



**SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL**

## Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8 March 2022

**Report of:** Councillor Robert Reid

Cabinet Member for Housing and  
Property



## Update on provision of water refill fountains

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:
<b>Clean and Sustainable Environment</b>	<b>Non-Key</b>	<b>Two or more Wards</b>

<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Paul Stokes, Head of Corporate Operations	18 February 2022
<b>Approved by:</b>	Gary Smith, Director of Commercial & Operations	22 February 2022
<b>Signed off by:</b>	Councillor Robert Reid, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property	24 February 2022

### Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

- 1. That the Sustainability & Climate Change Officer works with the Council's Communication Team and InvestSK to promote the national Refill scheme.**

# 1 The Background to the Report

- 1.1 This report aims to respond to discussions which took place at the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on [30 November 2021](#) regarding a proposal to consider providing public water refill fountains at four locations within the district, including detail on expected costs.
- 1.2 In previous discussions, the Committee recognised some of the potential benefits the new facilities could provide, which contribute to the Council's wider work on climate change, including reduced littering, reduced dependence on single-use plastic bottles, and a useful facility for the public during spells of hotter weather. Concerns were also recognised that the new facilities would be at risk of vandalism, and the ongoing cost of maintenance would need to be considered and budgeted for.
- 1.3 A proposal for installing a new water refill fountain in Stamford was previously considered by Stamford Town Council on [28 September 2021](#). While this proposal was not supported, South Kesteven District Council has been notified that the Plastic Free Stamford group has been awarded a grant of £6,000 towards the installation of a new water refill unit in Stamford Town Centre by the Harry Skells Trust.
- 1.4 According to South Kesteven District Council's Contract Procedure Rules, at least three written quotations were required. The potential to make use of an existing framework agreement for procurement was also explored, however it was found there is no agreement currently in place to install water refill fountains in public outdoor areas. In total, five suppliers were contacted to request costs for appropriate models of water refill fountains alongside further details.
- 1.5 A working specification for the correct type of water refill fountains required was developed. This included the below criteria that a suitable installation should:
- Be suitable for outdoor use
  - Provide ability to refill bottles
  - Use mains fed water
  - Not require a connection to electricity
  - Be wall or floor mounted
  - Have a sturdy design and be vandal resistant
  - Meet requirements to ensure accessibility for a range of different users
  - Have low or no touch capabilities to minimise hygiene concerns
  - Be a Water Regulations Approval Scheme (WRAS) approved model, which integrates concerns around water quality and safety
- 1.6 The ongoing covid pandemic has meant concerns around hygiene and infection control remain prominent. Therefore, models which minimised or eliminated touch points were prioritised.
- 1.7 Consideration of appropriate design and quality are also paramount. Concerns around longevity of the water refill fountain and its potential to suffer from ongoing vandalism should also be a key consideration for any new installation.
- 1.8 Proposed locations were discussed to site a water refill fountain within each of the district's town centres. These locations have been proposed based on ownership and

oversight by the Council, being adjacent to currently maintained facilities. Co-location outside of existing public conveniences was identified as a preferred option due to the supply of mains fed water. Each of the below locations remain subject to a further site survey to determine exact location of services and identify any potential issues with water pressure or drainage:

Area	Location
Grantham	Abbey Gardens public toilets (outside)
Bourne	Bourne Community Access Point public toilets (outside)
Stamford	Red Lion Square public toilets (outside)
Deepings	Market Deeping public toilets (outside)





1.9 If above locations prove unfeasible and subsequent locations identified which are not managed by the Council directly, there will need to be consideration of engagement with Lincolnshire County Council as the Highways authority, and potentially development of lease arrangements with building owners.

1.10 In order to determine firmer costs, prospective suppliers were asked to provide details and quotes of wall or floor mounted water refill fountain that meet the specification set out at paragraph 1.5. Both outright purchase and rental costs were requested in order to determine the best pricing model over a number of years. There are different implications for contract management dependent on whether the units are purchased outright or rented on an ongoing basis.

1.11 The scope of included costs are set out below:

Installation costs	Ongoing costs
Cost of unit Direct installation costs for new unit Recommended ancillaries (e.g. frost protection) Estimated cost of site surveys to locate services	Rental costs including maintenance contract Estimated annual utilities charge Staff resource required to clean and conduct daily checks Staff resource required for gritting in cold weather Reactive servicing additional to maintenance contract or repairs (e.g., through vandalism)

1.12 The summary costs for a choice of four water refill fountains can be seen in the table below. These costs have been separated into installation costs, and ongoing costs, with differences seen between outright purchase and rental options. At this time, there has been no budget established for either installation or ongoing costs to cover the project, excluding the possible grant allocation referenced at paragraph 1.3.

Wall mounted units			Floor standing units	
1. Elkay wall mounted bottle filler	2. Compact wall mounted bottle filling station	3. M-OBA external bottle filler	4. Elkay floor standing bottle filler	
				
Refill Fountain	Total installation cost per unit (one-off) (£)	Total ongoing cost per unit (annual) (£)	Total project cost for five years per unit (£)	Total for 4 units for five years (£)
1	2,014	3,604	20,032	80,127
2	1,445	3,948	21,186	84,742
3	1,425	3,989	21,371	85,482
4	2,379	3,893	21,844	87,374

- 1.13 While the new water refill fountains would certainly bring improvements to the public realm, there is a need to carefully consider the cost of the project over the five year period.
- 1.14 The above costs include:
- 1.14.1 Staff costs of £2,180 which includes a staff member to conduct a 10 minute clean and inspection twice a day, as well as a weekly deeper clean, sanitisation of fountain head and to run water on unit for 3 minutes to comply with guidelines on legionella. Currently it is expected that a new staff member would need to be appointed to conduct these cleaning duties. The cost also includes a staff member to attend the unit and grit the area in cold conditions to minimise slip hazards.
- 1.14.2 An assumed choice of rental agreement, where a maintenance contract is included as standard. Outright purchase costs with an additional maintenance contract were also requested.
- 1.14.3 A choice of wall or floor mounted units. The best unit will depend on exact site context and further survey to identify location of services.
- 1.14.4 An estimated annual reactive maintenance charge of £750 where a unit needs to be serviced or repaired outside of the twice-yearly standard. This cost could be higher in the event of serious damage through vandalism.

