

# Appendix 1: NORTHBROOK PARK PROPOSAL DELIVERY UPDATE

June 2022, Anya Oliver

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## 1. Introduction and purpose

In Spring 2021 Exeter City Council and Devon Wildlife Trust undertook a joint consultation on the proposal for Northbrook Park to be developed into a wild arboretum and accessible community greenspace. In October 2021 ECC's Executive committee approved in principle that we progress to the next steps of delivery planning for Northbrook Park, subject to a more detailed proposal being returned to Executive at a future date.

The principal partners to this project are Exeter City Council and Devon Wildlife Trust, working together under the terms of the Valley Parks Committee MoU. We expect to agree similar partnership agreements with Devon County Council and others as needed.

This update note sets out a detailed, phased project delivery proposal for ECC to consider. We propose to put in place an Interim Management Agreement for DWT to manage the greenspace during the delivery of a project of capital works. ECC and DWT will work in partnership to deliver the project and to develop a long-term management agreement. The project will incorporate a package of support, including funding, for both the capital project delivery, and for longer-term management of the site by DWT.

This update should be read with the accompanying project budget.

The principal source of funding for this work is expected to be Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This paper will help inform the proposal made to the ECC Exec for CIL funding for the project.

## 2. Update

Since October 2021 there have been developments to some of the elements of the core proposal as follows:

### Paths and routes:

ECC and DWT Officers met with Devon County Council Officers in May 2022 to discuss options for travel connections through the site with the intention of developing these options in greater detail as part of an integrated travel proposal. *The updated proposal assumes that there will be significant upgrade to cycling routes through the site that will be led by DCC and funded through separate sources.*

### Northbrook stream:

The Naturalising Exeter's Waterways ('NEW') partnership project (ECC, DWT, DCC and Environment Agency) has assessed the feasibility of a number of options to address the poor environmental status of the Northbrook stream. These have arisen as a result of chronic poor water quality leading to a significant reduction in biodiversity value and public



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appreciation of the stream. In addition the heavily engineered and modified catchment leads to increase flood risk to properties downstream. Our objective is to resolve these issues through integrated nature based solutions. In the most recent phase of this work a river restoration proposal within the reach of the stream through Northbrook Park has been identified; the outline proposal is to realign and regrade the channel with meanders and a series of connecting wetland areas. This proposal requires further feasibility and detailed design work. In particular the solution will need to address the significant technical challenge of problems associated with the Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) in this reach. *The NEW project proposal provides enough information for access and visitor flow-routes through the park to take account of and 'future proof' for Northbrook stream interventions.*

## **Car-park and building:**

Earlier this year a new gate was installed by ECC at the car-park entrance as a security measure to prevent unmanaged access to the car-park.

Unfortunately the building has recently been subject to some vandalism.

The car-park is occasionally used as a compound for near-by civil engineering works.

The existing outline proposal for the old golf-club-house building is to become part of a 'learning hub' to support low-key learning activities on site. DWT's proposal needs to be developed in greater detail and this will be led by DWT's Discover Nature Manager in close consultation with partners including ECC and local communities.

Some car-parking space is likely to be retained for accessibility to the site long-term. A detailed proposal is required for the car-park area to ensure appropriate car-parking is retained and designed to integrate with the site and its uses and audiences.

*The partners propose a phased approach to development of the building and car-park. We have identified a programme of short-term use of the facilities supported by an appropriate agreement. We hope to reduce anti-social behaviour by bringing the building back into use. The temporary programme will also enable the partners to build a longer term plan based on feedback from trial programmes onsite.*

## **3. Outline phasing**

In October we set out some next steps to progress the development of plans for Northbrook Park and move into a delivery phase. These steps are set expanded here into more detailed phases. The phases don't follow consecutively, there is some overlap between them. In summary the phases are:

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- **P1 Development:** Partners agree the budget and outline project plan as well as management agreements. The project is developed in detail with other partners. An Interim Management Agreement is put in place (for at least four years), and the principles for formal long term arrangements are agreed).
- **P2 Tactical delivery:** Some smaller-scale tree planting and access works are agreed to generate community support and engagement. Includes a short-term agreement on use of the building for outreach activities.
- **P3 Infrastructure delivery:** Major access routes, paths, and other infrastructure improvements are delivered around the main park site.
- **P4 Habitats delivery:** Programme of habitat enhancements (involving local communities).
- **P5 Management / ongoing development:** This phase includes the transition from the initial capital project to DWT managing the site (under the Interim Agreement). Linked projects around the long term use of the building and the Northbrook stream will continue as separate strands.

