

Agenda Item 11

The Conifer and other Trees at Dickie Nook:

At a meeting with Higherford Residents Action Group held on the 19th June 2019 the conifer was discussed. There had currently been 5 responses from residents regarding the removal of the tree. Mr. Simpson had spoken to the Tree Officer regarding the removal of the tree and the Tree Officer had made comments regarding the removal and replacement with a significant deciduous specimen.

The Tree Officer also stated that as responsibility for the festive lights within the tree lay with the Parish Council then the Parish's consent would be required.

The meeting was attended by Cllr. Stringer, Cllr. Oliver, Cllr. Peake, Mr Simpson, Mr. Mitchell and the Clerk. The conifer was discussed at length with the HRAG representatives' opinion being that a sizeable number of residents would support the removal if asked. HRAG's questionnaire circulated at their AGM was minuted at a later meeting as having only received 5 responses, with three recommending removal and two pruning.

HRAG are keen to circulate a questionnaire to residents but it is minuted at their meetings that a computer generated picture incorporating a mature deciduous tree has been created, presumably for circulation with the questionnaire. This may give a good impression of Dickie Nook in 20, 30 or 40 years' time but may not be a factual representation of the first 10 years; this may be misleading to residents.

The Tree Officer in his email to the Clerk (contained in Appendix 1) insists that the tree must be replaced, preferably with a deciduous one of significant size (He did suggest a Copper Beech) in order to retain the amenity value of the site. A light or heavy standard tree is not going to be sufficient. If the replacement tree is of a significant size the Parish Council should expect the cost of installing new electric festive decorations to be borne by the Higherford Residents Action Group.

A significant size means different things to different people so a definitive size range should be sought from the Tree Officer and if that is above 4.5m then festive decorations will be appropriate.

The full cost of this project which must be met by HRAG will probably be prohibitive if all the factors are mitigated and met.

1. Disconnection of and safely isolating festive decorations within the tree.
2. Adequate risk assessments and safety mitigation, including possible road closures needed for felling a large tree at the junction of two major roads.
3. Alternative facilities for the bus to turn round whilst works are ongoing.
4. Stump grinding to remove the old stump and allow the planting of the replacement tree.
5. Planting of the replacement which, due to its size, will need heavy machinery to dig the hole and lift in the tree, which may again require road closures.
6. Replacement of festive decorations with the type approved for exterior commercial use.

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7. Maintenance costs for the tree for the first five years These could include replacement of the tree if it fails to survive in that location with associated festive lighting implications.

Clerk's Recommendations:

Recent relevant events at Dickie Nook raise concerns:

- The shedding of a large branch off a Horse Chestnut tree, blocking the A692 for 4 hours and the subsequent removal of that tree
- A further two Ash trees being condemned for showing signs of dieback.

The first question that should be asked is: what is the condition of the other trees at Dickie Nook and how many may need pruning or felling?

The Clerk's recommendation is that the removal of a healthy tree for cosmetic purposes is entirely a matter for Councillors at Barrowford Parish Council and Officers at Pendle, but the wider picture including the condition of other trees at Dickie Nook cannot be ignored.

If the Parish Council and Officers at Pendle are minded to support the removal of the conifer, both the Borough and Parish Council should be satisfied that HRAG has ample finances in place to bring this project to a satisfactory conclusion before agreeing to any part of this scheme.

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Hiya Iain,

I met with Hugh Simpson yesterday to discuss the Leylandii tree on Dicky Nook.

Hugh's brief email below does not reflect the outcome of the discussion in its entirety. As a result I shall endeavour to expand.

I have to admit, I am not a fan of Leylandii unless they can grow to their full extent. For an example of this your need to be looking at the ones in Victoria or Alkincoats Parks. That being said this particular tree, in my opinion, has a high amenity value. It is in a prominent gateway location that has a high amount of traffic (both pedestrian and motor vehicles) passing it. Therefore, it is regularly seen and creates an attractive focal point.

Health wise, it is ok. It's had some pruning done to the bottom of it that has caused bare patches but it is safe and in decent condition. Therefore, it's contribution to the landscape and amenity is likely to last in excess of 40 years (we only work to a maximum of 40+ years in arboricultural surveys). The question has to be, if this was a tree not on Council land would it be suitable for a Tree Preservation Order? The answer to the question (although it pains me to say it with regard to a Leylandii) is yes.

And, of course, there is the question of the lights in the tree that belong to you.

So at the meeting it was decided that in principle, I am ok with the group removing the tree subject to the following conditions:

- Funding – The group fund the entire project. Pendle Council will not fund the removal of the tree or any replacement.
- Replacement – The tree must be replaced. Preferably, with a deciduous (I did suggest a Copper Beech) of significant size in order to retain the amenity value of the site. A light or heavy standard tree is not going to be sufficient. We are talking instant impact landscaping size tree. Obviously, there will be a high cost to this.
- Lights – The group must discuss the removal and re-hanging of the lights with the Parish Council.
- Health & Safety – The Council would want to see risk assessments, insurance and certificates of any contractor involved.

It was left that Hugh would discuss the lighting issue with the Parish Council, should the Parish Council agree to the removal of the lights in order to carry out the work then the group come back to us with a proposal and a decision would then be made. What I forgot to discuss with him was the ongoing maintenance and inspection of the tree.

If I'm honest with you; I'm not sure how feasible the project is. It's going to cost somewhere in the region of £500 - £750 to remove the tree, another £100 at least to stump grind; probably between £1000 - £1500 for the replacement; I haven't a clue how much it's going to cost to plant it and to top it all the cost of removing and re-installing the lights.

I hope this clarifies things a bit but should you want to discuss this with me then please give me a ring.

Best wishes

Lee