

Branston Water Park

Burton on Trent

Management Plan 2018-2021

Main contact:

Michael Hovers

Communities, Open Spaces & Facilities Manager

Tel 01283 508776

Michael.hovers@eaststaffsbc.gov.uk

Foreword

Branston Water Park is a unique public park within the Borough, and as such very important to the Council's commitments to delivering its corporate priority enhancing lives throughout the borough in which our population live and work.

The Council's 380 hectares of parks and open spaces contribute much to what attracts people to live and work in the Borough and provides ample opportunities for all to lead healthier more enjoyable lives. As such, the desire to improve quality in our most valuable green spaces is one which I support and commend. In particular, our ambition to retain the Green Flag Award is one I totally support and wish the officers and the local community every success in this endeavour.



Cllr Colin Whittaker

Deputy Leader

CONTENTS	PAGE
Introduction	4
Location Plan	5
Layout	6
History	7
General description	7
Community use	8
Survey & Assessment	8
Welcoming Place	8
Something for everyone	10
Conservation & Heritage	15
Community involvement	17
Market appraisal	18
Action plan	20
Policies & Strategies	22
Risk Assessment	24
Local Nature Reserve declaration	25

1. Introduction

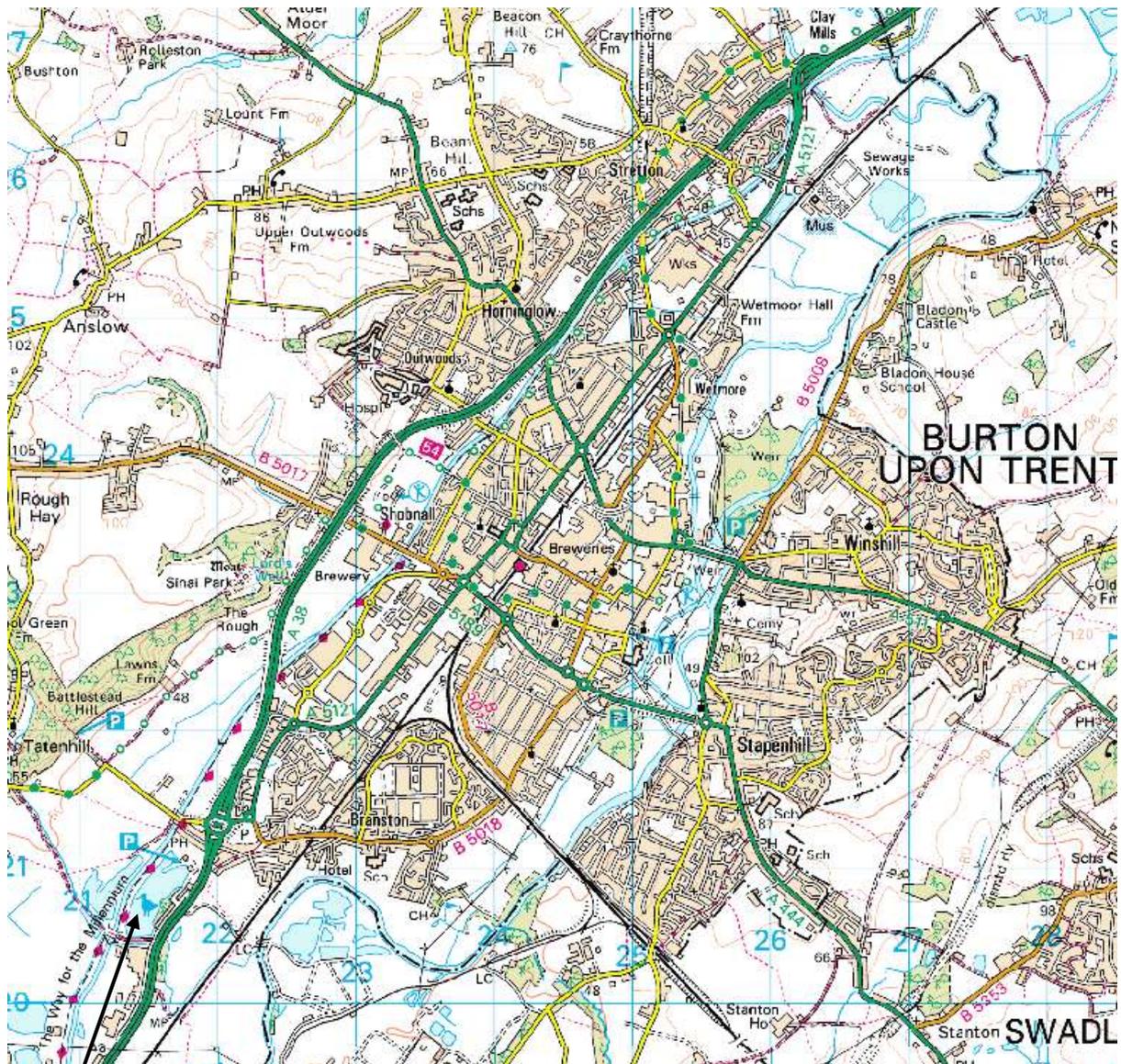
Branston Water Park is a former gravel pit on the edge of Burton on Trent in-between the busy A38 and the Trent and Mersey canal. The site consists of a large lake surrounded by woodland, wetland and wildflower meadow that supports a rich variety of wildlife. It is one of East Staffordshire's key sites and is a popular wildlife and recreation centre for local residents and visitors alike.