The phases are set out in more detail below.

## 3.1. Phase 1 Development

Elements of this phase have already commenced. Some *key decisions* are required during this phase for the project to be delivered in full.

Note that we have identified the need for an Interim Management Agreement (to cover a proposed period of approximately four years) for DWT to manage the main area of greenspace and to lead project activities on-site. We expect this Interim Agreement to be enacted swiftly. We also envisage the partners will formally agree with their respective Boards that a Long-term Management Agreement will be put in place at the end of the term of the Interim Agreement (and this intention to be set out in an MoU). This approach allows:

- The project to start on site within the 22/23 financial year
- DWT to manage the project onsite as well as the land under the terms of the agreement
- The CIL funding identified to cover project costs as well as a transition-period of DWT management costs up until a long-term agreement is signed
- DWT to identify and secure additional funding for the project from Charitable Trusts and other smaller scale funding opportunities.

The building and car-park will be excluded from the Interim Management Agreement and will remain the responsibility of ECC. However we expect to agree terms for short-term use of these facilities for the partners and project team whilst a longer-term plan for these facilities are developed. Costs of this are included in the budget (under phase 2). The facilities are expected to be included in the long-term agreement.

**Phase 1 budget:** *The full budget includes project-delivery funding only in the first year (phases 1 and 2). In phase 1 this includes DWT staff time and legal costs.*

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Key elements of Phase 1 will be as follows:

Element	Actions		Who / When	Products
Project budget	- Fully costed budget agreed – detailing all income and expenditure.		ECC/DWT/(DCC): Summer 2022	Budget
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CIL funding confirmed</li> <li>- Funding plan in place for securing other income lines</li> <li>- Fundraising activities (for phase 4)</li> </ul>		ECC/DWT/(DCC): [September 2022? ECC Exec] DWT	CIL confirmation  Funding plan
Development, working groups	- Establish working groups to develop detailed plans for core programme delivery elements (including integrated transport planning with DCC)		ECC/DWT/DCC/other partners and stakeholders From summer 2022	Working Groups (Terms of Ref)
Communications / community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a communications and stakeholder plan</li> <li>- Community involvement in planning and co-creation</li> </ul>		Officers ECC/DWT: Summer 2022 Autumn/winter 2022/23	Comms plan
Management agreement for site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agree options / principles for DWT long-term site-management</li> <li>- Partners gain in-principle agreement from Boards (DWT Board / ECC Cabinet) for long-term mgt agreement – establish overarching MOU</li> </ul> <p>(Long-term management agreement to be developed and to gain full approval from partner Boards in parallel with other phases for adoption at the end of Interim Agreement term. Long term agreement will include terms for building/car-park).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agree terms of Interim Management Agreement (eg 4 years)</li> <li>- Full approval from partner Boards as required</li> <li>- Enact Interim Mgt Agreement in time for [P3?]</li> <li>- Enact short-term building-car-park licence[ (eg 6 months)]</li> </ul>	Officers ECC/DWT: Summer 2022  Boards ECC/DWT: Autumn 2022?  Team and timetable tbc.	Interim Management Agreement  Building/car-park agreement (temporary)  MoU for key terms of long-term agreement

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## 3.2. Phase 2 Tactical delivery

Whilst the capital project is under development, we have identified key essential and enabling works or ‘quick wins’. These projects will help refine the vision, make targeted site improvements, enable diverse and new audiences to be engaged, and to extend our understanding of how the site is being used. Example elements identified:

- **Agree grass cutting regime:** agree a scaled back grass cutting regime in response to feedback and to help formalise access desire lines (*Summer*)
- **Install dog-bin:** this will help manage the growing issue of dog-waste currently on-site
- **Short-term programme to use the building:** following an initial assessment of the building and its condition we propose to develop a temporary agreement to use these facilities for activities to help support the overall project development
- **Tree surgery/pruning to improve access:** for example facilitating safe pedestrian access from Topsham Road, expanding visibility splays for cyclists at the larger access bridge by pruning laurel bushes (which impede access and create a sharp corner) and high-pruning boundary trees to improve light levels and reduce risk of anti-social behaviour (*from Autumn*)
- **Small scale native-tree planting:** to compensate for any tree/shrub removal and increase canopy cover on site we will undertake some high profile native tree-planting with communities in selected areas of the site (*from Autumn*).

