

Allotment site in Uppermill

The District Partnership provided funding to enable the Parish Council to purchase the allotment site from the Canal and River Trust in March 2013.

In December 2011, the District Partnership allocated £10,000 to support the initial costs involved in bringing the land into allotment use. It was proposed that the funding would cover legal, planning and enabling works. The report identified the proposed works and cost estimates as follows:

Task	Estimated cost
Uppermill Allotment Site	
<i>Supply of stone for the footpaths</i>	£1,700
<i>Supply of Timber edging for footpaths</i>	£1,472
<i>Timber 4 bar post and rail fence to one side</i>	£1,155
<i>Breaking through existing stone wall and making good wall ends and supply and install 1.2 m wide metal gate</i>	£700
<i>Supply and Install Gabion support for access ramp from towpath including all stone and associated access issues (this item would be carried out professionally due to health and safety requirements)</i>	£800
<i>Supply and deliver diversion signage for general public access during works</i>	£300
<i>Cost of planning application</i>	£170
<i>Legal costs</i>	£1,000
Denshaw Allotment Site	
<i>Material for fencing, raised beds</i>	£3,000
TOTAL	£10,297

The report stated that ***“these costs are based on the provision of materials, it is expected that the future allotment holders would provide labour with support from the Council where required”***

A Parish Council working group comprising Councillors Allsopp, Buckley, Knotts and McGladdery was created to deal with the purchase of the site and its subsequent development as allotments. The Parish Council working group held a number of meetings with Councillor Beeley, Lisa MacDonald and Glenn Dale. Glenn agreed to review the original costings, his revised costings included the supply and transporting of top soil to the site and the cost of moving the stone onto the site. It was subsequently agreed that the existing soil is adequate and new top soil is not required.

The nearest vehicular access point to the site is the car park adjacent to Lime Kiln Lock this is approximately .25 km from the entrance onto the allotment site. Around 85 tons of stone is required to construct the paths, as approved as part of the Planning Application. It is estimated that it will take around 13,500 man hours to move the stone, by wheel barrow, from the car park onto the site. No allowance has been made for clearing or levelling the site for either the allotment plots or the paths.

A local ground works and landscaping contractor has visited the site to discuss options for preparing the site, including paths. He has suggested a minor relocation of the gate on the

towpath which would remove the need for the gabion and ramp but require a small change to the paths. A Listed Building application will be required for the proposed access gate.

Access to the car park, to unload the stone, is via Moorgate and Den Lane or Ladcastle Road / Mowhalls Lane and Den Lane. Large (20 tons) vehicles would not be able to use either route. The most cost effective method would be for the stone to be delivered off-site and transferred to smaller vehicles, and then delivered to the car park. The stone could then be loaded into a 2 tons dumper and taken down the towpath. It is estimated that 20 tons of stone could be stored safely in the car park at any one time.

The contractor has proposed creating a 2 metre gap in the wall, which would allow access onto the site for earthmoving equipment and the dumper truck. The weeds would be scraped off and the paths marked out, with the digger bucket, which is 1.2 metres wide. The wooden path edgings would be installed with a membrane under the path, the stone would then be moved from the car park onto the paths on the site. It was also proposed that a stone base would be created for the communal shed. Once the site work was completed the wall would be re-built to create the opening for the gate.

The estimated cost of the work including the purchase of the stone and timber edging is £19,500. The cost of the timber access gate is not included.

The Parish Council working group met at the site to discuss the options and Councillor Knotts agreed to research alternative options for the creation of the path. A reinforcement mesh could be used. The likely cost of the materials is £5,137, the cost of transporting the mesh to the site and fitting it has not been identified. The paths would need to be scraped and levelled before the material was laid. The manufacturer states that it can be laid directly on the ground without a base layer. The site is on a flood plain, thus a base layer may be needed. There would be a need to periodically trim the grass growing through the mesh.

The Parish Council working group agrees that future allotment holders should be expected to prepare individual allotment beds but they should not be expected to construct the footpaths. The work has to accord with Planning Authority specifications that ensure the development site is landscaped to an acceptable standard in the interest of protecting the visual amenity and character of the site and its surroundings. Future allotment holders will not necessarily have the expertise to satisfy this need. Permission must be obtained from The Canal and River Trust before any work is carried out on or adjacent to the tow-path or canal.

There have been discussions about clearing the whole site, three options have been discussed, spraying, scraping off the weeds or using Strimmers & Rotavators. The Parish Council has agreed that only the paths should be cleared, each allotment holder would be responsible for preparing their own plot.

The estimated cost of the work is £22,000, the District Executive has ear-marked £10,000 for work on the Uppermill site. The Parish Council has requested that the District Executive provides all the funding to enable it to provide the access and paths on the allotment site, as out-lined above.