

PADSTOW TOWN COUNCIL
LEISURE TOURISM AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE: 23 MAY 2023

AGENDA ITEM 10: COUNCIL'S MEMORIAL BENCH POLICY: To receive an update for information.

1. Overview

- 1.1 As per Council's Memorial Bench Policy approved by Full Council 31.05.22, it provides details of how the management for existing wooden benches will be handled. It was agreed that Council will cease its ongoing maintenance of wooden memorial benches, it will monitor benches and once they become a health and safety risk or are in such a poor state of repair so as to have a negative effect on its surroundings, contact donors and where safety concerns are high benches to be removed.
- 1.2 The full memorial bench policy is on the Council's website (<https://padstow-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Memorial-Bench-Policy.pdf>). Appended to this report is the relevant section from the policy, section 3 Management plan for existing wooden memorial benches (appendix 1)
- 1.3 This report is to make the Committee aware that Council's Foreperson and Facilities Officer have agreed in consultation with the Town Clerk that 4 benches are to be removed inline with paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 of the Policy (as appended), immediately if there are safety concerns.

2. Process

- 2.1 Following point 3.5 & 3.6 of the policy we have contacted the affected donors whose bench will be removed that we had on record, which is 1 of the 4. The donor of this bench understands that the bench is being removed and that they have 1 year to proceed with placing an order of a new recycled material bench or else the space maybe offered to someone else (if Committee decides the space is acceptable at a future meeting). The donor is speaking with their family members and understood that the wooden benches require a lot of maintenance and the change to recycled material made sense.
- 2.2 We have taken pictures and will keep on record, which show the reason for removal. Then if donors get in contact, we are able to provide them with picture of what the bench was like at time of removal. We will also keep hold of the memorial plaque.
- 2.3 As several of the benches at Stile field are placed on concrete bases and if considered a trip hazard, the maintenance team will highlight the edge of any removed bench space in yellow.
- 2.4 We will update our website and put notices on gates at Stile field to advise public.

3. Way forward

- 3.1 As per the memorial bench policy the "spaces" will be considered by Committee, this will be brought back to a future meeting, where we can also update about memorial trees, thus looking at memorials together and can then consider the way forward. Due to issues with historical record of donors of the benches, the space cannot be used for at least 1 year after removal.

3. Management Plan For Existing Wooden Memorial Benches

- 3.1** Padstow Town Council monitors and maintains a large number of wooden memorial benches that have been donated during the years 1985 (approx) to 2011 and placed on Town Council Land.
- 3.2** Padstow Town Council respects the significance that memorial benches hold for the loved ones of those they commemorate. This policy seeks to sympathetically address ongoing maintenance which has become either onerous or which is no longer economical, whilst navigating issues with historical records during the associated timespan.
- 3.3** It is accepted that a wooden memorial bench could be expected to have a serviceable lifespan of 10 years. By July 2022, existing wooden memorial benches will range between approx 10 and 36 years old. It is reasonable to assume that by this date donations (if any) made towards the upkeep and maintenance of these benches will have been spent.
- 3.4** From Monday 4 July 2022, Padstow Town Council will cease its ongoing maintenance of wooden memorial benches, including the painting, varnishing and repairing thereof, as it is no longer considered economically viable to do so. They will be kept fit for purpose by way of the occasional removal of any build-up of grime and the removal of graffiti (where possible). Benches will continue to be monitored for signs of deterioration which impact their safety.
- 3.5** Where the Town Clerk, in consultation with relevant staff members, considers the condition of a bench to be either a) a health and safety risk, or b) in such a poor state of repair so as to have a negative effect on its surroundings, the Council will notify the original donor to discuss more sustainable options for the future of the memorial. Where safety concerns are so great as to require the bench's immediate removal, donors will be contacted after the event.
- 3.6** Where, in respect of 3.5 above, attempts to contact the donor fail, or where the donor fails to respond within 4 weeks of being notified, the bench will be removed. No further attempts to contact the donor will be made after 4 weeks.
- 3.7** In acknowledgement of issues with historical records relating to the recording of memorial bench information, the "space" left by any wooden memorial bench removed in accordance with 3.6 above will not be actioned in the manner of paragraph 2.3, until at least 1 year after its removal.