

## Friends of Poynton Pool 2024 Annual Report



In October 2022, Cheshire East Council (CEC) announced its Poynton Pool Spillway Proposal (planning application 23/4152M) which aims to reduce any flood risk, but significantly threatens the trees and habitats in doing so. As a result, Friends of Poynton Pool (FoPP) was formed. More information about who we are and what we stand for can be found on our website [www.poyntonpool.org](http://www.poyntonpool.org).

FoPP is concerned that inaccurate and misleading data has been used as a basis for the proposed works and has tried to engage with CEC at every opportunity to ensure the works are proportionate to the risk of any flooding from the pool.

In early 2023 we worked with Poynton Town Council and other experts in their field to produce reports, including:

- An Arboricultural report which places the capital amenity value of the trees at risk between £3-5m. This value is not included in the planning application cost benefit analysis;
- A report from well-respected Professor David Ball, which highlights significant errors in the report on which the scheme is based; and
- Mark Buttle, CEng MCIWEM, who interrogated the Flood Report provided by Jacobs to CEC and wrote an open response.

We've spoken at two full Council meetings (June 2023 and January 2024), and held a further two closed meetings with them.

In July 2023 a meeting was held with CEC and their engineers Jacobs, where they acknowledged that the risk of dam failure at Poynton Pool was not 'unacceptable' but actually categorised as falling into the 'tolerable' risk zone. Despite the justification for the planning proposal changing, the application remains virtually unchanged.

Over 5,800 Cheshire East residents signed a paper petition against the works which was formally submitted to CEC on 4th October 2023.

Despite this, the planning application was launched by CEC in November 2023, and closed for comments on 10th January 2024 with approximately 1,700 comments submitted. Within the planning application the stated number of trees impacted has reduced to 31, however these figures are grossly inaccurate as advised by Cheshire Woodlands Limited and CEC's own tree officer. See our myth busting campaign, <https://poyntonpool.org/myth-busters/> for further details.

FoPP has undertaken a comprehensive review of all the documents relating to the planning application and has submitted a 52-page objection. This details our concerns regarding a range of fundamental omissions, errors, and inconsistencies in the application. On the 26th January 2024, 16 weeks after the petition was submitted to CEC, it was presented to the Economy and Growth . Sadly, the committee only

'noted' the petition without any debate. Only after the deciding vote did some councillors declare an interest in this matter, which is against the Council's code of conduct.

The planning application for Poynton Pool was heard by CEC's Strategic Planning Board on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2024 with a recommendation for approval by the Local Planning Authority case officer despite the proposal breaching 22 of CEC's own policies.

In a report to the board, CEC's case officer stated: *"The proposal results in a significant loss of trees. The loss of these trees is significantly harmful to the amenity of the local area and the non-designated heritage assets of Poynton Pool and Poynton Park."* The report also stated: *"...The identified harm is considered to be outweighed by the need for the proposal and the lack of any viable alternatives in this case."*

Stewart Tennant, chartered engineer and fellow of both the institution of structural engineers and civil engineers spoke on behalf of Friends of Poynton Pool to object to the proposals Poynton councillors Laurence Clarke, Jos Saunders, Mike Beanland and Mike Sewart also attended to object to the application.

Having raised our objections highlighting errors and inaccuracies in the application and presenting valid alternative proposals, the application was deferred for the following reasons:

1. To consider and update where necessary any inaccuracies in the submitted data to ensure modelling is accurate.
2. To review the current condition and risks associated with the existing dam wall, and the impact caused by removal of trees on the dam.
3. Encourage engagement with third parties to consider / explain alternatives.
4. To instigate a further independent review, if necessary.
5. To review the location of the proposed mitigation and consideration of any alternatives

The responsibility for addressing each of these reasons for deferral lies with officers of the local LPA who are leading the deferral process. Following a request by the LPA, Poynton Town Council and FoPP submitted reports listing the inaccuracies we had identified at the end of May 2024.

We are currently awaiting the LPA to advise of a meeting involving the Council (as applicant), FoPP, Poynton Town Council and all other interested parties to work collaboratively to address the technical issues and queries raised.

Finally, I would personally like to acknowledge and thank those people who have made donations that have funded our group activities, enabling us to raise awareness and challenge this application, the ongoing support from Poynton Town Council and last but not least the hard work and support from our amazing group of volunteers.

Mike Ellison  
Chairman  
On behalf of Friends of Poynton Pool

