



All-party motion to save Aldenham Reservoir



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A commitment to continue to seek ways to address the ‘continuous, systemic neglect’ of a much-loved Hertsmere amenity and beauty spot has received all-party backing.

Our councillors agreed a motion condemning the actions of the current landowners of Aldenham Reservoir as a ‘dereliction of duty’ and calling on the council to ‘explore all possible actions’ to restore the site was approved at a full council meeting on Wednesday (26 January). The pledge highlighted the constructive cross party-work which has already taken place on this issue and welcomed the recent designation of the reservoir as an asset of community value. As an  [asset of community value](#), it means once the reservoir comes to be sold, the community have an opportunity to bid for the site for a period of five years.

In its motion, councillors also committed to exploring further actions to ‘restore the reservoir to its former glory’, including legal means to protect the site. A working group of councillors and officers will now be set up and a report setting out the potential next steps is due to be published within the next three months.

Speaking at the meeting, Councillor Caroline Clapper, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Property, who proposed the motion, said: “I stand before you this evening to propose this very important motion, not just as the local councillor or as a local resident, but as a frequent user who is absolutely devastated at the systematic destruction of one of our most beloved assets in Hertsmere – Aldenham Reservoir.

“I’ve been heart-broken to witness the way the owners of the reservoir, currently known as the Jewel of Hertsmere, have continually neglected the reservoir, which has not only led to such a negative visual impact, but has negatively impacted on all the animals which once thrived in this environment, both above and below the water.

“If this all wasn’t serious enough, numerous attempts have been made to block the well-used footpaths around the reservoir and the children’s playground has been demolished too.

“We have had some positive wins with the designation of the site as an asset of community value and the retention of the rights of way for now. But these are smaller battles in a much larger war if we are to restore Aldenham Country Park to its former glory.

“We must now say enough is enough. All three political parties have agreed to come together to explore any and all possible options to us to achieve resolution to the most serious of all issues.

“Over the past few years, there have been so many individuals, community groups and tiers of government who have put a great deal of work into finding a workable resolution to this issue.

“We are looking to unite and work with every related stakeholder on this matter – and we will not stop until we have achieved the desired outcome.”

Cllr Jeremy Newmark, Leader of the Labour and Co-operative group, who seconded the motion, added at the meeting: “I grew up around here, enjoyed many moments during my childhood around the reservoir and the country park, and I can certainly agree about the mental health and wellbeing benefits that the reservoir and its surrounding provides for local people.

“That’s why the local people need to know that on this we are all on their side. That’s why this matters, that’s why it matters that we’re seen to be united as councillors across the political divide on this and that’s why it matters that we leave no stone unturned in our efforts to save Aldenham Reservoir.

"This motion is important. It recognises the shocking behaviour and neglect on the part of the owners. It also recognises that the way forward is to set out clear, unambiguous public positions and demands, not to try and do deals behind closed doors and in smoke-filled rooms - because that never works.

"It's really important that the public see that, when it comes down to it, when it comes to protecting significant local assets of this nature, we are united; we won't be divided; we will leave no stone unturned."

The reservoir is currently owned by the Jewel of Hertsmere, formerly known as Liberty Leisure Ltd.

Several planning applications, including most recently one for the development of a hub building, including café, reception area and shop, 50 accommodation pods and additional car parking, have been submitted for land to the south of the reservoir by the land-owners. All applications have been refused or withdrawn.

To read the full motion and watch a webcast of the meeting go [here](#) (listen from 01:06:00 hours).

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