

## **Stover Park – Approval of funding bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Restoring the Park**

Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

**Recommendation:** that the Cabinet:

- (a) approve submission of the Delivery Phase grant bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund;
- (b) approve submission of associated grant funding bids to National Highways, and other relevant grant aiding bodies;
- (c) give delegated authority to the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport to make minor changes if necessary to the bids.

### **1. Summary**

In March 2020, Devon County Council received confirmation of the successful award of a Development Grant of up to £341,300 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). This has enabled work to be carried out to develop proposals to restore and enhance Stover Park.

The Development Grant award was for approximately 65% of the total approved Development work cost of £521,300, with additional funding support from Devon County Council, Historic England, Friends of Stover Park, and Devon Gardens Trust.

In accordance with NLHF procedures, Devon County Council will soon be eligible to submit a Delivery Phase grant application to implement the developed proposals.

The award of Delivery Grant funding is a competitive process governed by an award committee. To achieve a successful bid, the project must demonstrate strategic value and associated benefits measured against mandatory and prioritised NLHF outcomes.

An outline Delivery Phase budget was included as part of the original Development phase bid. This was based on a project cost of approx. £4m, for which the NLHF could potentially fund up to a maximum of £1,919,600.

Work proposals and funding streams have subsequently been refined as part of the Development Phase.

Due to a combination of cost increases, funding constraints, and high levels of competition for grants, it has been necessary to omit some works originally envisaged as part of this project. This relates to the restoration of two historic buildings within the grounds of Stover School (the former Souterrain Stables and Ionic Temple). Consultation continues with Historic England and Stover School to investigate the feasibility of securing alternative funding opportunities outside of this Delivery Phase project.

There has also been a change in scale for some retained works, specifically including desilting of the lake, with a reduced volume of silt now proposed for removal. This has been assessed in liaison with Natural England and still represents a substantive improvement.

In addition to the potential award of NLHF grant, Delivery Phase funding is proposed from National Highways and Devon County Council (via the capital programme and Local Transport Plan), alongside contributions from local stakeholders including Friends of Stover Park, and Devon Remembers. Public donations are also being obtained via a contactless giving facility as part of public art installed in the Park during the Development Phase.

A key milestone has been a formal review meeting with the NLHF held on 26 January 2021. This forms an integral part of the monitoring of the Development Phase project and is a critical point in determining whether Devon County Council will be eligible to submit the Delivery Phase grant bid.

The indication is that the proposed restoration and enhancement works for Stover Park are of national significance and worthy of NLHF support. Accordingly, Devon County Council can proceed to the next stage of submitting the Delivery Phase grant application.

Subject to Cabinet approval (and associated confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution), the NLHF grant application can be submitted in May 2022, with a decision expected in September 2022.

Alongside the bid to the NLHF, the partner funding will also need to be secured, along with all permissions.

Subject to successful awards of grant, the Delivery Phase will run for 3 years from Sept 2022 to Sept 2025.

## **2. Introduction**

Devon County Council is leading an ambitious project that aims to revitalise and enhance the biodiversity, historic landscape, and recreational value of Stover Park.

Stover Park was created during the period 1765 -1847, initially as part of a larger estate acquired by James Templer (a Devonian entrepreneur), and then by Edward Adolphus Seymour, the eleventh Duke of Somerset. Ownership of the Park today is fragmented, which has led to a loss of coherent management and the gradual erosion of the designed landscape. Since 1979, 46.15 hectares (114 acres) has been managed by Devon County Council as a Country Park and Local Nature Reserve.

The parkland is of national importance, as recognised by inclusion on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England (Grade II). Details on this listing are outlined at [STOVER PARK, Teigngrace - 1001268 | Historic England](#).

In addition, individual features such as the granite gatehouse/lodge are listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for their special architectural or historic interest – as outlined at [THE GRANITE LODGE ADJACENT A38 APPROX 1550 METRES NORTH-NORTH-WEST OF STOVER HOUSE, Teigngrace - 1308943 | Historic England](#)

At the heart of this historic landscape is a 10-acre naturalised freshwater lake, designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to its importance for dragonflies and invertebrates.

