

# **RICKMANSWORTH AQUADROME UPDATE REPORT 24/06/2026**

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE**  
**24 JUNE 2026**

PART I

**RICKMANSWORTH AQUADROME PROGRAMME UPDATE  
(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**

That the Climate Change and Leisure Committee:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report
- 2.2 Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance to enter into contracts or funding agreements above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding, or where a project is in existing/agreed budgets providing that the purpose of such is in line with the approved Aquadrome Management Plan and actions proposed within this report.

**3 Details**

**Project Overview**

- 3.1 The [Rickmansworth Aquadrome Management Plan 2022 – 2027](#) is an ambitious and far-reaching plan. As a result of the Plan, the [Rickmansworth Aquadrome Programme](#) was established to support its delivery.

**National Lottery Heritage Fund**

- 3.2 The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) is a 3-stage process. Three Rivers has successfully progressed through Stage 1, the initial Expression of Interest, has been accepted and funded by NLHF for Stage 2, the Development Phase, and is preparing to bid for funding under Stage 3, the Delivery Phase. The final, third, phase is when capital works (physical improvements on site) will be delivered.
- 3.3 The table below provides an overview the approved purposes for the NLHF Development Phase. This phase is largely preparatory and focuses on developing project proposals and working them up into more detailed designs. This funding phase does not include any physical works on site.

<b>National Lottery Heritage Fund Approved Purposes</b>	<b>Timescales</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
Deliver small-scale activity programme including nature-based activities, workshops and citizen science surveys to engage and inform.	Throughout the Development phase

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
Phase 2 of the hydrological study producing specifications and documents to achieve improvements.	September 2025 - May 2026
Complete an accessibility audit across the site.	September 2025 – December 2025
Procure and appoint consultant team.	September 2025 – August 2026
Complete asbestos assessments and other surveys reviewing capital project sites to inform risk assessments and method statements.	October 2025 – March 2026
Consultation and engagement with community, stakeholders and steering group.	2025: October, November 2026: February, March, May, July
Develop detailed designs for all aspects of proposals including interpretative and access improvements, tender package documentation and gain relevant consents.	January 2026 – May 2026
Develop activity plan for delivery phase.	May 2026 – July 2026
Evaluation of development phase.	July 2026 – August 2026
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 – September 2026
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

### Site Wide Masterplan and Public Engagement

- 3.4 [RIBA Stage 2 designs](#) have been widely publicised, and the community have engaged with the outline plans. Public engagement has been offered both through online and in person concerning the masterplan.
- 3.5 Residents along Uxbridge Road, who live adjacent to the River Colne received letters to invite them to take part in the engagement period, along with advertising on social media, onsite posters, website and details circulated to all councillors.
- 3.6 Online consultation ran from 12 February 2026 to 17 March 2026. There were 157 responses to the survey, with 1635 people viewing the pages and 641 document downloads.

- 3.7 Face to face engagement was provided informally by officers on site and supported by a well-publicised full day of public face to face engagement on Saturday 7 March attended by council staff and the full range of external specialists working on the programme. Upwards of 160 people attended, with approximately 30-40 people spending 30 minutes or more discussing the plans. A total of 80 people actively participated in the interactive engagement activity, prioritising interpretation themes and key wildlife and heritage features. A number of residents with property backing onto the River Colne attended to discuss river restoration proposals. It is worth noting that on this day staff were subjected to a significant amount of verbal abuse and aggression from residents. This will impact risk assessment of any future in person engagement activity.
- 3.8 Engagement feedback:
- 3.8.1 Most people would like to find out information via onsite notice boards, followed by online information Support was demonstrated for improvements to and introduction of new information boards explaining the presence and importance of the habitats and wildlife present on site on the provision that this did not lead to the site feeling cluttered with such.
- 3.8.2 Respondents were not supportive of the introduction of an arts trail on the site preferring to see the sites natural environment prioritised. As such the proposal for an arts trail will not be progressed
- 3.8.3 Concerns were raised about dog behaviour at the site, whilst others wanted to ensure dogs could be kept off leads in relation to the dog enrichment zone
- 3.8.4 Concerns were raised around the closures of the Ebury play area and the Woodland Path
- 3.8.5 The majority of respondents were either supportive or very supportive of the following proposed enhancements:
- Visitor Hub (67%),
  - Bury Point (70%),
  - Natural Play & Discovery Zone (69%),
  - Meadow (74%)
  - Car park one way system (68%)

