

# Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 29 February 2024

## Parks and Open Space Investment Update

Executive/routine  
Wards

Routine  
All

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Culture and Communities Committee is asked to note this update on the Parks and Open Space investment programme.

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Andy Williams, Head of Neighbourhood Environmental Services

E-mail: [andy.williams@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:andy.williams@edinburgh.gov.uk)

## Parks and Open Space Investment Update

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report provides an update on the Parks and Open Space investment programme for 2023/24.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 On 23 February 2023, the Council [approved](#) an additional £3m for Parks and Open Space investment, taking the available budget for 2023/24 to £4.05m. Details of how the additional funding was to be allocated was [presented](#) to Committee on 11 May 2023.
- 3.2 An [update](#) on the Parks and Open Space investment programme was presented to Committee on 10 August 2023 and an update on the additional investment was included in the [Business Bulletin](#) on 7 December 2023.
- 3.3 Including the additional investment agreed for 2023/24, the total budget for Parks and Openspace investment in 2023/24 is £4.053m. A breakdown of the allocation of this funding is shown in Appendix 1.

### 4. Main report

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#### Programme Update

- 4.1 Appendix 2 provides an update on the capital investment programme in 2023/24 and provides a progress update on each project planned for delivery within the existing budget.
- 4.2 Since August 2023, key developments include:
- 4.2.1 A tender has been accepted for the replacement of the Katesmill pipeline bridge (Colinton Dell) and works are due to start in February/March 2024;
- 4.2.2 Except for a wall near to the riverbank, vegetation clearance and the remediation of Miller Row walls began in September 2023. Remediation, where required, included dismantling and rebuilding, wall repointing, and the

addition of finishing cope stones. Landscaping of grounds will commence when the conditions for undertaking stonework improve;

- 4.2.3 Completion of the refurbished tennis courts within Inverleith, St Margarets, Victoria, and Leith Links parks and the introduction of an electronic gate entry and booking system (an update will be provided to Committee on this later in the year);
- 4.2.4 Dean Path landslip project was completed in November 2023;
- 4.2.5 Work is progressing on the urgent refurbishment of Hermitage House roof and parapets;
- 4.2.6 The path above the landslip within Ferry Glen Back Braes remains open. Regular monitoring of the landslip and the path continues, and an update for the geotechnical model for the site is progressing;
- 4.2.7 Options for the re-opening of the Dell Road to Water of Leith path are being considered;
- 4.2.8 Enhancement to car parking and facilities within the Pentland Hills Regional Park continues, with the project scheduled for completion by June 2024; and
- 4.2.9 Polytunnels within Inch Park Plant Nursery have been replaced.

- 4.3 Despite the projects delivered so far, there remains difficulties in securing interest/competition/suitably qualified companies for construction works contracts.

#### **Parks and Open Space Site Surveys**

- 4.4 To date, 154 of the 193 parks and open space sites have been surveyed (80%). The final surveys are expected to be completed by summer 2024. Progress has been limited since the last update due to an increase in workload for inspections across the Council.

#### **Scottish Government Nature Restoration Fund**

- 4.5 In addition to the Council's investment funding, the Scottish Government Nature Restoration Fund awarded Edinburgh £272,000 during 2023/24. Based on the funding conditions associated with this, eight projects are being progressed:
  - 4.5.1 Water of Leith stabilisation – Canonmills;
  - 4.5.2 Machinery for grassland management;
  - 4.5.3 Cramond foreshore erosion control;
  - 4.5.4 Vehicle counters;
  - 4.5.5 West Pilton Park wetland;
  - 4.5.6 Nature on the doorstep pilots;
  - 4.5.7 Easter Craiglockhart pond rewilding; and
  - 4.5.8 Blackford Pond island restoration.

#### **Parks and Openspace Lighting Project**

- 4.6 The park and openspace lighting guidance is nearing completion, with Council officers and the Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership (WSPP CIP) being engaged in its development.
- 4.7 The guidance document will be shared with Committee members once finalised and updates on progress and delivery of lighting projects will be incorporated into future parks and openspace investment updates.
- 4.8 A street lighting engineer is now carrying out site inspections of the 58 parks and openspaces that were initially identified as a priority for lighting assessment ([Guidance on Park Lighting report](#)). This survey work will ensure that the information held reflects what is in place on site before lighting designs are developed. A design risk assessment is also being prepared for use when developing detailed designs. Engagement with users, community representatives, residents' associations, community councils, etc., will be carried out for every site.
- 4.9 Progress will vary by site based on complexity, but it is hoped that projects will be implemented on several sites this summer. While the Council has agreed a prioritised list, some lighting work is progressing with the help of the community (e.g., Gyle Park) and housing developers (e.g., Ratho Station Park). It is anticipated work will have commenced, but not completed, on four sites by the end of the financial year.