The partners will agree a timetable to expedite this programme of delivery from the Summer. This work is likely to occur in advance of the Interim Management Agreement, and will therefore require partners to agree which organisations will lead each element.

The short-term agreement over use of the building will need to go through due process and be formalised as a discrete agreement (as part of phase 1).

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**Phase 2 budget:** *The full budget includes project-delivery funding only in the first year (phases 1 and 2). In phase 2 this includes DWT staff time and delivery costs associated with the elements set out above.*

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## 3.3. Phase 3 Delivery (access infrastructure)

This phase will establish the principal access routes around the site and key infrastructure, addressing key feedback around accessibility raised during the public consultation, including:

- New/improved access and welcome points and pedestrian and cycling routes through the site
- Improved boundary/access between the building, car-park area, and greenspaces
- Informal trails around the site
- Access furniture to include in-keeping signage, benches, dog-bin etc
- Cycle racks.

**Phase 3 budget:** *In the second year of project delivery (phases 3 and 4) we anticipate the Interim Management Agreement to be in place and for DWT to be managing the site. Therefore the budget includes project delivery costs as well as management costs in this phase.*

*Note that the budget for phase 3 has been developed based on early assumptions about type, length and cost of path upgrade required, in consultation with colleagues at DCC. Whilst exact solutions and detailed budgets need to be developed and funding streams agreed, the budget provides a well-informed cost envelope. There will be some flexibility and tolerance to the finalised solutions, budgets and funding streams that will be able to absorb changes as plans develop.*

## 3.4. Phase 4 Delivery (habitats and engagement)

This phase will complete the vision of a wild arboretum and community space including:

- Parkland tree and orchard planting

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- Meadow creation
- Pond creation
- Features and pause points (eg natural log benches and interpretation) to support people's enjoyment.

**Phase 4 budget:** *The budget for this phase includes project delivery costs as well as management costs.*

*The budget includes delivery of habitats by contractors as well as time invested in community engagement, and delivery of habitat work by communities.*

*DWT will raise funds through additional sources to add value to this phase.*

### 3.5. Phase 5 Management and ongoing development

Once the main site is established ongoing maintenance and enhancement work is essential. Elements of this phase include:

- Management and maintenance of the site
- Community engagement – attracting new and diverse audiences
- Develop long term plans for the building and car-park (sub-project)
- Progress river restoration plans for the Northbrook stream (associated project).

**Phase 5 budget:** *The main project delivery will be complete. DWT will be managing the site (under the Interim Agreement) for the remainder of this phase, which is three years. The CIL funding request includes a commuted sum to cover the management costs during this period.*

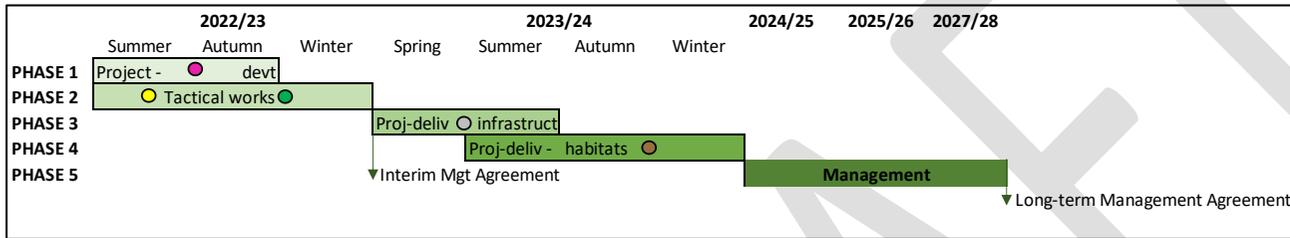
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## 3.6. Timeline