### **Accessibility Audit**

- 3.9 An audit was undertaken by Inclusion & Accessibility UK who considered the site from arrival, access, toilet provision and interpretation/signage, spending two full days on site. The audit was supported by an online survey which received 46 responses.
- 3.10 The audit recommendations include:
- Accessible information at the visitor hub (written, audio and tactile)
  - Improved signage, wayfinding & interpretation
  - Inclusion of handrails and a tapping rail for mobility canes on proposed boardwalks
  - Introduction of a Changing Places facility
  - Seating which allows easy transfer and use for a range of needs
  - Promotion of site accessibility on the website & social media channels
  - Increased locations for shelter in inclement weather

- Increase capacity for disabled parking

3.11 These key recommendations are being incorporated into the RIBA Stage 3 designs and improvements have been made to the website to enable greater advance planning for visitors with disabilities.

### **Hydrological Study – Floodplain Connectivity, Lakeside Habitat Management and River Restoration**

3.12 In Autumn/Winter 2025, the council and its contractor were granted access to the Environment Agency’s (EA) updated Upper Colne model, allowed work to complete on the [hydrological study](#) for Rickmansworth Aquadrome.

3.13 The hydrological study considered the key complexities of the Rickmansworth area:

- Complex hydrology that can lead to complicated water level information
- Overland flood water from kilometres upstream
- A mixture of water from the rivers Chess, Colne, Gade and the canal which each have different flows, water levels and interactions
- Overtopping of water from adjacent lakes

3.14 Building on this, detailed local information was gathered on the topography (study of forms and features of land surfaces) and bathymetry (study and measurement of underwater depth in lakes, rivers, and oceans) of the Aquadrome. Upon this, flood modelling was conducted using highly technical computer programmes to replicate the existing situation. The model was then subjected to a range of flooding scenarios to gain insight into the consequences and how the landscape can be expected to react. The modelling yielded interesting and invaluable information on the anticipated extent of future flooding – this has directly fed into and strongly influenced the design process.

3.15 The concept designs for the Aquadrome Project will deliver a coordinated package of measures to restore natural chalk stream processes, improve ecological connectivity, enhance wet woodland hydrology, and maintain safe public access. These include:

- a) Weir removal and regrading of the channel bed
- b) Installation of berms within the river channel to either narrow the channel increasing flow or protect the riverbanks
- c) Floodplain habitat creation within two areas of wet grassland
- d) Riverbank management of trees to introduce more light to the channel
- e) Creation of water flow pathways and lowering of the embankment increasing connectivity and facilitating the flow of water through the Aquadrome
- f) Footpath improvements to facilitate safe access around the Aquadrome when in flood
- g) Bank protection

3.16 The mill stream is a section of the River Colne designated main river as attributed by the Environment Agency who are the appropriate authority for permitting work on/near main rivers regulated by The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations, 2016. A Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) is only granted by the EA where they are satisfied that any works near rivers and floodplains do not adversely affect flood risk or the environment; this would include the risk of impeding flow. The removal of Bury Weir would require a

FRAP to be granted; meaning that if granted the Environment Agency would not consider the works to present an adverse impact on flood risk.

