

Motion to restore fishing at the Moat, Park Farm

Moved by Councillor Chilton
Seconded by Councillor Spain

This Council notes:

- 1) In a report issued by the Environment Agency (EA) in 2021ⁱ it was noted that new research has shown people have formed long-term plans to reconnect with nature through a surge in popularity for new hobbies such as fishing, gardening and birdwatching. The report noted that 1,019,723 individual freshwater rod licences were sold to adults living in England, compared to 882,989 in the previous year 2019/20, an increase of 16%. The report also revealed that fishing had gained appeal among women since the pandemic, with 38% of those questioned saying they would fish for relaxation, meditation or mindfulness.
- 2) The Moat in Park Farm has been a popular angling venue for many years, particularly for residents of Park Farm since the estate was built in the late 1990s. Situated in the heart of Park Farm, the Moat is a much-loved site that attracts a diverse range of anglers, including women and children.
- 3) Prior to the COVID pandemic, discussions had already commenced with Stanhope Angling Society (SAS) regarding the condition of the Moat, most notably the related issues of **siltation** and **low water levels**.
- 4) In late 2020 (?) ABC commissioned Mid Kent Fisheries to undertake a silt survey of the Moat, which estimated the volume of silt at around 5,570^{m3}. The survey concluded that the high volume of silt was having a direct and significant impact on water depth and consequently represented a threat to the health of fish and viability of the site as a fishing venue. The Angling Club, with the support of the Parish Council, therefore asked ABC to make the necessary arrangements to de-silt the Moat.
- 5) ABC officers subsequently considered a number of solutions for de-silting the Moat, including options for (a) excavating and moving the silt off-site to an appropriate licenced landfill, or (b) excavating and depositing the silt close by the Moat. It was concluded that transporting the silt to an off-site landfill would cost at least £200,000, as the nearest approved 'landfill site' is in North Kent. It was therefore concluded that the most cost-effective and viable solution would be to deposit the silt in an area of open space adjacent to the Moat, and then bunding it up and re-planting with grass. This solution was costed by Mid Kent Fisheries at around £35,000.
- 6) Kingsnorth Parish Council and Stanhope Angling Club were agreeable to contributing 50% of the cost, although the Parish Council did point out that the

Moat was an ABC asset and the need to periodically de-silt the Moat should have been anticipated and sufficient funds set aside for this purpose.

- 7) In September 2021, an 'Options Paper' including this proposal was presented to ABC's Management Team, but the proposal was rejected on the grounds of cost and other priorities on the Council's budget. Management Team was also not prepared to fund further studies on water levels. Instead, ABC's Management Team asked officer(s) to engage with the Angling Club and Parish to identify alternative funding opportunities, and report back in 6 months.
- 8) In the first half of 2022 Cllr. Larry Krause (Mr Mayor) was asked by the Leader to chair and 'mediate' a meeting with all concerned (Angling Club, ABC Officers, Parish Council & Ward Member(s)). This took place in mid/late 2022, when the decision was made to close the Moat from the end of March 2023.
- 9) The Council's decision to close the Moat to fishing has upset many residents of Park Farm. In February 2023, Kingsnorth Parish Council started an online petition (see below) to save fishing at the Moat ⁱⁱ that currently has 792 signatures (5th July 2023).

Petition - Save Fishing at the Moat, Park Farm, Ashford

It is planned for fishing to stop at the Moat. The water depth has decreased due to silt build up. Since Ashford Borough Council (ABC) took control of the asset, once the estate was complete, there has not been money set aside for dredging which is typically required broadly every 20 years.

Fishing provides a local activity that appeals across generations. While younger children are well catered to with playgrounds the planning of estates tends to be lacking in activities for older children and young adults in our community.

The fishing club and the Parish Council have previously made offers to contribute towards the cost the desilting. The discussions have appeared to be on the basis that ABC has no funds at all to contribute and therefore it is unsurprising that discussions have been unsuccessful.

It cannot be right that when developments are planned features such as fishing at the Moat are required by planners to create community for new residents, only for them then to be lost over time as the estates age and the Borough's focus moves elsewhere.

We ask that the Borough Council saves fishing at the Moat

10) On Friday 12th May over 30 members of the local community met with Damian Green MP to express their opposition to the decision to close the Moat to fishing.

The Council further notes:

11) The Moat is an ABC-owned asset and will need to be de-silted periodically, regardless of whether angling continues or not, as it forms part of the drainage system for Park Farm.

12) In the absence of oversight by a responsible angling club with an interest in the site, the Moat will potentially become an area for anti-social behaviour and a danger to younger people particularly due to its location near to a children's play area.