There will be some overlap between these phases and delivery is dependent on funding and other factors. Whilst funding and working groups are established, this provides an outline timeline proposal to aim for:



This phasing allows for some time- or season-specific elements, for example:

- Early tactical-delivery on site over Summer (Yellow dot)
- Agreement of CIL funding by ECC Exec in September 2022 (Pink dot)
- Tactical tree-works Autumn/Winter 2022/23 (Green dot)
- Main infrastructure works Summer 2023 (Grey dot)
- Main habitat works Winter 2023 (Brown dot)

CIL funding has been identified as a core income stream to support project development, project delivery and a contribution toward ongoing support for management by DWT. Other cash income and in-kind contributions will also support the project. This is detailed in Section 4.

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## 4. Costs and funding

### 4.1. Project costs

The overall project costs and associated income can be aligned with the phases:

Phase	Costs	£	Income
1 Development	Project management costs (DWT), legal costs, and DWT and other partners' contributions in time (in-kind-contribution IKC)	£17,341	CIL / IKC
2 Tactical delivery	Some infrastructure costs and tree-works delivered by ECC/contractors and DWT, costs associated with opening building	£25,635	CIL / IKC
3 Infrastructure	Main infrastructure works including access and paths. Management costs for DWT (under Interim Agreement)	£100,150	CIL / DCC sources / IKC
4 Habitats	Main habitat works led by DWT. DWT management costs. Legal costs associated with Long-term agreement	£67,110	CIL / other sources / IKC
5 Management	Revenue costs associated with management including staff time and contractors	£78,346	CIL (contribution) DWT
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£288,583</b>	

The timeline above allows for CIL funding to be released in the Autumn so that the project development and tactical delivery can be funded. Other income streams for phases 3 and 4 can continue to be agreed with partners (eg DCC) and sourced through fundraising (DWT).

The draft budget sets out capital costs for two years of project development and delivery, with a total cost of around £185,000. The total project/capital funding from ECC is around £119k, 64% of the project delivery cost.

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This budget *excludes* costs associated with ash tree removal, and the Northbrook stream project, both of which are to be funded separately.

The budget *includes* costs associated with re-opening the building and car-park on a temporary basis, but *excludes* large capital and long term costs associated with these, as the proposal and costs have yet to be developed.

The draft budget *assumes* that DWT will provide an in-kind contribution of 25% toward DWT staff costs. The budget does not include the costs of any other partner staff time.

We have *assumed* a contribution by DCC / funds identified by DCC to strategic cycle routes but *this has not yet been formally proposed*.

We have also built in some fundraising time and an assumption that external grant funding can be secured towards habitat enhancement and community engagement.

## 4.2. Commuted sum

We propose that in addition to the capital project costs a commuted sum of [approximately] £104,000 is granted to DWT as part of the management agreement. This will cover approximately four years of management costs (estimated at £25,500 p/a based on current costs).

## 4.3. Total cost

The total of the project delivery cost (£184,637) plus the commuted sum for management costs (£103,946) is **£288,583**.

## 4.4. Total funding

The total request for CIL funding is **£222,615** (77% of the total cost)

Other sources of funding (expected to be secured) total £65,968.

