

Part A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: Monday, 4 October 2021

**Report author: Contract Manager - Parks and Streetcare,
Temporary Parks Project Manager**

Title: Rediscovering the River Colne Programme 2021-2031

Nature of Report: Key Decision

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report recommends the approval in principle of a 10 year programme and proposals to restore the River Colne, a key feature of Watford's landscape, to improve water quality, biodiversity, access and engagement and ultimately wellbeing for all.

1.2 The report sets out the proposals for the first three years of the programme.

1.3 To develop the proposals, supporting programme and action plan, significant work has been undertaken for the Council by Groundwork a national network of environmental charities working to change places and change lives. They also host ColneCAN (The River Colne Catchment Action Network) caring for the whole catchment area of the River Colne. This work has included engagement with a range of stakeholders and partners since 2019, including a public consultation in 2019.

1.4 This programme contributes to a number of the council's strategies, priorities and commitments as listed below;

- The Mayor's Manifesto 2018 -2022
- Watford Together Delivery Plan 2020-2024 – A Healthy, Happy Town 2020-2024
- Sustainability Strategy 2020 -2023
- Watford Riverwell Regeneration Project 2015-2035

1.5 The programme will deliver four work streams designed to improve the river, access to it, and a number of engagement activities with the public to promote use and understanding of the river and the environment;

Work stream 1: Environmental Improvement

Work stream 2: Landscape and Access Improvement

Work stream 3: Environmental Monitoring

Work stream 4: Engagement

- 1.6 The 10 year programme has a total estimated cost of £2.8M. The first three years of the programme are estimated to cost just over £1.2M. The council has committed capital funding of £750,000 between 2021 and 2024 with the remaining funding for that period coming from stakeholders and external funders. £124,925 has already been obtained and the remaining match funding of £335,301 is being sought to cover the full cost via a fundraising strategy and applications to various organisations. Any shortfall will see works prioritised to derive the optimum benefit for the funding within the four work streams.
- 1.7 Groundwork South and Groundwork East have been appointed under two procurement exemptions to manage the delivery phase of this programme from 2021-2022. These appointments include managing works, community engagement and fundraising. Watford is covered by Groundwork East which has partnered the council many times and is working on the engagement elements of the Rediscovering the River Colne programme. The wider Colne Catchment Action Network is hosted by Groundwork South which has greater in-river experience and is therefore leading on this element.
- 1.8 A procurement exercise will be conducted for the works to be carried out from 2022 - 2024
- 1.9 There is a strong environmental and social case for the programme as it will improve the environment, enable access to the river and deliver a number of engagement activities for the public to connect with their environment.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Strategic programme partners change or withdraw from programme	Programme delayed or stopped	Effective governance, commissioning and partnership agreements	Treat	2x 3 = 6

A suitable specialist provider is not procured to develop the strategy and deliver the project	Insufficient expertise to deliver the programme to a high standard and achieve desired outcomes	Groundwork South and Groundwork East appointed as delivery partners to date. A robust procurement exercise will be undertaken for works from 2022	Treat	2 x 3 = 6
Key programme delivery partners do not have the capacity to support and implement the different stages of the project	The programme is not delivered to its full potential	Ensure effective project management to identify clear work streams for each delivery partner and agree realistic commitments in advance. Effective governance and commissioning of services	Treat	2 x 2 = 4
There is a lack of financial resource to deliver the programme	The programme is not delivered to its full potential	Obtain cost estimates, identify external funding opportunities and delivery of the programme is phased over a number of years. Fundraising strategy included as part of the programme. Prioritisation process to deliver optimum benefit for available funding	Treat	3 x 2 = 6
National Legislation or policy change in relation to Water Framework Directive and achievement	Higher or lower standards and targets for water quality may be imposed or timescales for compliance may be changed impacting	Currently nothing has been raised and national policy and legislation is moving in a direction to support nature recovery. Effective programme	Treat	2 x 1 = 2