- 3.17 While the removal of Bury Weir is being proposed within the Aquadrome Project, it is also independently ear-marked for removal by the Environment Agency within the Water Framework Directive measures to improve the condition of the River Colne. Further to this, when the weir partially collapsed in August 2025 and guidance was sought from the EA it was confirmed that it was not viewed as a flood risk concern and that there is ecological benefit to this which would be furthered by its removal.
- 3.18 Within the [Technical Design note](#) section 2.4 outlines the proposed design which includes the removal of Bury weir and the subsequent regrading of the existing channel bed. Implementing this design will result in improved ecological connectivity, restored natural river processes, and contribute to long-term geomorphic recovery downstream. Wier removal will be supported by careful and precise regrading of the riverbed both upstream and downstream of the weir location to deliver a smooth transition as the section will no longer be impounded. The works will be carefully calculated to ensure flows are distributed appropriately, maintaining hydraulic continuity and chalk stream characteristics.
- 3.19 To address the deteriorating condition of the lake banks, a lakeside habitat management plan is in development. This recognises that both lakes exhibit varying levels of erosion influenced by recreation, hydraulics, vegetation management and historic bank protection. The lakeshore design seeks to:
- Stabilise eroding lake edge
  - Enhance ecological condition
  - Address dominant erosion pressures
  - Protect and enhance public amenity
  - Support long-term climate resilience
- 3.20 Through preventative measures, nature-based (bioengineering) solutions and engineered interventions protection and enhancement of the lake banks is proposed where the right option is selected for the appropriate location. Interventions include:
- Prevention Measures: Retention of fallen trees and exclusion fencing
  - Nature-based solutions: planting of live willow, marginal berm creation, installation of offshore large woody material
  - Engineered solutions: rock mattresses (stone filled mesh units along the lower banks provide an armouring layer) and aqua-rock bags (geotextile mesh bags filled with stone provide stabilisation against wave wash)

### **Woodland Walk and Pinetum**

- 3.21 The outcome of the hydrology design work recommends several floodplain connectivity points along the River Colne, adjacent to the wet woodland. These connectivity points are approximately 3-4m in length and up to 500mm in dept and aim to support controlled flow into the wet woodland.
- 3.22 Proposals for the formal route through the pinetum and wet woodland have been developed in accordance with the hydrology recommendations to ensure safe accessibility during high flows. Two bridges over the connectivity points are proposed along the woodland path with a natural material installed as the

formal pathway surface. The Environment Agency have confirmed that they would object to the use of tarmac adjacent to the River Colne at this location (negating a like for like repair/replacement of the existing path) and as a result, a loose fill, natural material (e.g. hoggin) will be used.

- 3.23 To ensure the project remains viable from a sustainable and financial perspective, the formal route has been revised to provide access through the pinetum, turning north-east along the River Colne to re-join the main footpath network at Batchworth Lake. The remaining section from the Bury Lake entrance will see the pathway returned to a natural surface with the existing end of life tarmac removed.
- 3.24 Chestnut fencing and gates will be installed at the main entrances to the Pinetum Path and Woodland Walk, so that in the event of significant flooding it can be closed temporarily to protect public safety until the flooding has receded.

### **Visitor and Welcome Area**

- 3.25 The newly designed area will create a welcome hub and orientation place for visitors. Attractive pathways, low mounds, fixed seating and tree planting are proposed for the area outside the café .
- 3.26 The welcome area will provide a fixed point of information (interpretation boards) through which visitors can understand the layout of the site, its important social and natural history and hydrology of the Aquadrome. A tactile site map has been included in the plans to support those with visual impairments but is also expected to have wide appeal.
- 3.27 A Changing Places facility (a bespoke changing facility for users with special needs who may require a hoist, shower, adapted toilet and space for carers), has been incorporated next to the toilet block between the block and the cafe.
- 3.28 The existing concrete apron grounds maintenance depot access will be screened to create a more attractive visual for visitors whilst ensuring operational access remains.

### **Bury Point**

- 3.29 Proposals include a new shelter in the Bury Point area on the southern shore of Bury Lake. This will support all-weather use and resilience for this facility and the various groups using Bury Lake.

### **Natural Play**

- 3.30 Natural play enhancements are proposed to complement the wild play area in the dog free zone. The improvements include willow tunnels and balance beams, additional seating with paths leading to the seating and retention of the area as amenity grass.

### **Meadow and Lakeside Platforms**

- 3.31 The area from the café towards both lakes has been designated as Meadow. And is proposed to incorporate a “scrape” designed to hold excess water, preventing the flow of the water across the path. A small, raised area is

proposed to provide attractive landscaping with much of the space left to amenity grassland.

- 3.32 To further connect the visitor to the lakes, it is proposed that Bury Lake will have lakeside platforms in a similar style to those already installed on Batchworth Lake. One platform will replace the existing bird feeding area, and a further platform would be erected directly opposite a newly installed pedestrian bridge from the café. In addition, three picnic platforms are proposed at the locations where currently concrete pads enter the water.
- 3.33 The council receives a number of requests for the installation of memorial benches and plaques at Rickmansworth Aquadrome. Under the current Memorial Bench Policy, the Aquadrome does not have any capacity for additional memorial benches. Programme proposals include the replacement and upgrading of existing benches. To facilitate the increasing request for memorials at the Aquadrome, it is proposed to offer the opportunity for plaques to be installed on the mid-rail of the new “lakeside platforms” on both Bury Lake and Batchworth Lake. The full details of this offer will be developed as part of the scheduled review of the council’s Memorial Bench policy towards the end of 2026.

