

# COMMITTEE REPORT

15/10/2025

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE**  
**15 OCTOBER 2025**

PART I

**RICKMANSWORTH AQUADROME PROGRAMME UPDATE – DRAFT  
(ADE)**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Rickmansworth Aquadrome Programme, including funding progress and opportunities.

**2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 That the Climate Change and Leisure Committee:
- 2.1.1 Note the content of the report
- 2.1.2 Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance to enter into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding, or where a project is in existing/agreed budgets.

**3 Details**

**Project Overview**

- 3.1 The Rickmansworth Aquadrome Management Plan 2022 – 2027 is an ambitious and far-reaching plan. Produced in partnership with Countryside Management Service, the Plan's Vision Statement is:

*“For the Aquadrome to be enhanced, nurtured, and protected. To achieve the balance so nature can flourish and visitors can connect with and discover beautiful and unique habitats, whilst understanding the importance of the environmental heritage of the site.”*

- 3.2 As a result of the Plan, the Rickmansworth Aquadrome Programme has been developed. Its goals include:
- Habitat enhancement: grassland management, creating meadows, ditch management to facilitate natural drainage, nurture wet woodlands.
  - Understand and manage the waterflow and floodplain environment.
  - Reducing lake and riverbank erosion securing habitats and public access.
  - River restoration to globally rare chalk river.
  - Enhancement of marginal lakeshore habitats.
  - Targeted enhancements to benefit priority species
  - Introducing accessible interpretation on niche habitats and social heritage
  - Replacement of pedestrian bridges to improve access/connectivity.
  - Develop eco-friendly travel routes.
  - Vegetation and tree management to complement natural features.
  - Creating step free access, improving sightlines, making site more accessible and welcoming.
  - Upgrading footpaths and site furniture.
  - Creating a sense of arrival, welcome area, accessible signage.

- Improved inclusion and participation to engage diverse audiences in heritage.
- Involving community through an orchard and training.
- Implementing the new site narrative and Communication Plan to improve communication with all the Aquadrome visitors.
- Implementing a new and attractive branding to nurture its identity

### **Aquadrome Bridge and Landscaping**

- 3.3 Following a structural survey of the original pedestrian bridge, which deemed it to be in a very poor condition and a subsequent successful Community Infrastructure Levy bid, granted at Full Council on the 11 July 2023, the planning permission for a replacement pedestrian bridge was agreed on the 19 October 2023.
- 3.4 The project included the removal of the old bridge, the installation of a new 3m wide steel bridge, entrance enhancements, new hard landscaping and associated groundworks, with accessible pathways on either side of the bridge, new seating and soft landscaping opposite Ebury Play area and new welcome signage at the entrance on Riverside Drive.
- 3.5 The old bridge was removed over the weekend of the 15 and 16 February 2025 and the new bridge was installed over the weekend of the 15 and 16 March 2025. Between the new bridge install and site handover on the 23 May 2025, works continued on the hard landscaping.
- 3.6 All bridge works have now been completed.

### **Batchworth Lake seating and viewing Platform**

- 3.7 As part of the landscaping work to the Batchworth Lake side of the new pedestrian bridge, a new viewing platform and associated seating area has been created.
- 3.8 The fully accessible platform is step free and has been installed using the same materials as the newly updated fishing swim areas (a specific area for fishing to be carried out) and bird viewing area to provide uniformity. New seating has been installed to allow visitors to have scenic views of Batchworth Lake and associated wildlife.
- 3.9 As part of the step free design, the new platform is now significantly higher than the original area, requiring the installation of a barrier to prevent people from falling into the lake from a height.

### **Ebury Play Area**

- 3.10 Works to the play area started and progressed well once the new bridge had been installed. Mounds were created to house tunnels, play equipment was removed from Area A and reinstalled in Area B, a new sandpit was created, trees and willow tunnels were planted, existing equipment was sanded down and plans were in place to refurbish the safety surfacing to ensure that the whole play area would be rejuvenated.
- 3.11 Unfortunately, the highly invasive species, Japanese Knotweed, was identified on-site just before May half term. Works were halted and specialist work commissioned to formally identify the species, investigate the source of the contamination and develop a remediation plan. Officers are continuing to work

with the contractor to agree a remediation plan and a programme of works for its mobilisation and completion.

- 3.12 Information on the delay to the playground reopening has been made available to the public, including videos explaining the situation, information on site in the form of storyboards explaining the situation and the importance of following the correct procedures as dictated by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which states that it is against the law to allow Japanese Knotweed to spread. The site boundaries also display the necessary hazardous material signage.
- 3.13 Officers will provide further updates once a remediation programme has been agreed for the project to continue to completion.

### **Fishing Swims and Bird Viewing Area**

- 3.14 Utilising funding secured through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, works were undertaken to carry out routine maintenance to 20 fishing swims (specific areas for fishing to take place) around Batchworth Lake, including a new, accessible swim. As part of this work, six fishing swims were returned to nature. This was developed in consultation with Uxbridge Rovers Angling & Conservation Society (URACS) who lease the fishing rights on Batchworth Lake.
- 3.15 An updated bird viewing area was created on the western side of Batchworth Lake. A temporary interpretation board has also been created to showcase the different species of wildfowl and birds found in and around the lake and to encourage visitors to responsibly feed the birds. A permanent interpretation board will be created as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund project in future years.
- 3.16 The overall look and feel of all the completed works, is that the swims appear natural and are more in keeping in appearance with the Nature Reserve status of the site. New signage has been installed on the fishing swims with what.three.word locations to enable them to be easily identifiable to the council, URACS and to the emergency services. New signage has also been installed on the swims that have been returned to nature to explain to visitors what is happening in these areas.

