

BUCKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL



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Proposed Water Connection at Bucklesham Allotments

Report prepared for **Bucklesham Parish Council** by Ruth Johnson,
Clerk to Bucklesham Parish Council

Brief: To assess the implications for Bucklesham Parish Council if they agree to connect the Allotments, Green Crescent, Bucklesham, to the national water supply.

Introduction

This report has been written following a request from a Tenant of the Allotments for Bucklesham Parish Council (BPC) to connect to the mains water and supply Tenants with running water for their plots.

This report has been compiled with a view to BPC being in receipt of all information needed to make a decision. However, some issues remain unresolved at the time of publication of this report.

A discussion with regards to whether BPC will be willing to agree to the connection to the mains water supply will take place at the next Parish Council meeting on 13th November 2024 in Bucklesham Village Hall at 7pm. BPC should aim to make a decision in principle at said meeting, while being mindful that new information may subsequently emerge which could lead to a need for further discussion.

The Situation as it Currently Stands

There is currently no water connection on the Allotments and individual Tenants use various methods to harvest rain water themselves.

Existing Tenants' Opinions

I have contacted all existing Tenants to ask their opinions on the proposal. Of the 19 Tenants asked, the following 8 comments were received:

- *"I'd be fully on board with that idea! When I took over my plot recently, I was honestly surprised there wasn't already a water supply. At the moment, I've been filling up lemonade and squash bottles, then lugging or (as there are so many) driving them to the site. As you can imagine, it takes a lot of bottles to keep everything watered properly—definitely a bit of a workout! Even with a water butt, in dry spells like we've had this year, my guess would be it would still be a challenge to collect enough water. My opinion is that having a supply on-site would be a huge benefit to everyone. I'm not sure how you'd set up charging for it, but I'd be more than happy to contribute. I'm already using water from home, so I'm paying anyway!"*
- *"I would be very interested in the water proposal. It is a constant source of concern collecting rain water and storing it the growing season. We have all witnessed dry winters so every drop of water has been carefully stored. I appreciate that some people would not want to pay for a water supply, preferring to collect their own for free. There is of course the added problem that water usage will vary per gardener so I wonder if meters were to be fitted so that you pay for your own usage. I appreciate this sounds a costly endeavour but I see it as long term investment and will help regulate water usage, stopping abuse of supply."*
- *"Yes it would be great to have running water at the Allotments, however my view on it is the same as it was previously. The initial cost would be quite high I feel and in my opinion many of the plot holders would not wish to pay for it. Secondly, fairly allocating the cost to each plot holder accurately would be challenging and probably cause disagreements.

My biggest concern would be future bills could be increased beyond a level that would be sustainable. Having been on the Allotment for a few years now, my personal view is that in most years you can collect enough rain water over the winter and spring to get through the summer. How about an alternative solution? What about erecting a roofed open sided structure (like a Hay Barn in design) that could house a woodchip pile/communal composting bins and feed the rainwater it collects into IBCs that the Allotment holders could make use of if required? Effectively a one-off cost and should last a couple of decades with minimal maintenance."*
- *"It would be good to have a water supply to the Allotments, but if there is just one outlet, then plots furthest away from that may not be interested in using it. Most plots do seem to have large water butts, so not sure many Tenants will actually be interested in sharing the cost for a water supply. I think most Allotments who do have mains water supplied to the site seem to just divide the annual cost between the Tenants and I would be happy to do this provided the supply was convenient for my plot."*
- *"I think we are in two minds about water really... We have water butts already and have a good plot and we are too new to know what a dry summer is like, this year being quite wet. To monitor who uses how much sounds quite complex and expensive to sort out but I think it would have to be measured per Allotment for it to be fair. Would it be one tap for the whole site or a tap per Allotment?"*

- *“I’m not really interested in being connected to mains water as I have spent quite a lot of money on infrastructure to capture rain water and am generally self-sufficient. I don’t know what the rest of the Allotment holders think. Previously it was very mixed in opinions.”*
- *“I’ve had a plot on the Allotments for many years and I think connecting to the water is not a good idea - it’s lazy gardening! Half the fun of a plot is working out ingenious ways to harvest water and it’s not very ‘green’ to have water on tap so to speak. In the event of a long hot summer we won’t be allowed to use the standpipe anyway. I think it’s open to abuse and not the done thing anymore.”*
- *“I would prefer the Allotments are NOT connected to the mains water. In this day and age we are encouraged to ‘love every drop’ and I think if water was readily available people would be far less likely to use it carefully. I also don’t want to pay for other people’s usage!”*
- *“In response to your question of whether I would like water at the Allotments, I would most definitely **not**. Those of us that have had Allotments for a few years have taken adequate measures to collect and use rainwater. In my opinion, having taps at some points will only cause problems, with some people using them lots and others not at all. Surely the only way to use the taps will be to fill watering cans and most holders will then have further to carry them than if they had water butts on their plots. Most gardeners and Allotment holders do not water sensibly and hence waste what is a valuable commodity here in East Suffolk. This would also put the price of the Allotments up substantially, which would not be welcome by those who do not want to use the taps.”*