The small visitor centre was converted into a café in 2015 and is part of a partnership with a local café chain. Facilities include picnic areas, vantage points, a children's play area, a one mile circular nature trail around the lake that follows flat, surface paths and a large car park. There are also toilets include disabled facilities.

Branston Water Park was the first open space in East Staffordshire to achieve Green Flag status, in 2005. The site was designated a Local Nature Reserve in July 2010.



Location plan within Burton



© Crown copyright and database rights [2011] Ordnance Survey [100010575]

Branston
Water Park

Layout of park



History

Branston Water Park is one of a series of gravel pits located within the River Trent Valley. Gravel extraction began in the 1930s and ceased in the 1950s. No known restoration took place, but natural colonisation resulted in habitats being created on the land surrounding the lake.

Over time, private arrangements for angling, sailing and windsurfing clubs to use the lake were developed with the landowner, but there was no agreed public access.

In the mid 1980s, when the private landowner contemplated selling the land for development, East Staffordshire Borough Council (ESBC) stepped in to secure the land through a lease. The Council has since introduced public access and developed the site as a small Country Park.

'Manpower Services' and private contractors created path routes, signage and visitors centre and these have continued largely in their present form to this day. In subsequent years, minor capital investment and revenue funding has allowed incremental development of visitor services and enhancement of the landscape, wildlife habitat and recreational facilities.

Local Community Punishment Order teams are regularly on site at weekends, doing practical management and improvement tasks.

General Description

Branston Water Park is an important wetland site attracting birds, aquatic animals and other wildlife to the availability of freshwater and associated grassland and woodland habitats. The geology and resulting soil type of the site is made up of sand and gravel deposited by the river across the floodplain. Extraction pits have been allowed to flood with water from the surrounding gravel beds and the remaining parts of the site range from being waterlogged to very dry, the whole of the site is generally flat.

Vehicular access is off the A38 to the eastern edge of the site, skirting the edge of the lake and woodland. Car parking and main visitor attractions are found to the north of the lake. A flat, circular path starts and finishes at the car park for ease of access. Along the western edge of the site runs the Trent & Mersey canal, access from the site to the towpath is available along this stretch.

Further round the lake to the south-western corner the site opens up with picnic benches and a wildflower meadow. From the south-eastern corner and along most of the eastern boundary there is a large reed bed with predominantly willow and birch woodland behind it.