### **Tree and Vegetation Management Strategy**

- 3.34 Work on the Tree & Vegetation Strategy and Action Plan for the Aquadrome is currently being developed with survey work underway across the site to assess: the presence of non-native invasive species, tree work requirements, new tree and shrub planting opportunities and the scope for habitat enhancement and management works.

### **Activity Plan**

- 3.35 The creation of an Activity Plan is part of Development Phase with implementation following in the Delivery Phase alongside the capital works programme.
- 3.36 NLHF have approved an activity plan focus on reaching more diverse underrepresented local groups over the usual aim to increase overall footfall. In addition, the plan focuses on changing visitor behaviour to engender respect for the nature reserve and to nurture a sense of stewardship of place.
- 3.37 The activity plan will include focus on:
- Targeted Children and Young People – Specifically young carers, children on pupil premium, the councils ACE Scheme and those in lower economic areas.
  - People with a disability – specifically those with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, visually impaired and long-term physical/mental health
  - Age 65+ visitors- specifically isolated adults, care homes
  - Special interests- specifically Three Rivers Museum, Colne Valley Regional Park, U3A and Woodoaks Farm
  - Adults demonstrating anti-social behaviour – specifically around dog control, attitudes to litter and care for the environment
  - Educational research and development – specifically GCSE/A Level, home school communities
  - Support those who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) – specifically through a green skills training programme and apprenticeship
  - Ethnically Diverse Audience engagement – specifically underrepresented groups

- 3.38 A key feature of the activity plan will be use of and building upon the site wide interpretation boards and opportunities to celebrate the social and natural heritage of the site. This will include key habitats and changing use of the Aquadrome and River Colne over time, working in partnership with the Three Rivers Museum and other professional stakeholders.

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

- 3.39 Following the completion of the Development Phase officer anticipate the following timeline:

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
Submission of the delivery phase application	November 2026
Anticipated outcome of Delivery Phase application	April 2027
Commencement of Delivery Phase	April/May 2027
Completion of the Delivery Phase	March 2030

- 3.40 The delivery phase of the programme and associated timelines are subject to a number of potential restrictions. These include but may not be limited to:
- The success of the delivery phase application
  - Consents for work, including Planning and Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) applications
  - Environmental conditions experienced through the programme (for example flooding)

### **Ebury Play Area**

- 3.41 Remediation works to safely remove the Japanese Knotweed and other invasive weeds at the play area began on Wednesday 18 March 2026 and are on course to complete no later than Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2026. Weekly updates are shared on the council’s website and reported directly to Ward Councillors.

### **Marketing and Communications: November 2025– May 2026**

- 3.42 The programme’s communications plan continues to make use of onsite Storyboards, copies of which are also accessible on the council website. Currently the site displays information boards on the Woodland walk, Ebury Play Area and the National Lottery funding phases. Over Easter, the site also displayed a board promoting local play opportunities and holiday activities.
- 3.43 The Aquadrome programme has been widely communicated to the community and other stakeholders through a variety of media channels as part of a NLHF approved Communications Plan.
- 3.44 Website - The [dedicated website pages](#) are regularly refreshed to reflect the progress of the programme. Website visitor details for the period November 2025 to May 2026 were 2670, significantly higher than in previous recording periods.

- 3.45 Following a recommendation from the site Accessibility Audit [a new tab](#) has been added to the website to enable people to plan their visit, using better information and imagery.
- 3.46 Have your Say - The council's dedicated consultation platform was used successfully for public engagement for both the RIBA Stage 2 engagement and the Accessibility Audit. The RIBA engagement has 60 survey submissions and 304 documents downloaded.
- 3.47 Press Release/videos - This period saw 10 News Stories published covering topics relating to the woodland path, the Masterplan and Ebury Play Area. A video is in production that documents the development of the masterplan over the year.
- 3.48 YouTube coverage - Three videos have been produced to enhance press release publications. The most recent being the video of the Leader of the council explaining the process of the Development phase. This gained 63 visits with 321 impressions. <https://youtu.be/jupYxJ9WSuM> (published 20 Jan 2026)
- 3.49 MyNews- Monthly editorial articles are submitted to the My Ricky Newspaper, a hyperlocal media publication. Each month the article covers a topic related to the programme. In the period since the last Committee report topics have included:

November 2025	The Master Plan for the Aquadrome
December 2025	Appointment of RSK and their role
January 2026	Engagement officer – Have your Say
February 2026	Come and meet the RSK Experts
March 2026	Woodland walk and Path
April 2026	Remediation works to Ebury Play Area
May 2026	Public Engagement feedback on RIBA Stage 2

- 3.50 Future articles will include content on the planning process for the project as the plans at RIBA Stage 3 will be subjected to planning approval as part of the NLHF requirements.
- 3.51 Social media – Regular social media posts continue to be issued across all the council's platforms to share details of the Aquadrome programme; the activities visitors can and can't participate in at the site, as well educate about the wildlife that the site provides a home for. Press releases and videos have also been shared on all council social media platforms as well as proactive messaging encouraging participation on the wide variety of engagement activities that have been available in this period. A total of 113 posts across 3 platforms have been posted in this period with a total reach of 159,253.
- 3.52 Social media and Have Your Say have also been used reactively to answer direct questions received from residents and visitors regarding aspects of the project.

### **Tree Management – September 2025 to May 2026**

- 3.53 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. 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.

- 3.54 The following works have been completed since the previous Committee report:

Emergency works

- 3.54.1 An American Elm on the avenue leading up to Batchworth Lake Young Mariners (BLYM) was felled.
- 3.54.2 A willow on the Avenue leading up BLYM was re-pollarded.
- 3.54.3 Two partially failed willows, close to a footpath opposite the cafe, were felled and pollarded respectively.

High Priority works

- 3.54.4 Two of the veteran oak trees in the dog-free play area were crown reduced during this period, following internal decay testing.
- 3.54.5 An ash to the rear of the toilet block was monolithed
- 3.54.6 A sallow on the bank of Bury Lake was re-pollarded
- 3.54.7 A limb from a partially failed willow on the bank of Bury Lake was reduced
- 3.54.8 No routine, facilitation or habitat management tree works were carried out during this period..

Inspections

- 3.55 In January 2026 the 12-monthly inspection of the main footpaths at the Aquadrome was carried out by Tree officers with the 18-monthly inspection of higher risk areas at the Aquadrome carried out by external consultants taking place in February 2026

Pest and Diseases

- 3.56 No reports of Oak Processionary Moth at the Aquadrome have been received to date in 2026. Any reports of its presence will be inspected, risk assessed, and any nests, and any caterpillars, may depending on location, be removed and destroyed by a pest control contractor.

**Footpath Improvements**

- 3.57 In December 2025 patch repairs were undertaken on the section known as FP65 and the causeway between Bury Lake and Stockers Lake. Repairs were completed using a type 1 crush.
- 3.58 In March 2026 footpath repairs were made to the area around the sluice gate in the western corner of Bury Lake and at the access to the disabled swim around Batchworth Lake

**Bury Lake Young Mariners**

- 3.59 Officers have been working with Bury Lake Young Mariners (BLYM) to support the development of a new Business Plan, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding application and identify other funding sources to support their desire to

develop the dry-side facility for which Planning approval was granted in June 2024 and will expire on the 17 June 2027. BLYM are expected to submit their CIL funding application in the current application window which opened on 1 June 2026.

### **Glade Bridge**

- 3.60 The wooden bridge, which spans the river, from an area known as the Glade onto the Canal towpath, is reaching end of life. Several 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.
- 3.61 A structural survey was last carried out in May 2025 and officers undertake regular checks on the bridge to ensure it remains safe for public use.
- 3.62 A FRAP application for replacement works was submitted in July 2025 and approved in October 2025.
- 3.63 A planning application was submitted but rejected by the Environment Agency (EA) who requested changes to the design of the replacement bridge. Following further correspondence with the EA, their objection has now been lifted and the plans are scheduled to go before Planning Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2026.
- 3.64 Exact costs for the replacement bridge are being finalised. It is hoped that the project will be eligible for grant funding from Veolia, however, it is expected that the council will need to also provide funds as certain elements of the project cannot be funded under the Veolia fund criteria including HCC permits for work from HCC as the access to the bridge is via their land.