Stover Country Park is also of great importance for recreation and public enjoyment. The Park features an Interpretation Centre (situated near the main entrance) which consists of a visitor centre, classroom, rangers' office, and public toilets (open 8 am to 5 pm). Additional recreational resources include interpretation boards, an aerial walkway, a bird hide, walking routes, a car park, and picnic areas.

A combination of environmental pollution, resource constraints, and the passage of time has resulted in a situation whereby the heritage features are 'At-Risk' (as assessed by Historic England), and the lake is in 'unfavourable condition' (as assessed by Natural England).

These nationally important historic, landscape and wildlife assets require investment to safeguard their value and ensure that they continue into the future; hence, recognition by Devon County Council, the NLHF, and other partners of the need for restoration and enhancement, and allocation of funding towards the Development Phase.

In developing the capital elements of the project, Devon County Council has engaged with a variety of stakeholders and partners including Historic England, Natural England, National Highways (Highways England), Environment Agency, Stover School, Sibelco, and Imerys (the latter two being owners of neighbouring quarrying interests). The Development Phase has included a substantial programme of research, feasibility, design, and costings which has identified priorities for action.

In parallel with the capital elements, Devon County Council has refined the community engagement proposals, developing plans for both existing and under-represented audiences alongside key community partners. The plans for community engagement have six key focuses:

- Supporting ecology and the environment
- Improving knowledge of Climate change and sustainability
- Understanding nature and heritage
- Promoting volunteering and community
- Enabling learning and skills
- Nurturing Health and Wellbeing.

### **3. Proposal**

Having carried out extensive project development work, priorities have now been established for the proposed Delivery Phase. Actions are focused on:

- **Lake Restoration:** Desilting the lake to improve water quality and address the decline in the condition of this Site of Special Scientific Interest. This will complement previous work to minimise the range and amount of new pollutants entering into the lake through surface run-off from the A38. Working in partnership with Highways England, two Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) have already been created to catch new sediment and filter contaminants. The next phase is to remove silt within the lake that predates these SuDs.
- **Historic Landscape and Buildings:** Conservation work, including safeguarding the granite lodge and restoration of part of a historic serpentine lake. Related images are included in Annex A.
- **Discovery Centre:** Upgrading and extending the visitor centre to improve quality, use, sustainability, and income generation. This includes the provision of community space for learning, networking, and crafting; outdoor facilities for catering and refreshments; and workshop and office accommodation.
- **Visitor Welcome and Enjoyment:** Improvements to car park layout, including the better provision of spaces for people with disabilities, and greater accessibility for coaches and minibuses. Orientation will be enhanced with improved connectivity for people accessing the site by bus, on foot, and by bicycle. There will also be new paths, specifically including the development of trails to enable people to explore more of the historic parkland and aid dispersal away from the most sensitive habitats. Purchase of approx. 11 acres of neighbouring land is proposed to support this part of the project.
- **Activities:** Alongside physical works, there will be an extensive programme of community engagement targeting existing visitors and under-represented audiences:
  - Socially isolated older people living in and around the Newton Abbot and Teignbridge area (accessed through existing care and health support pathways)
  - Local families with young children (pre-school – 11 years) living in local areas of multiple disadvantage (accessed through

schools and partnerships with local organisations or Devon County Council support pathways)

- Local young people (16 – 25 years) with additional support needs for mental health and well-being (accessed through local support charities and Devon County Council networks and initiatives)
- Serious hobbyists and special interest groups (local and national, including Further Education/Higher Education research students and academics and those active in climate change action/debates)
- Volunteers (existing and new).