of 'Good' water quality status over the 10 year lifecycle	on proposals and delivery timescales	governance and monitoring		
Stakeholders will not be fully engaged, cooperative or supportive	A strategy that does not reflect stakeholder views, requirements and expectations	Ensure thorough and extensive stakeholder engagement, identifying and contacting these early in the programme development and throughout programme lifecycle. Effective governance	Treat	2 x 2 = 4
Physical works not able to be carried out on site due to technical constraints	The programme is not delivered to its full potential	Effective governance, programme management and collaboration with key partners. Permitting process to be followed with Environment Agency	Treat	2 x 3 = 6
Programme and staff continuity	Disrupted delivery, change in programme, funding availability and political support	Effective governance and monitoring. Effective documentation management to ensure continuity.	Treat	2 x 2 = 4
Climate change event during programme	Disrupts delivery, additional cost, changes planned works, damage to completed works	Proposals to be developed with Environment Agency. Monitoring of weather/climate change and impacts on river and surroundings throughout programme	Treat	1 x 4 = 4

Risks will be managed as part of the programmes governance regularly reviewing the programme risk register

3.0 Recommendations

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves in principle the proposals for 'Rediscovering the River Colne 2021 – 2031 as detailed in section 4.4 and appendices 2, 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, and 3d.
- 3.2 That Cabinet approves the proposals for the programme for 2021 – 2024 as set out in this report.
- 3.3 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Head of Community & Environmental Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability to agree priorities within the proposed work streams and funding of the programme.
- 3.4 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Head of Community & Environmental Services to finalise the terms of the contracts with Groundwork East and South for the delivery phase of the programme 2021/22.
- 3.5 That Cabinet notes the procurement exemption to appoint Groundwork East (Appendix 5) for the delivery phase of the programme 2021-2022
- 3.6 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Head of Community & Environmental Services to undertake a procurement exercise to secure a delivery partner to carry out works under the programme in the financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24; to award the contract to the successful bidder and to finalise the terms of the contract.

Further information:

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Report approved by: Donna Nolan, Managing Director

4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 The River Colne is one of two main rivers in Watford, and covers the largest geographical area of the two. It enters the borough in the East (Meriden ward) near Topgolf and leaves the borough in the South (Holywell ward) near the Lairage Land Local Nature Reserve. It passes through a number of parks and open spaces including Knutsford Playing Fields, Radlett Road Playing Fields, Timberlake Allotments, Waterfields Recreation Ground, Oxhey Park, Riverside Recreation

Ground, and Riverside Park. It also passes through the major regeneration area called Watford Riverwell, and numerous retail and industrial areas.

- 4.1.2 There is a perception that the River Colne is in many parts dirty, inaccessible, unkempt and of low wildlife value. In reality this is not always the case and in some areas such as Oxhey Park it adds value to the local amenity. However, it is a natural asset that is largely overlooked and ignored by the local community.
- 4.1.3 By virtue of The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) regulations 2017 the UK government has a target to achieve 'Good Ecological Status' for all water bodies by 2027. This duty is delivered through the Environment Agency and a 'Catchment Based Approach' which requires collaboration between and with a number of stakeholders alongside its regulatory function to meet this target. Currently the River Colne in Watford has 'Moderate' status due to a number of factors impacting on the river such as manmade modifications, pollution, invasive species and adjoining habitat quality.
- 4.1.4 The River Colne is part of the River Thames basin and has a catchment area in the region stretching from Chesham in the West to Potters Bar in the East and Harpenden in the North to the River Thames in the South. A catchment area is defined as a geographic area defined naturally by surface water hydrology rather than by administrative or site boundaries. The catchment area of the River Colne is overseen by the Colne Catchment Action Network (ColneCAN), hosted by Groundwork, which brings together a wide range of partners to protect and improve the whole river catchment area.
- 4.1.5 In recognition of the issues affecting the river, its potential and benefit to the borough, the council committed to developing proposals to improve the River Colne through a number of strategies as detailed in 4.2. In 2019, the council approved £150,000 of funding and Groundwork were appointed to develop proposals for the River Colne.
- 4.1.6 The programme was officially launched in September 2019, there is a dedicated micro website for programme information and updates at www.rivercolnewatford.co.uk and it has also been promoted on the council website, social media and in the Watford Observer.
- 4.1.7 Stage 1 of the programme has now been completed by Groundwork which involved public and stakeholder engagement, undertaking surveys, detailed reports, cost estimates, and developing proposals and action plans.

4.1.8 This report details proposals to improve the River Colne, access to it and to mobilise and engage the community in using and caring for the river.