There are pedestrian entrances and access points via an underpass from Branston village, a bridleway from Tatenhill village and from the canal towpath. Nearby Branston village is well serviced with a number of bus stops allowing access via

public transport. National cycle network route 54 also passes close to Branston Water Park making it an ideal stop off point for cyclists.

Community Use

Branston Water Park is a very popular site for local people, predominantly from Branston village but also attracts visitors from further afield, who come by car or canal boat.

Several groups use the park more formally and have agreements with ESBC, these being Burton Mutual Angling Association, and the Burton Model Boating Club.

The park provides an oasis of calm on the edge of Burton on Trent for recreation. All ages use the site and the flat, surfaced path allows buggies, wheelchairs, bikes, walkers and runners to use the site together.

There are popular picnic areas to the north and south of the site, enabling families to spend time enjoying the area. In combination with the onsite café visitors can relax and unwind.

Additionally, the park is used by Social Services and the local special school, Fountains Academy as a place for quiet reflection and contemplation and to help patients and students mentally relax.

In 2015 the park was awarded the trip advisor Certificate of Excellence award for consistently high reviews and continues to do so, ranking fifth of top twenty “things to do” in Burton on Trent.

2. Survey and Assessment

To ensure this plan meets the aspiration of genuinely improving the quality of the park, the following assessments have been designed around the current Green Flag Award criteria.

A Welcoming Place

The park has one vehicular access, from the busy A38. It is well signposted with brown tourist signs. There is a, graphic sign welcoming you to the park, which has improved the overall feel as well as larger sign affixed to container within the depot. Entrance signage has been improved in 2017.



Main entrance signage

The main entrance from Branston village is via an underpass. Officers from the Neighbourhood Management team at ESBC have worked with residents and Parish Councillors to improve the main pedestrian access to the park from Branston village. Work included repainting and installing lighting, to make the underpass safer and a more pleasant route into the park. As part of monthly park inspections Council Officers continue to review the condition of the under pass feeding back any concerns to colleagues in the County Council who have ownership of the subway.



The painted underpass



Signage near underpass

The main pedestrian access from the canal is good with a notice board, signage and tourist information boards with further informal access points along the canal.



Notice board at main canal entrance

Other pedestrian access points are near the main vehicular access and have the potential to be more welcoming with improved surfacing and fencing.



Pedestrian access at SE corner of the park

The streets leading to Branston Water Park are swept every twelve weeks and litter picked on a cyclical basis every ten working days. Additionally, the busy, A38 is litter picked fortnightly as one of the main access points to the town

In 2017 the Council updated interpretation boards and included Quick Response (QR) codes scanning so that parks visitors could access information about the Council, events and opportunities for volunteering.

Something for everyone Healthy Safe and Secure

Branston Water Park has a number of visitor facilities but in essence it is a nature and recreation area.

Children's Play Area

In April 2014 work on replacement of the play area was completed following extension consultation with school children.

All around the site there are opportunities for informal, natural play with woodland, meadow areas and the lakeside.

Branston Water Park Cafe

The small brick built visitors centre has been converted into a modern café selling a wide range of hot drinks, cakes and sandwiches.

Café opening times

Monday- Tuesday: closed

Wednesday- Sunday: 9:30am-2:00pm

Toilets

There are standalone male and female toilets next to the visitors centre, of metal construction. They are in working order and maintained and cleaned by ESBC contractors. There is a disabled toilet attached to the visitor's centre which can be opened with a radar key. In 2014 investment in public toilets across the borough saw facilities at Branston Water Park improved.



Picnic Area

In 2005 a new picnic area and extra car parking was developed using Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund Grant aid. It consists of seven picnic benches on the northern end of the park and is accessible for wheelchair users. The area is popular with visitors as it gives a large seating area with great views of the lake. In 2014 the Council installed recycling bins to encourage visitors to recycle more waste.



