

**HERMITAGE PARK REGENERATION - END OF PROJECT REPORT AND
EVALUATION REPORT**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee with the End of Project Report and the Evaluation Report for the Hermitage Park Regeneration project. It highlights key achievements, ongoing obligations and associated risks of this project which received £2.4m funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) from a total budget of £3.9m.
- 1.2. The End of Project Report and the Evaluation Report demonstrate that the project successfully performed against the approved purposes agreed with NLHF and other funders. Key findings were positive and show that the park is much improved, well used and provides a range of benefits for the community and the environment.
- 1.3 Ongoing legal obligations for the Council include:
- 6 year successful Green Flag Award
 - 10 year funded Management and Maintenance Plan
 - 20 year contractual period of grant
- 1.4 The project is now complete, the project officer is no longer in post and the majority of the funding has been drawn down with the exception of the final payment of £100k. Although the final report has been submitted, at this time the final payment cannot be claimed until the matter of the skate park has been determined and this remains a risk to the project. A table of project risks is included in the body of this report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee are invited to:

- 2.1 Note that the Parks for People NLHF project is now complete and the project officer post has come to an end.
- 2.2 Note the End of Project Report and the Evaluation Report and all that has been achieved through the project.
- 2.3 Note the Council's continuing legal obligations.
- 2.4 Note the risk to the Council in relation to the final drawdown of £100,000 grant from NLHF.

**HERMITAGE PARK REGENERATION - END OF PROJECT REPORT AND
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3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee with the End of Project Report and the Evaluation Report for the Hermitage Park Regeneration project. In addition the report highlights key achievements, ongoing legal obligations and associated risks.
- 3.2 This committee report details how the project performed against the approved purposes agreed with NLHF and other funders, with details relating to;
- Two capital contracts, Lot 1 – construction of passivhaus Pavilion and Lot 2 – Landscape and Heritage
 - Community support and involvement
 - The Activity Plan
 - Handover arrangements and legal obligations
 - Project financial performance
 - Ongoing risks and issues
- 3.3 Hermitage Park in Helensburgh is an important heritage asset and includes the town's 'A' Listed war memorial and walled garden. The Hermitage Park Regeneration project (project) aimed to create a sustainable park for residents and visitors to the area and a resource for the local community. It aimed to deliver outcomes related to the economy, health and wellbeing, culture and heritage. It would also be a key contributor to the wider regeneration of Helensburgh.

- 3.4 The park was successful in its stage two funding application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for £2,333,247. This was further increased in March 2021 to £2,382,300, to help mitigate the impacts of Covid19 on the delivery programme. The Council approved the NLHF Terms of Grant for the conservation, development and reconfiguration of the recreational facilities of Hermitage Park in Helensburgh on 21st January 2016 and permission to start was granted by NLHF on 4th May 2016.
- 3.5 As set out in previous reports to Council, the broad aims were;
- Restoration of historic fabric including A listed war memorial and walled garden, pond and gates, old mill remains, Hermitage Well and the Millig Burn paths, bridges and walls.
 - Restoration/reinterpretation of historic planting, including open up lines of site to improve safety of visitors.
 - Celebration of heritage through interpretation and community involvement – and upgrading of the paths and drainage to increase access to the park.
 - Reconsideration of the recreational elements which include the children’s play park, bowling green, tennis courts, putting green and recreational pavilion, shelter and toilets.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee are invited to;

- 4.1 Note that the Parks for People NLHF project is now complete and the project officer post has come to an end.
- 4.2 Note the End of Project Report and the Evaluation Report and all that has been achieved through the project.
- 4.3 Note the Council’s continuing legal obligations.
- 4.4 Note the risk to the Council in relation to the final drawdown of £100,000 grant from NLHF.

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 The project has achieved all of the approved outcomes that formed part of the approved funding arrangements with NLHF and other funders, and the End of Project Report and the Evaluation Report provide full detail of this. The highlights are detailed below.
- 5.2 A significant **landscaping restoration** took place to improve the visitor experience. A **new play area** created at a more appropriate location in the park with an adjacent tarmac plaza as a **multi-purpose venue** for a range of

recreational activities. Improvements were carried out to the **grade 1 listed war memorial and walled gardens** items of significant **heritage interest** have been preserved, improved and interpreted. Lighting and CCTV were installed, a new drainage system introduced and the horticulture in the park redesigned. In total the landscaping contract cost £1,871,839 and further details can be found within the appended End of Project Report.

