



<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Strategic Planning &amp; Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>19th November 2019</b>
<b>Part:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Jellicoe Water Gardens Project - end of project evaluation</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Cllr Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure  <b>Responsible Officer:</b> James Doe, Assistant Director, Planning, Development & Regeneration  <b>Authors:</b> Claire Covington, Strategic Planning and Regeneration Officer
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To update members on the impact of the Jellicoe Water Gardens restoration project.
<b>Recommendations</b>	That the report be noted.
<b>Period for post project review</b>	This report provides the end of project evaluation now that the period of HLF support for the Water Gardens restoration is drawing to a close.
<b>Corporate objectives:</b>	<u>Building Community Capacity</u> The restoration project has created opportunities for community involvement, activities and volunteering in the Water Gardens, building community capacity and pride in the area.  <u>Ensuring Economic Growth and Prosperity</u> The Water Gardens provide vital open space for Hemel Hempstead town centre. Their restoration has created a unique and attractive environment which will encourage businesses, visitors, residents and shoppers into the town centre.

	<p><u>A Safe, Clean and Enjoyable Environment</u></p> <p>The restoration works have improved the quality and facilities of the Gardens to create a destination green space for residents and visitors in the town centre. The Heritage Lottery Fund grant includes contributions towards staffing and maintenance costs to ensure the Gardens are kept to a high standard.</p>
<p>Implications:</p> <p>'Value for money' implications</p>	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>None arising from this report – revenue costs are contained within current budgets.</p> <p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>Through the Heritage Lottery Fund's Parks for People programme the Water Gardens has been able to lever in grant funding to support the restoration project, including staffing, maintenance and activity costs.</p> <p>The programme allows a cash value to be attributed to volunteer hours.</p>
Risk implications	The Water Gardens project risk assessment was reviewed monthly up to December 2018 when the construction project was closed. Risk assessments are prepared for each event and activity taking place in the Water Gardens.
Community Impact Assessment	A Community Impact Assessment was undertaken for the Jellicoe Water Gardens project in August 2014.
Health and safety Implications	None arising from this report
Consultees:	<p>Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director (Housing and Regeneration)</p> <p>Craig Thorpe, Group Manager (Environmental Services)</p> <p>Simon Coultas, Operations Manager (Clean, Safe and Green)</p> <p>Rob Cassidy, Parks and Open Spaces Officer</p>
Background papers:	Cabinet Report: Jellicoe Water Gardens Restoration, July 2014
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>DBC – Dacorum Borough Council</p> <p>HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund</p>

## Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2014 The Heritage Lottery Fund/BIG Lottery Fund announced that DBC had been awarded £2.4 million towards a £3.6 million project to restore the historic Water Gardens in Hemel Hempstead town centre.
- 1.2 The project aimed to deliver:
  - Restoration of the historic fabric within the Gardens including bridges, balconies, riverbank treatment and flower garden terrace widening
  - Environmental enhancements through the introduction of fish passes at each of the four weirs within the Gardens, removal of silt from the watercourse and wildfowl management
  - Provision of a new community building in the northern section of the Gardens set within a growing and display bed area
  - Relocation of play provision to the Water Gardens (South) car park through an extension to the flower garden area
  - Re-planting of soft landscaped areas, to be in keeping with Susan Jellicoe's original design aesthetic through the flower garden and Lovers' Walk
  - Removal of later additions to the Gardens including tree planting along Waterhouse Street and the two islands in the lake, plus the addition of a greening system to the decked car park to reduce the impact of the structure.
- 1.3 In August 2015, site clearance commenced, followed by main construction works lasting 22 months. The completion of the restoration was celebrated at a Big Garden Party in July 2017, attended by the Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, Lady Verulam, and the Mayor of Dacorum.
- 1.4 In addition to the main capital works, funding was provided towards revenue costs associated with staffing, maintenance and activities for a five year period, to support delivery of the Parks for People's five outcomes:
  - Increasing the range of audiences
  - Conserving and improving the heritage value
  - Increasing the range of volunteers
  - Improving skills and knowledge through training
  - Improved management and maintenance.
- 1.5 The programme requires monitoring and evaluation to be undertaken throughout delivery and its overall impact detailed in a final report. The Water Gardens end of project date is currently 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