General Maintenance

Action	Frequency
Grass cutting	10 per year
Shrub bed spot treatment	3 per year
Play inspection (visual)	2 per week
Play inspection (operational)	4 per year
Play inspection (annual)	1 per year
Play equipment painting	Every 5 years
Play area surface treatment	3 per year
Safety Surface inspections	2 per week
ESBC Officer whole site inspections	12 per year
Bin emptying and litter picking	2 per week
Picnic area chemical control	3 per year

ID Verde maintain Branston Water Park for ESBC through a defined contract specification. ID Verde staff wear, distinct uniforms with fluorescent vests or jackets with logos and identification badges clearly visible.

ID Verde badge and uniform



Maintenance of the grass is 10 occasions per year starting from March to beginning of November of each year. This is done on a regular schedule using rotary bladed mowers.

Shrub beds are spot treated with chemicals to reduce the weeds this takes place in April, July and September. Pruning of all shrub beds are completed from November to March with hand tools and all arising's are taken to the contractors recycle tip and recycled as green waste. At the same time as pruning the shrub beds are half mooned. All of these contribute towards the visual appearance of the public open space.

Play areas are inspected visually by the contractor who are ROSPA trained on two occasions per week (Tuesday and Friday), as the national standard. Operational inspections take place on a three monthly basis with annual inspections under taken by an independent organisation. All equipment and fencing to the play area is painted at least once in a period of 5 years to ensure a fresh and welcoming look. The safety surface is chemically controlled 3 occasions per year April, July and September to reduce moss and weeds. Bins are emptied at least twice a week due to the high level of footfall, 12 dual litter and recycling bins in Branston Water Park help to reduce the incidents of littering and dog fouling.

Sweeping of the site is carried out by the Borough Council Waste Services Department and this is done weekly after the mowing has been completed. These synchronised operations ensure the user experience is kept at the highest level.

The main gates are locked and unlocked daily each day through the year except for Christmas day. This reduces the risk of anti social behaviour in the park, making it a safe place for people walk through on an evening.



The Breedon gravel picnic area is chemically controlled on three occasions per, April, July and September. This keeps control of weeds and moss and keeps the area looking tidy.

As the bird nesting season is from March to August, hedges are maintained at the beginning of September, this helps to keep the paths clear so the public can access the whole park but also leaves the park looking tidy and inviting.

All repairs and damage to Branston Water Park are reported within 24 hours by the contractor and actioned appropriately by the Council. Members of the public can report damage or concerns via the Council website or through the contact telephone number (01283 508013) during office hours.

Probation Services Community Pay Back teams also work on the site. The Pay Back team work at weekends in the park and carry out other improvements which are not on the contract. This includes painting of fencing, clearing paths through overgrown wooded areas. Cut and maintain willows and weaving small fencing panels placed around the footpaths. They also fit bird boxes to encourage bird nesting. The reed beds are also on a rotation of cuts each year .This keeps them maintained and tidy. But also by cutting areas on a rotation does not disturb the wildlife for which the reed bed provides a home for.

All the grounds maintenance works and the work which the Pay Back team carry out keep Branston Water Park looking at its best. Branston Water Park provides a wild life park with various birds, insects, ducks, and geese for the public to enjoy and the Borough is very proud of what Branston Water Park has now become.

A site by site inspection of all the water sites in the Borough was conducted by ROSPA in the autumn of 2013 and an action plan produced based on the recommendations.

Dog Fouling

Dog fouling is not a particular problem at Branston Water Park but Community & Civil Enforcement Officers patrol the park to tackle both dog fouling and littering throughout the year, issuing fixed penalty notices for offences. Officer patrols can start at 7am and/or finish as late as at 10pm. These high profile patrols are to make sure early and late dog-walkers are targeted for information and advice.