### **Storyboards and Welcome Sign**

- 3.17 The programme communications plan includes use of onsite Storyboards. These take the form of temporary boards located in areas of change and provide updates of the work taking place or due to commence on site, usually in the immediate vicinity. Four boards have been used to date with the most recent informing visitors (at four locations around the site) of the delay in work programme for Ebury play area due to the discovery of Japanese Knotweed. Storyboard artwork is also included on the project's website.
- 3.18 The pedestrian entrance includes a newly designed welcome sign which demonstrates the Aquadrome branding and 'look and feel' for the site. The sign's base is set in a gabion frame which reflects the industrial nature of the history and heritage of the Aquadrome. The signage continues this industrial feel with a Corten looking background against the vibrant blue/green primary colour. (Please see Appendix C for imagery of the sign).
- 3.19 Fishing swim signs across the refurbished fishing platforms have been designed. These carry the name of the swim, the peg number and

What3words to assist location identification. (Please see Appendix C for imagery of the signs).

- 3.20 'Return to nature' signs are also in place around Batchworth lake. These six signs demark disused fishing platforms that are being rewilded and returning to nature informing the public of the purpose of the area. (Please see Appendix C for imagery of the signs).

### **Marketing and Communications: March 2025 – September 2025**

- 3.21 Working closely with the council's Communications team, the Aquadrome programme has been widely communicated to the community and other stakeholders through a variety of media channels. A Communications Plan has been developed outlining how messages for phase 1 of the programme which focused on the removal and installation of the new Aquadrome pedestrian bridge would be communicated to residents, visitors and stakeholders. This plan is currently updated as the programme enters its next phase following the successful award of National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) Development funding.
- 3.22 Website - The [dedicated website pages](#) have been refreshed to reflect the progress of the programme. Available information includes details of the programme governance, external funding successes and progress against delivery action on the ground. Website visitor details for the period April to June 2025 were 747, with a running total of 2147 visits since August 2024.
- 3.23 Have your Say - The council's dedicated consultation platform was used successfully for public engagement in determining a name for the new pedestrian bridge in April 2025 and since then has offered residents and visitors a platform on which to share their stories and memories of the Aquadrome as well as their ideas for what they would like to see happen at the site. It is anticipated that this platform will be used significantly when we enter a period of consultation for the detailed plans for the site. Figures indicate between 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025 had a total visit of 123 with a running total of 2740 visits since January 2025.
- 3.24 Press Release/videos - Five proactive press releases have been written and issued covering the programme since March. These remain on the website after issue. Examples of recent stories include:  
  
<https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/news/new-aquadrome-pedestrian-bridge-installed>
- 3.25 The content has been picked up local media and BBC News also followed the Aquadrome Bridge story running an article in May 2025 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2lz8yyeq7yo>). BBC 3CR also interviewed the Leader of Three Rivers District Council, Cllr Stephen Giles-Medhurst, about the "*naming of the bridge*" public engagement.
- 3.26 [YouTube coverage](#) - Three videos have been produced to enhance press release publications. Filmed at the Aquadrome featuring the Leader of the Council and Lead members they have been promoted through the council's website, YouTube and other social media platforms. The removal and installation videos of the bridge on YouTube have been particularly popular and have a running total of 2037 views between them as at end of June 2025.

- 3.27 The council Communications team collaborated with the council's principle contractor to produce [a video for schools](#) explaining the process of removing the old bridge and how the new bridge was developed, built and installed. The video also features a council officer explaining what wildlife visitors can expect to see at the Aquadrome and advise pupils what to feed and what not to feed the birds. The video has been shared with six local primary schools including Arnett Hills, St John's and Yorke Mead explaining about the video and asking the school to share.
- 3.28 MyNews- Monthly editorial articles are submitted to the My Ricky Newspaper of My News Mag, a hyperlocal media publication. Each month the article covers a relevant topic of the programme and alternates with the natural world and the built world reinforcing the nature reserve narrative. Topics have included:

3.29	April 2025	3.30	Refurbished Fishing Swims
3.31	May 2025	3.32	Pedestrian Bridge and Ebury Play Area
3.33	June 2025	3.34	Natural Wonders of the Aquadrome
3.35	July 2025	3.36	Ebury Play Area and Japanese Knotweed
3.37	August 2025	3.38	National Lottery Fund Award

- 3.39 Future articles will include content on the new Viewing Platform and migratory birds, an Ebury Play Area update, Trees event and a new storyboard on trees at the Aquadrome, as well as a National Lottery Heritage Fund Project update. The RickyNews distribution of the A5 publication is 5,059 whilst its readership registers at 12,648. A recent example includes the announcement of the National Lottery funding:  
<https://www.calameo.com/mylocalnews/read/004433267985a643c78e0>
- 3.40 Social media – Regular social media posts have been issued across all the council's platforms to promote the Aquadrome programme; the activities visitors can and can't participate in there, as well as the wildlife that the site provides a home for. Press releases and videos have been shared on our social media channels, such as Facebook and X. The period since the last report to committee has seen proactive social messaging particularly focused on the installation of the bridge, including advance warnings for motorists regarding the lane closure on Riverside Drive, promotion of the naming and opening of the bridge, completion of the fishing swims replacement project and the delayed opening of the Ebury Play Area following the discovery of Japanese Knotweed. Social media has also been used reactively to answer direct questions received from residents and visitors regarding the new bridge and other matters related to the Aquadrome with questions also informing updates on the dedicated web pages. Since May, 13 posts have been sent out on Facebook receiving a total of 388 clicks and a reach of 13.3k. The highest performing post since May has been with reference to the job adverts associated with the new National Lottery funding. This had a reach (number of

unique individuals who have seen the content) of 9K, closely followed by the bridge posts concerning diversion routes having a reach of 8.3k.

