

## **Item 10 B - Update on Fencing Project:**

### **Proposal :**

To remove the boulders (and other existing bollards and metal barriers), on the Old Sunderland Road and Replace with continuous metal fencing.

### **Background**

The boulders had been put in situ many years ago following residents concerns about anti social behaviour from joy riders, cars, bikes and quad bikes etc. However, because of the wide spacing, they were considered ineffective and unsightly given this is one of the main roads through the parish.

The proposal to replace with fencing was first suggested to Parish Council in 2019 as part of a draft Parish Planting Plan developed to determine priorities for a grant submission to Hargreaves community fund.

The initial proposal was to remove the boulders and replace with continuous wooden fencing with hedging behind it to soften the appearance. A quote of £11,450 was subsequently received from DCC. When this was considered by Parish Council in 2019 some concerns were raised about the potential robustness of wooden fencing, so it was agreed to ask DCC for a quote for metal fencing. A quote for £18,560.00 was subsequently received in Sept 20 but given the substantial increase in price from a wooden fence, DCC were asked if they could seek additional quotes from other providers. A second quote was provided in March 21 for £12,970. A third quote could not be provided.

The second quote was not directly comparable with the first and further information was required from DCC to clarify the position before a report could be brought to Parish Council to make an informed decision on whether or not to proceed with the project.

Due to a change in key staff at DCC during 2021, the matter had to be discussed with a new officer who had no prior knowledge of this project option. As a result, a site visit was arranged to discuss this project, together with other issues where DCC input was still awaited.

A site visit was held 28 September 21 and DCC agreed to consider potential options for fencing and to provide an updated quote (s).

### **Current Position**

23/12/21 DCC provided a quote in an email for:

“Removal of the existing boulders and patches of fencing and replace with 900mm high Galvanised / green bow topped, powder coated railings to a length of 291 lin/m, at a cost of £23828.26, and advised, “this type of fencing is best suited for this area, and I would not suggest using timber or marmax fencing in this situation”.

However, this again required clarification as to what this fencing looked like and what this price included. It has subsequently been confirmed, at a further follow up site visit 27 January, that this quote was for the same type of fencing that encloses the play park on School Avenue.



At the site meeting it was mentioned that DCC was not able to remove the boulders free of charge (as initially advised in 2019) and consequently there would be an additional cost of £4,000 for their removal. Clarification on this verbally quoted additional cost has subsequently been sort, given the wording of the emailed quote appeared to include the cost of removal

The quote provided does no include the cost of hedging. DCC would not support adding hedging to fencing. Hedging is sometimes suggested as an alternative to fencing, but this would obviously take time to establish and would not be sufficiently robust enough as a replacement of the boulders to deter anti social behaviour.

DCC have reservations about replacing the boulders with fencing as:

- The metal fencing quote requested does not include fencing off the access from the doctor's surgery side. Unless this is addressed cars could still access the area. It was suggested that wooden bird's mouth fencing could be erected along this area, but this would be a cost that DCC would incur.
- Access for grass cutters and emergency vehicles would be required but could be done via the drop-down metal bollard on the footpath leading from near Burns Close to Fairview.
- Fencing would not prevent the anti social behaviour from motor bikes or quad bikes because of the footpath access required
- Spraying of fencing, as opposed to around boulders, would have to be regularly carried out. This would therefore necessitate more spraying than done currently – the length of the entire fence would need to be sprayed on both sides. This is likely to result in increased complaints from residents about excessive use of herbicides. (The Green Group have been working with DCC to reduce the use of herbicides around the parish – as agreed in the Community Led Parish Plan).
- Senior officers do not consider the proposal to replace the boulders with fencing to be good value for money and would prefer the boulders to remain.

DCC's preferred option to help reduce anti social behaviour, would be to leave the boulders in situ, add a fence at the doctor's surgery end (which they would fund) to prevent cars access. The latter would also help to tidy up the area around the doctor's surgery.

In view of DCC's preferred option, the issue of gaps in the placement of boulders was discussed: Prime example is the boulder that was displaced following an incident in 2020 next to the seat opposite the garage. The boulder was small enough for it to be moved and despite requests to DCC at the time to have this relocated/replaced with a larger boulder this had not been addressed and is currently the main access point for joy riders. This will now be addressed.

It was acknowledged by officers that regular spraying around the boulders can create bare patches in some places, which can look unsightly, but spraying is necessary as DCC can not do any strimming. They also acknowledged that some hardy weeds may still grow in some areas which can make the area look untidy.

It was advised that further enhancement of the environment could be achieved if the Parish Council was able to give a commitment to arrange for regular strimming around the boulders as spraying could then cease.

### **Summary**

The cost of fencing has doubled since the Parish Council agreed to include the replacement of boulders as a potential project in its improvement plans

The removal of the boulders and replacing with the fencing, as quoted for, would not prevent anti social behaviour from joy riders accessing the green.

Spraying along the entire length of this green area may look a lot worse than spraying around the existing boulders and is likely to result in increased complaints from some residents.

DCC, as land owner and the body responsible for maintaining fencing added to the area, have a number of reservations about the proposal. DCC approval would be required to support grant applications for external funding and if not forthcoming this would be a substantial cost for the parish council to fund entirely from its own reserves.

### **Recommendation**

It is therefore proposed that:

- The boulders are left in situ.
- Our grounds maintenance contractor is asked to trim around the boulders once a month over the summer months to enhance the appearance of the area
- We continue to work with DCC to reduce the gaps to help reduce anti social behaviour from car joy riders.

Cllr Wallage  
February 2022