The Council resolves:

- 1)** To undertake a thorough and comprehensive review of the decision to close the Moat to fishing, and the likely negative impact on local residents etc. etc.
- 2)** To re-consider the options for de-silting the Moat, as put forward to ABC's Management Team in Autumn 2021, with a view to selecting the best option for de-silting the Moat at the earliest opportunity (preferably during the winter of 2023-24);
- 3)** To work with the Parish Council and local residents to support the establishment of a community-based angling club that will manage the fishery in a sustainable and transparent manner and in accordance with best practice.
- 4)** To acknowledge the Council's responsibility to maintain the Moat and commit to set aside funds to undertake de-silting at regular intervals.
- 5)** To report back to Full Council within 6 months on the progress made towards restoring fishing at the Moat.
- 6)** To follow up on the recommendations made in the March 2020 Report by EPS Design '*Park Farm Moat, Kingsnorth, Ashford Study concerning Low Water Level*'

ⁱ [The Great Outdoor Escape: popularity for fishing here to stay as public desire long-term connection with nature - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-great-outdoor-escape-popularity-for-fishing-here-to-stay-as-public-desire-long-term-connection-with-nature)

ⁱⁱ [Petition · Save Fishing at the Moat, Park Farm, Ashford · Change.org](https://www.change.org/p/save-fishing-at-the-moat-park-farm-ashford)

Motion to Build a New Community Facility on Bockhanger Square

This Council notes:

- That on the 18th of July 2019 Cllr Spain brought the issue of a new community facility on Bockhanger Square to a meeting of the Ashford Borough Council. The final motion agreed unanimously at this meeting resolved:

“That following the formation of the “Kennington Community Council” and the subsequent meeting between the Chair, Mr Chris Morley and the Leader of the Council, the following Motion be agreed:

(i) That the sixteen Community Councillors representing the five Wards, in the Kennington Community Council should take the lead in identifying their local community needs.

(ii) That the Kennington Community Council and Ashford Borough Council should work together to agree a programme that prioritises these needs and consider how best they can be addressed.

(iii) That the two Councils work together in a positive way to address the funding issues that will inevitably arise in the delivery of such facilities and/or improvements.

(iv) That proper and timely reporting be undertaken to ensure that progress can be made on these matters.

(v) That the Council undertake a full and thorough consultation with as large a number of Bockhanger and Bybrook residents as possible, by the end of March 2020, as to the type of replacement/new community centre/community hub to be built, and the facilities contained within it.”;

- That since the demolition of Bockhanger Community Centre in 2019 on the Bockhanger Square site in north Ashford, multiple surveys - Ashford Borough Council, Kennington Community Council, and resident-led - have been undertaken;
- That these surveys taken together have clearly identified the needs of residents for a substantial and sustainably built community facility to serve the people of Bockhanger and Bybrook, and the wider area north of the M20;
- That there is a demand from residents that this site is primarily redeveloped for community facilities whilst retaining as much green space around it as possible, and that there is minimal desire for this to be a ‘housing-led’ scheme;
- That a report on the Kennington Community Council's consultation with residents on the future of the Bockhanger Square site showed that two-thirds of those who responded had a preference to see a community facility built on the site;
- That Kennington Community Council passed a motion in May 2023 calling on Ashford Borough Council to “...to meet its responsibility and finance a project to design and build a new, stand alone, community facility on Bockhanger Square, incorporating amongst other features a function hall distinctly larger than those available currently, of at least 400 sq. metres.

Stands ready to support Ashford Borough Council in any application which it may make for grant funding towards the cost of the project and to contribute proportionately to the costs in both the design and construction stages and invites the Leader of the Council to open a dialogue with this Council before the summer

Agrees to undertake preparatory work to establish a trust to operate the facility once built and, in the meantime, to continue to promote new social activities in the Kennington area for all ages.”

- That Ashford Borough Council has a successful track record for securing funding for large publicly beneficial projects such as the International Studios at the Newtown Railway Works and at Victoria Park.

This Council resolves:

- To work with Kennington Community Council, local Borough Councillors, residents and other stakeholders, to develop a detailed plan and proposal for all the community facilities on Bockhanger Square, including a stand-alone community facility building, incorporating amongst other features a function hall distinctly larger than those available currently, of at least 400 sq. metres, on the Bockhanger Square site;
- To take the leading role in seeking funding for the facilities from all available sources, including the Borough Council itself, the Kennington Community Council, and grant-making and other potential national, regional, and local funding sources;
- To facilitate and enable the final design and building of the facilities as soon as possible, in consultation with residents and all other key stakeholders;
- To ensure that the facility is designed to be as sustainable as possible, incorporating technologies including solar panels, rainwater recycling, ground source heat pumps, high levels of insulation, and uses sustainable construction materials, for example is designed as a mass-timber structure.
- To work with local stakeholders including residents, businesses, community groups, Kennington Community Council, and others, to ensure the long-term successful operation of the new community facilities helping to establish strong governance and operational arrangements, potentially including the establishment of a trust to operate the facilities.

Proposed by Cllr Diccon Spain member for Bockhanger ward

Seconded by Cllr Alan Dean member for Bybrook ward