- 5.3 A second capital contract was let to demolish the former park pavilion and replace it with a **new pavilion**, built to passivhaus standards and housing a community room (available for rent), a café facility (leased to an external operator) and public toilets. The passivhaus standard is met by including triple glazed windows, a PV array on the roof, an air source heat pump, extensive insulation, and a heat recovery system which captures heat generated within the building (including the café) and then filters and recirculates the heat through the building. The cost of the pavilion, as per the final certificate, was £958,041.
- 5.4 **Community support** has been integral to the project and indeed the initial impetus for the regeneration came from the Friends of Hermitage Park. We are grateful for their constant and continuing support. In addition a wide range of local individuals, organisations, societies and organisations have helped deliver the park. At the outset the strapline for the park regeneration was 'Growing our Park Together' and the Evaluation Report demonstrates how this has been achieved. At the final reporting stage to NLHF, the value of community volunteering to the park was £179,860.
- 5.5 **Community involvement** continues in the park through regular volunteering sessions and the continuing development of the demonstration garden.
- 5.6 In addition to the capital elements of regeneration an **activities programme** was also part of the funding from NLHF. The cost of the activities programme was £408,925 and further details can be found within the appended End of Project Report.
- 5.7 The park regeneration has also given direct **employment opportunities**. The pavilion was built by a local company bringing economic benefits to the community. The council directly employs a Park Supervisor, and additionally one Kickstart trainee was taken on and has secured full time employment with the Council. One regular volunteer secured employment with the National Trust Scotland at Geilston Gardens. Although numbers vary seasonally, the Park Pavilion café employs a core of six people.
- 5.8 During the period of NLHF funding, a Park Manager was also employed to deliver the project and this was a key component of the successful delivery of the project.
- 5.9 Visitor numbers are indicative of the value to the local community of Hermitage Park. At the start of the heritage-led regeneration project, the target was to increase a baseline level of use of 62,600 to a target of 78,048. **The visitor**

figures for 2021 are 149,661, representing an increase of 92% beyond the set target.

- 5.10 Hermitage Park has been awarded Green Flag status for four consecutive years. Green Flag is an accepted mark of excellence for parks and greenspaces.
- 5.11 With the end of NLHF funding, the Hermitage Park Manager post came to an end on 30th June 2023 and a range of tasks and responsibilities were subject to handover arrangements to colleagues in Roads and Infrastructure Services and Property Services as detailed in the next section.

6.0 HANDOVER ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 The Pavilion

The new Pavilion building was completed in 2020. Day to day running of the Pavilion is the responsibility of Roads and Infrastructure Services, with appropriate support relating to maintenance, statutory testing and repairs being given by Property Services. Issues specific to the agreed lease with the café tenant are handled by Estates.

6.2 Park maintenance

The NLHF supported park improvements and activities have helped make Hermitage Park a valued space for the community. With the NLHF grant now almost complete, it is important to have a newly established mechanism in place to allow for the continuing delivery of quality activities and to maintain a quality environment. This will help the park to remain as a valuable community asset.

A condition of the NLHF grant is that the approved 10 year Management and Maintenance Plan is adhered to for a 10 year period after NLHF funding ends. Additionally the park should achieve the Green Flag Award for six years. As the Management and Maintenance Plan is the foundation for the quality demanded by Green Flag, the two things are closely linked. Maintenance in the park is currently carried out by the Park Supervisor supplemented by an agreed programme of additional input, including (but not restricted to) annual regimes for cutting grass, spraying weeds and cutting hedges. The budget annually for employing the Park Supervisor and carrying out these operations sits with Roads and Infrastructure Services.

Experience has indicated that additional maintenance is required on occasion and this has been agreed at officer level - this level of support will be necessary to maintain the standards contained within the approved Management and Maintenance Plan, which are in turn necessary to meet the conditions of grant.

6.3 Income Generation

The NLHF funding award was given with the expectation that the park would generate income which would contribute to the future sustainability of the park.

This is done principally through the Pavilion building with rental income from the café leaseholder, and rental income from groups using the community room. It is important that the income potential is maximised going forward in order to ensure that there is an income stream to support the future sustainability of the park.