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

- 3.65 The vehicle access gate at the entrance of the Rickmansworth Aquadrome site, has reached end of life and no longer working on an automatic basis resulting in manual opening which restricts its practical use and efficiency in granting vehicle access to those who need it (site tenants, TDC staff) whilst deterring those who should not be accessing the site other than on foot.
- 3.66 The current gate when functioning normally allows access via swipe card which is open to abuse where individuals share the card beyond permitted users and the issuing and recording of access card is an administrative burden that would, with an alternative gate solution, be unnecessary.
- 3.67 Options for a replacement gate with ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) functionality are being investigated by officers.

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

- 4.1 To note the content of the report and to agree delegation in relation to contracts and funding to permit works to continue.

## **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 2026- 2029.

- LNI04 - External Funding secured to support Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Projects and Activities.
- LNI05 - Year on year increase in the area of land owned by Three Rivers District Council, being managed for biodiversity benefit.
- 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:

- **A Well-Run Council** - a key part of the Development phase of the NLHF 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 acts 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.
- **A Prosperous and Vibrant District** – 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.
- **Healthy, Safe and Thriving Communities** – the Aquadrome project will look to enhance the current leisure and cultural offer to visitors to the Aquadrome. This will include engagement activities and volunteer opportunities. A full activity programme is being developed as part of the NLHF Development phase. This is being carefully balanced against a desire to not significantly increase visitor numbers. Focusing rather on audience diversification and on-site engagement to improve health and wellbeing.
- **A Green and Sustainable Future** – the initial focus of the programme has been to ensure an improved understanding of the movement of water across the site to better facilitate the essential natural dynamics of the flood plain. This will support the resilience of site to the impacts of severe weather, wider climate change and ensure it can continue to protect the town of Rickmansworth from flood events. Significant enhancements to the biodiversity of the site will improve the condition and scope of the in, several instances rare, habitats present.

## 6 Financial Implications

6.1 The total anticipated cost for the entire programme at this stage is at this stage undefined. Works will only be undertaken when funds have been secured to deliver them. To date officers have secured £2,849,761 of external funding to support the programme.

6.2 The table below shows external funding secured and future applications where known:

Amount	Funder	Secured Applied For/
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		<b>Future App</b>
£216,691	NLHF - 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) - £22,000 Recovery & Resilience Project - £32,000 Hydrological Study - £50,000 Match funding NLHF Dev Phase	Secured
£736,515	NLHF Development Phase	Secured
£TBC	Affinity Water	Future App
£4,146,114 (estimated)	National Lottery Heritage Fund - Delivery Phase	Future App
<b>£TBC</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	

### **Future Funding**

- 6.3 During the NLHF Development Phase costs for the NLHF Delivery Phase application will be established through detailed designs and tender. Currently this is estimated to be approximately £5,446,563, made up of £4,146,114 from the NLHF and the remaining using match funding (required by NLHF) from the AMP and a planned application to Affinity Water through their Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP).
- 6.4 Hertfordshire County Council currently hold S106 funding of £34,862 in relation to the public right of way – Footpath 65. Officers have been advised that there is the potential, subject to formal approval, to utilise this funding towards the programme.
- 6.5 Officers propose to allocate £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.
- 8.2 As part of the Approved Purposes of the NLHF Development Phase Project an Accessibility Audit was conducted. This raised a series of recommendations as detailed earlier. Where possible these have been incorporated into the RIBA stage 3 designs and included in the funding application, for example a Changing Places facility and tactile map.

## **9 Staffing Implications**

- 9.1 The Aquadrome programme is being delivered by the Programme Development Manager, along with several 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 funded project specific posts, including a Project Support Officer and Natural Infrastructure Projects Officer to ensure the project is effectively delivered. Staffing will also be a core element of the NLHF Delivery Phase funding application.
- 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 in their undertaking of 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.

11.2 Officers have consulted the Police regarding the shelter at Bury Point and they have not raised objections to the proposals.

## **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.

### **Asbestos Management**

12.2 The [Aquadrome Asbestos Management Plan](#) is fully embedded as part of business-as-usual management of the Aquadrome site.

