

Rickmansworth Aquadrome Steering Group meeting

Wednesday 16 September 2026 10.30am - 12.30pm

Venue: Rickmansworth Golf Course, Moor Lane, Rickmansworth WD3 1QL

Minutes	Presenter
The following organisations were represented at this Steering Group Meeting: Batchworth Community Council, Three Rivers Museum Trust, Colne Valley Regional Park, Herts Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Affinity Water, Colne Catchment Action Network, Rickmansworth Waterways Trust, Rickmansworth and District Resident's Association, Colne Valley Fisheries Consultative, Councillor for Rickmansworth Town, Councillor for Penn & Mill End, Countryside Management Services, The Environment Agency, and Three Rivers District Council Officers. Welcome and introduction of attendees Cllr Chris Lloyd welcomes and thanks all in attendance.	Cllr Chris Lloyd Lead Member for Leisure
An overview of the project and updates since public consultation was given. The presentation is included in these minutes. The following points were emphasised during the presentation introduction: • Since public engagement took place earlier this year, the development phase designs have evolved. Further considerations have followed numerous studies and surveys undertaken on site and the final development phase design enhancements (RIBA 4) are almost finalised. • In July, TRDC Aquadrome project team presented a development and funding review to The National Lottery Heritage Fund. This was very well received by the Lottery and permission to move towards submitting a delivery bid was given. • TRDC are on track to submit relevant planning permission documentation this coming November. A FRAP (Flood Risk Activity Permit) from the EA (Environment Agency) will also be required. • The project team are on track to submit the Delivery Phase bid and documentation to the Lottery in November. It is noted by TRDC that Questions from members of the steering group present will be welcomed at the end of the presentation. • RIBA 3 designs show the welcome area / hub. The community supported consultation on a better welcome area. Wildlife and heritage information will begin here to orientate the visitor, with care given to not clutter the site with too much signage. • The updated plans show the addition of a changing places toilet next to the existing toilet block. This will drastically improve the experience for people visiting with additional physical needs, and their carers. • For further improvements on accessibility the carpark will be re-configured, with a clearer pathway route into the Aquadrome and additional disabled car park spaces. • Informal pathways will be interrupted with root protection fencing around key trees at the entrance of the site. With these enhancements TRDC hope to introduce the narrative of protecting this special place and it's wildlife and habitats. • The proposed dog enrichment area was not supported at public consultation and combined with the asbestos in the proposed area, will not be going ahead. The Natural Play area and discovery zone will remain dog free, with improved accessible picnic tables and play provision.	Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure and Programme Development Manager

The presentation shows RIBA 3 design plans in further detail:

- **Meadow area:** Significant flooding occurs in this area, resulting in erosion and poor access opportunities within the bird feeding area. Plans proposed using a 'cut and fill' technique to lower the ground level allowing the potential for flood storage. The soil removed will be used to create a mound feature, and platforms over the slipways will provide bird viewing and resting opportunities.
- **Car park:** Enhancements include a one-way system with access directly from Frogmore Bridge. The plans show the addition of minibus disabled bays to support visitors in groups from care homes, and dimension improvements to current disabled parking.
Vegetation management will increase the capacity for parking and bunds will be used to delineate rows.
The access into the Grounds Maintenance depot has been moved, and clear signage directing the visitor into the Aquadrome will be key.
TRDC are required to submit planning permission documents for the proposed enhancements to the carpark.
- **Woodland walk:** Currently this area does not interact well with the river. The surfacing is not appropriate, and the current disconnect between the river and floodplain is apparent. During the development phase several variations of modelling have been tested. Reasoning behind such extensive modelling is to ensure safe accessibility in various river flow. TRDC now also have greater understanding of the asbestos presence in this area, and so the formal route has been revised to provide access through the pinetum, along the River Colne to re-join the main footpath.
- TRDC refer to the map on slide 15 of the presentation. The proposal is to encourage and direct flow through this area.
- The remaining section of path from the Bury Lake entrance will be returned to a natural surface with remaining tarmac removed. The wet woodland should continue to be wet woodland. It's a rare habitat, not far from London which is incredibly unique.
- **Bury Point:** This is a newly named area alongside Bury lake which runs parallel to the main path up towards Bury Lake Young Mariners. It is currently very inaccessible. There is no longer a path here and the majority of memorial benches are at end of life. It serves as an important location for the radio boat yachting group who joined consultation to request an improvement to paths and a shelter area. The open shelter design proposal was reviewed by the police, and their feedback was positive. The design would not be an area of concern for anti-social behaviour and will be used by other visitors and groups when the yachting group are not meeting.
- The improved path will run from the café as a circular route providing access in all weathers, and well-being activities listed on the activity plan can take place around this space. The addition of a shelter is also useful for those with a disability and is beneficial when looking at the reserve as being dementia friendly.
- There will be a memorial design element, with gabion based seating to create a peaceful area to pause and reflect.
- **Lake Views and Erosion:** Consultation showed how important the lake views are to the visitor. Plans will aim to improve the views and banks along the lake paths by managing the shore protection, trees and roots through a process-based and nature-led approach.
- Areas of significant erosion will consider various methods where the technique used will depend on the bank condition and the depths of water
- Previous work completed on eroded banks in the past will be used as reference. Temporary chestnut fencing is planned in certain areas to protect the banks and any marginal planting.
- **Footpath 65/The Causeway,** suffers significant erosion and overland flooding. Ground level modelling has shown how sensitive this path is and many options have been considered. For example: A) A raised path, which could result in likely flooding B) A Boardwalk - very expensive option which did not allow for vehicle access.
- The solution result is the proposal of a honeycomb grid network with built in maintenance plan.