- 3.41 Working with the National Lottery Guidelines - Since confirmation of successful award of the “Development Phase” National Heritage Lottery Funding, all NHLF funded work within the programme needs to follow strict funder protocols. This includes specific use of the Lottery logo and wording within press releases and all public materials. All communications relating to funded works is required to be approved by the Lottery before publication. Officers have received praise and thanks from Lottery staff for the council’s communications to date. An example of recent communication is found in this press release: <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/news/water-wildlife-wellbeing-aquadrome>

## Funding Update

### Secured Funding

- 3.42 To date officers have successfully secured significant levels of funding from several external sources for development and delivery of the Aquadrome programme.

Amount	Funder	Status	Date Secured	Spend Period
£161,691	National Lottery Heritage Fund - Recovery and Resilience	Secured - project complete	18 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	January to October 2024
£100,000	UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Fishing Swims)	Secured - project complete	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2024	April 2024 to March 2025
£1,286,092	CIL and UKSPF (Replacement Bridge, landscaping and play area)	Secured	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2024	October 2024 – ongoing
£510,463	HS2 Colne Valley Additional Mitigation Plan (AMP)	Secured <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£22,000 used towards the Recovery &amp; Resilience Project</li> <li>£32,000 for Phase 2 of the Hydrological Study</li> <li>£50,000 – match funding for the Development Phase Grant</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2024	£104,000 between 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2024 and 31 August 2026  £406,463 between March 2027 and March 2030
£736,515	National Lottery Heritage Fund - Development Phase	Secured	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2025	9 July 2025 – 31 August 2026
<b>£2,794,751</b>	<b>TOTAL secured to date</b>			

- 3.43 Securing nearly £3million of external funding to date has enabled the council to further understand the rich habitats and dynamics of the Aquadrome site through ecological surveying and public engagement; it has directly resulted in physical infrastructure being replaced, notably the replacement of the end of life pedestrian bridge with a brand new 3m wide bridge ensuring this important access route remains available and accessible to a wider range of visitors; the



creation of a new accessible decked lakeside viewing area and the upgraded replacement of 20 fishing swims on Batchworth Lake.

- 3.44 The most recent funding success has been the award of £736,515 for the Development Phase of a series of projects from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Further details on this stage are detailed below from paragraph 3.50 onwards.

### **Future Funding Applications**

- 3.45 During the Development Phase of the NHLF projects, detailed costs for the delivery phase application will be established through the development of detailed designs and tender specifications all of which will be informed by further public and stakeholder engagement. Currently it is estimated that £5,446,563 will be required for the Delivery Phase of the project of which it is anticipated that £4,146,114 will be secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the remaining coming from match funding, including that already secured from the HS2 Colne Valley Additional Mitigation Plan (AMP).
- 3.46 The NLHF require match funding of 10% of the total cost of projects. It is anticipated that the match funding will be made up of funding from the AMP (already secured) and a planned partnership with Affinity Water through their Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP). Should additional budget be required to meet the 10% requirement, Officers propose to utilise £25,000 from the existing council Open Spaces Access Improvement budget per annum over the 3-year delivery period towards the match funding requirements of the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This option will only be used should the 10% total not be reached from external funders.
- 3.47 The following table outlines the funding sources currently proposed to fund the Delivery Phase of the NHLF projects:

<b>Amount</b>	<b>Funder</b>	<b>Secured / Applied For / Future Application</b>
TBC following development phase	Affinity Water	Partnership
£4,146,114	National Lottery Heritage Fund – Delivery Phase	Future Application
£75,000	Three Rivers District Council	To only be used if necessary (see point 3.48)
<b>£TBC</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	

### **National Lottery Heritage Fund – Development Phase**

- 3.48 Looking forward to the year ahead within the development phase of the National Lottery Heritage funded elements of the programme; the following table shows the approved purposes and the approximate timescales they will be delivered within.



<b>National Lottery Heritage Fund Approved Purposes</b>	<b>Timescales</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>
Ensure high visibility acknowledgement of the National Lottery Heritage Fund onsite, online and in activities, as well as using your project to thank National Lottery players.	Throughout the Development phase	Communications plan agreed with the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
Deliver small-scale activity programme including nature-based activities, workshops and citizen science surveys to engage and inform.	Throughout the Development phase	To be led by Lottery funded post – Aquadrome Community Engagement Officer and Natural Infrastructure Projects Officer.  Staff posts commenced role on 16 September 2025
Creation of a site wide Masterplan encompassing all environmental and landscape elements including a tree and vegetation strategy and action plan.	September 2025 – July 2026	Procurement exercise for lead consultant completed and contract awarded to RSK on 23 September 2025. Contract will run until 31 August 2026.
Phase 3 of the hydrological study producing specifications and documents to achieve improvements.	September 2025 - May 2026	Procurement exercise for lead consultant completed and contract awarded to RSK on 23 September 2025. Contract will run until 31 August 2026.
Complete an accessibility audit across the site.	September 2025 – December 2025	Procurement exercise completed and contract awarded to Access and Inclusion UK
Procure and appoint consultant team.	September 2025 – August 2026	Procurement exercise for lead consultant completed and contract awarded to RSK on 23 September 2025. Contract will run until 31 August 2026.
Complete asbestos assessments and other surveys reviewing capital project sites to inform risk assessments and method statements.	October 2025 – March 2026	Procurement exercise for lead consultant completed and contract awarded to RSK on 23 September 2025. Contract will run until 31 August 2026.
Consultation and engagement with community, stakeholders and steering group.	2025: October, November  2026: February, March, May, July	To be led by Lottery funded post – Aquadrome Community Engagement Officer, along with project lead consultant – RSK. Contract awarded to RSK on 23 September 2025. Contract will run until 31 August 2026