4.2 Strategic Alignment

4.2.1 The proposals to improve the river support the following strategies and commitments by the Council:

- The Mayors Manifesto 2018 -2022 themes of ‘Protecting our Local Environment’ and ‘A Sustainable Town’
- Watford Together Delivery Plan 2020-2024 theme of ‘A Healthy, Happy Town’ and action to ‘Revitalise the River Colne’
- Sustainability Strategy 2020 -2023 action of ‘Nature Restoration’
- Watford Riverwell Regeneration Project 2015-2035 – care for the river and integration to the development forms part of the overall masterplan.

4.2.2 It is also complementary to a number of other strategies of the council such as the Green Spaces Strategy (2013-2023) and Sports Facilities Strategy (2015-2025) which focus on green spaces next to the river, and green infrastructure elements of the council’s proposed Local Plan. In terms of the national government priorities, it supports the green recovery agenda.

4.2.3 The council’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), identifies eligible spending priorities for the Community Infrastructure Levy. The ‘Colne Valley Linear Park’ is listed as one of the IDP strategic initiatives we are implementing to bring forward accessible green space to cater for the growth in Watford. Improving the river corridor and access to it can address the implications of growth especially in or adjacent to strategic development areas such as Watford Riverwell and the Colne Valley Sustainable Development Area. Its successful implementation will support current and future residents to access an improved environment. This priority also stems from our green infrastructure delivery programme.

4.3 Consultation and stakeholder engagement

4.3.1 A public consultation (Appendix 1) was undertaken in 2019, with 131 respondents. The key summary responses are set out below:

- 76% wanting less litter and fly tipping
- 75% wanting habitats improved
- 67% wanting better access to the river
- 63% wanting better publicity
- 62% wanting better water quality
- 62% wanting improved views

4.3.2 A range of key stakeholders were also consulted on how to improve the river, this included; Environment Agency, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative Forum, Community Connection Projects CIC, Green Gym, Affinity Water, Thames Water and Veolia.

4.3.3 Further consultation and engagement will take place as the programme progresses and designs are developed and finalised. Stakeholders will include councillors, friends groups, residents associations, housing associations/managing agents, health organisations, schools, businesses and riparian landowners.

4.4 The proposed programme

4.4.1 Following the stakeholder engagement and a range of technical surveys and studies Groundwork have been able to develop a proposed programme for improving the River Colne. Appendix 2 summarises the work completed and proposed work streams. The proposed programme consists of four main work streams, summarised below in Table 1. Concept plans of the proposed physical improvements are shown in Appendix 3. Appendix 3a is the Landscape Strategy and Access Improvement proposals report. Appendix 3b is a visual interpretation of some of the proposed landscape and access improvements. Appendix 3c is the feasibility study detailing proposals for Environmental Monitoring. Appendix 3d is the report detailing proposals for community engagement.

4.4.2 For each work stream actions have been identified for the first three years (2021-2024) designed to meet the available funding and supporting funding strategy.

Table 1: Summary of proposed work streams

Work stream 1 – Environmental Improvement	
Stage 1: Programme development	Habitat improvement plans have been produced for 8 sites (Knutsford Playing Fields, Radlett Road Playing Fields, Timberlake Allotments, Waterfields Recreation Ground, Oxhey Park, Riverside Recreation Ground, Riverside Park, and Lairage Land Local Nature Reserve). These are based on geomorphological surveys, aquatic invertebrate surveys (river flies), botanical surveys, bat surveys, water vole and otter surveys, and an environmental record search. The plans identify improvements required and how these will be monitored over time.
Overall outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved functioning river and adjacent habitat management • Improved biodiversity including thriving water vole population • Supporting the Environment Agency’s approach to reducing flood risk. • Removal of invasive non-native species • Reduced pollution

