

TIDAL PADDLING POOL NEW BRIGHTON
RESPONSE TO CABINET REPORT 12 JANUARY 2012

I'm presenting this report as Ward Councillor on behalf of residents in New Brighton Ward.

This project proved to be the most popular of the applications put to the public at the March 2011 New Brighton / Wallasey Area Forum. In general, many of the public would like to see this amenity brought back into use. It is an attractive proposition for a number of reasons:

- It is free to use
- It is family friendly – for young and old alike
- It offers opportunities to paddle/swim safely for children, model boating and tidal pool fishing for rock-pool wildlife.

A number of reasons have been given in the Report to support the recommendation of Officers that the £10,650 funding now be transferred to the Sea Cadets 'Crow's Nest' project. The applicant would like to respond to these as follows:

1 Two quotes for a structural survey were obtained from experienced coastal engineers, one of whom has contracted to work with the Council – the applicant has approached the Council's Coastal Engineers to ascertain the specific requirements for this but the information has been refused on the basis that this would be the responsibility of the firms quoting. In addition the applicant is willing to pay the cost of a survey, both of those obtained being substantially less than £1000. Therefore, this would not be reducing the funding allocation for the remedial works. By declining to give the applicant the necessary information, the Technical Services staff have effectively prevented the applicant from making further progress on the scheme. The applicant is disappointed that only one meeting with the technical staff took place.

2 The applicant has received advice from the Council's Planning Dept that Planning permission for repairs to the wall would not be required

unless a Penstock Valve (to drain the pool) were to be installed. Due to the shape in cross-section of the wall, a Penstock Valve would be unsuitable for this task. However, an alternative much cheaper valve through the wall would be equally effective and achieve the same result.

3 Design Management fees would not be required if the work was carried out within 30 days of commencement and less than 5 men were to be employed on the task.

4 The MMO Licence would cost £450 for the scheme at this value.

5 Therefore the applicant believes the £3000 figure to cover the above to be over – stated.

6 While details are not yet available, HM Treasury has announced a significant sum of money to fund a Coastal Communities Fund which the applicant could apply for and is in the process of identifying other sources of funding.

7 The Health and Safety issues associated with this project are similar to the hazards any member of the public may experience when walking / paddling on the beach. In 2004, Timothy Walker the HSE's Director General said: "HSE has no wish to curtail the use of tidal pools....(which) offer great benefit to coastal communities by providing a good alternative to swimming in the open sea".

In 2006, Bill Callaghan the Chair of the Health and Safety Commission (HSC) accused public servants of pedantry saying, "If you're using Health and Safety to stop everyday activities get a life and let others get on with theirs".

Blue Book guidelines no longer apply to pools/lakes/streams where 'operators' do not actively 'encourage' swimming. (See [www. River-swimming.co.uk/hse.htm](http://www.River-swimming.co.uk/hse.htm) for case law on the meaning of encourage).

8 The Report quotes a figure of £9000 pa to maintain the facility with daily inspections with a total 100 year figure of £350,000 for maintenance and inspections.

The applicants have suggested that the pool only be operational during the summer months, June, July and August thus reducing this figure to less than £3000 pa. With the assistance of a 'Friends' Group

– there is already support from volunteers for this – this figure could be further reduced. The £350,000 figure includes 20 year replacement of Penstock Valves, which as previously stated above are unsuitable because of the profile of the wall and a cheaper, equally effective alternative is available.

The applicants suggest £350,000 is a grossly over-stated figure for maintenance and query why 100 years is the time scale chosen to illustrate the issue. While acknowledging there is uncertainty about the future costs of the whole of the Tidal Pool, the applicant believes there are good prospects of sourcing funding for this project in the future. The applicant understands the need for an effective inspection regime and overall responsibility for maintenance would fall to the Council but believes there is enough good will within the Community to support the scheme and wants to secure the money for the seaside regeneration of New Brighton.

Before making its decision, Cabinet may wish to consider this £10,650 is Central Government funding and that the money was allocated by Public Participatory vote.

As a Party, Labour has traditionally represented the less well-off in Society and at a time of economic difficulty, the tidal paddling pool represents a free recreational resource for the people of Wirral and beyond.

If finally, Cabinet does decide to reallocate the grant money to Sea Cadets, the applicants would be grateful for Officer assistance to identify and make application for alternative sources of funding and technical information to put together an application for funds to cover the regeneration of the pool to Council specifications.