- 1.14.5 An assumed utilities charge of £264 covering metered water and a standing charge. This could be higher where the units are very well used, or there is an ongoing leak.
- 1.15 The installation and maintenance of water refill units will come with a number of considerations and duties for the Council to manage. These are expected to include:
  - 1.15.1 Ensuring the units are hygienic, with appropriate staff resources to complete daily and weekly cleaning and inspection throughout the year. These additional checks have been included in above costings, but it is noted where the Council does not directly manage cleaning staff at proposed locations, these obligations will need to be passed on.
  - 1.15.2 Obligations around water quality and safety, with a need to ensure compliance on a regular basis. The Council's existing contract for legionella testing has been identified as one route for this, which may incur a small additional cost per unit serviced.
  - 1.15.3 Concerns around ongoing occurrences of vandalism targeted towards the units. This could result in more regular cleaning and inspection being required, as well as costs for reactive servicing and replacement parts where water refill fountains have been damaged.
  - 1.15.4 Reputational considerations where the water refill fountains are out of order for a brief or a longer period. The units are expected to be in prominent positions, thus affecting the Council's reputation should servicing not be completed quickly or replacement parts have a lead-in time.
  - 1.15.5 Managing flooding and overspill near the units and associated safety risks including slip hazards. This is a particular risk in periods of frost.
  - 1.15.6 The units may be required to be drained down and isolated in periods of frost to prevent damage to internal pipes.
  - 1.15.7 It is understood the installation of water refill fountains at the proposed sites would not require Planning permission, being permitted development under Part 12 of the General Permitted Development Order. It is recommended that Planning are engaged in the next steps to insure any new installation is compliant.
- 1.16 Regarding wider project considerations, local authorities have worked in partnership with their respective water companies on projects to install water fountains and water refill fountains in town centre areas. Bristol City Council worked with Bristol Water to install eight water fountains in the public realm. Anglian Water have also been contacted by South Kesteven District Council regarding any further support or finance they may be able to offer toward a similar project, however unfortunately they confirmed they would not be able to support a project on a similar basis.
- 1.17 Some local authorities have also 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 Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider whether they would like to propose the installation of four water fountains within the district to Cabinet and identify options for how this may be funded. Given the costs involved, this may need to be considered as part of the 2023/24 Council budget preparation.
- 3.2 Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider whether they would like to propose the installation of one water fountain in the district, on a trial basis to Cabinet and identify options for how this may be funded. This would allow for better understanding of how to manage risks and obligations. Given the costs involved, this may need to be considered as part of the 2023/24 Council budget preparation.
- 3.3 Anglian Water have been approached to understand if they would be able to support a project within the district. However, they have confirmed they would not be in a position to do so.
- 3.4 Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider whether they would like the Sustainability & Climate Change Officer to Work with the Council's Communication Team and InvestSK to promote the national Refill scheme within the district, to promote behaviour change away from dependency on single-use plastic bottles.
- 3.5 Do nothing.

#### **4 Preferred Option**

- 4.1 For the Committee to give a steer on any potential additional 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.
- 6.2 If progressing with any water fountains, then engagement will take place with the relevant Town Council via their Clerk.

#### **7 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 The expected cost for installation and ongoing maintenance for a period of five years is set out within the report. There is currently no budget provision for this initiative so it could either be considered as a new budget proposal for 2023/24 or savings would have to be identified within established annual budgets in order to fund this proposal.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Head of Finance & ICT**

#### **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 Accessibility and safety of the water refill fountains for a range of users is a key consideration, and it is recommended this is considered in detail when choosing the unit, as well as reviewing its correct placement.

## 10 Risk and Mitigation

- 10.1 The main identified risks and mitigations (where possible) are set out under paragraph 1.15.

## 11 Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 One of the expected risks to manage of the installation of water refill fountains is of ongoing occurrences of vandalism, which will impact on the usability of the fountains as well as potentially have a cost implication. Water refill fountain models should be selected with this in mind to minimise the risk as far as possible.

## 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 scope 3 carbon emissions. There may be a small increase in staff travel in order to maintain the units. Installation of the water refill fountains will provide a new facility for the public and help in the move away from single-use items.

## 13 Background Papers

- 13.1 30 November 2021 (item 39). South Kesteven District Council Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee:  
<http://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s31757/Water%20refill%20stations.pdf>
- 13.2 28 September 2021 (item 257). Stamford Town Council:  
[https://www.stamfordtowncouncil.gov.uk/UserFiles/Files/Minutes/132435-STC\\_Minutes\\_280921.pdf](https://www.stamfordtowncouncil.gov.uk/UserFiles/Files/Minutes/132435-STC_Minutes_280921.pdf)

<b>Report Timeline:</b>	Date of Publication on Forward Plan (if required)	n/a
	Previously Considered by: Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee	30 November 2021
	Final Decision date	n/a