**Natural
Infrastructure
Programme
Manager**

**Head of Leisure
and Natural
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**Natural
Infrastructure
Programme
Manager**

**Programme
Development
Manager**

**Natural
Infrastructure
Programme
Manager**

- **Signage / maps / interpretation** Public engagement felt very strongly about not cluttering the site, and leaned towards a natural style to complement the surroundings. There will be 5 different types in this suite of signage and these will be strategically positioned across the site.
- The use of a Navilens QR code will be considered to increase accessibility opportunities for visual impaired.
- The welcome hub will include a tactile map to follow RNIB guidance.
- Interpretation will celebrate the local social and natural heritage from across the Aquadrome site, including industrial origins, unique habitats & species and social use of the site through time.

TRDC invite steering group members to ask questions:

Question

Some cyclists are cycling dangerously, can there be signs that say: 'Shared Pathways'?

Answer

TRDC will feed this into signage design and refer to the Leavesden site where instructional signage is used.

Question

Will the paths and signs encourage people who visit using public transport eg, from the station? Don't forget people are walking in and not driving.

Answer

Gateway signage is planned at all entry points and Countryside Management Services are also re-doing the directional finger posts from Uxbridge rd. as part of Rights of Way.

Question

Do we have enough car parking capacity, are we reducing spaces?

Answer

Currently much of the car park is informal, but with the proposed plans for vegetation management specifically around scrub land towards the back this will make better use of the space.

Question Will the new car park surface stop inconsiderate parking, will bays be designated?

Answer

The proposed crushed stone material will not be compatible with line marking. Although TRDC are looking at formalising some to maximize the space.

Question

Are there plans for the tow path on the corner of Batchworth?

Answer

Our project scope does not cover outside of the Aquadrome boundaries.

Recommendation *A suggestion for the Welcome Hub and Nature play area is the opportunity for pollinator plants, rich in nectar sources, also fruit shrubs for birds. Have TRDC considered climate change impact for trees and plants to establish and survive the dryer summers. Deep rooted plants do better in this climate. The mound and play area would benefit from low area perennials, and will continue flowering when other varieties don't.*

Question

Regarding the woodland walk proposals, would fencing be incorporated to stop dogs from going out into the woodlands and disturbing habitats?

Furthermore to keep in mind for Bury lake when felling trees, could add large branches to the water, for fish and other wildlife. If there are plans to target and benefit specific species, it would be lovely to see what our targets are in terms of nature and wildlife.

Answer

Trees proposed for planting at the Aquadrome will need to enjoy being wet in the floodplain and also draught tolerant, so there is a requirement for a middle ground. The benefit to having TRDC grounds maintenance team on site is that during planting and establishing they will pay close attention to these new plants.

Reference to fencing the path to restrict dog access, this isn't the plan at the moment. Some of the sensitive parts of the route will be protected through the route but also by temporary fencing alongside river works for example.

