

SPLASH Management 2019 season review

Foreword

1. Fylde Council and the Friends of Promenade Gardens have worked in partnership on a community project to create a fully inclusive water play facility within a former paddling pool area on the Promenade Gardens in St Annes, which is known as SPLASH.
2. The project followed the ten stage process of the community parks improvement programme, which included a comprehensive consultation exercise, clear funding strategy and robust tender process. Officers assisted the Friends group with external funding bids and the allocation of S106 monies. Kingcombe Stonbury Ltd was awarded the construction contract in March 2018 to the total project value of £259,295.
3. Construction of SPLASH was completed in October 2018 and was followed by additional works to refurbish the facility infrastructure as well as develop marketing information to aid public use including a website, social media and signage. Operating procedures and staff training programmes were implemented to ensure safe management.
4. SPLASH was opened to the public following an official launch event on the 16th March 2019 attended by members, the 'Friends' and funding providers. This report describes Fylde Councils findings from the first operating season and summarises potential enhancements identified for 2020 following consultation with staff, visitors and residents.

Management Debrief

Operating Season and Times

5. The SPLASH operating season was set from 16th March until 29th September, with advertised opening times of 10.00am – 4.00pm. Opening times reflected the available staffing resources at the time and allowed for facility system start up and shutdown protocol including site cleansing and health and safety checks.
6. During periods of hot weather, there was an increased demand for extended opening times to allow for after schools use from Monday – Friday as well as at weekends during the school holidays when visitor levels were high.
7. Nevertheless, some local residents were concerned regarding disturbance levels from the facility and did not support the further extension of facility opening times.
8. The opening times were extended from 10.00am – 5.00pm only during the school summer holidays throughout July and August. Any consideration to changes of advertised opening times, will need to balance the needs of users alongside those of local residents.

Staffing

9. Geoff Willetts, Senior Coast and Conservation Officer was the lead officer for the day to day management of SPLASH and associated staff, with support from Mick Sumner, operations Supervisor. Both staff received formal PWTAG Pool Plant Training and a further eight staff received system operational training from the system provider.

10. Initially, one full time SPLASH Attendant was appointed through an agency to support the daily operation of the facility. Adapting to the popularity of the site and increasing levels of use, a second full time SPLASH Attendant was agreed and appointed in May.
11. The SPLASH Attendants were periodically supported by the Coast and Conservation team staff as well as Security Patrol Officers throughout the summer holidays.

Media and Communications

12. A SPLASH specific webpage was developed on the [Discover Fylde website](#) to promote the facility and provide clear information on opening times, directions and rules of use. A SPLASH Facebook page was also created to provide live updates on facility use, extended opening times where relevant and closures due to inclement weather. The Facebook page proved invaluable in obtaining visitor information and feedback. The page received 5,044 likes and 238 positive reviews and recommendations.

System Operation and Health and Safety

13. A Systems Operation Manual was developed for staff to ensure safe and effective management of the plant room, water management system and SPLASH pad. The system worked efficiently for the majority of the season without shutdown or error. In the rare occasion system failures occurred, Kingcombe Stonbury Ltd were fast to respond and effective with call outs and repairs.
14. There were issues with people thinking the facility was closed during quiet periods as they could not visibly see active water sprays. When not in use, the SPLASH effects pump shuts down and has to be reactivated by pressing the activator pads. Additional signage had to be put up explaining this.
15. Blackpool Council's Health and Safety team were requested to undertake an independent safety audit of the SPLASH facility, system and staff to determine any weaknesses in operation. No defects, errors or issues were found.

Rules and Enforcement

16. Rules of facility use were advertised on the facility webpage, Facebook page and on signage by the main entrance. There were some challenges ensuring users adhered to the rules. There are a number of reasons for this including uncontrolled entry on an open access site, some people not reading signs or some people refusing to adhere to the rules. Adding a secondary SPLASH Attendant and utilising Security Officers and Rangers to assist with enforcement and shutdown aided this. The scale and wording of site signage will need to be reviewed and more active posting on SPLASH rules is required on the SPLASH Facebook page.

Access Management

17. Despite a clearly defined entrance point into the facility and additional hedgerow planting to close the perimeter landscaping gaps, SPLASH is a largely open aspect facility. This resulted in uncontrolled access from the surrounding areas, causing problems with damaged rockeries as well as people entering the site away from the entrance point where rules signage was situated.

Visitor Count

18. Visitor numbers were consistently high throughout the season and unsurprisingly peaked during period of hot weather, weekends and school holidays. SPLASH Attendants were tasked with undertaking daily head counts to enable us to determine attendance numbers. It is difficult to do this consistently throughout the day, however the below figures provide and estimated monthly figure:

- April - 3033
- May - 1134
- June - 1503
- July - 4900
- Aug - 2300
- Sept - 150

Running Costs 2019

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|--------------------------------|---------|
| • Staffing | £13,500 |
| • Chemical and material costs | £2,500 |
| • Water and electricity costs: | £4,500 |
| • Total - | £20,500 |

Management Recommendations 2020

19. Two full time SPLASH Attendants are required to affectively and safety manage the facility throughout the season. The presence of Security Officers or Rangers at end of day closure needs to be maintained during busy periods.
20. Manage public access to the facility to aid security, reduce residential disturbance and prevent damage to perimeter rockeries and landscape. Achieve this through the installation of perimeter fencing.
21. On the completion of the fencing installation, re-establish and gap up the surrounding shrub belt to visually screen the facility, ensure privacy and aid sound absorption.
22. Install public toilets and changing facilities at an agreed location. Care needs to be taken on location. Toilets need to be close enough to ensure ease of use for families/groups with more than one child, but not too close to the entranceway that a secondary problem of bottle neck of crowding near to the main entrance and plant room occurs.
23. Facility rules of use need to be more clearly and consistently advertised. Install larger signage with revised rules. More social media activity is required to highlight rules and expected behaviour – including being mindful of noise levels in respect of local residents.
24. Members may consider the introduction of a modest entrance charge, however it is advised that this is not considered until adequate infrastructure, including toilets and fencing, are introduced.
25. The demand for extended opening times needs to be considered alongside the impact to local residents. It is advised that the facility opening times are only extended to 5.00pm during weekends and school summer holidays when the weather will allow.

26. Arrange for the Head of Parks, Leisure and Cultural Services, Parks and Coastal Services Manager and key Members to attend a meeting with representatives from the overlooking residential apartments to discuss ongoing concerns regarding SPLASH and identify any practicable mitigations.