Develop detailed designs for all aspects of proposals including interpretative and access improvements, tender package documentation and gain relevant consents.	January 2026 – May 2026	Procurement exercise for lead consultant completed and contract awarded to RSK on 23 September 2025. Contract will run until 31 August 2026.
Develop activity plan for delivery phase.	May 2025 – July 2026	To be led by Lottery funded post – Aquadrome Community Engagement Officer
Evaluation of development phase.	July 2026 – August 2026	To be led by the Programme Development Manager and Aquadrome Project Support Officer
Appoint 3 new development phase posts: Project Support Officer, Natural Infrastructure Projects Officer and Community Engagement Officer extending hours of existing staff post.	July 2025 – August 2026	Staff posts commenced role on 16 September 2025
To provide a delivery phase application and the delivery phase supporting documents (e.g. Tender Packages, Activity Plan, full Cost Breakdown)	September 2026 - November 2026	Planned delivery phase submission will be November 2026 as per the National Lottery Heritage Fund timescales.

3.49 It is important to note that the development phase focuses on developing the project proposals into more detailed designs. This phase of the funding does not include any capital or physical works on site.

### **National Lottery Heritage Fund – Delivery Phase**

3.50 Following the completion of the development phase the council anticipates the following timeline:

<b>Approved Purpose</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
Submission of the delivery phase application	November 2025
Outcome of Delivery Phase application	April 2026
Delivery Phase period commences	April/May 2027
Completion of the Delivery Phase period	March 2030

3.51 Through the delivery phase of the programme the following goals will be achieved:

- Habitat enhancement: grassland management, creating meadows, ditch management to facilitate natural drainage, nurture wet woodlands.
- Understand and manage the waterflow and floodplain environment.
- Reducing lake and riverbank erosion securing habitats and public access.

- River restoration to globally rare chalk river.
- Enhancement of marginal lakeshore habitats.
- Targeted enhancements to benefit priority species
- Introducing accessible interpretation on niche habitats and social heritage
- Replacement of pedestrian bridges to improve access/connectivity.
- Develop eco-friendly travel routes.
- Vegetation and tree management to complement natural features.
- Creating step free access, improving sightlines, making site more accessible and welcoming.
- Upgrading footpaths and site furniture.
- Creating a sense of arrival, welcome area, accessible signage.
- Improved inclusion and participation to engage diverse audiences in heritage.
- Involving and engaging the community through orchard, community garden and training.
- Implementing the new site narrative and Communication Plan to improve communication with all the Aquadrome visitors and wider community.
- Implementing the new and attractive branding to nurture its identity

3.52 The delivery phase of the programme and associated timelines may be impacted by a series of potential restrictions. These include but may not be limited to:

- the success of the delivery phase application
- the release of the EA flood modelling for the catchment area and subsequent Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) applications
- environmental conditions experienced through the programme (for example flooding)

### **Hydrological Study Update**

3.53 In 2024, a hydrological study and options appraisal was commissioned with the following aims:

- Minimising overland flow from Bury Lake to Stockers Lake across a causeway footpath
- Reducing flood risk on site and the potential to do this through improved ditch maintenance
- Enhancing habitat along the river Colne for both the riverbanks and investigating in-channel opportunities

- Enhancing marginal habitat on Batchworth & Bury Lake including bank reinforcement
- 3.54 As of July 2025, the following progress has been achieved: desk study & field assessment; long-list options appraisal; completion of a multi-criteria analysis (MCA) including optioneering report. At this point the hydrological study was paused pending the release of the Environment Agency's (EA) updated flood model. The current flood model dates to approximately 2014 and with various environmental/climatic changes the validity and accuracy of the modelling is limited.
- 3.55 With the release of the updated modelling the hydrological study will continue by assessing the options against the flood modelling; this will conclusively create a list of options that are appropriate to be undertaken within the Aquadrome. Detail design work and costings can then be developed.
- 3.56 The Council received the flood modelling from the Environment Agency on 2 October 2025. JBA, who were originally commissioned to complete the Hydrological Study will now be working on completing phase 2 of the study, with the expected production of the report at the end of 2025.
- 3.57 Phase 3, which includes detailed design work, stakeholder engagement and public consultation, will then be undertaken by RSK in early 2026.

### **Batchworth Lake Erosion**

- 3.58 Dovetailing with the hydrological survey, a Lakeshore Erosion report has also been commissioned with the following aims:
- Identify Erosion Hotspots only the lake shore of Batchworth and Bury Lakes.
  - Identify the primary causes of erosion.
- 3.59 Propose remedial actions to reduce or prevent ongoing erosion.
- 3.60 CBEC Eco Engineering completed this element of work as specialists providing nature-based sustainable solutions. With significant experience in surveying, geomorphology, hydrology, natural flood management, river and flood plain restoration and more. The resulting recommendations to the report are therefore considerate to the Local Nature Reserve designation while balancing the need to maintain public safety.
- 3.61 The report found that within Bury Lake there is minor, widespread erosion which in each instance is generally localised. The key drivers of this erosion due to the outlet in the north-western corner, footfall, poaching\* and a lack of bankside vegetation.
- 3.62 At Batchworth Lake there is a different situation, here the erosion was found to be minor to severe with the worst instances at the north-western and south-eastern corners. The key drivers of the erosion are deemed to be the waterskiing, culvert discharge, poaching\*, footfall and lacking vegetation.

