of the contamination had not been adequately defined and so a programme of additional site investigations has been recommended. Specifications for this work are now being prepared and it is expected that it will be carried within the coming summer period.

Whilst the site is being investigated voluntarily and hence outside of the Part IIA EPA regime, EDDC wish to follow the requirements of this act to ensure that the site is inspected and remediated to a high standard. Hence further study is required to assess the existing documentary information, develop a conceptual model and evaluate whether the land appears to meet the requirements of Part IIA and could be defined as contaminated land.

It will then be necessary to identify appropriate solutions for remediating the site, designing appropriate works, and to procure a Contract to carry this out and finally to implement the works.

The study, design and procurement will now be carried out in 2007/08 whilst the remediation should be carried out in 2008/09. This will enable the works to be completed before the Visitor Centre is constructed.

Legal Implications

No legal implications at this stage, although further legal advice in the context of Part IIA EPA 1990 may be called for.

Financial Implications

To date £66k of the £1,150,000 has been spent leaving £1,085,000 for the remainder of the project.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

None

Background Papers

None

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Executive Board
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27 Exclusion of the Public

The Vice Chairman of the Board to move the following:-

“that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description(s) set out on the agenda is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B)”.