

## **Rewilding Allestree Park**

### **Purpose**

- 1.1 To consider the outcomes of the Allestree Park Rewilding consultation.

### **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the outcomes of the Allestree Park Rewilding consultation exercise, as summarised in section 4.4 of the report and detailed fully in the Consultation Report at Appendix 1, be accepted.
- 2.2 That the “Vision for Community Rewilding Allestree Park” in Appendix 2 be adopted subject to ongoing consultation and assessment of financial issues.

### **Reasons**

- 3.1 In 2019, Derby City Council declared a Climate Change Emergency, recognising the magnitude of the climate crisis in Derby and committing to play its part in preventing the most devastating impacts of climate change. Rewilding Allestree Park will place Derby as a leader in nature’s recovery in an urban setting and demonstrate the commitment of the Council to taking urgent and direct action to address the Climate Crisis.
- 3.2 Climate change is driving nature’s decline, and the loss of wild places leaves us ill-equipped to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to change. Responding to the climate crisis is not possible without creating more space for nature. This report proposes a community rewilding approach at Allestree Park to help tackle these problems synergistically.
- 3.3 Allestree Park is the largest open space in Derby. It offers the perfect opportunity to kickstart the development of a wider, more connected Derby that is equipped to tackle the Climate Change Emergency in support of the Council’s Climate Change Action Plan that was agreed at Council Cabinet on 15 June 2022.
- 3.4 Community Rewilding of Allestree Park will help to:
  - Drive nature recovery in Derby, providing more space for nature-rich habitats and potentially reintroducing new species.
  - Inspire people in and around Derby to notice and care about nature and mobilise people and communities to deliver pro-environmental actions.

- Increase Derby city's carbon storage and sequestering capacity.

## Supporting information

- 4.1 At Council Cabinet in November 2021, "A Vision for the Urban Rewilding of Allestree Park" was presented which contained three proposed options of rewilding:
- Passive Rewilding - letting the park rewild itself with little or no intervention.
  - Community Rewilding - having some intervention to enable other types of habitats to develop more quickly, this could include planting wildflower meadows and planting trees and could also mean reintroducing species.
  - Commercial Rewilding - requiring infrastructure, capital investment and more intervention, leading to more commercial eco-tourism operations.
- 4.2 It was decided that Allestree Park be re-purposed and managed in the future to enhance biodiversity and help combat climate change whilst maintaining public access and helping to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Derby. It was also decided that a full consultation exercise be carried out to ensure that the details of the proposed rewilding of Allestree Park are co-created with key stakeholders and the people of Derby and to then be considered by the Cabinet in due course.
- 4.3 A 12-week consultation was undertaken from 17 January to 11 April 2022 using a mixed method approach. Using the Council's consultation platform, 'Let's Talk Derby', people could take part through:
1. An online survey asking for views of the proposals (paper copies provided on request)
  2. Quick Polls updated once a month
  3. Ideas board – where participants could provide their further ideas for the park
  4. Forums – where participants were asked to give feedback on the targets for Urban Rewilding
  5. Stories – where participants were encouraged to share any stories of the park pictures or examples.

Further engagement was undertaken as outlined in the Allestree Park rewilding consultation report (Appendix 1). In total there were 2,065 participants who engaged through the Let's Talk Derby consultation portal including 1,034 individuals giving their view through the survey.

4.4 Appendix 1 provides the full consultation report; however the key survey findings were as follows:

- 69.5% of respondents agreed supporting nature recovery in the Derby region is the most important priority.
- Community Rewilding is supported by the majority of respondents (89%).
- There is agreement for all the proposed habitats to be included in any rewilding, with wildflowers (89%) the most popular. Other areas suggested are more woodland and trees.
- When asked about the proposed species to be introduced, water vole was the most popular (84%).
- 93% of respondents agree that it is either very important or important to involve local communities with the rewilding of the park. 51% would like to help survey and monitor the park, with 43% who would like to support in reintroducing species.
- Respondents want to see self-led nature trails (87%), wheelchair and wheeled opportunities (73%) and visitors' centre/toilets (70%). Interest is divided in those wanting a treehouse café (33% not interested, 53% interested).
- Respondents do not want to see glamping/wilderness or adventure experiences such as zip lines (74%).
- Interest is more divided regarding outdoor activities and treeline experiences (58% not interested, 32% interested), cycling opportunities (42% not interested, 46% interested).
- When asked about an engagement programme there is interest in all the options suggested, however the higher interest is for junior rangers (69%) and Forest Schools (66%).