Other Allotment Managers’ Opinions on the Proposal

I have contacted other Allotment Managers within East Suffolk for their thoughts and opinions on the proposal given their own experiences. I had 5 replies:

- *“At Wickham, both our Allotments have water and the cost is recovered through the tenancy charge. Most people are sensible and many still harvest rainwater for their plots anyway. Our water bill is about £1,300 for 100 plots (£13 each per annum). It is turned off during the winter months. Hope this helps”* **AI Besly, Wickham Market PC Clerk**
- *“In Hollesley we do have water connected. We have 2 troughs at either end of the plots. Tenants can fill up buckets or watering cans by dunking them in the trough. There is a ball-cock so it self fills and does not overflow. Not all Tenants use it so there is a padlock and only those who pay know the combination. The problem with this is that the combination does get shared and people who have not paid then take water. I would say everyone pays regardless of usage. There is no way to monitor who takes what amount. It has to be done on trust and people do abuse that trust. The cost is usually around £10-£15 per plot per year.”*
Judi Hallett, Parish Clerk
- *“The easiest answer is water butts! Putting on a water supply and divvying up the cost per Tennant is a nightmare I believe. Also if there is a water shortage they won’t be able to use the standpipes anyway. If only one or two people want water on the Allotments it’s possibly not worth it. Our people have water butts and take water in containers from home to put in their butts to water seedlings in. Watering encourages shallow root systems rather than encouraging roots to naturally go down to damper soil. Mulching also helps.*

Some of our people put the black woven material then cut holes in it to plant in. That keeps weeds down too. I don't think supply water on tap is very environmentally friendly these days either!" **Sue Harvey, Trimley St Martin**

- *"We at Trimley St Mary do not have water connected. We encouraged our plot holder's to save water and give our free recycled guttering etc."* **Trimley St Martin PC Clerk**

Estimated Costs

I have initiated a non-binding enquiry as to the costs of connecting the water. A lengthy application process has been completed and I have had an on-site meeting with a representative from Anglian Water.



The point in the existing mains pipes that we would need to connect to is half way up Green Crescent. Anglian Water would carry out the works laying new pipe for our connection but will only go as far as the bottom of Green Crescent where the pavement starts. It would then be the Parish Council's responsibility to connect from there to the Allotments. This would involve BPC laying pipe the full length of the entrance drive (it will be necessary to dig up the concrete), and installing a standpipe in the corner of the Allotments nearest to the

entrance (to minimise cost).

BPC would have to instruct a third party to carry out this work which has been estimated at £6,600. The pipe needs to be 750mm deep and needs to be inspected by Anglian Water before they will then connect to the mains.

The representative from Anglian Water reported that their portion of the work (connecting to the bottom of Green Crescent) would be a significant undertaking as they would need to rip up the road, and the cost to BPC and inconvenience to neighbours would be substantial.

Anglian Water have estimated the cost for them to connect from our pipe at the end of the entrance, to the mains at the bottom of Green Crescent, to be £5,370.84 (see appendix A).

The total cost of the project will likely be in the region of £11,970.

Points to Consider

Any water supply connected would be in the form of one standpipe at the entrance to the Allotments. This would not suit many of the Tenants as they may not want to have the water so far away from their plots. Some Tenants have expressed a desire to have a standpipe at the end of each plot but this is not feasible as it would add to the costs considerably.

As it is not feasible to have taps at the end of each plot, the standpipe would have to have a lock on the tap to ensure only those who wish to pay for water have access. It would not be possible to monitor who uses what amount. Therefore all charges would have to be equally divided between the Tenants regardless of usage.

BPC could use CIL funds for this purpose as Allotments are considered infrastructure and a water connection is an improvement to this infrastructure. However, Councillors will need to consider whether the considerable cost involved is an appropriate use of CIL money as it would only benefit 19 Tenants.

Of the 19 Tenants, 6 are non-residents of the village. These non-residents are very welcome and took plots when there were no residents who were willing to manage one. All non-residents keep their Allotments in excellent order and are assets to the site. However, they are not villagers, and the Council will need to consider whether it is justifiable to spend a large amount of Bucklesham's CIL money on a project that actually would only benefit 13 residents, and when only 3 of those 13 were actually in favour of the project.

I hope all of this information will assist BPC in deciding whether to go ahead with the project. If there is anything else you would like me to find out before the meeting please just ask.

Ruth Johnson

Clerk to Bucklesham Parish Council, 29th October 2024