*\* "Poaching" refers to the localised erosion and destabilisation of the banks caused by footfall. At well-used, unofficial access points for dogs (which are not permitted to enter the water at the Aquadrome – something which is regularly ignored by many dog owners) and birds, the actions of them getting into and out of the water erodes the banks at an exacerbated rate.*

- 3.63 The report recommends both preventative measures and remedial management actions as follows:

Preventative Measures:

- Suspend waterskiing
- Fence off poaching-prone areas &/or for dogs to be kept on a lead
- Retain fallen vegetation and avoid clearing in front of benches

Remedial Management:

- Planting: Use live willow and flood-resistant species; avoid seed mixes.
- Large Wood Structures: To deflect flows and dissipate wave energy.
- Hard Engineering: Use rock mattresses and Aqua Rock Bags for severe erosion zones

### **Tree Management – August 2024 to present**

- 3.64 Tree works for safety, the prevention of damage and visitor access across the site are separated into 3 categories: Emergency works; High Priority works; and Routine works.
- 3.65 Works to trees may also be carried out occasionally to facilitate the construction of new or replacement structures or facilities, or for habitat management to benefit biodiversity.

#### *Emergency works*

- 3.66 No emergency works were required during this period

#### *High Priority works*

- 3.67 Following inspection of the mature poplar trees on site during spring of 2024, a poplar near the waterski club was identified as being in very poor condition. In autumn of 2024 the tree was monolithed (all limbs removed) to leave a standing stem, to reduce the risk of failure, whilst retaining many of the wildlife benefits.
- 3.68 Large trees with cracks and fissures are particularly important for species, such as bats (which are legally protected and for which The Aquadrome is an important site) and a wide variety of rare and specialist insects.
- 3.69 In February of 2025, a mature Ash which was growing over the toilet block, by the cafe, was heavily reduced. The tree was in decline, in part due to Ash Die Back, and works were required to prevent its failure onto the building.

#### *Routine works*

- 3.70 During February 2025, Willow and Ash trees hanging low over the towpath of the Grand Union Canal (GUC) were felled and pruned to maintain access to the Aquadrome from the GUC.
- 3.71 In March 2025, a large willow growing low over the footpath by Batchworth Lake was coppiced to prevent it from blocking the path.

- 3.72 In July 2025 the avenue of American Elms along the access road to BLYM (Bury Lake Young Mariners) were crown lifted away from the phone line to the sailing club.

#### *Facilitation works*

- 3.73 In September 2024, several trees around the old Aquadrome bridge were felled and pruned, in line with the planning permission granted, to facilitate the construction of the new bridge. Trees in the Ebury Play Area were also crown lifted and willows along the riverbank coppiced to accommodate the new play area.

#### *Habitat Management*

- 3.74 No tree works for habitat management were carried out during this period

#### *Inspections*

- 3.75 No scheduled safety inspections were due during this period, only reactive inspections in response to issues reported. The next scheduled safety inspections, of higher risk areas, and the main footpaths will be carried out by the end of March 2026.

#### *Pest and Diseases*

- 3.76 In July 2025, Oak Processionary Moth was detected on several Turkey Oaks growing in the meadow next to the access road to BLYM. The nests, and any caterpillars, accessible from ground level were removed by a pest control contractor and destroyed.
- 3.77 Also during July, several moribund Ash trees, suffering from Ash Dieback (ADB), were removed from across the site.

#### *Future Development*

- 3.78 As part of the Aquadrome Programme, a new Tree and Vegetation Strategy and Action Plan will be developed. This is likely to involve a multi-year programme of pro-active management works.
- 3.79 A range of works will be specified, including;
- pollarding and re-pollarding of mature willows across the site;
  - removal of areas of non-native buddleia and cherry laurel;
  - eradication of non-native invasive species such as Japanese knotweed;
  - coppicing of shrubs and bramble to open up views across the lakes;
  - control of scrub in reedbed, fen and grassland habitats;
  - reducing shading of selected sections of riverbank;
  - thinning of woodland areas,
  - new planting across the site, such as elm avenue, orchard, dog-free play area, and cafe / entrance / car park areas.

#### **Green Flag Award 2025**

- 3.80 The Green Flag Award is an international accreditation given to publicly accessible parks and open spaces, managed under licence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, a UK Government

department, by Keep Britain Tidy, who also administers the scheme in England.

- 3.81 The Aquadrome was first awarded Green Flag in 2013 and successfully retained this again this year. Judges commented that 'The site is well managed by a dedicated team who have a good knowledge of the site and its complex issues including the different site ownerships and management regimes. The site is a worthy Green Flag winner.'

### **Footpath Improvements**

- 3.82 Path repairs were undertaken by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) rights of way on FP65 in February/March 2025. Officers from HCC and TRDC continue to work together for any ongoing repairs to this stretch of footpath, due to it being a designated right of way.
- 3.83 Additional pathway works along the northern corner of Bury Lake were carried out during July 2025. This included a full repair of 120m, including excavation of the existing pathway, laying of MOT Type 1 sub-base, weed barrier, binder course, PCC (concrete) edging, tack coat and sealant and dense wearing course.
- 3.84 The woodland path remains closed.

### **Bury Lake Young Mariners**

- 3.85 Officers within Leisure and Natural Infrastructure have been working with Bury Lake Young Mariners to support the development of a new Business Plan, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding application and identify other funding sources for their desire to develop the dry-side facility, following Planning approval granted on the 17 June 2024. Planning Permission for these works will expire on the 17 June 2027.

