

AQUADROME PROJECT – MATCH FUNDING REQUEST COMMITTEE REPORT

08/10/2026

**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
8 OCTOBER 2026**

PART I

**AQUADROME PROJECT – MATCH FUNDING REQUEST
(ADE)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 During the Development Phase review with the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the account managers informed Officers that whilst they expect project costs for Delivery Phase to increase due to detailed design work, they would also expect to see income/match funding increase.
- 1.2 Particularly of note, as the Lottery are potentially investing a significant amount of money into the project (circa £5 million), they would expect to see Three Rivers District Council contributing capital towards the total project cost.
- 1.3 The percentage of funding between the Lottery and match funding must remain similar to that which was submitted as part of the Development Phase budget. This was 75% from the Lottery and 25% from match funding. As costs have increased, these percentages have changed and the level of match funding required also needs to increase to balance the percentages.
- 1.4 Officers have explored all avenues of funding available for the project, including securing funds from Affinity Water, the HS2 Colne Valley Additional Mitigation Panel (AMP) and the Chilterns National Landscape – Access for All funding. There remains, however, a shortfall
- 1.5 Officers will also be applying to the Community Infrastructure Levy funding pot, however, should this be unsuccessful it is recommended that £165,000 is included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan for use as match funding towards the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- 1.6 Should additional income not be secured, delivery costs will need to be reduced, which means key aspects of the project (Improvements to Footpath 65 – the Causeway between Bury and Stockers Lakes) will not be delivered.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Policy and Resources Committee recommends to Full Council that £165,000 of capital funds be allocated to be used as match funding towards the Aquadrome Project as detailed at point 1.5 and between points 3.7 and 3.10, should a funding application to the Community Infrastructure Levy be unsuccessful.

That public access to the report be immediate.

That public access to the decision be immediate.

Report prepared by: Charlotte Gomes,

Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure

3 Details

- 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.
- 3.2 The council have been exploring funding opportunities and have so far secured match funding from the HS2 Colne Valley Additional Mitigation Plan and from Affinity Water. Chilterns National Landscape have also provided a letter of support, outlining their commitment to support funding from the Access for All funding stream for the Changing Places Toilet, Tactile Site Map and a 360-degree tour of the site – all in place to improve the accessibility for visitors with additional needs.
- 3.3 The council has also been successful in securing and engaging with the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) as part of their Heritage Fund.
- 3.4 The 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.
- 3.5 As part of the Development Phase period, a key milestone is the Development Phase Review – this is when the Lottery will determine whether or not the project remains viable and if there continues to be support for the council to progress towards the next stage, which is submission of the Delivery Phase funding application.
- 3.6 Positively the council passed this review and have been invited to continue to develop the delivery round submission.
- 3.7 It was, however, requested that the council reviews the project costs and in particular, secures additional match funding. The NLHF Investment Manager particularly emphasised the need for the council itself to provide direct match funding to demonstrate their support for the project.
- 3.8 The Lottery will expect the ratio of lottery grant and match funding to remain the same or close to the original ratio as submitted as part of the Development Phase bid. This ratio was 75% National Lottery Heritage Fund and 25% match funding.
- 3.9 As project costs have become more refined as a result of the detailed design work, scientific investigations and public engagement, the ratio has changed to the Lottery providing more and match funding being less. Currently the ratio is at 76% National Lottery Heritage Fund and 24% match funding.
- 3.10 In order to bring the ratio back to where it needs to be, Officers will be applying to the Community Infrastructure Levy funding pot, however, should this be unsuccessful it is recommended that £165,000 is included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan for use as match funding towards the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- 3.11 The implications of not agreeing the recommendation are as follows:
 - 3.11.1 The National Lottery Heritage Fund decision makers are less likely to be supportive of the project and determine that the council are not invested in its

delivery. This could seriously jeopardise the funding application being successful.

- 3.11.2 The alternative to increasing match funding, would require a removal of some project costs (and related delivery) from the overall programme. Officers are currently reviewing what this could realistically be. Given costs of individual packages of works and known public and political priorities it is likely to be the replacement of Footpath 65 (The Causeway between Bury Lake and Stockers Lake) with a more sustainable solution. Whilst addressing the overall issue of cost for the programme the removal of this aspect of work will not, however, change the view from the NLHF that without match funding contribution the council are unsupportive of the project.

4 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Option 1: agree the addition of £165,000 capital funding from the Council's budgets towards the 2027-2030 delivery phase of the Aquadrome Project, should a funding bid to the Community Infrastructure Levy pot. This would strengthen the council's bid and positively impact the outcome of the funding decision by the National Lottery.
- 4.2 Officers will continue to look for other sources of match funding in order to reduce the additional capital amount being requested.
- 4.3 Option 2: not agree the addition of the £165,000 capital funding from the Council's budget. This would result in the likely loss of Footpath 65 as highlighted at point 3.11.2 and would jeopardise the successful outcome of the funding bid.
- 4.4 It is officer recommendation to proceed with option 1 as outlined above.

5 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 5.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy.
- 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.

5.4 The recommendations in this report are not within the Council's agreed budgets. The recommendation requests an additional £165,000 of council budgets towards the project as match-funding, should an application to the Community Infrastructure Levy fund be unsuccessful..

6 Financial Implications

6.1 The total cost of the project is circa £5.6 million, with the Lottery grant request approximately £5 million, meaning match funding will need to total approximately £1.5 million. The requested £165,000 will be regarded by the NHLF as a positive contribution to this match funding.

6.2 Other funding applied for / secured towards match funding includes:

6.2.1 HS2 Colne Valley Additional Mitigation Panel

6.2.2 Affinity Water

6.2.3 Chilterns National Landscape – Access for All

6.2.4 Community Infrastructure Levy (car park contribution)

6.3 Individual amounts remain confidential until the funding partner has agreed them. However, they currently total just under: £1.4 million.

6.4 As outlined in point 3.10, the capital budget of £165,000 will only be required should an application to the Community Infrastructure Levy fund be unsuccessful.

7 Legal Implications

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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".
- 7.3 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. Key features of these recommendations will be subject to the outcome of a funding application to the Chiltern's National Landscape – Access for All grant programme.

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.

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 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 delivery costs	Insufficient project funding	Ensure a high contingency and inflation figure is included within the NLHF bid Procurement processes completed to assess value for money.	Treat	4
Asbestos present in delivery locations	Increase in costs to manage asbestos Delay to work programme Risk to public health	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	Evidence based funding applications Skilled staff employed to develop funding	Treat	3

	Reputational damage to the council	bids Building on success of securing the Development Phase National Lottery funding. Continue to identify, review and apply for variety of external funds Demonstrate council commitment through investment in the project.		
Unable to secure additional external funding	Project vision and objectives not fully realised.	Evidence based funding applications Skilled staff employed to develop funding bids Only seeking to match fund as able to use National Lottery funding.	Treat	3
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](#)

24 June 2026 – Rickmansworth Aquadrome Update Report: [Rickmansworth Aquadrome Project Update Report](#)

