

The Council has been aware of public desire to see investment and improvement in the facilities at Earlswood Lakes. Working together, the Council's Property and Parks & Countryside teams carried out a tender exercise in late 2015 to identify a service provider to work with the Council to provide investment, catering and leisure facilities at the site.

Following consultation with key Councillors and local Ward Members, the Council announced in December 2015 that a new service provider would be providing a catering service from January 2016 with boating activities to commence later. Following further consultation with key councillors, an Easter start date for the boating was recently announced.

We understand some users of the site are concerned about the impact boating may have on the wildlife and about health and safety. The Byelaws of the Common permit boating activities with the Council's consent. The Management Plan for the Common includes a vision statement which promotes both existing formal and informal recreational activities and the creation of "*opportunities for local people to enjoy and understand the natural and historic environment of Common, which encourage appropriate use by all sectors of the local population*".

Both the Council and new operators have researched the impact of recreational boating on wildlife, which concluded that boat users and wildlife can enjoy the lake together, as they do in many other locations both within the region and nationally. There is no statutory requirement that prevents the two uses together or requires environmental or ecological surveys be undertaken. However both the Council and the boating operator know how important the Lake's wildlife is and have agreed actions that exceed any statutory requirements. This includes exclusion zones to protect nesting birds and provide ample area for birds to use the water without coming into contact with boats. Boat users will be monitored and all users must be considerate to the wildlife and other boat users. Anyone breaching the exclusion zone or conducting themselves in a way that could reasonably be considered to negatively impact on the wildlife or others will be removed from the Lake. All boat users aged under 14 and non-swimmers must wear buoyancy aids and children must be accompanied by an adult. Boats will also be moored offshore when not in use. These measures aim to ensure that the boating is considerate to the resident wildlife and minimises the risk of a health and safety occurrence.

The Council and operator will monitor the boating activities and any impacts will be mitigated via the Management Plan to ensure uses complement each other.