



<b>Subject:</b>	Avian Influenza Waterworks Park
<b>Date:</b>	11 January 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Stephen Leonard Neighbourhood Services Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	Avian Bird Flu is an issue across the UK, ROI and continental Europe. The disease has been identified in wild birds at six locations in Northern Ireland, including the Waterworks. DAERA and the Public Health Agency have updated advice to landowners and the general public to avoid contact with wild birds, and in particular dead and dying birds, bird faeces and practice good personal hygiene. This report provides an overview to members of the work undertaken by the Council in respect the outbreak of Avian Influenza (AI) in wild aquatic birds at the Waterworks.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Note this update.</li></ul>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
	<p><b><u>UPDATE WATERWORKS PARK</u></b></p> <p>3.1 Following confirmation by DAERA of the presence of Avian Influenza in wild birds at the Waterworks park, the Council carried out a risk assessment, with input from an avian expert in order to inform appropriate response measures. In addition to this, the Council liaised with both DAERA and PHA in order to ensure that our approach is in line with government advice. The Council is satisfied that it is, and has been meeting all of our obligations as landowner of the Waterworks in this scenario.</p> <p>3.2 In an effort to contain the spread of the AI and on advice from DAERA sick birds were not removed from the site. As part of our response to the outbreak we made provision for a vet to visit the site daily to monitor the birds and assess any sick birds that have been observed by our parks staff. If it is deemed necessary by the vet, the birds are euthanised on site.</p> <p>3.3 The Council has undertaken an audit of the birds on site, and ongoing monitoring of the site includes Council staff carrying out daily counts, and monitoring numbers of wild birds, in accordance with the recommendation from our risk assessment, and with advice from our avian expert.</p> <p>3.4 We have also taken additional steps to ensure the birds welfare needs are being met. This includes supplementary feeding as required, in recognition of the fact that the park was closed to the public and therefore they were not feeding the birds. In order to prevent any further spread of AI within and across sites, it was necessary to restrict public access to shield the public from dead and / or dying birds.</p> <p>3.5 The public were advised that if they encountered a bird that they suspect has come from a Council site they should contact the Council's Customer Hub in the first instance for advice. Signage was in place at all Council sites that have wild aquatic birds. This provides details of the Customer Hub and asks members of the public to refrain from feeding the birds.</p> <p>3.6 Our staff have and continue to work hard to implement the recommendations of our risk assessment and are working hard in the background to look after the welfare of the birds and prevent the spread of AI.</p>

3.7	<p>The AI outbreak remains active and Council officers or our contracted agencies are unable to prevent or predict how the disease will impact the remaining resident bird population at the site, and currently we have no way of shielding or segregating the bird population from park users. Until the bird flu outbreak is brought under control and/or runs its course there remains a high possibility that birds at the park will continue to become ill and display symptoms, which we are aware has been distressing for members of the public.</p>
3.8	<p>Members will be aware that the Waterworks park remained closed over the holiday period and at the time of writing the report (4<sup>th</sup> January 2022) there had been no further reported bird deaths at the site and officers were making arrangements to liaise with our independent expert to update our risk assessment with a view to re-opening the park. A further update will be provided to members at the People and Communities meeting.</p>
<p><b><u>MANAGING AVIAN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK</u></b></p>	
3.9	<p>Council Officers have liaised with DAERA who have advised that they have activated emergency structures in response to the Avian Influenza outbreak. Their work has focussed on disease control/eradication primarily in the livestock sector. Their engagement re wildlife (wild aquatic birds) is for surveillance purposes. In terms of animal welfare DAERA takes the lead regarding farm animals, councils lead re companion animals, PSNI lead on wildlife crime but no agency has a specific role re the welfare of wildlife.</p>
3.10	<p>While no legal opinion has been taken there may be an understanding that on public land the landowner only takes responsibility for animal welfare if they feed/restrain/display or include them as part of their offering. It is recognised that public perception however may differ in respect of this.</p>
3.11	<p>DAERA have updated their advice to the public and landowners in respect of the handling of dead birds. The council disposes of all dead birds in accordance with DAERA and PHA advice and all Health &amp; Safety risk assessments have been updated to reflect DAERA and PHA advice. Biosecurity measures are in place for staff handling dead birds and for any person or vehicle accessing and egressing the site. Further measures will be implemented when the park is re-opened.</p>

3.12	<p>The PHA's role is when a person is confirmed to have been exposed to a confirmed Avian Influenza case to put health surveillance in place. They have also provided the public guidance not to handle dead birds. PHA are engaged in the national risk assessment and the risk to public health re Avian Influenza as this is a UK wide programme. The risk to human health is very low and transmission from animals to humans has never happened in Europe and has only occurred in small numbers in Asian regions where contact arrangements would differ e.g. wet markets, prolonged contact.</p>
3.13	<p>Avian Influenza has however got a high mortality rate – so early identification enables better outcomes for the individual. PHA will undertake a risk assessment when a lab confirmed AI case has been handled by an individual without suitable safeguards. In general, there has been no requirement to close parks in the UK on public health grounds – the emphasis is on not touching the birds, and if dead birds are awaiting collection to consider park management arrangements. Activities on the water do not have to be stopped unless there is visible evidence of significant faecal matter. Signage and access to good hand hygiene are the key messages.</p>
	<p><b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b></p>
3.14	<p>Operational arrangements can be accommodated within existing revenue budgets.</p>
	<p><b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b></p>
3.15	<p>There is no identified equality impact, this will be continually reviewed.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<p><b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>None</p>