All of the above actions will directly contribute to the delivery of priorities as set out within the Devon County Council Plan 2021 – 2025. Examples include:

- Respond to the climate emergency – helping wildlife and landscapes recover; encouraging more cycling and walking; raising awareness of practical measures to mitigate, avoid and adapt to climate change; improving the energy efficiency of buildings; and using resources more efficiently.
- Be ambitious for children and young people – providing space for children and young people to connect with the natural world and each other; supporting and delivering high-quality environmental education; enabling disadvantaged and socially excluded children and young people to access and explore the countryside; and creating new opportunities to participate and develop practical skills.
- Support sustainable economic recovery – providing a place and support for learning conservation, land management, and other practical skills; and improving sustainable transport options for accessing the Park.
- Tackle poverty and inequality – promoting community cohesion and targeting support to enable under-represented and excluded people to access and enjoy the countryside.
- Improve health and wellbeing – greater opportunities for walking and cycling; creating new and better spaces for mental health and wellbeing; targeted support for carers to connect with the natural world.
- Help communities to be safe, connected and resilient – new and additional volunteering opportunities; targeted activities to help tackle social isolation; engaging with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.

#### **4. Options/Alternatives**

i) Do Nothing / Status Quo: Stover Country Park is a popular and well managed green space, as recognised through achieving Green Flag Award status (the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world). However, if the additional investment cannot be secured, historic and wildlife value will continue to deteriorate resulting in the loss of nationally important features. In

addition to negative environmental impact, this could diminish reputational standing.

ii) Incremental Approach: a phased approach with targeted funding towards individual features on a prioritised basis would be better than doing nothing. This could potentially allow for some works utilising Devon County Council capital budgets, or possibly through one of the proposed partners. This may need to be progressed should it not be feasible to bid for and secure funding as recommended within this report. This option does not optimise the opportunity to attract match funding, and unfunded features will continue to deteriorate – possibly resulting in loss, and/or higher future costs of maintenance. Community-focused activities will also be greatly reduced.

Progressing with the Restoration Project / Delivery Phase as recommended will optimise external funding and address the highest priority activities as assessed during the Development Phase. This will arrest deterioration and safeguard key features of national significance and enable the delivery of high-profile activities to engage local communities.

## **5. Consultations and Representations**

Initial project scoping and implementation of the Delivery Phase have been carried out in consultation with key internal and external stakeholders. In addition to supporting good governance and accountability, this has enabled sharing of skills and experience.

A Project Board has met bi-monthly with representation from elected members, Stover School, and officers with expertise in social inclusion and equality, heritage, finance, environment, and project management. This has been informed by an Advisory Board which includes wide-ranging external partners and stakeholders including neighbouring landowner/managers, local Council members, Statutory Bodies, and key community partners.

Wider consultation has included park users, an Education Group Survey (primary, secondary, higher education/further education, special educational needs and disabilities, youth services) and the Devon Countryside Access Forum, with work proposals designed and costed using specialist consultants and contractors.

The consensus is that the restoration project is of great importance and will deliver much needed, high-quality strategic outputs and outcomes.

## **6. Financial Considerations**

Costs estimates are being finalised as part of the current Development Phase, alongside identifying all the partnership funding.

The indication is that costs have risen significantly since initial estimates were first calculated (in 2019, prior to submission of the Development Phase funding bid to the NLHF). In addition, demand for grant scheme support has

risen, with priorities placed on initiatives most closely supporting Covid recovery.

As a result, project proposals have been refined and re-evaluated to best reflect potential funding. The terms and conditions set out by any grant awarded, will be carefully reviewed before acceptance, and approval will be sought before adding to the capital programme in line with the approvals process.

Estimated Expenditure:

Habitat and Heritage Conservation	£602,948
Visitor Centre	£871,080
Access Management	£216,330
Land Purchase	£198,170
Interpretation / Digital	£121,883
Other (Contingency, Inflation, Fees,)	£561,836
Activities (inc. Staff Costs and Volunteers)	£735,002
Management & Maintenance	£299,978
Total	£3,607,227

Projected Income:

NLHF	£1,919,600
National Highways	£656,678
Devon County Council	£300,000
Local Transport Fund (grant)	£200,011
Other (local partners, leases licences and charges, volunteer 'in-kind')	£530,938
Total	£3,607,227

## **7. Legal Considerations**

The lawful implications of the recommendations have been considered and taken into account in the preparation of this report.

