



Green Corridor Land Management Plan January 2023 – December 2027

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and Wellington Town Council have entered into a Lease Agreement through which SWT will lease land known as the Green Corridor and referred to in the Lease as the Green Space to the Town Council for a period of 150 years from
- 1.2 A requirement of the lease is that Wellington Town Council submit a 5-year management plan to SWT for approval. This Plan is the first Management Plan and covers the period January 2023 – December 2027.
- 1.3 Given that this is the first year that the Town Council will be responsible for the land, the intention is that the first year of this five-year period will be spent assessing need, consulting the community and developing a long-term Vision for the land. The Management Plan will then be reviewed before the end of December 2023 to reflect the Vision and set out in more detail plans for the following four years.
- 1.4 The Vision and management Plan will deliver the commitments agreed by the Town Council in April 2022:
 - It will ensure that the land remains available for public use and use it to promote recreation, healthy lifestyles, local food growing (see below) and the development of arts and cultural spaces.
 - It will ensure that the land is maintained in a way that promotes biodiversity whilst ensuring the health and safety of those accessing it.
 - It will honour existing agreements and licences with community groups to carry out work on those areas of land covered by any agreement for example Transition Town Wellington (TTW) and Fox's Field).
 - It will consult with the community and community groups to seek views on how to make best use of the land.
 - It will work with the Wellington Community Food Group which is seeking to establish a Community Farm on the land.
 - It will seek to extend the existing Basins Allotments site to create more allotments to encourage greater self-sufficiency in food production and support the reduction of the town's carbon footprint.

- It will work with the Wellington Sports Federation to explore the possibilities of developing additional playing pitch capacity on the land.
 - It will seek to improve active travel options across the land linking Tonedale and Westford with The Basins and through to Rockwell Green by developing an infrastructure that promotes walking and cycling and is accessible to all irrespective of any mobility issues they may have.
 - It will use the land to enhance biodiversity and reduce the towns carbon footprint through planting more trees and wildflower meadows to sequester carbon and create a more biodiverse and resilient environment. This will also help with natural flood management and healthier soil.
 - It will increase the amount of viable habitat for wildlife in the area helping natural ecosystems to thrive.
- 1.5 This is a working document and will be refreshed annually through the Green Corridor Advisory Board (GCAB) for agreement by the Town Council and the Somerset Unitary Council in or about the month of October (both in respect of medium-term and annual priorities) to ensure that it remains relevant, forward-looking and deliverable. All activity specified in the plan is subject to the availability of funding and other relevant resources.

2. Governance

- 2.1 The Town Council has established a Green Corridor Advisory Board (GCAB) that will help develop the Strategy and Management Plan for the land, for adoption by the Town Council, and have oversight of its delivery.
- 2.2 The GCAB will be managed by the Town Council, and it will report to its Environment and Open Spaces Committee.
- 2.3 Membership of the GCAB is drawn from the following Groups (one member per group other than the Town Council which has three representatives):
- The Town Council (which will Chair the meetings)
 - Transition Town Wellington
 - Wellington Community Food
 - Wellington Mills CiC
 - Wellington Sports Federation
 - The Basins Volunteer Group
 - SWT/Somerset Unitary Council
 - Environment Agency
 - Somerset Wildlife Trust
- 2.4 The GCAB meets monthly. It is not a decision making body. Notes of its meetings and any recommendations arising from the meetings are

considered by the Town Council's Environment and Open Spaces Committee. Where the Committee can make decisions within its delegated powers it will do so otherwise it will make recommendations for action to the Town Council.

3. Consultation and Engagement

3.1 The GCAB has devised a consultation approach for the community which will inform the development of an overarching Vision for the land and in turn the further development of the Management Plan. This will be taking place in early 2023. The consultation is designed to establish:

- How people currently use the land
- What they would like to see therein the future
- What is important to them

3.2 Using social media posts, articles in the Wellington Weekly News, Zoom meetings, surveys, mailbox leaflet drops, posters in shops, noticeboards and on the site itself, we will collect extensive information about how the community as a whole feels about this very public area. This initial consultation will inform future engagement activities across the year as plans develop.

3.3 The community will be encouraged to engage in activities on the land for example tree planting and work with the Community Farm.

4. Site Improvement Works

4.1 During the Year 1 the intention is that the GCAB will develop individual Management Plans for each area of the Green Corridor that reflects its characteristics. Whilst those are being developed the broad principles for how the land will be managed and maintained are set out below.

4.2 Overall natural management plan

It is proposed that the site be maintained and enhanced to:

- Enhance the natural biodiversity of the site by creating or allowing natural habitats to remain wild and unkempt.
- Keep certain invasive species under control (primarily Himalayan balsam) rather than eliminating them entirely.
- Maintain parts of the site as open, wildflower meadows to encourage pollinators and insects, and their associated bird and animal life.
- Keep the existing pathways open and clear for the community to use and improving them for anyone with mobility issues.
- Improve active travel options across the land by developing an infrastructure that promotes walking and cycling.
- Maintain the hedges so that they are kept healthy and useful as wildlife corridors.
- Encourage the natural regeneration of the ecosystem wherever possible with minimal maintenance in the longer term.

- Maintain the site as an integral part of the 'green corridor connecting key areas of habitat in the wider area.

