

Sewerage Briefing Paper (Sent to Members on 26TH February 2021)

Members,

Many of you will be aware of the surface water and sewage issues that have been circulating around the Sue Noake Leisure Centre in Ystrad Mynach.

Unfortunately, there has been a lot of misleading and inaccurate information circulating on social media over recent weeks about this matter. As the facilities at this site are widely used by residents across the county borough, I thought it would be helpful if I shared with you a briefing note by way of an explanation, now that the facts are becoming clearer.

While there have been a number of disparate surface water drainage and sewage issues at the site over its history, in recent weeks many of these issues have become mistakenly combined as 'sewage' issues linked to a single Welsh Water trunk sewer manhole.

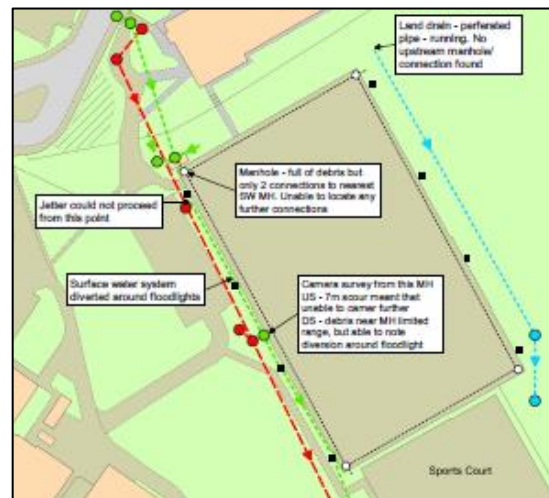
I felt it is important that I set out to Members the facts in relation to the issues at the site, update you on Welsh Waters investigations and explain the approach that will be taken from here on in.

Historic Flooding and Sewerage Issues at the Sue Noake ATP

Over recent years, the existing Astro Turf Pitch (ATP) at Sue Noake has been subject to a number of incidents involving flooding and foul contamination of the playing surface.

An investigation undertaken by the Council with the support of an external drainage expert, identified two underlying issues.

The first was a collapsed storm drain that runs the length of the ATP (see green dots in Diagram ---).



The second was traced back to a previous misconnection of foul waste from a neighbouring commercial premises to the storm water system that runs through the Sue Noake site alongside the ATP (see red dots in Diagram ---).

On occasions when the site was subject to high levels of rainfall, the increased volume of water needing to be managed caused a breach at the collapsed storm drain, with the result being the distribution of both surface water (flooding) and foul water (sewage) across the ATP surface. These issues are well documented and have been the subject of regular reports to the Council and across social media.

This matter was addressed in July 2020 when an external drainage expert, under the instruction of the neighbouring premises, remedied the misconnection, ensuring foul waste was correctly connected to the foul waste system (red dots in Diagram ---). This correction means that foul waster is now appropriately carried away and will not affect the future usage of the Astro Turf Pitch.

The Council has separately commissioned the repair of the collapsed storm line running the length of the ATP to ensure that the historic surface water flooding issues are remedied. This work will begin mid March 2021, will take approximately three to four weeks to complete and will address issues of prior surface water flooding at the ATP.

It should be noted that the flooding and sewerage issues on the ATP have at no point impacted on, or encroached, the grass pitches at the Sue Noake site.

Manhole surcharge at the site of the proposed new pitch SN2

Two manholes (located alongside X in the diagram below) sit above a mainline or trunk sewer and are the responsibility of Welsh Water.

Welsh Water have confirmed that their own records indicate that there have only been two recorded incidents of the manholes shown at X surcharging over the previous ten years. The first of these was in 2014 and the second, the most recent incident, in January 2021. Discussions with Welsh Water this week confirm this to still be the case.



The two isolated incidents at these manholes have been subsequently verified in separate conversations with the Head Teacher at Lewis Girls School and staff at Sue Noake Leisure Centre.

Leisure Centre staff have also confirmed that they have received no other reports from members of the public, dog walkers or Centre users of sewage escaping from these specific manholes during the last ten years.

