

REPORT OF Sustainability & Climate Change Officer / Estate Manager
To: Community & Resources Committee
Subject: Installation of drinking water fountains at Victoria Park, Bideford and Westward Ho!
Date: 23/10/2023 **Reference:**

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To consider the benefit / cost of installing drinking water fountains on TDC land, aimed at reducing single-use plastic bottle consumption.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Councillor Climate Change Working Group (CCCWG) proposed that C&R consider installing drinking water fountains at Victoria Park, Bideford and Westward Ho!

2. REPORT

Context – Consumer Options

There are four main sources of the public accessing drinking water:

1. Self-sufficiency (i.e. filling from home), noting the rise of people with specific re-use water bottles and re-using plastic bottles.
2. Purchase of water from a local vendor, noting the potential issue of increased plastics use vs this being a source of sales for the vendor.
3. Provision of water fountains, as installed across various UK cities and towns, supporting direct to mouth drinking and refill provision.
4. Accessible free water top-ups from vendors. In many cases the vendor will sign up to a network such as www.refill.org.uk (as supported by Recycle Devon), with locations being notified by a window sticker or located by a smart phone app and/or website. As an example, www.refill.org.uk is supported by 19 locations in Bideford and 20 locations in Westward Ho! The café in Victoria Park Bideford will also refill water bottles free of charge.

Context – TDC Provision

As context there are TDC supported drinking water fountains, located at toilet blocks in:

- Churchfields Car Park, Appledore (TDC permitting Northam Town Council to install/maintain and TDC supporting the cost of the water).
- Westbourne Terrace, Westward Ho!



Drinking Water Fountain Types

The CCCWG discussed two types of drinking water fountain in the context of TDC land. A base unit cost is identified in the examples below, noting further comment in this paper on establishment and ongoing considerations.

1. Wall Mounted (per as at Appledore)



Acorn Thorn Wall Mounted Fountain

£305-415 + VAT



2. Free-Standing (Wessex Water installation at Minehead)



MIW Tubular Outdoor Bottle Filling Station

£2860 + VAT

Rent from £14.52

Identifying Success in Reducing Single-Use Plastic Bottle Consumption

In general, there is no data to support the success of drinking water fountains reducing single-use plastic bottle purchase. There is a presumption however that use of a fountain is replacing purchase of a single-use bottle.

There is no data to show the success of the Appledore drinking fountain, however Councillor perception is that it is well used. Feedback from officers at Northam and TDC say it is not well-used to refill water bottles and that there is a mental stigma about using drinking water from a public toilet.

Installation & Operational Funding

At present South West Water do not fund the installation of drinking water fountains - their support is for the promotion and use of Refill (the app referred to above).

Wessex Water have funded the installation of MIW drinking water fountains at numerous sites across their supply area (outside of District).

There are no identified solutions to secure funding for the installation of water fountains at present.



No consideration has been given here to installation infrastructure/costs, statutory considerations (e.g. planning as may be required, consent to connect from the water authority, health & safety), ongoing maintenance/obligations and repair/replacement. Likewise, to the provision of free access water.

Anecdotally, Northam Town Council have spent £280 (excluding time resources) on replacing parts of their drinking water fountain after breakage/vandalism.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

- Limited, noting these would be located on TDC land and assuming no infrastructure / establishment concerns.

Financial Implications

- No current budget considerations.
- Locations haven't been determined, with any additional infrastructure costs needing to be assessed.

Human Resources Implications

- Present resources are fully engaged on existing pro-active / reactive activities.

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

- No established data to support (see body text context).

Equality/Diversity

- Increasing facilities may support EDI, however supporting data is not available.

Risk Management

- Legionella and testing for cleanliness would be a requirement.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

- Targets a reduction of waste within the public sphere.

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

- No relevant impacts.

Climate Change

- No established data to support (see body text).

Ward Member and Lead Member Views

- Views sought from:
 - Cllr R Hicks, Chair of Communities & Resources (11/10/2023)
 - Cllr D Smith, Chair of Councillor Climate Change Working Group (11/10/2023)

4. CONCLUSIONS

There are several ways that decarbonisation (through bottle re-use / access to water refills) is being promoted in the wider UK sphere.

Whilst the installation of water fountains could provide an added amenity, the impacts in terms decarbonisation benefits have not been established in a meaningful manner.



There is a perception point that could be argued in promoting a reduction of single use plastic bottles.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to monitor funding availability from South West Water and others for water fountain infrastructure and provision.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations:	Date of Consultation Officers Consulted
Contact Officer:	Donna Sibley – Sustainability & Climate Change Officer Jon Wynne – Estates Manager
Background Papers:	None.