**Programme
Development
Manager**

Question

- A) When the works begin for the meadow mound design and viewing platform, what is the plan if asbestos is discovered?
- B) Is there an option to keep some of the Woodland walk open and diverting part of it when it floods?

Answer

A) Thanks to the extensive survey works during development phase we have better than ever knowledge of Asbestos hot spots. There are unfortunately no guarantees that where we do plan to do works, further asbestos won't be uncovered. However, the materials management plan remains and if ground is contaminated then it is dealt with appropriately. The budget is built in as contingency, and asbestos management is ongoing on site.

B) Referencing the map on slide 15, this shows the formal route proposed for the Woodland Walk. A fence and gate have been included should the high risk flood area require restricted access to keep the public safe. The remaining path would not be restricted.

On Footpath 65 the proposed surface will allow vehicles and can be walked by visitors wearing appropriate footwear when it floods if they so wish. There is not an option to close this path as it is a public right of way. Warning signs to alert of flooding as and when may be required.

A reminder that as a floodplain, the Aquadrome will continue to flood and needs to, with a holistic approach and small considered changes to better river connectivity there will be less of the gush of water that we experience now.

Question

The weekly Ebury play area updates were great. So that we can distribute key updates within our groups, would the same weekly updates be given during works on this project?

Answer

TRDC are committed to sharing key milestones and updates throughout the project. It would be difficult to commit to once a week as during some weeks there may not be much to share. There will be an extensive comms plan once work on the ground begins which has been meticulously planned alongside the lottery timeline of the delivery phase.

Question

Could we have further details regarding the suds in the car park - (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems), Where is the water going to go, and could we have tree planting in the carpark.

Answer

The suds for rainwater will feed into the ground and will include a French drain system. Referencing the map of the car park on slide 13 – The bright green circles represent new trees.

Question

Previous signage placed on cones during closures were being moved by some members of the public. Are flood warning signs possible?

Answer

TRDC will investigate signage options to forewarn visitors of flooding. Social media and the council's website will continue to have updated comms.

Question

Some visitors would like to have the option for more memorial benches at Bury Point, will that be possible?

Answer

The existing plans will propose to keep all existing memorial benches due to the sensitivity and importance of them. There is limited space for further benches, however discussions on a possible plaque railing on viewing platforms could be an opportunity.

Question

Will anything change for water skiing.

Answer

No that doesn't change, they hold the current lease.

Question

Regarding additional planting, will there be a staff increase – who will do that? Would you consider an 'adopt a tree' option for visitors who wish to help?

Answer

The Tree and Vegetation strategy contains an action plan which accompanies the whole project with a phased approach so work load is manageable. The bid will include a request to hire a new grounds maintenance team member as a steward, and planting would be part of their role. We currently have a total of 24 professional grounds maintenance staff with at least two on site all day every day. Project delivery work will be incorporated into their schedules when required.

Question

For water management have you thought about rain water harvesting or building a structure to save and utilise water? A climate resilient garden at Kew is great for information and inspiration.

Answer

A separate project outside of the lottery bid is a new building for grounds maintenance, this new building will have rainwater harvesting facilities and solar panels.

The Steering Group meeting resumes with a presentation given by the Natural Infrastructure Programme Manager and the Environment Agency 'Restoration along the River Colne'

**Environment
Agency**

The presentation is included in these minutes.

It is important to remember that Chalk streams such as the river Colne are incredibly rare and ecologically significant. The proposals for river restoration, lakeside habitat management, and floodplain connectivity are integrated with landscape improvements across the site, and backed by hydrology and flood modelled situations.

Work to relieve river pressure during times of flood must also fit into the catchment so as not to cause any negative impacts further downstream. One recent river survey included use of a Hydrone, which was used to float along the river and canal to understand the shape of the riverbed. To continue to be considerate of the wildlife that call the Aquadrome home the rivers must be mitigated appropriately.

Weirs at the Aquadrome:

- **Originally installed to power paper mill and later water cress beds**
- **In poor and deteriorating condition**
- **Preferred option is safe removal and regrading riverbed**
- **No residential flooding risk**

Weirs are a man-made structure, primarily used to power mills and help with navigation by making rivers deeper. Looking at the Colne specifically there are 33 major obstacles in this water course and a fragmented fish population which is in fairly poor condition and more vulnerable to pollution events as the fish are not able to move upstream. Sediment movement is a very important aspect of river impact and due to small numbers of working mills, weir removal projects are happening across the country as a very good way of restoring our rivers. There is an immediate benefit to fish when a weir is removed as they can move much easier. The river starts to repair itself and will do most of the work to find its own new balance.