When a breach of this nature occurs, particularly on a trunk sewer, Welsh Water have a number of specific responsibilities. These can be summarised as site containment, decontamination, reinstating the manholes, investigation and remediation.

With regard to the breach at Sue Noake, the area of the surcharge has been cordoned off by Welsh Water (site containment) to enable the elements to begin naturally breaking down any waste material (decontamination). The manholes have also been reinstated.

Welsh Water have commissioned contractors to visit the site this week to remove the surface debris. The Council has received an apology from Welsh Water for the delay in clearing the debris.

Welsh Water have begun a detailed investigation of the breach and will return to site this week to continue to explore both upstream and downstream using specialist camera equipment. This will enable Welsh Water to identify the cause and prescribe the necessary remedial action to clear the system and protect against future breaches.

The Council has discussed the possibility of a site visit with Welsh Water but the company have asked that they be afforded the opportunity to conclude their investigations into the surcharge before such a meeting is arranged.

I am sure that Members will fully appreciate the need to support Welsh Water in the conclusions of their detailed investigations at the site before drawing any conclusions themselves.

I will brief members once again when this work has concluded and remedial action is being developed.

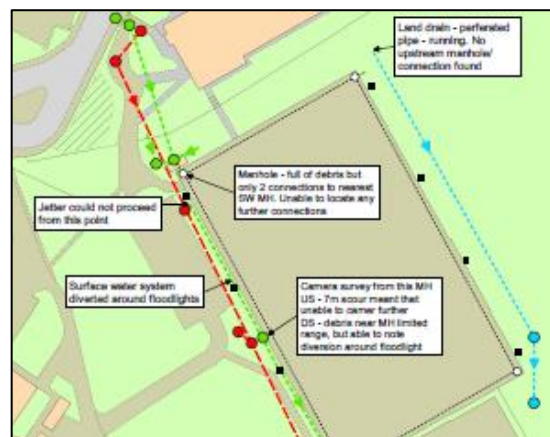
Surface Water Issues at the Sue Noake Leisure Centre

There have been a number of images circulating on social media over recent weeks showing surface water flooding at the lower end of the Sue Noake site.

It must be acknowledged that these images have followed significant and sustained periods of inclement weather and have occurred at times when multiple other locations across the County Borough and the country have been subject to surface water flooding.

As part of the mitigations being developed in relation to the proposed expansion of Trinity Fields Special School, the Council intends to install herring bone drainage beneath the proposed Sue Noake 2 pitch.

This type of drainage, consistent with that in place at the Trinity 1 pitch, can be connected to the existing land drainage pipe running across the back of the ATP pitch and away from the site (see blue dots in Diagram ---).



Drainage of this nature ensures that any surface water that may occur as a result of significant and sustained rainfall is carried away quickly and efficiently and the pitch above can become usable again very quickly thereafter.

Further Mitigation Proposal for Manholes at X

The likelihood of a reoccurrence of the recent surcharge of the manholes at **X** is considered unlikely and the frequency of reports over the last decade would appear to support this position.

The work being carried out by Welsh Water to investigate and remediate the issue would further support this position. That aside, the Council acknowledges the benefits of developing some additional safeguards to provide further assurance to the users of the site.

The Council will make an application to Welsh Water to relocate the manholes further away from the pitch.

The application will need to be considered by Welsh Water.



In the interim the Council is also exploring as part of its plans for SN2 the possibility of developing a protective 'bund' around the manholes. A 'bund', essentially, a raised grass bank will be installed between the pitch and the manholes to provide additional protections to the new pitch from any debris that may emerge should the manholes surcharge again at a future point.

Conclusion

Hopefully members will be reassured by the facts and the explanation outlined within this update. It is important to note that the appropriate responsible agencies are fully aware of the issues and are engaged with the council to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

The health and wellbeing of the community is paramount and all appropriate steps will be taken to address these issues before any proposed development takes place at this site.

Further updates will be provided as details are firmed up over the coming weeks, but please feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or questions in the meantime.

Regards

Ed Edmunds