6.4 Community relationships and volunteering

Hermitage Park is fortunate to have been so ably supported by the local community in terms of aspirations, funding and volunteering. The Friends of Hermitage Park Association have been steadfast supporters and are redefining their purpose with a view to providing continuing support now that their initial aim of helping to establish a regenerated park is complete.

Their principal contact has been the Hermitage Park Manager, with support from the Park Supervisor. With the ending of the Park Manager role, their principal contact is now Roads and Infrastructure Services, again supported by the Park Supervisor.

The practical arrangements for community volunteering in the Park have been shared between the Park Manager and the Park Supervisor. These tasks will remain with the Park Supervisor.

6.5 Summary of handover arrangements

Certain actions have passed from the Park Manager and the wider team working on the NLHF programme to mainstream Council working, and the transition arrangements in place for this are in a table format in the End of Project Report.

6.6 Legal obligations of the NLHF grant include the following:

6.6.1 Standard terms of grant last for 20 years from project completion. This includes the application and all documents submitted in support of the application.

6.6.2 Council to keep exclusive control over the property and not sell, let or part with interest in, or give any rights over it to anyone else without approval beforehand.

6.6.3 Council must maintain the property in good repair and condition and have an agreed 10 year management and maintenance plan. This was agreed at an operational level in June 2023 and covers the period Dec 2022-Dec 2032.

6.6.4 Retain the Green Flag Award for a further six years.

7.0 PROJECT FINANCES

- 7.1 On 14th January 2016 Council approved the project. The approved amount at this stage was £3.1m made up of a HLF award of £2.3m, council funding of £280k and other funders. The council underwrote £268k of funding which was not required due to Sustrans and MOD funding being accessed.
- 7.2 Further funding was obtained internally within the Council and externally from funding partners for a range of works, including a new car park and enhancements to the new Pavilion to boost its climate change credentials.
- 7.3 Further additional works were identified and carried out within the park and the new Pavilion. Additionally, impacts caused by COVID19 and the associated conditions of lockdown made it necessary to extend the delivery timescale of the project and, accordingly, the length of contract for the Park Manager.

These works attracted additional external funding from various sources with the extended contract for the Park Manager in particular being supported by a financial uplift from NLHF. Therefore the final Approved Project Budget is £3,923,270 and comprises the following;

Capital Costs		
Lot 1	£958,041.81	
Lot 2	£1,871,839.57	
Professional fees	£355,374.49	
General additional costs	£164,041.71	
Total Capital		£3,349,297.58
Revenue Costs		
Activity Plan	£408,925.00	
Other revenue	£165,048.00	
Total Revenue		£573,973
TOTAL		£3,923,270

- 7.4 Income to support the park improvements came from a variety of sources, and is summarised below;

Funder	Amount
ABC	£380,000
NLHF	£2,382,300
MoD	£253,000
Sustrans	£335,332
War Memorial Trust	£78,550
Section 75	£75,000
Other funders	£105,355
Volunteer Time (in-kind)	£102,090
M&M	£47,200
EDST	£104,317
ABC Capital	£69,000

	£3,932,134
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- 7.5 The balance of costs against income therefore currently shows a project underspend of circa **£9k**. This underspend is due to an outstanding item of work that will be completed this year. The project is therefore on budget, due to the additional £69k previously allocated by Council.
- 7.6 Additionally there is an ongoing dispute with the contractor of Lot 1 – The Pavilion, regarding payment and eligible cost issues. To date this has been through two rounds of arbitration which have found largely in favour of the Council, however the contractor has, till recently, been pursuing civil proceedings on the matter. However the contractor has recently been subject to Liquidation and the court action they initiated is currently paused to clarify whether the liquidators wish to pursue. That is currently considered unlikely.
- 7.7 As members will be aware consideration is being given to the relocation of the skate park from the Helensburgh waterfront site. Alternative sites are being considered including Hermitage Park. Initial contact was made with NLHF to seek their views on the Park as a possible location. NLHF have advised that this would represent a change in the approved purposes and approved masterplan and would require a heritage impact assessment undertaken by a specialist consultant in historic parks and accompanied by plans, surveys etc for consideration by NLHF. As a consequence the final drawn down of £100k has been put on hold by NLHF pending further information being received in regard to the councils position. This obviously represents a risk to the council.

8.0 ONGOING RISKS

The following items are considered to be the major risk factors to the Council regarding Hermitage Park. More detail on these risks can be found in the appended End of Project Report (section 7).