First 3 years	Delivery of the habitat improvement plans for the <u>river and adjacent habitats</u> for Knutsford Playing Fields, Timberlake Allotments, Radlett Road Playing fields and Waterfields Recreation Ground
Work stream 2 – Landscape and Access Improvements	
Stage 1: Programme development	A landscape masterplan has been produced and identified opportunities to improve access, connectivity to surrounding areas and interpretation e.g. signage, nature trails, sculptures, steps. This will have benefits for sustainable travel, public health, education and awareness, and general aesthetics of the river corridor.
Overall outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible river corridor • Improved river signage • Creation of destination areas • Creation of a heritage themed walk • Potential new river crossing
First 3 years	Signage of the whole length of the river, improving accessibility and way-marking.
Work stream 3 – Environmental Monitoring	
Stage 1: Programme development	A plan has been produced detailing monthly monitoring that will be carried out by stakeholders and the local community through river fly surveys, outfall safari, pollution (phosphates and nitrates), geomorphological surveys, invasive species and fish populations.
Overall outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a Citizen Science Network • User led monitoring activity programme • Increased volunteering opportunities • New early warning for pollution incidents, water levels and invasive species
First 3 years	Carry out monitoring activities including riverfly surveys, outfall 'safari', pollution (phosphates and nitrates), geomorphological surveys, invasive species and fish population. Hosting a Watford Water Quality Forum. Extension of the citizen science network. Producing the annual water quality report
Work stream 4 – Engagement	
Stage 1: Programme development	A plan has been produced in order to involve the community in each element of the programme including monitoring opportunities, volunteer days, activities and events, regular communication, education and awareness.

Overall outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased volunteering opportunities • Involvement of a wider range of the Watford community • Improved opportunities for health and wellbeing of residents • New education programmes and materials for schools • New arts and heritage programme
First 3 years	Creation of a full time post (to support work streams 3 and 4), delivering an activity programme including a River Festival, and reaching out to the wider community.

4.5 Benefits

4.5.1 This programme has a range of benefits through improving the environment and people's wellbeing. The key benefits that have been identified are as follows:

- An improved town centre with a beautiful, healthy and bio-diverse river and riverside at its centre
- A river and adjoining habitats that are in positive conservation management
- Reduced pollution
- Further promotion and engagement with accessible recreation spaces that encourage people to get outdoors and active, to improve their health and wellbeing, and to value their natural environment.
- Increased understanding among young people, residents and businesses in Watford about what they can do to support and protect their river and the wider natural environment
- Improved community cohesion and connectedness through a user-led approach and community volunteering initiatives.

4.5.2 To achieve these benefits the following targets have been set as performance indicators for 2021-2024 which will be monitored throughout the programme.

ACTIVITY	OUTCOMES 2021- 2024
Physical improvements to the river and adjoining habitat	
Improved functioning river and site enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.2km of river improved • 10 floodplain habitat features installed • 5 sites adjacent to the river improved • Feasibility assessment for a constructed wetland enhancement scheme
Improved biodiversity for native flora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.4km² area sown with UK native plants species • 5km of river surveyed for non-native invasive species including: Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed. Awareness of the issue raised locally.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual report analysing spread and severity of non-native invasive species in target area.
Engaging the community	
Residents' awareness raised of the impact of their actions on the river and how to reduce this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12,000 residents reached through all media and varied events with information that gives them a greater understanding of where water comes from, and how & why to reduce their usage to leave more in the environment
Development and delivery of a programme of a range of tasks and events to engage the whole community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,500 individuals and 20 business involved in projects and activities including litter picking, surveying and habitat management. 4,500 volunteer hours. 50 adults, 15 schools (500 pupils) and 50 young people participating in the River Colne education programmes 100 individuals participating in health and wellbeing activities 100 individuals participating in arts and heritage projects
Activities to engage and involve people in protecting the river landscape	
Enhance existing citizen science activity to provide appropriate/adequate training for volunteers to collect meaningful water quality information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 citizen science volunteers recruited and trained in six survey techniques. 1,000 volunteer hours of survey activity delivered and recorded Annual water quality report produced using collected riverfly, outfall safari and water chemical testing information and highlighting pollution hotspots to guide future activity and provide baseline Water quality forum to meet 4 times per year to assess and progress water quality issues with key stakeholders. 1 conference/event run each year
Development of the river access and surrounding landscape	
Improved physical access to the river corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop two destination points through seating and interpretation at key points, improved access points and their visibility.
Improved river signage and interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26 signs installed along 5km of walks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signed heritage walk created and interpreted on site and via leaflet and on-line information
Funding	
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Match funding obtained of £335,500 by 2024 via grant applications, corporate and public funding and development opportunities.