## Impact

- 2.1 The quality of the restoration has been recognised nationally. In 2017 DBC and the project's landscape architects HTP Design LLP, won the Landscape Institute Award for Heritage and Conservation for 'the preservation and conservation of a significant mid-20<sup>th</sup> century design', with the project being described as 'groundbreaking'. In 2018, the Gardens obtained Green Flag status and this has been retained. The Gardens were also a Regional Finalist in the 2019 Pro-Tem and Civic Trust Awards. More recently this November they were shortlisted as a finalist in the 2019 Landscape Institute Award in the Excellence through Planting and Horticulture category, recognising both the planting design and the high standard of maintenance achieved by Clean, Safe and Green.

- 2.2 Following the restoration the Water Gardens are now enjoyed and appreciated much more by the local community. In the 2019 visitor survey, 92.2% of respondents agreed that the overall changes were very positive and 87.1% were satisfied with the Gardens, a significant increase from the 2013 result, when 25.1% were satisfied.
- 2.3 In applying Parks for People HLF programme, DBC made an ongoing commitment to maintain the Water Gardens to a high standard. This was supported by the HLF with funding towards a lead gardener and seasonal operative from 2017, supported from 2018 onwards by an apprentice gardener, studying for Level 2 City and Guild qualification in Horticulture. In the 2019 visitor survey, 76% of respondents had noticed improvements in maintenance and cleanliness, with additional comments made that they were 'lovely, clean and beautifully kept' and 'they're so well looked after'. In 2018 and 2019 the Water Gardens achieved the Green Flag award, the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. Under the terms of the programme, the HLF expects the Gardens to achieve the Green Flag award for seven consecutive years on completion of the capital works.
- 2.4 The HLF award provides funding towards a part time Community Engagement Officer to deliver initiatives to support the community outcomes of the Parks for People programme and the Friends of the Jellicoe Water Gardens. This role commenced in 2013 during the development phase and has continued throughout the project.
- 2.5 The work undertaken over the past six years to build community involvement and a diverse audience for the Water Gardens through a programme of activities and events is now being realised. Over 500 people attended a garden party in June and a summer school holiday children's miniature gardening activity was oversubscribed, despite 40 places being offered. The project also enabled dementia sufferers to visit the community garden and take part in horticultural activities, a group with high care needs who would otherwise not be able to access the Gardens. The health and wellbeing benefits of these sessions remained with participants when they returned to their care home.
- 2.7 The full impact of this work, and the restoration project, has been captured in the end of project monitoring and evaluation report prepared by Community First Partnership. Key findings will be presented to Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee by Adrian Spray. A presentation, and two short films, will also be shown at the meeting.

## **Sustainability**

- 3.1 The focus on delivering activities and building community involvement in the Water Gardens has absorbed staff time, and as a result, resources have not been available to develop a strategy for the long-term sustainability of the community programme once the project comes to the close. Officers have raised this issue with the HLF, highlighting areas where further work is needed to ensure the Friends have the volunteers, training and fundraising skills to continue their activities and community programme; volunteers are recruited to work with Clean, Safe and Green and support the high standard of maintenance in the Gardens; and specialist sessions such as the dementia gardening can continue through additional external funding. A

request has been made to the HLF for the Community Engagement Officer post to continue to be supported for a further four months to work on these areas.

3.2 The HLF has indicated their willingness to extend the end of project date from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 and continue to provide 68% of the costs associated with the Community Engagement Officer during this period. This can be accommodated within the overall HLF project costs of £3.6 million from underspends in other areas.

3.3 This additional project time will focus on the following activities:

- recruiting more volunteers to the Friends of the Jellicoe Water Gardens,
- seeking sponsorship and corporate volunteers,
- searching for funding to support the delivery of future activities, particularly targeting health and well-being initiatives,
- promoting the Water Gardens and education resource pack to targeted local schools,
- business support for the dementia gardening session provider and investigating funding opportunities for this activity to continue,
- training for the Friends of the Jellicoe Water Gardens and volunteer roles to build skills in order for the group to become more effective and self-sustaining.