



TOTTON DEPOT DRAINAGE - SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL ESTIMATE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 During the night of 9 January, vandals broke into Totton Depot at Hounslow and broke the optical gauge on a storage tank containing kerosene. Approximately 200 litres (40 gallons) of fuel escaped as a result and eventually drained into a stream within the site.
- 1.2 The Police were called to the incident and took immediate steps to stop the discharge. The Environment Agency, Environmental Health Officers and New Forest Commercial Services attended the site and initiated both preventative and pollution clean up works.
- 1.3 As a consequence of this event John Mascal and John Rainbow were interviewed under caution by Environment Agency staff at their Colden Common office. The transcript of the interview together with a report of the incident is currently with the Environment Agency's legal department who are considering what action is to be taken. This could be an informal written warning, a formal caution or prosecution.
- 1.4 The Environment Agency have subsequently invoiced the Council for their costs incurred which amounted to £1290.41, and this has been paid from existing budgets.

2. PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

- 2.1 The immediate action taken following the escape of fuel was to relocate the tank within a secure building so that it was less vulnerable to damage and to stand it on a suitable tray so that any leakage or spillage was contained. Temporary catchpits have also been constructed to try and capture any noxious material washed into the drains.
- 2.2 It is very important that a similar incident does not occur at any of the Council's depots in the future and therefore an audit of all fuel and chemical storage facilities plus the drainage systems has been undertaken. This has identified a number of items of work that need to be undertaken at Totton Depot.
- 2.3 The existing drainage system within this depot does not meet current design standards. Existing surface water run-off and water from the vehicle wash-down discharge via gullies and drains into a stream without being directed via properly designed and constructed petrol interceptors. Codes of practice require that commercial vehicle parking areas should be drained into systems with petrol interceptors installed before the final point of discharge.

- 2.4 In the light of the pollution that took place it is not acceptable to do nothing. The most likely source of any future pollution is as a result of vandalism and this would be almost impossible to prevent. Therefore the Council need to upgrade the drainage to minimise the risk. Should another event occur then it is almost certain that the Environment Agency would prosecute.
- 2.5 Within the depot the area adjacent to the refuelling pumps is drained via a petrol interceptor and it is proposed to relocate the vehicle washdown facility within this area to make use of this existing facility. This will improve the quality of the surface water discharge to the stream and further reduce the risk of pollution. Unfortunately the site levels do not permit the whole of the depot area to drain to this area without the installation of a pumping station. This option has been explored but is not feasible for a number of reasons.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The estimated cost of purchasing and installing a petrol interceptor and relocating the vehicle washdown facility is £19,700. This sum cannot be met from existing budgets. The maintenance budget for Totton Depot is only £3,240. There are no virements available therefore approval for a supplementary capital estimate is required.
- 3.2 If another pollution incident occurs and the Council have not taken appropriate action following this incident prosecution would almost certainly result and it would be very difficult to present an acceptable defence. Fines for polluting watercourses are significant and can be many thousands plus costs are normally awarded.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The protection of the environment is a key element of the Council's corporate objectives. It is important that action is taken to minimise future risks of pollution.

5. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Causing pollution is a criminal offence. The fact that the cause was, or could be, an act of vandalism will not necessarily prevent a successful prosecution particularly if it has happened before and all reasonable, practical, preventative measures are not in place.

6. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

- 6.1 Having considered all the relevant factors the Portfolio Holder's approval is given.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Pollution occurred at Totton Depot earlier this year as a result of vandalism. The follow up investigation has identified a number of practical measures that need to be put in place to minimise the risk of it happening again.
- 7.2 Doing nothing is not an option given the Council's high commitment to the environment and the very high risk of a successful prosecution should another pollution incident occur.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is recommended that a supplementary capital estimate of £19,700 be approved.

Further Information:

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Background Papers:

Consultancy Services File on Totton Depot