### **River Colne & Floodplain Management**

- 3.86 Rivers and their floodplains are complex, dynamic and natural systems - riparian management must adapt to this. Legally, river channels are the responsibility of the relevant landowner(s), as a statutory body the Environment Agency may intervene in situations where they feel this is necessary. However, ultimately it is not the EA's responsibility to manage individual rivers/stretches.
- 3.87 The landownership of the section of the river Colne through the Aquadrome is complicated, Officers are working to clarify this situation.
- 3.88 Within this stretch of the Colne, there have been trees which have fallen into the river and understandably are causing concern. The EA provide guidance for owning a watercourse, which outlines the responsibility to "let water flow naturally," acknowledging that clearance must be undertaken to prevent obstruction or impact on a public right of navigation and if causing a reduction in the flow or causing flooding to other landowners' property. However, in all other eventualities the EA state "leave all other trees, branches and shrubs" because they can help prevent flooding by varying the shape and flow of the channel and reduce erosion.
- 3.89 The ways that rivers are managed has changed significantly through history. Rivers have been seen as tools that could be manipulated; they were straightened or widened and rerouted for transport or agriculture. Similarly



dredging was believed to be a way to reduce flooding and maintain the efficiency of a river; now the disastrous impacts of dredging are understood. There is also greater understanding of how river systems work best, where increased variety is integral to resilience.

- 3.90 Therefore, it is likely that members of the public will have noted changes in the river management of the Colne and indeed many other rivers; naturally river management should react to the changes in science and knowledge.
- 3.91 For example, with the changing climate, increased rainfall and varying climates, it is likely to result in increased times of flood and drought which the infrastructure will need to be resilient against. Therefore, it is situations like this when the presence of large woody debris in the channel has the capacity to assist with flood mitigation as water flow is slowed and held upstream allowing the channel downstream time to react. The increased quantity of water present in a time of flood needs to be dissipated somewhere and this should take place on the rivers floodplain (in this location it is the Aquadrome); if the connectivity between the river and its floodplain is poor the flooding will happen elsewhere, this may be locally upon private property or the problem is pushed downstream – the problem still exists and as a riparian owner the council has a responsibility to act appropriately.
- 3.92 Within the Aquadrome stretch of the Colne, there are two weirs. These are engineered structures installed for various reasons: water level management, flow measurement, environmental enhancement or channel stabilisation. The primary impact of a weir is increasing the water level above its natural level.
- 3.93 The upstream weir, known as Batchworth Weir is a Canal & Rivers Trust asset, which principally controls the levels of the Grand Union Canal.
- 3.94 The downstream weir, known as Bury Weir, however, is understood to be owned by the relevant riparian owners, which officers are currently investigating. The condition of this weir has recently significantly deteriorated to the extent that the weir has “notched” (a gap) itself in the middle.
- 3.95 Officers have consulted with the Environment Agency (EA) who have confirmed that they are not concerned about increase in flood risk to nearby properties as a result of this. The council has been advised by the EA to leave the weir as it is, pending the completion of the hydrological study to pose recommendations for future works.

### **River Colne Restoration**

- 3.96 As a water supplier, Affinity Water abstract groundwater from aquifers and as such there are environmental obligations that they are required to meet in order to improve the overall water environment. This is known as the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP), a programme that is governed by both Ofwat and the Environment Agency.
- 3.97 With the support of the Environment Agency, Affinity Water intend to work in partnership with Three Rivers District Council as part of their river restoration programme on the river Colne, and in particular for the section of the river that runs through the Rickmansworth Aquadrome. This has been included within their WINEP allowing Affinity to provide both technical and financial support.
- 3.98 Within the Development Phase of the NHLF project and following the release of the Environment Agency’s (EA) Upper Colne Flood Risk Mapping Study

(flood model) and the completion of the Aquadrome hydrological study, the river restoration and floodplain management recommendations will be developed into detailed designs.

### **Asbestos Management**

- 3.99 The Aquadrome Asbestos Management Plan procedures updated in 2023 are fully embedded as part of business-as-usual management of the Aquadrome site. This includes permission to dig forms being completed prior to any ground disturbance work being undertaken on site (for example when the pedestrian bridge was replaced), along with proactive and reactive operational processes in place for occasions when any asbestos is identified on site. Staff from a wide range of council services working on site are required to have undertaken annual asbestos awareness training and this is included as part of pre-work checks.
- 3.100 As part of the Development Phase of the NHLF projects further work will be carried out under the Aquadrome Asbestos Management Plan, including site surveying and removal when required.

### **Glade Bridge**

- 3.101 The wooden bridge, which spans the river, from an area known as the Glade onto the Canal towpath, is reaching end of life. A number of repairs have been carried out to the bridge in recent years, but these have only aided in keeping the bridge open to provide an alternative route whilst the Aquadrome Bridge was replaced and whilst a more permanent solution could be planned.
- 3.102 A structural survey was last carried out in May 2025.
- 3.103 Officers have identified an opportunity for external funding via Veolia (it is estimated that the project will require in the region of £125k) and are intending, subject to the FRAP being awarded and a successful planning application, to submit an application in the funding round which opens on the 27 November 2025 and closes on the 8 January 2026.
- 3.104 A FRAP application was submitted the week commencing 7 July 2025. It is expected based on current EA timelines that this could take up to 6 months for a response from the EA.
- 3.105 The planning application for this project was submitted on the 30 September 2025. It included ecological surveys and an arboricultural assessment to support the application. Approval of this application and the FRAP are required prior to submitting the funding application to Veolia.
- 3.106 Under the current programme, the bridge works could be realised as soon as June 2026, avoiding events that take place nearby and the school holidays, however, this timeline is dependent on several external factors as outlined in the preceding paragraphs.

### **Automatic Site Vehicle Access Gate**

- 3.107 The vehicle access gate, which is at the entrance of the Rickmansworth Aquadrome site, has reached end of life. The current gate is manually having to be opened and closed and as such means the site is not secure during the day to stop unwanted vehicles having access to the site.

