

Canterbury Society – Broad Oak Reservoir Amenities & Facilities survey responses

26th March 2025

1. How do you, or the members of your organisation, currently use the site and local area, and what do you value about the site?

The Broad Oak area has long been valued as a natural space for learning, conservation, and recreation. It was home to the Canterbury Environmental Education Centre (CEEC), also known locally as the Field Study Centre, which provided hands-on environmental education for decades until its closure in 2011 due to KCC budget cuts.

The CEEC was hugely successful and widely used, delivering:

- Over 4,000 school visits per year, providing practical environmental education.
- Learning experiences for all ages, from primary schools to university research groups.
- Conservation activities, including biodiversity monitoring and habitat management.
- Public engagement events, including guided walks, talks, and outdoor learning sessions.

For a relatively small operating cost (£105,000 per year, with a £50,000 funding shortfall), the CEEC provided huge educational and environmental benefits. Its closure left a major gap in Canterbury's outdoor learning provision - one that Broad Oak Reservoir could now fill.

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Walks and being with nature

2. What facilities would you like to see at Broad Oak Reservoir, and why?

Fishing, sailing, walking and cycle routes, picnic areas, shop/visitor centre, education centre, car and cycle parking.

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Broad Oak Reservoir should include an environmental education centre, ensuring that future generations have access to the same valuable learning experiences once provided by the CEEC.

I support:

- A dedicated environmental education centre, providing school visits, guided tours, and interactive exhibits on water conservation and biodiversity.
- Outdoor learning spaces, including nature trails, observation points, and pond-dipping areas.
- Collaborations with local schools, universities, and conservation groups, ensuring the site is an educational asset, not just for recreation.
- Interpretive signage and visitor engagement programmes, helping the public understand water sustainability and habitat protection.

Given that the CEEC successfully operated at Broad Oak for decades, it is entirely reasonable to reintroduce similar provision as part of the reservoir project.

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- I would like to see facilities in keeping with the surroundings and well landscaped,
- animal friendly, and safe for kids and all visitors;
- facilities and amenities to promote good health and active travel;
- facilities and amenities that can be accessed and used by all;
- educational facilities
- all facilities and amenities well maintained with a robust maintenance plan in place to ensure the facilities and amenities and surroundings remain to a high standard and are inviting and safe to the user / visitor.

3. What facilities would you not like to see at Broad Oak Reservoir, and why?

- Large-scale commercial developments (e.g., retail outlets, amusement attractions) that would detract from the educational and ecological focus of the site.
- Motorised water sports that could disturb wildlife and compromise conservation aims.
- Over-expansion of infrastructure (e.g. excessive car parking), which could urbanise the site rather than enhance its natural setting.

The CEEC operated successfully without high-impact tourism, demonstrating that a low-intervention educational model can thrive.

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Large corporations / chains, the facilities should promote local businesses.

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- Motorised water sports or fuel powered motorised bikes;
- Facilities that encourage anti-social behaviour and make the area feel unsafe;
- Large business brands / chains – promote local businesses;
- Facilities that are not well maintained;
- Facilities that are not oversized and as such not used and run down;
- Facilities that consider fauna i.e lighting impacting on bats;

4. Do you favour a low, medium, or high impact model?

I support a medium-impact model, focusing on educational access, conservation, and sustainable recreation.

This model would:

- Allow school and public engagement without commercial overdevelopment.
- Support guided educational activities, not just unstructured visitor access.
- Include nature-based recreation (walking, cycling, birdwatching) while protecting biodiversity.

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The CEEC operated within this balance, proving that education and conservation can coexist successfully.

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Low/medium impact

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For the scenarios for the amenities and facilities it is important that these are scaled down to the minimum not exploited as will be the case for the 'medium' and 'high' Scenarios. If the facilities are exploited, especially as per the high-intensity version, this will inevitably cause the whole area to become urbanised, drawing in more traffic, more activity etc. In effect Broad Oak will cease to be a rural village and will instead become part of the Canterbury urban area. Not good for the environment. And especially the wildlife

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Low impact with this growing if successful and the surrounding infrastructure can support to medium impact. However, any proposal must be well maintained.

5. What are your hopes and concerns for the reservoir project?

Hopes:

- That Broad Oak Reservoir restores the hands-on learning and educational opportunities lost when the CEEC closed.
- That it becomes a regional leader in environmental education, just as the CEEC once was.
- That it prioritises sustainability, avoiding commercial pressures that could compromise its long-term value.

Concerns:

- That the site may become over-commercialised, focusing on visitor numbers rather than meaningful education.
- That funding constraints could lead to lost opportunities, just as they did with the CEEC.
- That local infrastructure could struggle if high-impact tourism is prioritised over sustainable access.

The Broad Oak Reservoir is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to correct the mistake of closing the CEEC and create a new centre for environmental learning and engagement.

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Provision of an amazing outdoor space with facilities for everyone.

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I find the proposal to divert the Sarre Penn to run alongside the lake rather odd, especially the zigzag path where it drops down across the contours to meet the original course, to the east of the main dam. I find it hard to understand what this would look like in reality

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Probably the most concerning feature of the whole development is the water treatment works which is plonked down in the middle of the valley between the dam and the Herne Bay Rd at Calcott. This has the potential to be a particularly intrusive blot on the landscape here, certainly the indicative plan suggests so. The location of the treatment works and any structures and facilities needs to be sensitively integrated into the topography here and not plonked down like a great big industrial building.

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Hopes:

- High quality, innkeeping and well maintained facilities and amenities;
- Facilities and amenities for all (access and use);
- Educational facilities;
- Promote local businesses (varying sizes of tenancy / retail units)
- Sensitive to the surrounding and reducing impact to wildlife;
- A sensible design that has a fully coordinated and considerate design including impact on existing surrounding infrastructure

Concerns:

- A greater than low intensity of use may not occur therefore facilities and amenities would be unused and causing unneeded negative impact to the environment and build cost;
 - Build cost and maintenance costs;
 - Impact on surrounding infrastructure;
 - Impact to flora and fauna.
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