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## 4.5. Budget

COSTS	EXPENDITURE									INCOME												
	PROJECT					MANAGEMENT				TOTAL	SOURCES	PROJECT					MANAGEMENT					
	2022/2023		2023/2024			2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2022/2023			2023/2024		%	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	%				
PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	SUB-TOTAL	PHASE 5			PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	SUB-TOTAL	PHASE 5			TOTAL						
DWT staff time	8,341	4,584	3,046	7,036	23,008						DWT	2,085	2,346	1,985	3,008	9,424	5%					
Engineering and infrastructure	0	0	15,140	0	15,140						ECC (CIL)	15,256	23,289	43,365	36,759	118,668	64%	25,600	26,112	26,634		
Tree surgery	0	4,920	0	0	4,920						DCC*	0	0	42,000	0	42,000	23%					
Tree planting	0	1,200	0	6,600	7,800						Grant/other	0	0	0	14,544	14,544	8%					
Path creation	0	0	60,000	0	60,000																	
Other habitats	0	0	0	15,288	15,288																	
Other features	0	0	0	7,200	7,200																	
Building and car-park costs	0	12,600	1,224	1,248	15,072																	
Legal and other costs	9,000	0	0	12,000	21,000																	
PHASE SUB-TOTAL	17,341	23,304	79,410	49,373	169,428																	
CONTINGENCY 10% (P2-P4)	0	2,330	7,941	4,937	15,209																	
<b>PROJECT TOTAL</b>	<b>17,341</b>	<b>25,635</b>	<b>87,350</b>	<b>54,310</b>	<b>184,637</b>				<b>184,637</b>	<b>184,637</b>	<b>PROJECT TOTAL</b>	<b>17,341</b>	<b>25,635</b>	<b>87,350</b>	<b>54,310</b>	<b>184,637</b>						
Management costs (DWT) from P3			12,800	12,800	25,600	25,600	26,112	26,634			ECC (CIL)			12,800	12,800	25,600		25,600	26,112	26,634		78,346
<b>MANAGEMENT TOTAL</b>			<b>12,800</b>	<b>12,800</b>	<b>25,600</b>	<b>25,600</b>	<b>26,112</b>	<b>26,634</b>		<b>103,946</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT TOTAL</b>											<b>103,946</b>
<b>PHASE TOTAL</b>	<b>17,341</b>	<b>25,635</b>	<b>100,150</b>	<b>67,110</b>	<b>210,237</b>			<b>78,346</b>			<b>ECC (CIL) TOTAL</b>											<b>222,615</b>
<b>TOTAL COSTS</b>										<b>288,583</b>	<b>OTHER SOURCES TOTAL</b>					65,968						<b>288,583</b>
											<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>											<b>288,583</b>

\*DCC funding: this assumes that DCC will identify separate funding for costs associated with significant cycle-path upgrades. This funding has not yet been agreed.

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## 5. Risks

A full risk register will need to be developed as part of the project. The principal risks associated with the delivery proposal set out here are:

### **Risk of phased approach, to long term objective**

This proposal assumes that the partners will agree the principles of a long-term management agreement for the site and work together towards this aim. There is some risk that the long-term agreement will not be achieved following delivery of the capital project. This is low-probability due to the good working partnership between the parties and the precedent set by the lease arrangements on the Valley Parks (totalling 50 hectares, 50 times the size of this site), as well as the considerable investment by the partners to deliver the capital works. *The risk can be mitigated by the long term objectives being agreed in principle and set out in a robust MoU or similar.*

### **Risk of funding gap**

The proposal asks for 77% of the total cost from CIL. This leaves a funding gap of nearly £66k unsecured. However, a considerable amount of the remaining funding (8%) will be fulfilled by DWT's contribution of staff time, as well as a fundraising target, which is very low-risk. We aim to secure funding via DCC for strategic transport connections, for the remaining 15%. The estimated costs of this part of the scheme could be scaled down in consultation with partners, if sufficient funding can not be identified. There is a contingency budget of 10% of costs within the capital budget. *The risk associated with the small funding gap can be mitigated by partnership budgetary management.*

These risks should be balanced against the risks of failing to find a solution to progressing the delivery of the proposal first set out in 2020, and consulted on in early 2021. These include reputational risks to the partners as well as practical management risks such as anti-social behaviour associated with the site (especially the building and car-park, not being actively managed).

## 6. Roles and consultation

The primary project partners are Exeter City Council and Devon Wildlife Trust. Both partners have developed excellent working relationships to progress Valley Park and associated site enhancement.

We have begun consulting with Devon County Council on strategic transport links.

The public consultation in 2021 has established community engagement which will be continued during the project's development.

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Key officers involved to date include:

DWT	Pete Burgess, Director of Nature Recovery	Anya Oliver, Business Development Officer
	Chris Moulton, Valley Parks Ranger	Dean Holland, Discover Nature Manager
ECC	Dave Bartram, Director of Net Zero and City Management	Daryl Taylor-Hopgood, Engineer
DCC	Zsolt Schuller (consulted)	
WSP	Peter Knight (consulted)	

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