- 3.108 Current access is granted to the various clubs, cafe and Three Rivers staff and managed to reduce vehicle access across the site.
- 3.109 The gates are in situ to stop any unwanted vehicles accessing the main site and providing safety to pedestrians by minimising the number of vehicles we allow to drive on the site, whilst still adhering to the clubs' access rights.
- 3.110 The current access to site is via a swipe card which can be open to abuse if individuals share the card. It is also an admin heavy exercise to update parking cards for vehicles, both for the clubs and for officers.
- 3.111 A replacement gate which includes ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) gates is being explored. This will mean that all vehicles entering the site will be recorded. This will be beneficial should there be any incidents involving a car on site. This will also mitigate the need for providing cards to each vehicle / user that has site access as the registration numbers can be held in a central system and only that vehicle will be allowed to access the site. It is anticipated that the new gates will be installed early in the new financial year.

#### **4 Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 To note the content of the report and to recommend approval for entering into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding

#### **5 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

- 5.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. The proposals also relate to securing additional, external, funding, as outlined within the report.
- 5.2 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following performance indicators for the Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Service Plan 2025- 2028.
  - 5.2.1 LNI04 - External Funding secured to support Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Projects and Activities.
  - 5.2.2 LNI05 - Year on year increase in the area of land owned by Three Rivers District Council, being managed for biodiversity benefit.
  - 5.2.3 LNI06 - Percentage of vulnerable participants who take part in leisure activities.
- 5.3 The recommendations in this report relate to the achievement of the following Corporate Framework Objectives:
  - 5.3.1 **Responsive, Responsible Local Leadership** – a key part of the Development phase of the NHLF projects, will be to continue to engage and consult with the local community about the project. In addition, the Steering Group, consisting of 15 external organisations, several Lead and Ward Councillors, and officers across many Services will act as a critical friend, steering the direction of the project. The project will focus on securing significant external funding, reducing pressures on Council budgets and enabling the council's effective stewardship of this important asset.

- 5.3.2 **A Great Place to Do Business** – the Aquadrome is a visitor destination and this programme will further enhance this, whilst ensuring the balance between people and nature. A number of community organisations and businesses operate from the Aquadrome and it is anticipated that the benefits realised through this programme will in turn, benefit and support them.
- 5.3.3 **Sustainable Communities** – the Aquadrome project will look to enhance the leisure and cultural offer to visitors to the Aquadrome. This will include engagement activities and voluntary projects. A full activity programme will be developed during the development phase, although this will be carefully balanced against trying not to significantly increase visitor numbers. The focus will be more on diversifying the audience and the engagement on site in order to improve health and wellbeing.
- 5.3.4 **Net Carbon Zero and Climate Resilient** – the initial focus on the project is ensuring the movement of water across the site is better understood in order to facilitate the natural flooding occurring on the flood plain. This will improve the adaptability of the site making it more resilient to the impact of severe weather and help to protect the town of Rickmansworth. This will be achieved through the completion of the hydrological study. Alongside this will be significant enhancements to the biodiversity of the site in order to improve the habitats present, opportunities to further improve the adaptability of the site will be incorporated.

## 6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The total anticipated cost for the entire project at this stage is: to be confirmed (TBC). The table below shows funding secured and future applications:

Amount	Funder	Secured / Applied For / Future Application
£216,691	National Lottery Heritage Fund - Recovery and Resilience	Secured - project complete
£100,000	UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Fishing Swims)	Secured - project complete
£1,286,092	CIL and UKSPF (Replacement Bridge, landscaping and play area)	Secured
£510,463	HS2 Colne Valley Additional Mitigation Plan (AMP)	Secured
£736,515	National Lottery Heritage Fund - Development Phase	Secured
£TBC	Affinity Water	Future Application
£TBC	National Lottery Heritage Fund - Delivery Phase	Future Application
<b>£TBC</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	

- 6.2 £2,849,761 has been secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and HS2 Colne Valley Additional Mitigation Plan (AMP) as outlined in section 3 of the report.
- 6.3 During the Development Phase of the project, costs for the delivery phase application will be established through the development of detailed designs, tender specifications and public and stakeholder engagement. Currently this is estimated to be approximately £5,446,563, made up of £4,146,114 from the

National Lottery Heritage Fund and the remaining using match funding from the AMP and a planned application to Affinity Water.

- 6.4 As outlined at point 3.48, Officers propose to use £25,000 from the existing council Open Spaces Access Improvement budget per annum over the 3-year delivery period towards the match funding requirements of the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This option will only be used should the 10% total not be reached from external funders

## **7 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Under the Council Constitution, Committee approval is required to enter into any contracts above the value of £25,000.
- 7.2 All proposed works and equipment will be tendered within the Council's constitution and procurement procedures and any other permissions obtained (for example planning) where required.
- 7.3 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, updated by the Environment Act 2021, places a legal responsibility on public authorities in England to have due regard for habitats and species of the greatest conservation importance, whilst protecting all biodiversity. Section 40(1) states that a "public authority which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective." The accompanying footnote to this part of the Act states that the aim of the biodiversity objective is to provide for the enhancement or improvement of biodiversity, not just its maintenance in its current state. Gone is the former 'have regard' element in respect of conserving biodiversity, and this has been replaced by a proactive duty (new section 40(1)) to "from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective".
- 7.4 The Aquadrome Programme outlines a number of actions: within the Management plan with particular reference to 5.1 Creating Biodiverse and Sustainable Environments (Woodlands and Grasslands) and 5.2 Creating Biodiverse and Sustainable Environments (Lakes and Watercourses) the associated actions all aim to increase, conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the site.

