

Rublees Allotments Water Supply Issues

Report of meeting 10 August 2020 at Rublees

Present:-

Mike Warren - Chair of Allotment Association (AA)

Sally Sanderson - Secretary of AA

Cllr Paul Campbell - Chair of SPC Amenities Committee

Following Cllr Trevor Cree's report and suggestions of 22 June 2020, and the Amenities Committee meeting of 23 July 2020, the AA had arranged a wide-ranging consultation with its members. See Appendix 1

I met on site to discuss the results of that consultation and to discuss possible solutions, making clear that I was attending as an individual councillor, albeit Chair of Amenities, and that any views expressed were mine alone and that I was seeking information to enable me to make to the WP and the Committee suggestions which reflected the views of the AA and, hopefully, also of plot-holders who are not members of the AA.

Summary

As a result of our discussions, the clear and overwhelming message from the two officers of the AA - who are confident they speak on behalf of the vast majority of Rublees plot holders - though they only consulted their own members - is that they want, and would be very happy to have, the project dealt with in two phases:-

- The first phase should be focussed on the early provision of a reliable and adequate supply at the five stand-pipes, together with replacement dipping tanks and simple water-usage mitigation methods.
- The second phase, if required, should be more sophisticated mitigation measures, including additional dipping tanks and/or additional standpipes.

Phase 1

Supply issues – what the allotment holders seek

Upgrade the bore of the existing supply from Newham Lane to the meter asap. Supply 1.

Because the same trench can be used and so the additional cost will be minor, simultaneously install a new additional larger bore supply from Newham Lane as far as the meter and capped off for now (see Phase 2). Supply 2.

The upgraded Supply 1 would continue to supply the existing five stand-pipes as they have an adequate-bore distribution system already in place.

At each of the five stand-pipes there would be a tee to feed a replacement purpose-designed allotment dipping tank, each with a float valve to ensure they are kept topped up. Example here at £235.03 plus VAT.

https://cityirrigation.co.uk/acatalog/Galvanised-steel-allotment-dip-tank-4--x-2--x-2--TKGTA04.html?gclid=EAlaIqObChMIheOt6bCv6gIVVeztCh3alggrEAQYASABEgJaqvD_BwE

Check-valves would be needed to prevent back-flow risks into the public water supply system.

The AA would turn off Supply 1 and drain the dipping tanks over each Winter.

Mitigation re Phase 1

Obviously, the change from an inadequate supply of water to an adequate one is almost certain to mean more water use.

The trick is to ensure that any increase is because of reasonable and proper use, not because of irresponsible use.

- Mitigation Step 1 The existing allotment agreement provides "...Hosepipes must not be left unattended and no sprinklers are permitted". It is suggested that in the new allotment agreement this is tightened up to read. "...Hosepipes must be held in the hand while being used and so must not be left unattended. No sprinklers or soakers are permitted. Hoses must not be connected permanently or indefinitely and so must be disconnected from the tap at the end of each watering session"

Pending the new agreement, it would simply be made clear that this is the understanding on which the upgrade works are being undertaken.

- Mitigation Step 2 The AA would take monthly readings of the meter and feed them back to the Office so that there are no estimated bills and so that trends in use can be tracked with a view to informing the need for, and speed of introduction of, Phase 2.
- Mitigation Step 3 The AA would undertake an education blitz to encourage economical use (times of day, times of season, choice of plants, mulching etc.).

NB

If this works without an undue increase in water use, then instead of moving to Phase 2, it might be appropriate to simply add one or two extra standpipes to help out those nearer the MPF hedge.

Phase 2

This may be considered desirable on environmental and economic grounds and may be considered essential if the Phase 1 mitigation steps prove inadequate. Obviously, the lower

the usage after the Phase 1 upgrade, the less is there an environmental and economic case for Phase 2. That could also be part of the AA education campaign.

Phase 2 involves using for two distinct purposes Supply 1 and Supply 2 - the latter with a new separate meter.

- Supply 1 would serve only the five standpipes (and possibly a few new ones for those nearer the MPF hedgerow). The standpipes would be used only for hoses and the only people permitted to use hoses would be those who had agreed to pay an additional sum - that sum being an equal share of the metered water charges for that year on that supply. E.g. if fifteen plots wanted to use hoses then they would each pay a fifteenth of the total bill for Supply 1. For registered disabled plot-holders, the Council would pick up their share of the bill.
- Supply 2 would have a separate meter and a new and discrete distribution pipe system feeding the five dipping tanks plus a significant number of additional dipping tanks – probably sufficient to provide one tank at the intersecting corners of each set of four allotments. Thus, everyone would have a dipping tank in close proximity.

The water charges on Supply 2 would be paid by the Council – effectively included in the allotment rent, as now.

Having the dipping tanks close at hand, each filled automatically from an adequate supply, and usable free of charge should very much encourage their use rather than hose-pipe use.

This should keep water use to the minimum needed for adequately watered crops, while still leaving the option of hose use for anyone who is disabled or otherwise finds the dipping tanks too difficult and is either willing to pay or is eligible for the Council to pay.

Paul Campbell.

11 August 2020

Appendix1

Consultation Response

From: Sally Sanderson

Sent: 11 August 2020 10:23 AM

To: paul campbell

Subject: Re: Rublees Water Supply

Dear Paul,

This is to confirm for the Amenities Committee that the Steyning Allotment Association has consulted with its 80 current Members on the subject of the water supply to Rublees allotment site.

Over half the members replied and request that the water pressure for hose use is improved as a 1st priority and hopefully with larger dipping tanks with float valves.

Virtually all who replied use hoses as well as watering cans.

The 2nd priority was the boundary plots next to the Eastern MPF boundary hedge where access to water is the furthest away. Any improvement along this boundary would obviously be welcomed.

3rd priority was requested for education and information on water conservation methods and considerate and responsible 'etiquette' emphasised for the plot holders' use of hoses and tanks.

With best wishes,

Mike Warren - Chair of Steyning Allotment Association

Sally Sanderson - Secretary of the SAA.