12.3 As part of the NLHF Development Phase, works were procured to investigation into the potential presence of asbestos at key locations as part of the project plans for infrastructure improvements. The site investigations comprised of:

- 36 hand dug trial pits at a maximum depth of 1.2m
- Cone penetration testing at 14 locations to a maximum depth of 10m below ground level

12.4 The ground investigations and associated site walkovers identified 10 new Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM's) locations. One high risk, two medium risk and seven low risk areas were identified, of which four, including the high and a medium risk location, are within the vicinity of the Woodland Walk. The specialist consultants have recommended that access to this area remains restricted. Despite the existing closure of the Woodland Walk, continued non-compliance with on-site safety restrictions means that an unacceptable level of risk persists which has resulted in officers taking immediate action rather than wait for the delivery phase works. A surface pick of the ACMs was commissioned and took place over a two-week period in April and May 2026. Given the scale and nature of the asbestos in certain areas, complete removal is not considered viable and, as a result, it will be necessary to permanently restrict public access to such areas through permanent, secure, fencing. A secure access gate will be incorporated to accommodate staff and specialist contractor access for monitoring and maintenance such as tree works. The permanent containment of the high-risk area will not, in due course, negate the refurbishment of the woodland path itself nor will it preclude the planned reopening of the path as part of the Aquadrome Programme.

12.5 Details of all newly identified ACM locations where located in proximity to any of the planned capital delivery works, will be incorporated within the tender

specifications and contractor work under the Aquadrome Asbestos Management Plan.

### **13 Customer Services Centre Implications**

13.1 None-Specific to this report.

### **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 NLHF, 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 council website is regularly updated to reflect developments and includes extended pages covering funding successes and project implementation such as public engagement over RIBA Stage 2 and the Have Your Say opportunities around engagement. 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. A new tab has been added to support visitors planning a visit to the site following a recommendation from the Accessibility Audit.

14.4 The Aquadrome Steering Group is regularly updated by email with project developments. At the March meeting project consultants from RSK and Haley Sharpe, led a workshop about the RIBA 2 designs and the interpretation for the site.

14.5 Storyboards have been used across the Aquadrome – a temporary update board that reflects what's happening in that immediate area. The current boards focus on information about the closure of the woodland path, remediation of Ebury Play area and explaining the funding from the national Lottery (Development and Delivery phases).

### **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).

Risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response	Residual Risk Rating
Increase in	Insufficient	Ensure a 20%	Treat	4

delivery costs	project funding	contingency and inflation figure is included within the NLHF bid  Procurement processes completed to assess value for money.		
Asbestos present in delivery locations	Increase in costs to manage asbestos  Delay to work programme  Risk to public health	Undertake surveying work in key locations during development phase  Amend scope of works to reflect presence of asbestos  Undertake appropriate removal and/or containment works where ACMs identified	Treat	4
Unable to secure Delivery funding for the National Lottery heritage fund implementation	Project vision and objectives will not be realised  Public disappointment  Reputational damage to the council	Evidence based funding applications  Skilled staff employed to develop funding bids  Building on success of securing the Development Phase National Lottery funding.  Continue to identify, review and apply for variety of external funds	Treat	3
Unable to secure additional external funding	Project vision and objectives not fully realised.	Evidence based funding applications  Skilled staff employed to develop funding	Treat	3

		bids Only seeking to match fund as able to use National Lottery funding.		
Unable to secure relevant permissions (including Planning Permission & Flood Risk Activity Permit)	Project vision and objectives not fully realised.	Evidence based applications from thorough and precise surveying.  Close coordination with relevant authorities.	Treat	3
Local Government Reorganisation	Project vision and objectives not fully realised.	Contract novation will ensure continuity. Project flagged early in pre planning of LGR workstreams	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
- RIBA Stage 2 Masterplan
- RIBA Stage 3 Report

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](#)

**12 March 2025 Rickmansworth Aquadrome Update Report:** [Rickmansworth Aquadrome Project Update Report enc. 1.pdf](#)

**15 October 2025 – Rickmansworth Aquadrome Update Report:** [Rickmansworth Aquadrome Project Update Report](#)

### APPENDICES

**Appendix A:** Equality Impact Assessment

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