## **8 Equal Opportunities Implications**

- 8.1 A Short Equality Impact and Outcome Assessment is included at Appendix A. The assessment outlines the positive impact the Aquadrome is having and will continue to have on equal opportunities. Fully realising these positive impacts, however, remains dependent on securing the external funding highlighted within this report.

## **9 Staffing Implications**

- 9.1 The Aquadrome programme is being delivered by the Programme Development Manager, along with a number of Officers within the Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Service, including the Natural Infrastructure Programme Manager, Leisure Services Manager, Principal Trees and Woodlands Officer and Leisure Capital Projects Manager.

- 9.2 Development Phase funding has been approved for project specific posts, including a Project Support Officer, Community Engagement Officer and Natural Infrastructure Projects Officer to ensure the project is effectively delivered. These were successfully recruited to at the end of August 2025.
- 9.3 The programme of improving the Aquadrome is led by the Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Service and is strongly supported by many other service teams throughout the council. These include the Communications team, supporting the delivery of the site's Communications Plan and showcasing the positive work across all forms of media. Grounds Maintenance are instrumental in not only providing guidance, advice and expertise, but through undertaking general daily maintenance of the site and any additional duties because of the external funding. Many other services are providing support to the programme, including: Properties, Finance, Planning, Customer Service Centre, Legal and Environmental Protection. Their involvement has strengthened the work at the Aquadrome and helped in submitting successful funding bids, showcasing the way in which the council works together to support a successful outcome for the Aquadrome.

## **10 Environmental Implications**

- 10.1 A Climate Change and Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed giving this report a score of 3.7 out of 4 indicating strong positive impact for climate change and sustainability. (Appendix B).

## **11 Community Safety Implications**

- 11.1 Officers will liaise with the community safety team to ensure that crime is designed out where possible during the development phase process of the project.

## **12 Public Health implications**

- 12.1 Subject to securing external funding for the delivery phase of the project, there will be a diverse activity plan focused on enhancing health and wellbeing, protecting the environment and educating the local community. Successful examples of this during the Natural Heritage Networks project, included mindfulness walks, nature photography walks, creative writing, sessions with local schools and storytelling workshops.

## **13 Customer Services Centre Implications**

- 13.1 None-Specific

## **14 Communications and Website Implications**

- 14.1 As part of the ongoing communication for the Aquadrome programme the new site narrative developed through the Natural Heritage Networks project is at the forefront of all messaging and the updated brand guidelines are now fully implemented.
- 14.2 As part of the funding agreement with The National Heritage Lottery, there are strict communication guidelines around all media relating to projects funded by them. These have been embraced by all officers and are evident throughout all relevant communications.
- 14.3 The website is regularly updated to reflect developments and includes extended pages covering funding successes and project implementation such



as Fishing Swims and pedestrian bridge. A Frequently Asked Questions section has been developed which provides information to many of the questions that have either been asked through social media or raised directly through other channels.

- 14.4 The Aquadrome Steering Group is regularly updated by email with project developments, and the next face to face meeting is scheduled on 15 October. Ward members are notified of significant updates through email approximately weekly.
- 14.5 Storyboards have been used across the site – a temporary update board that reflects what's happening in that immediate area. These have included information about the new bridge, entrance and play area, the closure of the woodland path, understanding the flow of water and its impact on the site as well as the impact of Japanese Knotweed on the opening of the new play area.

## 15 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

- 15.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.
- 15.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Leisure and Natural Infrastructure service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

Nature of Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact)
Condition of Flood modelling from the Environment Agency is not as expected	Further delay and financial implication to ensure the model is viable.	Specialist contractor review of model and close liaison with the Environment Agency	Treat	9
Increase in delivery costs	Insufficient project funding	Ensure a 20% contingency and inflation figure is included within the NLHF bid  Procurement processes completed to assess value	Treat	4



		for money.		
Asbestos present in delivery locations	<p>Increase in costs to manage asbestos</p> <p>Delay to work programme</p>	<p>Undertake surveying work in key locations during development phase</p> <p>Amend scope of works to reflect presence of asbestos</p>	Treat	4
Unable to secure Delivery funding for the National Lottery heritage fund implementation	Project vision and objectives will not be realised	<p>Evidence based funding applications</p> <p>Skilled staff employed to develop funding bids</p> <p>Working off the success of securing the Development Phase National Lottery funding.</p> <p>Continue to identify, review and apply for external funding</p>	Treat	3
Unable to secure additional external funding	Project vision and objectives not fully realised.	<p>Evidence based funding applications</p> <p>Skilled staff employed to develop funding bids</p> <p>Only seeking to match fund as able to use</p>	Treat	3

		National Lottery funding.		
Local Government Reorganisation	Project vision and objectives not fully realised.	Contracts will ensure continuity.  Seamless transfer of existing contracts to new authority	Treat	3

15.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

15.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

### Data Quality

Data sources:

Natural Heritage Networks Evaluation and Ecological Surveying

Aquadrome Management Plan

Aquadrome Asbestos Management Plan

Ezytreevs Tree Management System

Inspection Reports

Data checked by:

Jess Hodges

Jo Copley

Alex Laurie

Data rating:

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	
3	High	X

### Background Papers

**Rickmansworth Aquadrome Management plan 2022 - 2027:** [Rickmansworth Aquadrome | Three Rivers District Council](#)

**Asbestos Management Plan 2023:** [Rickmansworth Aquadrome | Three Rivers District Council](#)  
**March 2025 Rickmansworth Aquadrome Update Report:** [Rickmansworth Aquadrome Project Update Report enc. 1.pdf](#)

## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A:** Images of work completed to date

**Appendix B:** Climate Change and Sustainability Impact Assessment

**Appendix C:** Equality Impact Assessment