River Rea: A case study on the River Rea: Tiered weirs were originally put in to help power a mill which had ceased trading. These weirs were very close together and were holding back a lot of water. To avoid the water from being released too quickly the weir was removed over the space of a year and in two phases. Successful results included ecological recovery with a Riffle which is a natural shallow section of the river where fish can spawn and feed, and the river found a new and improved equilibrium.

The river Colne is currently in decline ecologically. Physical modifications are required. Many modelling options have been completed, suggesting that safe removal of the small Bury weir is preferred, with no residential flooding risk and an increase in a more resilient fish population

Question

There are concerns that the Mill stream could be impacted by removal of this weir, affecting 200 properties. If the removal of the weir goes ahead will the Mill Stream flow rate be affected? It is very important to residents.

Response There is a public engagement meeting later this evening where questions from residents concerned about the weir removal can be asked, as the Mill Stream does not fall within the Aquadrome boundaries. The EA have been very kind in offering their knowledge and advice today and thank you also to Affinity water for supporting the river restoration process. Affinity Water Representative Where the Mill stream itself is out of scope that does not mean the flow and importance of the impact on the wider area will be neglected. AW support with the proposed weir removal and it would be useful to understand more about the hydrological surveys and flood surveys and the impact to maple lodge and the mill stream. Response Hydrological surveys are uploaded to the TRDC website and available to view. The extensive modelling that has taken place during development phase has improved our understanding of how complex the river system is. Low flow modelling based on events will help to inform the exact areas for grading and is currently in draft form. The final survey will be uploaded to the website once complete. It's important to remember the main aim of this restoration proposal is to improve the river system at the Aquadrome and TRDC and the Environment Agency will not consider options that hold a negative impact. Affinity Water Representative For the shading element and high temperatures it is suggested a 70% / 30% ratio is best. The Steering group members take a 5 minute comfort break The Steering Group meeting resumes with the final TRDC section of the presentation. The following points were emphasized: • The project team are now in the process of approving the final design plan, RIBA Stage 4 and fine tuning the management and maintenance plan. • Submission to the lottery for Delivery phase funding is due in November. • This funding bid is a £5m project. Update from the Colne Valley Regional Park The presentation is included in these minutes Key points emphasized during the Colne Valley presentation • Colne Valley Regional Park are in the process of their own National Lottery Heritage fund bid. The submission is due in May 2027. • The focus is on Colne catchment areas and key rivers, and The Aquadrome lies in the middle so is key to the wider catchment area where the water merges before heading down towards the Thames. • Proposals include 20 circular walks around the Colne Valley, with the introduction of kissing gates and removal of stiles to support accessibility. • Involvement with schools to get them out in the local countryside and understand the potential for improvements to heritage and nature in this area.	Representative from Affinity Water Representative from Affinity Water Break Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure and Colne Valley Regional Park
Steering Group Partner Updates: TRDC invited members to provide updates from their organisations. The Rickmansworth and District Residents Association (RDRA) submitted an update which is included in these minutes. In person partner updates Batchworth Community Council were planning to do litter pick at the Aquadrome. Is approval required? Response The grounds team should provide an asbestos risk assessment briefing on site before this goes ahead. Affinity water Opportunity for community groups within the Affinity Water supply area to receive funding and volunteer support to deliver biodiversity enhancements.	All agencies

It is noted that the full details of this funding opportunity will be added to the minutes, which can be found below: Affinity Water INNS Out scheme opens for applications mid October. The website link with further details is found here: https://www.affinitywater.co.uk/inns Other Affinity Water funding opportunity details can be found here: https://www.affinitywater.co.uk/sustainability/environment-funding	
Next Steps Date of next meeting The next meeting will be scheduled inline with project milestones and progress Once agreed, this date will be circulated in advance.	Associate Director for Environment
Aquadrome Development Phase video – highlighting the many professions and careers involved in the project The video is included in these minutes. Thank you and close Cllr Lloyd thanks all in attendance for their time.	Cllr Chris Lloyd Lead Member for Leisure