4.5 The consultation findings have led to the development by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) of a "Vision for Community Rewilding Allestree Park", see Appendix 2. Community Rewilding will enable the people of Derby to be involved in this bold initiative to reinstate natural processes on Allestree Park – shaping the landscape and habitats within. Through a collaborative approach we will work together to rewild Allestree Park, driving balanced, positive change for nature and for the people of Derby and the surrounding areas. It is proposed to do this by, for example:

- Putting nature in the driving seat with some initial interventions to kick start natural processes.
- Enabling the creation and enhancement of biodiversity-rich habitats.
- Maintaining and improving current appropriate enjoyment of the park including dog walking, cycling, walking, running, wildlife watching, picnicking, sledging and fishing.
- Improve accessibility to the park by enabling people to travel by public transport, on foot or by bike, wheels and creating multi-user routes.
- Improving diversity and inclusion by heightening awareness of opportunities, benefits and access to self-led and organised activities within the park.
- Engaging with local communities and visitors.
- Inspiring and empowering local communities and user groups to take responsibility for the park and planning the management of the rewilding project and be involved in its day-to-day care.

4.6 Some of the key next steps proposed in the Vision for Community rewilding Allestree Park include:

- baseline monitoring of habitats
- mapping of natural capital and habitat connectivity
- develop a management plan with key stakeholders
- undertake a sustainable connectivity study for the site for local visitors and visitors from further afield
- identify flood risk opportunities across the site
- design a programme of wellbeing activities for local communities to access
- explore opportunities for infrastructure such as a café, toilets, visitor centre and a “Wild Wellbeing Hub” on site
- explore opportunities for cycling infrastructure.

### **Public/stakeholder engagement**

5.1 This report has been informed by a 12-week consultation which was undertaken from 17 January to 11 April 2022 using the Council’s consultation platform, ‘Let’s Talk Derby’. The consultation report is provided in Appendix 1 of this report.

### **Other options**

- 6.1 To do nothing other than to continue with the current maintenance programme for the park. This would not maximise the opportunities of this important asset.
- 6.2 To progress one of the alternative options from the consultation exercise, opposed to proceeding with the preferred option to progress plans for the community rewilding of Allestree Park.

### **Financial and value for money issues**

- 7.1 The next stage, subject to Cabinet approval, is to work with partners and stakeholders to develop and quantify the opportunities detailed in the appended Vision for Community Rewilding Allestree Park. The Council’s input into this scoping stage will be funded from existing budgets. The revenue and capital implications of the Vision will then be considered as part of the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan process.
- 7.3 The Council will prioritise sustainability in its option appraisal to contribute as part of our response to the Climate Emergency.
- 7.4 An outline business case will be developed that will be appraised internally by the PMO Board as a Gateway 2 Review. Subject to this progressing, a full Business Case will be developed that will be brought back to a future Cabinet for consideration and approval.

## Legal implications

8.1 None from this report.

## Climate implications

9.1 We are in the middle of a climate and nature emergency, and the two are inextricably linked. Climate change is driving nature's decline, and the loss of wild places leaves us ill-equipped to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to change. Responding to the climate crisis is not possible without creating more space for nature. This report proposes a community rewilding approach at Allestree Park to help tackle these problems synergistically.

## Other significant implications

- 10.1 By connecting people and nature, the proposals will also improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Derby.
- 10.2 The Consultation Report gives the demographics of people with protected characteristics that took part in the consultation exercise. In addition, presentations were made to our Access, Equality and Inclusion Hub which also has a Parks Sub-Group to make sure they were fully informed and could take part in the consultation. An Equality Impact Assessment was also completed.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
<b>Legal</b>	Olu Idowu, Head of Legal Services	29 June 2022
<b>Finance</b>	Janice Hadfield, Head of Finance – Service Support	6 July 2022
<b>Service Director(s)</b>	Claire Davenport, Director of Leisure, Culture & Tourism	7 July 2022
<b>Report sponsor</b>	Paul Simpson, Chief Executive	7 July 2022
<b>Other(s)</b>	Ann Webster, Lead on Equality and Diversity	29 June 2022
	Nigel Brien, Head of Traffic & Transportation	28 June 2022

<b>Background papers:</b>	Report to Council Cabinet 10 November 2021: Future Management of Allestree Park.
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Allestree Park Consultation report. Vision for Community Rewilding Allestree Park