

10. ENGLEFIELD RESERVE – PROPOSED TOILET BLOCK

Officer responsible Parks and Waterways Manager	Author Kirsty Patten, DDI 941-6702
---	--

The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the response received from public consultation on the proposed toilet block at Englefield Reserve.

BACKGROUND

Englefield Reserve is a junior sports park (rugby) serving the southwest Belfast community and widely used by the local residents. It currently has a playground aimed at under ten year old children and large sections of open space used by older children for free play and ball sports. The reserve is separated from Northwood Subdivision by Kaputone Stream, an area currently being naturalised by the Parks and Waterways Unit.

In the previous couple of years a temporary 'port-a-loo' facility has been placed in the reserve for some of the junior rugby season. Anecdotal reports from some reserve neighbours indicate that during the summer months they have many requests for toilet use and during busy periods of the year, the shrubbery is being utilised for a changing/toilet purpose. The allocation of \$32,000 within the Parks and Waterways Unit budget provided an opportunity to reassess the reserves existing features and developing a plan in conjunction with the community which satisfies future requirements. As part of an area evaluation, an assessment was also made of the expected need for facilities adjacent to the Northwood playing fields. Initially, it was thought that one larger toilet block would be sufficient for both Englefield and Northwood, but with current access problems and lack of a suitable site the decision was made to place the facility where the current requirement was and monitor the need for a future Northwood site.

PROPOSAL

The proposed toilet block is the standard 'Safer Parks' design, which includes low-level lighting. It also has an outwards opening door enabling the prospective user to see that the cubicle is empty before entering. The facility consists of a single toilet/changing cubicle, which complies with the Parks and Waterways Unit's disabled access policy. The toilets will be locked during the hours of darkness. A drinking fountain is also included as part of the proposal.

The previously circulated plan shows the proposed location for the new toilet block and a computerised image showing how the toilet will look on the park. The building has been set back off the car park to assist with integrating the building on the park frontage. Existing shrubs in the proposed location will provide some minor screening and softening of the facility, with some further planting around the building planned. Copies of this plan will be **tabled** at the meeting.

The following factors were also key considerations when selecting the site:

- Located within the sightline from the road frontage, and also in an area with a number of pedestrians regularly passing through to enhance user safety.
- Within easy walking distance of the sports field and playground area.
- Sited near existing paths that allow the construction of permanent all weather access to the facility.
- Located in an area that is not immediately adjacent to any residential properties.
- Placed close to existing services such as water and sewer lines assisted in keeping construction costs to an acceptable level.

Building these facilities in areas with good visibility reduces the risk of vandalism and graffiti. Toilets have been successfully integrated into many other parks around the city by locating them in sites similar to this. Casual surveillance from members of the public walking through the park, using the playground area and adjacent sports fields or from nearby residences will also assist with the successful functioning of the facility.

CONSULTATION

A public information leaflet (PIL) showing a concept plan of the proposed toilet block was distributed to the community for comment. As a medium sized local recreation area, Englefield Reserve's natural community boundaries led to an information circulation of approximately 450. The return rate for the toilet block information was 38 written replies (8.4%), with all comment extremely positive toward the building and its proposed placement in the reserve.

Key features of the feedback received from the PIL response included:

- A high number requested a footbridge for access across Kaputone Stream, into the Crombie Green and Northwood development.
- Some, although happy with the prospect of the proposed toilet block, reminded the Parks and Waterways Unit of its obligations regarding toilet cleanliness.
- There was a suggestion that local children could be contracted to decorate the facility in order to deter graffiti.

The Parks and Waterways Unit have tried to site the toilet block in such a position as to discourage graffiti and vandalism. Englefield Reserve has not had a high incidence of graffiti, but the situation will be reassessed toward children's artwork if there is a recurring problem. As part of the stream enhancement, footbridges were identified as being an important link to open up the area from both sides of Kaputone Stream and are on the Parks and Waterways capital budget plan for construction in 2004/2005.

All respondents to the initial plan will be replied to and given further information on the redevelopment work occurring alongside Kaputone Stream.

WORK PROGRAM

The Parks and Waterways Unit anticipate that siting and construction of the toilet block will commence sometime in late March/early April 2003. Construction time for the new facility is expected to be approximately 12 weeks. The proposed landscaping may occur in stages from this time or as budget allows.

CONCLUSION

The proposed toilet within Englefield Reserve will be a convenient addition for the many different groups of park users and increase the perception of an attractive and safe environment. Feedback from the community has been very supportive with any concerns dealt with positively for an effective compromise. The toilet and changing facility provide new interest in the reserve and should prove to be a community asset.

Staff

Recommendation: That the Shirley/Papanui Community Board support the design and location of the proposed toilet block, as per the results of the community consultation.

Chairperson's

Recommendation:

1. That the staff recommendation be adopted.
2. That the staff negotiate that the toilets are locked in conjunction with the park gate.
3. That the Papanui Community Watch be advised of the new toilet block in the park.