

Statement regarding Sean Walsh Park:

The council has engaged a consultant ecologist to assist in carrying out a detailed examination of the site in question and specifically to deal with the following issues –

- Advice and assessment in relation to rehabilitation of a habitat and potential to encourage re-colonisation of the area.
- An assessment of circa 2.5 acres of land at Sean Walsh Memorial Park including the area subject to the deposition of soil over several years.
- Collating existing available surveys for the area and assessment of the habitats in and adjacent to the site.
- Advice on any actions to be carried out to stabilise the area.
- Assessment of the area subject to deposition of soil and its hinterlands in relation to existing ecology, recent works carried out and remaining ecology in the area.
- Advice in relation to any further surveys required.
- Perform ecological surveys of the ponds, the hinterlands and wetlands and report on same.

These assessments and surveys are currently underway.

Background:

There are in total 5 No. ponds located in Sean Walsh Park just South of N81, West of Whitestown Way and East of Old Bawn Road. The Whitestown Stream flows through these ponds, with the exception of the most southerly pond. A tributary of the Jobstown Stream known as the Killinarden Stream feeds this second attenuation pond. The second attenuation pond is currently being referred to in the media and by other commentators as a 'wetland' however it should be noted that it is not a constructed wetland. This pond and the pond to the north of it have been designated within the Draft Tallaght Local Area Plan as 'indicative location for integrated constructed wetlands.' Both ponds remain existing on site; and the recent maintenance works were carried out on the northern-most pond.

With regard to works carried out in the park recently, the condition of the main attenuation pond at Sean Walsh Park has been the source of many complaints from members of the public and elected representatives over the years with regard to litter and debris trapped at the bottom of it, and it has featured in a negative way in repeated IBAL survey reports on Tallaght town centre. It had been the intention of the Council's public realm section for some time to have the pond cleaned and the debris removed, and these works were arranged and commenced at the start of August 2019.

South Dublin County Council; in order to fulfil its obligations under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts 1977 & 1990 to maintain rivers, streams and lakes which are on public lands free from pollution; made arrangements to have the attenuation pond in Sean Walsh Park cleaned. In advance of these cleaning works commencing the Council consulted with Inland Fisheries Ireland to ensure that any actions taken or work done would be in compliance with the requirements of the Inland Fisheries Act and that measures necessary to protect rivers and streams during the course of the works would be agreed and implemented in advance. The Council's Drainage Section also consulted with the Heritage Officer to ensure that works would be in compliance with the terms of the Wildlife Act and EU Habitats Directive with regard to the protection of habitats in the area of the works. The Council also considered the nature of the work to be done and the material arising from the excavation works in the pond. As the material excavated from the pond is uncontaminated soil

and reused within the boundaries of the park area, SDCC deemed the material not to be a waste in accordance with European Communities (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011, as amended.

The Drainage Works Dept consulted with the Council's Heritage Officer and the Inland Fisheries regarding the work to be done, they also consulted with the public realm supervisor responsible for the maintenance of Sean Walsh Park and they engaged a plant hire contractor to provide and operate the machinery necessary for the pond cleaning works.

The work undertaken consisted of excavation of the soil from the bottom of the pond, placing of this material in mounds at an area to the south of the attenuation ponds and the sifting of these mounds to remove litter and debris from them with the litter to be ultimately removed off site. Similar works were carried out and completed on the large lake in this park in July/August of 2018. Material removed from that lake was deposited in mounds at the same location in the park. The ornamental lake close to the Old Bawn Road entrance to the park was also cleaned in recent years. On each occasion the soils arising from the cleaning works was deposited in mounds in the same part of the park, to the south of the attenuation ponds, in an area which has not been fully developed or landscaped to date. On occasions the soil mounds have been levelled and spread and on other occasions the material was left in mounds. The placing of these soils on site in this manner has been considered in detail on every occasion that such cleaning works have been carried out in recent years. While other options have been considered, such as the removal of the material off site, it is considered to be best practice to keep the material within the site on which it has arisen and this has been the option chosen on each occasion. It appears to be the case that keeping this material on site has helped the area to develop in the manner in which it has over recent years.

The cleaning works commenced on site on Monday July 29th and on Thursday August 1st a meeting took place on site involving SDCC Heritage Officer as well a representative from the Inland Fisheries to discuss the work in progress, including a discussion regarding where the soil would be placed. It was agreed that the excavated soil would be placed in an area to the south of the attenuation ponds which has been used for the same purpose in previous years. It was agreed that the soil would be placed in two long and narrow piles or mounds and that these long mounds would be turned to assist drying of the soil as well as the return of invertebrates to the surrounding area.

It was not the Council's intention to spread the excavated material. Regrettably there was miscommunication with the operator in relation to the mounding of the soil. The soil excavated from the attenuation pond was extremely wet and when tipped on site it did not stay in upright mounds but instead it spread out to a large extent under its own weight. Sifting through the soil mounds led to it being further spread over a larger area than had been identified as acceptable.

The Council is currently reviewing the practice of the disposal of silt drained from lakes. The outcome of this review will include recommendations with regard to procedures going forward.

With regard to Sean Walsh Park South Dublin County Council have no records of any ecological surveys carried out in this area. The report from the Council's consultant ecologist will include surveys of the area and will inform our next steps including developing a habitat management plan for this area of the park.

Preliminary reporting indicates that the disturbance of the area through the spreading of material recovered during the desilting of ponds adjacent is a short-term event. Given the degree of recolonization currently underway within a month of the event, it is estimated the area will be revegetated within a year. The ecology report will make further recommendations on how best to support rehabilitation of this habitat.