

DECISION-MAKER:	PLANNING AND RIGHTS OF WAY PANEL		
SUBJECT:	REMOVAL OF 3 TREES AT SKI SLOPE SOUTHAMPTON SPORTS CENTRE		
DATE OF DECISION:	11 NOVEMBER 2014		
REPORT OF:	HEAD OF REGULATORY AND CITY SERVICES		
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
N/A

BRIEF SUMMARY

The removal of two oak and one silver birch trees which encroach on the peripheral edges of the middle slope at the Alpine Snowsports Centre would improve overall skier safety and allow the centre to improve customer satisfaction on donut sessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) Removal of the 2 x Oak and 1 x Birch from the sides of the Alpine Snowsports Centre middle slope (as shown on attached plan).
- (ii) A condition is given that there are two for one replacement trees of a size no smaller than 20cm-25cm girth at 1m above ground level and of species and location to be agreed with the Council Tree Officer in consultation with the Friends of Southampton Sports Centre.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The loss of amenity is not considered to outweigh the benefits to both Health and Safety and the recreational resource that the Ski Slope can afford to users of the Sports Centre.
- 2 Replacement planting will ensure that there are trees for future generations providing amenity to the Sports Centre as a whole.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 3 Refuse permission to fell any of the trees. Rejected as there would be limited loss of amenity due to the location of the trees and this could be mitigated through the replacement of six semi-mature trees. The removal of the trees would have benefits for both Health and Safety and the recreational resource that the Alpine Snowsports centre can offer.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

- 4 The Alpine Snowsports Centre has requested the removal of three Council owned trees to enable them to make the sky slope safer and to develop further uses for their customers.
- 5 The trees in question are mature and of fair shape and form, and all appear in fair health. They make up part of the shelter belt running along the east boundary of the sports centre. Although there will be some impact on loss of amenity this will be limited to only certain views across the Sports Centre.
- 6 Because of their immediate proximity and encroachment on the slope the identified trees are fitted with impact padding to reduce injury if users impact the trees. Removing these trees will eliminate the impact collision risk from this slope. The issue of the trees has also been highlighted as a Health and Safety concern by both Active Nations insurers and Places for People (formerly DC Leisure).
- 7 Removing trees which directly overhang the slope may reduce the number of leaves/debris which fall onto the slope matting. Although as already mentioned the trees do make up part of a shelterbelt and there will still be a larger number of fallen leaves and debris of adjacent trees. Fallen leave/debris, particularly when wet, can interfere with the grip between a skier and matting which can cause unpredictable results which could result in skier injury.
- 8 The location of the three trees mid slope narrows the width in the middle of the slope by around 10m creating a pinch point. Removal will increase the consistent width of the slope providing more room for slopes users and less features to avoid. Creating a consistent width on the middle slope will allow the centre to install an additional donut launch point which will improve customer satisfaction by allowing children to get through more donut runs within their bookable time slot.
- 9 In addition Alpine Snowsports has several disabled groups as well as it's own weekly disabled session for children, the removal of the trees will enable a safer and more user friendly environment for wheel chair users that require use of specialist equipment such as sit skis.
- 10 The Friends of Southampton Sports Centre have been consulted about the proposal and have discussed the request at their committee meeting. They commented as follows "FoSSC has discussed the proposal and has no objection to it - it seems an eminently sensible idea to facilitate additional, more flexible and safer use of the facility. The 3 trees are not especially large / old and silver birches do have a limited life span. We welcome the proposal to plant 6, good size replacement trees elsewhere on the Sports Centre to compensate for loss of these 3 trees and will liaise with you, Martin Beer and the tree officer about ideas for appropriate species and where they might best be sited."

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

- 11 No Implications

Property/Other

12 No Implications

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

13 Under Council policy (Policy relating to trees on Council-owned Land Ref 273 1982) where a request to fell healthy trees is made the decision is determined by the Planning and Rights of Way Panel.

Other Legal Implications:

14 No Implications

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

15 No Implications

KEY DECISION? No

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	Bassett
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1.	Enc1 – Plan for Removal of 3 Tree at Ski Slope
2.	

Documents In Members’ Rooms

1.	
2.	

Equality Impact Assessment

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out.	No
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Other Background Documents

Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
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1.		
2.		