4.3 Works relating to trees

- 4.3.1 All significant or veteran trees will be retained for biodiversity, landscape and community value. No tree will be damaged, cut down or removed from the site unless necessary. Dead standing wood will be left, as far as possible, as wildlife habitats.
- 4.3.2 Individual larger shrubs and trees that may encroach upon wetland areas may be removed, if the ecological benefit of maintaining the open/boggy land outweighs that of allowing the natural regeneration of woodland on the site.
- 4.3.3 Trees or branches that may endanger the overhead power lines or are in danger of falling directly across footpaths or areas of significant public use will be pruned under the supervision of a qualified arboriculturist.
- 4.3.4 The planting, species and site choice for new trees and vegetation will aim to enhance biodiversity, to improve the use of the land by the community and should be suitable to the specific habitat type. Planting Plans will be developed by the GCAB in accordance with best practice for wildlife habitat and working on advice from experts and will be agreed by the Town Council.
- 4.3.5 During Year 1 an audit will be undertaken of trees on the land covered by the lease to assess risk and the need for action.

4.4 Works relating to scrub

- 4.4.1 Habitat and scrub around the larger trees and along the water's edge will be allowed to remain wild, as this represents vital habitat for wildlife.
- 4.4.2 Brambles, nettles and thistle will be kept in check rather than being allowed to take over.

4.5 Works related to grassland

- 4.5.1 The Green Corridor contains mainly improved/amenity grassland. Large parts of the fields will be left open and maintained perennial wildflower meadows. Proposed actions are as follows:

- The fields should be mown by tractor down to ground surface level in mid-late July. The cuttings baled and either removed for compost or biofuel.
- If the budget allows, the same will occur once or twice more between July and early March.
- Once the vigour of the grasses is assessed to be diminished, the wildflower meadow areas may be lightly harrowed and sown with a wildflower mix to create more biodiverse grassland.

- The perimeter footpaths, access pathways and subsidiary footpaths through the wildflower meadows should be kept regularly mown to an appropriate length.
- Scything will be used wherever feasible.

4.6 Works related to waterways

4.6.1 The wetland areas are important as carbon sinks, and assets in terms of flood mitigation not only locally but with implications further downstream (Taunton & the Levels) which must be considered.

4.7 Ecological survey report

4.7.1 As the main aim of the project is to enhance biodiversity, a base-line report on current levels of biodiversity would be necessary to track changes in levels brought about over the coming years. Funding will be sought to commission a professional report from a team of ecologists to carry out this work.

4.7.2 Bat surveys have already been started and have established the presence of over a dozen species of bats in and around the site, making it a nationally significant foraging site for bats, as well as an important site for slow worms, dormice, barn owls and many other species.

4.8 Identification of Views/Vistas Important to the Community

4.8.1 In Year1 we will ask the community what particular views/vistas are important to them from the land so that we can ensure that future developments protect or enhance them wherever possible.

4.9 General Maintenance

4.9.1 The Town Council Community Warden will carry out checks on the land on a weekly basis to ensure it is clear of litter and to check for hazards. Where possible the Community Warden will deal with hazards but if needs be specialist contractors will be employed to do so.

5 Development Proposals

5.1 Food Production/Community Farm

5.1.1 The food security and food sovereignty of Wellington and its residents should be improved by the way the land is managed, with some areas designated for food production. This will increase our community's resilience in the face of a changing climate and reduce the carbon footprint of the town, helping us with the aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

5.1.2 In Year 1 the Town Council has agreed that Wellington Community Food can carry out a Community Farm trial to assess the model that they are proposing to use. Progress will be reported to the GCAB and through that the Town Council and will inform future development of this aspect of the project during the remainder of this five-year management Plan.

5.1.3 In Year 1 The Town Council will assess the feasibility of extending the Basins Allotments. Progress will be reported to the GCAB and through that the Town Council and will inform future development of this aspect of the project during the remainder of this five year Management Plan.

5.2 Sports provision/Junior Sports Pitches

5.2.1 Access for residents wishing to exercise should be improved by the way the land is developed, enabling more of the community to lead a healthy lifestyle. This could include sports pitches or multi surface tracks.

5.2.2 In Year 1 the Town Council will work with the Wellington Sports Federation to assess the feasibility of developing Junior Sports Pitches on the land alongside the Community Farm. Progress will be reported to the GCAB and through that the Town Council and will inform future development of this aspect of the project during the remainder of this five-year Management Plan.

5.3 Archaeology

5.3.1 As part of the management of the land we will take the opportunity to explore potential archaeology of the area given some finds that have been made in fields close to the Green Corridor Land. In Year 1 we will develop an approach to make sure that opportunities to do this are built in to work plans for the various areas of land.

5.4 Accessibility

5.4.1 Walking and cycling to and around this area will be promoted as the preferable means of access. The impact of enhanced usage of the green corridor on the parking issues for residents will need to be monitored over time.

5.4.2 Footpaths currently unsurfaced and particularly those areas with maximum footfall need to be assessed as to whether they need to be surfaced with an environmentally friendly material (e.g., hoggin) to allow anyone with mobility issues access to the site.

5.4.3 In Year 1 we will assess the feasibility of making the land more accessible alongside the development of the Wellington Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Progress will be reported to the GCAB and through that the Town Council and will inform future development of this aspect of the project during the remainder of this five-year Management Plan.

5.5 Signage

5.5.1 Good signage will be essential: information boards regarding the use and design of site, and its ecology, as well as indicating species of trees and shrubs on the plants themselves. There is an opportunity for the provision of interpretation boards to help visitors understand the historic context of the surrounding Tonedale Mills and waterways.

6 Budget

5.1 The Town Council has set a budget of £20,000 for 2023/24 to cover the costs of implementing the Management Plan . This will be assessed through Year 1 alongside the development of the Vision and Management Plan to determine whether it is sufficient. The intention will be wherever possible to apply for grants or other alternative funding to support development work on the land.

7 Review

7.1 The Management Plan will be reviewed in October 2023 with a view to submitting a more detailed plan to cover the period from January 2024 to December 2027.

7.2 Further reviews will take place in October each year between officers of the Town Council and Somerset Council to assess progress against the Management Plan and to ensure it remains fit for purpose for the following year.