



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**



Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

30 November 2021

Report of: Councillor Robert Reid

Cabinet Member for Housing and
Property

Water Refill Stations

This report provides an overview and sets out some options to consider in terms of the potential provision of public water fountains.

Report Author

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Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
A clean and sustainable environment	Non-Key	Two or more Wards
Reviewed by:	Paul Stokes (Head of Corporate Operations)	17 November 2021
Approved by:	Gary Smith (Director, Commercial and Operations)	18 November 2021
Signed off by:	Cllr Robert Reid (Cabinet Member for Housing and Property)	18 November 2021

Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

1. Notes the context and considerations for the provision of publicly available water fountains and comment on any potential next steps.

1 The Background to the Report

- 1.1 A request to add a report to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda regarding the topic of 'water refill stations' was received by the Head of Democratic Services on 8 November 2021, requested by Councillor Ashley Baxter as per South Kesteven District Council's Constitution, paragraph 6.9.2.
- 1.2 Water refill stations and drinking fountains offer members of the public an opportunity to access fresh water free of charge to refill water bottles/containers.
- 1.3 Improved provision of drinking water can help to provide an alternative to single use plastic bottles. Provision of water refill stations is dependent on members of the public carrying and re-using a bottle of their own.
- 1.4 It is estimated in the UK, 7.7 billion plastic bottles are used for drinking water each year. These bottles have implications for waste disposal, littering and potentially contamination of waterways and the wider environment if disposed of incorrectly.
- 1.5 There are several maintenance, health and safety and accessibility considerations which need to be carefully assessed in parallel when considering new facilities. As well as costs deriving from scheduled maintenance, water testing and utility charges from the provision of water, drinking fountains in the public realm can unfortunately be subject to ongoing vandalism.
- 1.6 It is expected that there is an opportunity to learn from the experience of other local authorities, who have overseen the installation of public drinking fountains in recent years and will be in a position to share further details on uptake, perception and maintenance considerations.
- 1.7 Further consideration of any new public drinking fountain should include at least the below:
 - Viable supply of water to proposed location
 - Cost of establishment of new drinking fountain, ongoing routine maintenance, and supply of water
 - Appropriate design of the proposed fountain, including considerations around accessibility
 - Health and safety implications and infection control of drinking fountains
 - Cleaning schedule for the proposed fountain, outside of routine maintenance
 - Mitigation of any anticipated issues of proposed drinking fountains
 - Level of demand or expected use of any water fountains
- 1.8 Some authorities have worked closely with local businesses to promote the national Refill scheme, where participating businesses including cafes, supermarkets and leisure centres provide a free drinking water refill on request. Several national retailers have now joined this scheme and offer this option to the public upon presentation of a clean, reusable bottle. This represents another way that water can be provided to thirsty visitors in town centres which avoids the purchase of bottled water.

2 Consultation and Feedback Received, Including Overview and Scrutiny

- 2.1 No further feedback has been considered on this proposal as yet.

3 Available Options Considered

- 3.1 There is no current statutory requirement to provide drinking fountains in the public realm, and as such no need to progress the proposal further.
- 3.2 Review increased promotion and uptake of the national Refill scheme as described at paragraph 1.8 amongst local businesses and town centre users.
- 3.3 The Council could consider developing a proposal of a trial public drinking fountain in one town of the district and review the project once the new facility has been installed, to consider uptake and any ongoing maintenance issues in greater detail, subject to budget.
- 3.4 The Council could consider developing a proposal for a public drinking fountain in the town centres of each of the four towns in the district, subject to budget.

4 Preferred Option

- 4.1 For the Committee to give a steer on any potential next steps.

5 Reasons for the Recommendation (s)

- 5.1 As outlined in the report.

6 Next Steps – Communication and Implementation of the Decision

- 6.1 Dependent on the steer from the Committee.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 If the proposal is taken forward, the financial implications for installation, anticipated maintenance and utilities and reactive maintenance will each need to be costed and considered before progressing. There is currently no allocated budget provision for this initiative and the annual costs would either be considered as a new budget proposal or offset or incorporated into other (as yet unidentified) established annual budget allocations.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Richard Wyles, Assistant Director of Finance

8 Legal and Governance Implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications of this report.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Graham Watts, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

9 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 9.1 As noted above, any proposal for a new water fountain should carefully consider accessibility and use of the fountain in the choice of both design and location.

10 Risk and Mitigation

- 10.1 Any significant risks will need to be reviewed in further detail upon identification of locations and designs for any proposed fountains.

11 Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 None currently expected.

12 How will the recommendations support South Kesteven District Council's declaration of a climate emergency?

- 12.1 The proposal has no significant impact on the Council's own carbon emissions: any increase in water consumption from new drinking fountains is expected to have a nominal impact on the Council's reported carbon emissions. Should the proposal develop, public drinking fountains have the potential to reduce waste generated through reuse of bottles.

13 Background Papers

- 13.1 Single use plastics at SKDC, discussed at Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 February 2020.