

CASE STUDY



Blue Boar Contracts helps Cheltenham Borough Council restore a grade two listed park to its former glory

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**Geoff Beer - Senior Engineer, Design Services Section
Built Environment Division, Cheltenham Borough Council**



Cheltenham Borough Council

Cheltenham is known as 'the garden town of England' and its parks, gardens and tree lined avenues are nationally recognised as some of the best in the country. Pittville Park - which was opened in 1825 and has a Grade Two listing under the English Heritage register of historic parks and gardens - is the largest ornamental park in the town. It offers a wide range of sporting and leisure activities, as well as featuring a magnificent pump room and the beautiful Pittville upper and lower lakes.

Sadly, time had taken its toll on Pittville Lakes and in 2004 it became apparent that some renovation work was required. The lakes had silted up very badly and in addition, blue green algae had also been found in the area, causing major concern for local residents. As well as being a potential health-risk, this also affects the whole ecology of the lake and results in generally poor water quality.

To rectify these issues, Cheltenham Borough Council embarked upon a scheme to bring Pittville Lakes back to their former glory - a major two-stage project involving the de-silting of both the upper and the lower lakes. Geoff Beer, Senior Engineer for the Design Services section within the Built Environment division of the Council, takes up the story:



“This was a major project for us involving many separate elements. Not only did we have to find a way to remove the excess silt in both lakes, we also had to solve the problem of what to do with it once it had been removed! Phase One of the project commenced in 2004 with the upper lake and we made the decision that we would manage the process of finding a home for the silt ourselves, which turned out to be a real headache. So when it came to Phase Two, which commenced in August 2005, we realised that we needed to work with a company who could look after everything for us. Paying the additional cost to have all aspects of the project fully managed was definitely preferable to all the problems we experienced during Phase One.

We went out to tender in February 2005, although in reality there are only a very small number of companies in the UK who would be capable of carrying out a project of this nature – and ultimately chose Blue Boar Contracts based on their ability to do a good job. They were also technically sound and the best value”



Blue Boar started work in August 2005 with the construction of a 420m long temporary haul road through the park to take the silt away in tipper lorries. A temporary bypass culvert was constructed to convey the through-flow from Wyman's Brook around the lower lake whilst the work was going on, thus isolating the lake during de-silting and preventing any pollution problems from passing on downstream. Then, after the removal of all the fish from the lower lake – including many large carp – the de-silting began in October 2005. This was completed by early January 2006, by which time 8,375m³ of silt had been removed from the 5.56 acre lake.

Blue Boar used their own specialist equipment to carry out the work required. This included a floating pontoon which could move the excavator around the lake - with retractable legs which could be lowered to the lake bed as required to stabilise the pontoon when the excavator was in use. The silt was then placed into barges and transported back to the lake shore for unloading into tipper trucks, which then carried the silt away.

As already mentioned by Geoff, one of the main challenges with a project of this nature is what to do with the silt that is removed. Sending it to land-fill is not only expensive but is also a huge waste of what is usually excellent-quality material to spread on farmland. As part of the contract, Blue Boar negotiated with local farmers to identify suitable agricultural land onto which the silt could be placed - thus not only solving a huge headache for Cheltenham Borough Council, but also enhancing the local environment by providing agricultural benefit.

But it is not just as simple as finding land and tipping the silt into it, as before this can take place the silt has to be analysed to ensure that it is suitable for use on agricultural land. Once this has been done, an application then has to be submitted to the environment agency for a 'waste management license exemption' which demonstrates that the silt will provide agricultural benefit and so allows it to be placed onto the land. Geoff Beer concludes:

“Blue Boar managed everything for us and it was so much easier than Phase One. Having a company who could look after everything made a real difference for us and they completed the project efficiently and on schedule with no problems at all. They also negotiated with land owners to arrange payment for use of the land and even undertook the waste management license exemption application.

I was very satisfied with the work that Blue Boar carried out and with their overall service. The whole project went smoothly from start to finish and was definitely far less hassle than Phase One, thanks to the fact that they handled everything for us. At the start of the project there was some concern from the local community that the works would be disruptive, causing noise, smell and pollution, but these fears were unfounded. The whole thing was carried out with very little negative effect on the surrounding area or on the local residents.

We do not have any more lakes which require de-silting, but if we did, Blue Boar would definitely be invited to tender again. They were very co-operative and a very good company to work with.”



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