4.5.3 The programme will not on its own deliver achievement of ‘Good Ecological Status’ under The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations 2017 for the River Colne because the catchment is a large area beyond the council’s control and environmental recovery takes time. The programme will however make a significant contribution to achieving ‘good’ status.

4.6 Programme Governance and Delivery

4.6.1 As a long term programme involving a number of delivery partners effective governance is essential to successful delivery. The programme will follow the council’s internal governance procedures including its project management framework, overseen by the Enterprise Programme Management Office (EPMO) Assurance Group.

4.6.2 Groundwork South and Groundwork East have been appointed as the council’s managing partners to manage the delivery phase for 2021-2022. The scope of their appointments includes the following activities:

- Management of the programme
- Implementation of river improvement plans
- Implementation of access, landscape and signage improvements
- Developing and running a community engagement programme, including water quality monitoring
- Fundraising
- Marketing and communication in collaboration with programme partners

4.6.3 The programme will have a programme board comprised of officers from Watford Borough Council and Groundwork who will agree direction and decisions within the parameters of the programme to ensure success in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability. Groundwork will manage relationships with key stakeholders and programme partners and a wider stakeholder forum/friends group.

4.6.4 Groundwork will also appoint a dedicated programme officer to manage delivery, and, a part time community engagement officer to deliver the programme of community activities.

4.6.5 A Memorandum of Understanding governed the partnership between the council and external partners and stakeholders for the development phase and this will be renewed for the delivery phase.

4.6.6 In 2023-24, the programme will be brought back to Cabinet for review and to seek approval for subsequent years of the programme.

4.7 Programme Costs and Funding Strategy

4.7.1 The development phase of the programme had a budget of £155,000 and £157,618 was spent to produce the proposed programme within this report. Groundwork successfully obtained £25,000 from the Environment Agency to support this work.

4.7.2 The full proposed 10 year programme delivery cost is estimated at £2.8M as set out in table 2 (and detailed in appendix 2). This includes all works, community engagement activity and monitoring.

Table 2: Estimated full 10 year programme cost

Site	Signage	Route improvement/creation	Other landscape/furniture	Art	River works	Total
Knutsford	9,250	15,570	8,750	15,000	92,450	141,020
Timberlake	7,500	12,000	23,250	-	278,300	321,050
Radlett Road	7,500	26,500	3,750	-	497,800	535,550
Waterfields	8,000	12,000	-	-	125,000	145,000
Tesco/disconnect	12,000	36,000	-	50,000	1,500	99,500
Oxhey Park	8,000	12,000	5,000	20,000	20,600	65,600
Riverside Park	5,500	310,000	3,500	-	69,500	388,500
Lairage Land	4,000	20,000	500	-	164,500	189,000
Subtotal	61,750	444,070	44,750	85,000	1,249,650	1,885,220
Contingency 10%						189,040
Fees 15%						283,560
Inflation						56,712
Environmental monitoring (10 yrs)						240,000
Engagement (3 yrs)						142,500
Total						2,797,032

4.7.3 Funding has been secured to deliver the first 3 years of the programme of £874,925 to date, made up of:

£750,000 Capital funding

£124,925 Confirmed external funding

£874,925 Total Funding

4.7.4 The first three years (2021-2024) of delivery has an estimated cost of £1.2M. Full costs will not be known until bids have been received for the works to be carried out in 2022 - 2024. The funding committed to date will be used as leverage to obtain match funding from grant providers, corporate and public funding to address the current funding shortfall of £335,301 for the 2021 – 2024 works.

4.7.5 Groundwork as a charity have significant experience in fundraising and are best placed to apply for a number external funding streams that the council would not normally be able to apply for. The funding strategy for the programme is shown in appendix 4 and 4a.

4.7.6 The use of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding will be considered for the programme via a separate funding application as the programme proceeds. The programme meets the requirements of the following Strategic CIL funding priorities:

- Green infrastructure and connectivity to the wider network
- Sustainability and Climate Change Initiatives

4.7.7 Any shortfall in funding will see works prioritised to derive the optimum benefit, or rephased as funding opportunities become available, working within the identified work streams for the programme. Any opportunities to obtain excess funding will be directed towards future planned works for years 4-10 or to bring these works forward to an earlier date.