Where applicable, all necessary permits and consents will be secured prior to implementing associated works. This will be a pre-commencement condition of the grant.

## **8. Environmental Impact Considerations (including Climate Change)**

A project impact assessment was carried out in March 2020 and published in July 2020 in support of the Development Phase grant application. This is available on the Devon County Council website at [Stover Park Restoration - Impact Assessment \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/stover-park-restoration-impact-assessment)

A new assessment has now been carried out in consideration of the Delivery Phase. This is available at [Stover Park Restoration - Impact Assessment \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/stover-park-restoration-impact-assessment)

The Project will deliver substantive positive environmental impacts including biodiversity gain, landscape enhancement, water quality improvements, increased walking and cycling, greater energy efficiency and sustainable waste water treatment.

## **9. Equality Considerations**

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision-makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantages, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/ new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision-maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

This may be achieved, for example, through completing a full Equality Impact Needs Assessment / Impact Assessment or another form of options/project management appraisal that achieves the same objective.

In progressing this particular scheme/proposal, an Impact Assessment has been prepared which has been circulated separately to Cabinet Councillors and is also available alongside this Report on the Council's website [Stover Park Restoration - Impact Assessment \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/stover-park-restoration-impact-assessment), which Councillors will need to consider for the purposes of this item.

As indicated in 9. above, an impact assessment was first carried out for the Development Phase, with an additional assessment carried out for the Delivery Phase.

Equality impacts will be beneficial, with significant improvements to accessibility and outcomes for economically and socially disadvantaged communities. The activity plan specifically targets actions to support under-represented and socially excluded groups, including:

- Outreach into disadvantaged areas in Newton Abbot
- Schools programme will focus on schools with a higher proportion of children receiving pupil premium



- Holiday respite scheme will reach families with children with complex needs
- Quality and inclusion training for all staff and volunteers
- Enabling people on low incomes to attend activities by subsidising their fees
- All elements of the capital works and interpretation will be audited by Living Options for accessibility compliance
- Substantially increased volunteer programme with a focus on enabling people to develop skills, e.g., bike repair and maintenance.

## **10. Risk Management Considerations**

A Risk Register has been produced as part of the Development Phase project. This is kept under continual review, including being regularly and routinely reviewed by the Project Board; and this has been factored in preparing this report.

Risks are grouped under Funding; Costs; Permissions; Legal; Programme; Design; Resources; Community and Activities; Partnerships; and Business Planning.

A key factor in the 2 stage approach (as required by the NLHF) is to fully consider all the risks as part of the development phase so that these can be designed out, and/or the probability and impact minimised during delivery.

## **11. Public Health Impact**

As outlined in 9. above, delivery of the Stover Park restoration project will have notable physical and mental health benefits.

This includes new and improved opportunities for walking and cycling; and targeted activity with local agencies such as Kingscare, Active Devon, and Cycling UK.

An innovative addition to Park facilities will be a dedicated outdoor covered space for 1:1 private counselling in green space.

## **12. Reasons for Recommendations**

If recommendations are approved, Devon County Council will be able to maximise opportunities to secure external funding to protect and enhance key assets at Stover Country Park.

Delivering this project will:

- safeguard and improve biodiversity, heritage, and landscape
- improve environmental sustainability in support of measures to reduce carbon
- contribute to positive community outcomes for health and wellbeing.

Actions will also enable Devon County Council to boost revenue generation to aid future management and maintenance of Stover Country Park.

Meg Booth

Chief Officer for Highways Infrastructure Development and Waste

Electoral Divisions: Bovey Rural, with benefits for communities from adjacent Divisions and beyond.

Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport: Councillor Andrea Davis

### **Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers**

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<b>Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>File Reference</b>
Nil		

Stover Park – Approval of funding bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Restoring the Park - Final

Annex A to HIW/22/8



Former Serpentine Lake



Granite Lodge / Gatehouse