There are numerous bins around the park and signage encouraging owners to tidy up after their dogs. Dogs and their owners are encouraged to use the site responsibly and there is a dog water bowl near the visitors centre.

Furthermore, from 2017 Branston Water Park has become subject to a Dog Control Order (DCO) to encourage more responsible dog ownership.

Anti-social behaviour and vandalism

Fortunately, the instances of vandalism and anti-social behaviour on the site are relatively low reflecting the general trend across East Staffordshire.

All serious incidents of crime, personal safety and anti-social behaviour are dealt with through the Community Safety HUB (HUB). This group meets weekly and includes all the emergency services, enforcement, youth service, neighbourhood coordinators, schools reps, trading standards, and any other specialists as required. The Enforcement team at ESBC has a team of officers, who are able to call on multiple agencies and tactics to identify and deal with ASB issues. Open Spaces Officers, Civil Enforcement Officers, and Police Support Officers also monitor the site on regularly basis and this can include evening and weekend work if necessary.

The community notice boards provide information on current campaigns and contact numbers for members of the public wishing to get in touch with the Council or emergency services.

3. Conservation and Heritage

Natural Landscapes

Branston Water Park is an important wetland site attracting birds, aquatic animals and other wildlife by the availability of freshwater and by the associated grassland and woodland. Geology and the resulting soil type of the site are made up of sand and gravel, deposited by the river across the floodplain. Most of the sand and gravel was removed at the time the site was worked as a gravel pit, the underlying rock is Keuper Marl. Extraction pits have been allowed to flood with water from the surrounding gravel beds and the remaining parts of the site range from being waterlogged to very dry. Generally the site is quite flat.

Archaeology

There have been several archaeological finds at the site. During extraction operations in 1943, a human skull and other bones were unearthed. Experts revealed that the remains were those of a 23 year old girl who had lived 10,000 years ago. In 1960 the tooth of a mammoth was also discovered.

Woodland

Woodland makes up the majority of the eastern edge of the site. The rest of the edge of the lake is open or scrub area with hedge rows and the occasional mature tree.

ESBC operate a dedicated Tree Management Policy overseen by the Open Spaces team. This inspection regime gives an opportunity for any obvious faults to be identified and any remedial work arranged along the obvious high target areas of the path side and residential boundaries.

With the amount of trees and the nature of the site it is impossible to plot every individual tree so the trees are risk assessed and plotted in groups according to any potential risk they may pose. Individual trees deemed at greater risk are plotted as individuals in line with best practice. There are 176 trees entered into the database for this site at present.

Reed bed

The reed bed is one of the largest in Staffordshire and a habitat of national and local importance due to its declining status (Grade 1 Staffordshire Site of Biological Importance). It is dominated by common reed that supports a wide range of other birds and insects. To ensure that the reed bed does not dry out and continues to maintain its wildlife value we have a specific reed bed management programme.

Reed bed management programme (Burton Conservation Volunteers)

- March 2016: Coppice the encroaching scrub within the reed beds, as the willow and birch scrub will speed up the drying of the area.
- Create 'habitat' piles and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) incubators within the reed bed, using the arising from the coppice work.
- Ring-bark and pollard selected trees at a safe height, to create new 'beetle banks'.
- Locate and clear path to scrapes, to assess if they are still viable and if so what management will be required.
- November 2016- March 2017: 4 days coppice and habitat management.
- Remap the 7 reed cutting wales and mark out with posts and if funds allow, carry out first cut.
- April 2017- review and agree next phase of work.
- November 2017-April 2018- continue coppicing and habitat management

Ecology

Bird surveys have been carried out at the site on a casual basis by local volunteers. Notable species include reed warblers, kingfishers, willow warblers, little egret, bittern and reed bunting.

Mammal surveys have found the presence of mink, wood mice, bank vole and otter amongst others. The fish that can be found at Branston Water Park include Carp, Tench, Breen, Pike and Roach.