4.7.8 Two expenditure and funding profiles are shown below, table 3 showing the fully funded scheme for 2021-2024 as proposed and table 4 showing a scheme using the current available funding.

Table 3: Cost and funding profile for full proposed delivery phase 2021-2024

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Cost	£	£	£	£
Programme management	18,480	19,034	19,605	57,119
Work stream 1 – Environmental Improvements (River improvement plans)	52,248	357,000	270,798	680,046
Work stream 2 - Access, landscape, & signage improvements	118,350		99,256	217,606
Work streams 3 & 4 Environmental Monitoring and Community engagement	83,750	78,750	77,500	240,000
Fundraising	5,000	5,150	5,305	15,455
Total forecast expenditure	277,828	459,934	472,464	1,210,226
Environment Agency	-3,000			-3,000
Environment Agency	-57,000			-57,000
Affinity Water	-50,000			-50,000
Kickstart	-10,450			-10,450
Groundwork Local Family Learning	-2,675			-2,675
Youth Endowment Fund	-1,800			-1,800
Watford Borough Council (Capital)	-152,903	-159,934	-137,163	-450,000
Total confirmed funding	-277,828	-459,934	-137,163	-874,925
Net funding required	0	0	335,301	335,301

Table 4: Cost and funding profile for available funding for 2021-2023

Activity	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£
Programme management	18,480	19,034	3,000	40,514
Work stream 1 – Environmental Improvements (River improvement plans)	52,248	375,500	110,563	538,311
Work stream 2 - Access, landscape, & signage improvements	118,350	-	-	118,350
Work streams 3 & 4 Environmental Monitoring and Community engagement	83,750	83,850	-	167,600
Fundraising	5,000	5,150		10,150
Total forecast expenditure	277,828	483,534	113,563	874,925
Environment Agency	- 3,000			- 3,000
Environment Agency	- 57,000			- 57,000
Affinity Water	- 50,000			- 50,000
Kickstart	- 10,450			- 10,450
Groundwork Local Family Learning	- 2,675			- 2,675
Youth Endowment Fund	- 1,800			- 1,800
Total External Funding	- 124,925	-	-	- 124,925
Watford Borough Council (Capital)	- 152,903	- 483,534	- 113,563	- 750,000
Total WBC Funding	- 152,903	- 483,534	- 113,563	- 750,000
Total Funding	- 152,903	- 483,534	- 113,563	- 874,925

4.7.9 The works that will be completed within the available funding will be assessed to derive optimum value for money and benefit for the river and people. The proposed scope and activities that would take place are shown below, with the exact scope and scale to be agreed once works have been tendered, by the project board in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services.

Based on the current funding shown in table 4 there would likely to be some reduction in the scope and scale of works at Oxhey Park, Riverside and Lairage Land.

Year 1 (2021-2022):

River improvements:

- Detailed design, consent and permitting process for in river and adjacent habitat works to be delivered in 2021/2022 for Knutsford Park, Timberlake, Waterfields, Radlett Road, Oxhey Park, Riverside Open Space, Lairage Land.
- Evaluation and reporting

Access/landscape improvements

- Design and tender of all access works identified in plans
- Develop and design branding for signage/interpretation
- Develop ideas for art proposals
- Prioritisation and delivery of key access landscape improvements that can be delivered before main habitat works

Community engagement/monitoring

- The appointment of a full time role developing and running a programme of activity and awareness raising on the river and across the town. Developing a Friends group covering the whole river. Undertake training for additional citizen scientists to monitor water quality. Continue to support the local water quality group to identify issues, potential actions and how to take them forward.

Year 2 (2022-2023):

River improvements

Procurement and delivery of:

- Knutsford – creation of a two stage channel, wetland scrapes, installing wooded debris, tree works.
- Timberlake – installation of wooded debris, restoration of first backwater, tree works
- Radlett Road – restoration of two further backwaters, marginal berms installed to the river, tree works
- Waterfields – bank works, installation of wooded debris, creation of a two stage channel, backwater/wet woodland

- Evaluation and reporting on the works

Access improvements

- None in this year

Community Engagement

- Part time role continuing the programme development and delivery and including new elements of schools and business engagement. Continued citizen science training and activity, and water quality group meetings

Year 3 (2023-2024):

River improvements

Procurement and delivery of:

- Oxhey Park – Installation of wooded debris, gravels, and wet woodland enhancement
- Riverside Park – Installation of wooded debris & gravels, fish passage work, and pond creation
- Lairage Land – Creation of backwaters & ponds, and installation of wooded debris
- Evaluation and reporting on the works

Access improvements

- Delivery of residual access improvements that could not be completed due to in channel works

Community engagement/monitoring

- Part time role continuing the programme development and delivery. Continued citizen science training and activity, and water quality group meetings

4.8 Future sustainable management

4.8.1 To sustain the programme in to the future the programme will develop a stakeholder/friends forum to enable activities on the River Colne. This will be supported by the Council and its delivery partners such as Community Connection Projects CIC, Veolia and the ColneCAN network.

4.9 Procurement

4.9.1 The council's Contract Procedure Rules allow exemptions from undertaking a procurement exercise in certain circumstances provided the value of the contract is under the value of contracts that have to comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The contracts with Groundwork East and Groundwork South for 2021/22 are under that threshold and have been awarded on the basis of there being a limited market. As the contract with Groundwork East exceeds £100,000 it must be reported to Cabinet and a copy of the exemption is at Appendix 5

- 4.9.2 The works required in 2022/24 exceed the threshold and will therefore be subject to a procurement exercise in the current financial year.
- 4.9.3 This programme involves a number of procurements for works and services. The procurements required in the period to 31 March 2022 will be managed by Groundwork following the Council's procurement rules.
- 4.9.4 The first procurement phase was for 'Design and Permitting', and Groundwork have awarded this contract to ARUP to provide technical design and obtain the relevant permits to be able to tender the subsequent works packages. This has been funded by an Environment Agency contribution.
- 4.9.5 As services and works are tendered recommendations will be made by Groundwork East, Groundwork South and officers to the Programme Board on the available funding against the tendered costs and on how to phase the programme. The programme board will agree priorities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and the Group Head of Community and Environmental Services.

5 Implications

5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1 The Shared Head of Finance comments that the financial implications are set out in section 4.7 of the report.

5.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal issues are set out in the body of the report

5.3 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

- 5.3.1 Under s149 (1) of the Equality Act 2010 the council must have due regard, in the exercise of its functions, to the need to –

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them
- foster good relations between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not share them.

Having had regard to the council's obligations under s149, it is considered that an equalities impact assessment is not required for the decisions set out in this report.

Matters of equality will be assessed and considered as part of the various proposed work streams and subsequent projects particularly in regard of access, environmental monitoring and engagement as required.

Groundwork the council's delivery partner have policies consistent with the council's obligations to the Equalities Act. Overall the programme aims to improve the River Colne for all.

Data Protection

Having had regard to the council's obligations under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

5.4 Staffing

5.4.1 The council has appointed interim staff in the Parks and Heritage service to mobilise this programme and are appointing a dedicated parks project manager. Groundwork East and South have appointed dedicated staff to deliver the work streams. Existing officers within Parks and Heritage will attend the Programme Board and Programme Team meetings as necessary to ensure delivery and access to the council's support services as necessary.

5.5 Accommodation

5.5.1 There are no accommodation implications arising from this report

5.6 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

5.6.1 There are no community safety or crime and disorder implications arising from this report

5.7 Sustainability

5.7.1 This project is a direct action from the Council's Sustainability Strategy and directly contributes to addressing the climate change emergency.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Rediscovering the R Colne – Public Consultation Results

Appendix 2 Rediscovering the R Colne - Summary Report

Appendix 3 Concept Site Plans for: Knutsford Playing Fields, Lairage Land Local Nature Reserve, Oxhey Park, Radlett Road Playing Fields, Tesco and Disconnect, Timberlake Allotments, Waterfields Recreation Ground, Riverside Park

Appendix 3a Rediscovering the R Colne – Landscape & Access Improvement Report

Appendix 3b Rediscovering the R Colne – Visual interpretation of landscape and access improvements

Appendix 3c Rediscovering the R Colne – Environmental Monitoring Project Feasibility Study

Appendix 3d Rediscovering the R Colne – Community Engagement Report

Appendix 4 Rediscovering the R Colne – Funding Strategy

Appendix 4a Rediscovering the R Colne – Funding Opportunity List

Appendix 5 Procurement Exemption Groundwork East

Background papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.