

General notes to accompany Risk Assessments

Members of the Water Safety Incident Group (Denise Preston, Sean Flesher, Chris Ingham), Chris Lenton-Cliffe, Phil Staniforth and Peter Cornall, Head of Water Safety for RoSPA visited the site on Friday 30th March 2007 to discuss and draft the risk assessments for Wharfemeadows Park, Tittybottle Park and Manor Park.

There is a considerable water safety hazard, primarily being the presence of the large steep weir that has a fall of 5 – 6m on the downstream side and is little more than 20m downstream from the wildfowl feeding area that is popular in the park. Existing controls on site include two warning signs in Wharfemeadows Park and one in Manor Park stating 'this river is dangerous – keep out.' One of the signs had been graffitied out. There were two posts along the river bank that used to house liferings, both the housing and ring had been stolen. An ornamental bow top fence has been erected on the river bank adjacent to the playground to prevent children slipping down the bank at this point.

At the time of the visit there were two 9 year old children playing in the river below the level of the weir. Their clothes had been left by the warning sign. There was also a young child (toddler) leaning over the low wall unsupervised by the accompanying carer. Officers who know the site are aware that young people jump and dive off the river bank into the water at various points above the weir particularly during summer and that children regularly walk along the low wall top creating a genuine slip or trip hazard from the unprotected edge into the river. The RoSPA representative stated that there had been 25 known drownings in the River Wharfe.

It is recommended that multi-points safety signage be positioned at all main park entrances, positioned so the public can see them as they access the park. Repeat nag signs should be positioned at regular intervals along the water front. All signage will conform to 'The Health and Safety (safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996' and BS 5499.

The low wall along the unprotected river edge in Wharfemeadows Park and Tittybottle Park is a slip and/or trip hazard for children and young people. The low wall and the drop into the river would make rescue difficult. The suggestion is to install to a height of 1.1m bow topped ornamental Victorian style fencing along the low wall top from the road bridge to the playground in Wharfemeadows Park and along the complete length in Tittybottle Park.

Consideration was given to an alternative fence line running along the main park path from Bridge Street to Farnley Lane. On evaluation of the risk assessment this did not reduce the potential hazard and risk rating of children and young people slipping / tripping from the wall top into the river.

The riverside steps are a popular area for visitors to feed the birds. There is a potential for children, young people and old people to accidentally slip or trip into the water. There are two known incidents from this site. In May 2004 a young child with a fishing net slipped into the water and was rescued by a passer by. There were no known injuries. In March 2006 an old lady slipped into the water and again had to be rescued. The lady had to be taken to hospital and died a few months later. The

lady's daughter suggests that this was the primary cause of her death. The group discussed this and felt that the steps did not require fencing as there was a high likelihood that anybody falling into the water at this point could easily be rescued. Suggested controls at this point are to install warning signs on the steps, highlight the step edge and undertake repairs to the steps. The rationale for the steps was considered and as there is future potential to reintroduce boating on the river and that they are a major feature of the park a decision to retain the steps was made.

Access to 'holbeck' will be controlled by the installation of drop gates and ornamental band 4 fencing. Signage (pictograms) should be placed on these gates – Danger Keep Out.

Because of the high numbers of children using this area it was agreed to continue the line of band 4 fencing in front of the playground along the water's edge up to the concrete pad at the top of the rise.

Along the rest of the river bank down to the white bridge and along the river bank in Manor Park it was agreed to establish a 2m area of untrimmed vegetation at the bank edge.

At the base of the white bridge the concrete plinths supporting the bridge were a potential slip/trip hazard into the river, therefore this area will be protected by ornamental band 4 bow top fencing.

Public rescue equipment was thought to be of little effect as there had been difficulties in ensuring it was in place when needed and those untrained in using throw lines and life rings would be particularly at risk themselves when attempting to use them.

According to the Environment Agency information the River Wharfe has at the upstream end of the landing station at Wharfemeadows Park a 20% chance that the river will reach or exceed the banking at this point. This means that on average the banking level will be reached or exceeded once in any 5 year period. Data obtained from the Environment Agency from 2004 to date indicates that the river has exceeded the river bank above the weir on two occasions (10/08/04 and 08/01/05). The difficulty here is to predict flood situations and be able to effectively close the park in event of a flood. This is difficult because the river has substantial variances in flow and height, there are many entrances to the park and resources may not be available at the right time to implement physical actions on the ground. Therefore it was agreed that the solution is to make the edge of the river visible by the installation of the fencing along the wall top. Although there is no fencing on the steps area the line of the fence either side clearly defines the bank at this point.