The wildflower meadow, although managed, is not as species rich as it was some years ago. Further management needs to be carried out on this area for the benefit of wildlife.

4. Community Involvement

The following organised groups are active within the park. Aside from groups physically involved on the park the Borough Council open spaces team engages with citizens through the use of social media. This done through officers sending regular tweets and also posing service based questions.

Burton Mutual Angling Association – Branston Water Park is a key site for BMAA. They regularly maintain the fishing pegs around the park, including disabled ones.

Burton Model Boat Club – The club use BWP as their base and regularly have club meetings and regattas on site.

Burton Conservation Volunteers and The Conservation Volunteers – have carried out extensive practical conservation work with local people on the site on a number of occasions throughout the year. Work includes reed bed management, coppicing and hedge laying.

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue service- The local Fire service regularly use Branston Water Park for training using natural water and public demonstrations.

Staffordshire Athletics Network- provide a range of running based activities for local people that are keen to get into this form of physical activity. With a one mile circular route and proximity to the Trent & Mersey canal, the park provides beginners and expert runners with an attractive and varied route.

Rykned School – The local school and the children have been a key stakeholder in designing the new play area on Branston Water Park helping to design the new play area in 2014. Additionally, as an active partner have attended awareness workshops set up by Council officers to raise awareness of the importance of parks and open spaces, and the wildlife within them



5. Market Appraisal

Parks and the long term vision for open spaces centre on their role in helping to improve residents physical and mental wellbeing. This is part of wider health improvement plan strategy adopted by the Borough Council.

These commitments and the impact for different groups are set out in the market segmentation below.

Segment	Needs	Core Activities	Are these met?
The Great Outdoors	Fresh air and exercise	Dog walking, jogging, walking & cycling	The park offers a peaceful oasis on the outskirts of Burton, with access to the countryside and some wonderful walks, along the towpath and beyond. The flat, circular walk around the park allows users to walk, jog or cycle round the park. It is also perfect for buggies and wheelchairs. It is a very popular site for dog walking with a dedicated dog dip area, away from the main congregation of wildfowl.
The Sanctuary	To feel calm, peaceful and relaxed.	Sitting, walking and fishing.	There are ample places to sit and relax at the park, with benches along the 1 mile circular path around the lake. Burton Mutual Angling Association uses the site as one of their main fishing lakes and they have well-maintained fishing pegs around the lake including

The Playground	Excitement & fun	Playing, feeding ducks, informal games	<p>disabled ones.</p> <p>The park is an ideal place for getting back to nature and natural play. There are opportunities for children (and adults) to play in meadow, lakeside and woodland environments. There is also a popular formal play area to the north of the site, near to the pedestrian access from Branston village. Just by the car park is the main duck feeding area, which is very popular with visitors. Near to the formal play area are a series of new 'wild mazes' within the trees, created by Burton Conservation Volunteers.</p>
Team Spirit	Connecting with adults and socialising	Team sports, barbeques and picnics.	<p>There are two main picnic areas, to the north and south of the site. Opportunities exist for barbeques and in the northern picnic area there is space for informal games, by the meadow.</p>
The Disengaged	All of the above	Events	<p>The park does not lend itself to large events but holds a number of events throughout the year including apple day, guided walks and wildlife events.</p>

6. Action Plan

The action plan for Branston Water Park is derived from a SWOT analysis carried and reviewed annually.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country park adjoined to Canal Network and cycle paths • Café • Used by a variety of park users • Home to an abundance of animal and plant life • Local school actively involved in park life • New interpretation boards 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer usage data is new. Longer study is required to make sense of the data.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of park for positive mental and physical health • Potential income from nearby development • Increased footfall from 2,500 home development • Online engagement with users • Sponsorship and other income streams 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falling water levels • Management of costs and declining funds

2018/19

Reed bed management	£900	Mike Hovers	Conservation & Heritage	ongoing
Conduct site surveys	n/a	All staff	Something for everyone	1 per quarter
Review Open Space strategy using feedback data	n/a	Mike Hovers	All	April 2018