CURRENT RISKS / ISSUES				
Description	Risk Owner	Prob	Imp	Mitigation

NLHF final drawn down of £100k is not permitted due to breach of purposes of grant	Council	High	High	Skate park is located in a suitable spot in Helensburgh. If located in Hermitage Park a full suite of documents are required by NLHF including; a heritage impact assessment undertaken by a specialist consultant in historic parks, H&S risk assessment, statement from planning department, survey of park users and stakeholders, the local community and Friends group to gauge public opinion, an updated and fully funded management and maintenance plan explaining how skate park will be maintained over 20 years, an updated Pavilion business plan, statement of impact on Green Flag award. This requirement is legally binding in order to draw down funds and not be liable for clawback.
Income Generation opportunities are missed, affecting park sustainability (condition of grant)	R&I	Low	High	Ensure recharging of maintenance, service and service supply costs to café leaseholder are carried out, with funds going to approved earmarked reserve. Continue to market and manage community room
Maintenance requires to be to Green Flag standards for a period of six years (condition of grant and reputational risk)	R&I	Low	High	Ensure that the obligations within the approved Management and Maintenance Plan continue to be delivered.
Level of community involvement reduces. Reduction in volunteering opportunities in the Park.	R&I	Med	High	Encourage existing partnerships and develop new partnerships. Keep good communications with Friends of Hermitage Park. Park Supervisor to continue regular volunteering sessions. Develop a clear structure for these with clear learning points
External funding opportunities are missed	R&I	Med	Med	Encourage Friends of Hermitage Park to continue to target small pockets of funding for agreed purposes, and offer support as and when required.
Existing legal agreements lapse	R&I	Low	Med	Finalise/review when necessary agreements with UHI and FoHPA

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Hermitage Park Heritage-led Regeneration project has achieved its aim of creating a quality greenspace for the community and visitors to Helensburgh, and provides an ongoing quality resource for their enjoyment and a venue for ongoing volunteering and learning. The quality is evidenced by the Green Flag Awards received by the park. The park is a key location within the wider regeneration of Helensburgh and offers a venue for people to enjoy recreation, keep fit and healthy, meet friends and participate in training and educational activities. Furthermore it offers local employment opportunities through the cafe.
- 9.2 The Agreed Purposes that form part of the funding contract with NLHF and other funders have all been met and delivered. Those Agreed Purposes addressed

the concerns expressed at the time by the community and, as such, those community concerns have also been met.

- 9.3 The project however, is not able to complete its final financial NLHF draw down of £100k until a decision is made on the potential location of the skate park in Helensburgh. In addition, there is the risk of claw back should the council go ahead with this proposal. This is because NLHF have confirmed that locating the skate park in Hermitage Park is not part of the agreed purposes of the £2.4m grant. Should the proposal go ahead NLHF would require a whole park assessment to be submitted for their consideration.
- 9.4 With the end of NLHF funding this Green Flag Award winning park is a valuable mainstream council asset sitting within Roads and Infrastructure Service however it is important that the council continue to deliver on the legal obligations of the grant contract and there is on-going management and maintenance of this key community asset.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Policy This projects supports delivery of the SOA in particular outcome 6, that we live in safer, stronger communities and the Local Development Plan and Economic Development Plan, Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 10.2 Financial 1) Roads and Infrastructure Services have a budget for park maintenance. Income from the Pavilion café and community will contribute to the sustainability of the Park.
2) NLHF funding of £100k remains to be drawn down – see risk.
- 10.3 Legal 20 year contractual grant agreement, 10 years management and maintenance as per plan and a further six years Green Flag Award.

The location of a skatepark within Hermitage Park would constitute a change to the purposes of grant.
- 10.4 HR Will be taken forward by existing staff.
- 10.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
10.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics Hermitage Park and the new pavilion are fully accessible.

10.5.2	Socio-economic Duty	Provides opportunities for communities and business to access quality spaces.
10.5.3	Islands	n/a
10.6	Climate Change	Climate change benefits are delivered by the new passivhaus pavilion and the sustainable drainage system.
10.7	Risk	It is a condition of NLHF grant that Green Flag status is maintained. NLHF funding of £100k remaining to be draw down is at risk.
10.8	Customer Service	Improved facilities for customers.

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4th August 2023

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Hermitage Park End of Project Report

Appendix 2 Hermitage Park Evaluation Report