2019/20

Reed bed management	£900	Mike Hovers	Conservation & Heritage	ongoing
Conduct site surveys	n/a	All staff	Something for everyone	1 per quarter
Section 106 funding for Park improvements	n/a	Mike Hovers	Something for everyone	TBC

2020/21

Reed bed management	£900	Mike Hovers	Conservation & Heritage	ongoing
Conduct site surveys	n/a	All staff	Something for everyone	1 per quarter

Links to Policies

Tree Management Policy

East Staffordshire Borough Council operates a generic Tree Management policy that is implemented across the Borough. Within Branston Water Park the following species of tree are present.

Tree species	Quantity
Ash	16
Common Elder	4
Wild Cherry	2
White Willow	9
White Poplar	17
Sycamore	7
Silver Birch	35
Scots pine	6
Hawthorn	2
Field Maple	3
English Oak	5
English Elm	1
Crack Willow	63
Common Lime	5
Common Alder	4

Policies in other service areas

As well policies that directly affect Parks and Open Spaces there are a number of other service area policies that impact indirectly. These are listed below

- i) **Climate change**
Available on request

- ii) **Communications & Marketing**
The Borough Council have a specific Marketing Officer that works with Open Spaces teams to effectively market and promote parks and open spaces, this done through a variety of mediums such as social media and other more traditional approaches like local newspapers.

- iii) **Enforcement Policy**
Available on request

- iv) **Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy**
The current Council ASB strategy takes into account recent changes in legislation that has seen changes to the types and ranges of powers available to agencies tackling ASB.

Risk Assessment

Service: Culture

Department: Communities & Open Spaces

Area/Task Assessed: Branston Water Park

Assessor(s): Zoe Belcher

Date created: 2015 Reviewed: January 2016, January 2017, December 2017.

Hazard	Persons affected	Severity of harm A/B/C	Current Controls	Likelihood 1/2/3	Further Controls Needed	Date to be achieved & person responsible	Further controls implemented (sign & date)
Car park moving vehicles	General public, Contractors	A	Speed bumps and line markings.	2	n/a		
Animals	General public, contractors	B	Owner's responsibility and no dogs allowed in the play area.	3	Sign on the play area entrance		
Play area	General public	B	Adults to supervise. All equipment is inspected monthly by ESBC.	2	n/a		
Open water	General public, contractors	A	Life buoys in place. No swimming notices	3	n/a		
Footpaths (slips, trips and falls)	General public, contractors	C	Inspected monthly for defects	3	n/a		

3. Local Nature Reserve declaration



**LOCAL NATURE RESERVE DECLARATION
EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL
NATIONAL PARKS AND ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1949
BRANSTON WATER PARK LOCAL NATURE RESERVE
NO. 1 DECLARATION 2010**

In pursuance of Sections 19 and 21 of the above-mentioned Act (as amended by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) and all other powers enabling them in that behalf, East Staffordshire Borough Council (hereinafter referred to as "the Council") hereby declares that the land containing 23.25 hectares or thereabouts situated in the Borough of East Staffordshire and shown edged in red on the attached plan is the subject of a Lease entered into with the Council on the 16th July 1986 for a term of 53 years,

AND in pursuance of Section 19 (2) of the above-mentioned Act and all other powers aforesaid the Council hereby further declare that the said land is being managed as a Nature Reserve for the duration of the said Lease to the 15th July 2039.

This declaration may be referred to as the Branston Water Park Nature Reserve No 1

Declaration 1./2010.

Given under the Common Seal of
the East Staffordshire Borough Council
this 6th day of July two thousand and ten



15064

(Signed)

[Handwritten Signature]
Authorised Signatory

East Staffordshire Borough Council
Town Hall,
Burton on Trent,
Staffordshire,
DE14 2EB