#### **Public toilets at Portobello Promenade**

- 4.10 Officers have been in discussion with Edinburgh Leisure on their proposed works at the swim centre in Portobello, and the potential to incorporate publicly accessible toilets into their plans. While initial plans and costs have been received, discussions have since focussed on access, safety, and the space available for male and female, baby change, and disabled toilet facilities, as well as external showers.
- 4.11 The initial proposal, which allows for unisex units and a separate disabled toilet, is estimated to cost around £220,000. This estimate is considered reasonable and likely to be less than if a standalone facility (with the same provision) were to be located on Straiton Place Park. However, if the concerns over access, achieving separate male and female facilities, safety, and layout cannot be resolved, then a standalone facility may need to be further considered.
- 4.12 Potential funding to progress this are currently being considered, using either Place Based Investment funding or by reprofiling some of the additional £3m capital investment for parks that was agreed as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process. Committee will be updated on these proposals in a future Business Bulletin.

#### **Public Toilets in Parks**

- 4.13 As outlined in Appendix 1, an allocation of £600,000 has been made for new public toilets at three parks – the Meadows, Inverleith Park and Leith Links. While incorporating public toilets into existing buildings has been considered, extensive fabric upgrading works would be required and therefore modular toilets are being progressed as a viable and attractive solution which can be customised. Within

each block of toilets, there will be at least one wheelchair accessible toilet, a changing places facility, and a gender-neutral toilet. Supporting this will be developing the necessary support and expertise in providing all-inclusive public toilets that enhance the quality of life for all Edinburgh residents and visitors.

- 4.14 The following actions are currently being progressed:
- 4.14.1 Locations have been identified with community involvement, subject to surveys to confirm access to utilities;
  - 4.14.2 Discussions with utility companies and contractors on permissions, installation timescales, and installation of connections for water, power, and sewerage;
  - 4.14.3 Procurement for the design and build, with a deadline for submissions of 11 March 2024 (with the contract expected to be awarded by 1 April); and
  - 4.14.4 Appointing landscape architects to design the areas around the toilets (including access path and lighting) and developing the specification for groundworks, foundations and connection to utilities.
- 4.15 It is planned that these new facilities will be available for the start of the school summer holiday period, however the main risk to achieving this will be the long lead-time for connection of utilities.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 The programme of remediation is ongoing, with prioritisation given to those assets whose failure will present a potential danger to the public and staff and/or which could result in the closure of grounds.
- 5.2 Notwithstanding any future priorities that are identified in the remaining surveys, there are two priority 1 investment projects outstanding: the replacement of boilers at Inch Park Nursery and the potential remediation of a wall located within Gracemount Community Park. Funding and delivery options are being considered for the boilers and the remediation of the wall is likely to begin in the spring.
- 5.3 While much of the work is unlikely to attract additional investment, officers continue to seek opportunities to do so where possible (e.g., through Planning-led developer contributions, community fundraising, and third-party grants). In addition, projects with Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust are on-going to assist in leveraging additional third-party funding.
- 5.4 The next update on the Parks and Open Space investment programme will be in the Business Bulletin for Committee in August 2024.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 The cost of works is funded from the approved capital allocation for Parks and Open Space Investment and any other funding secured. A summary of the capital

allocated, spent, and committed is provided in Appendix 1. The remaining funding will be retained to respond to any new priority 01 projects identified in the condition surveys still to be carried out or to support delivery where the cost is more than anticipated.

- 6.2 When budgets permit, asset investments that do not meet the capital *de minimis* of £10,000 will, if possible, be funded through revenue budgets:

## 7. Equality and Poverty Impact

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- 7.1 Parks and openspaces can have a considerable impact on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing by providing space for exercise, relaxation, social contact with friends and family, and opportunities for children and young people to play. While people recognise the value of local parks and openspaces that are convenient to them, they can become places to be avoided or underused if they feel unsafe, or if the space, infrastructure, or facilities are of poor quality.
- 7.2 Ethnic minority, disabled, and neurodiverse members of our communities are more impacted than others by the quality of our parks and openspaces. It is therefore important to provide quality, well-maintained parks and openspaces as they are proven to impact deprivation, deliver better outcomes for health and wellbeing, especially among black and minority ethnic groups, and create stronger communities.
- 7.3 Sustained investment in recent years has allowed priority work to be undertaken to a diverse range of parks and openspaces to carry out work including repairs (e.g., to infrastructure) or investment (e.g., in lighting and public toilets). Improving access, carrying out repairs, and investing in facilities, such as toilets, can help to remove barriers that may prevent use of parks and open spaces and improve the perception of safety and fear of crime.

## 8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

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- 8.1 As a public body, the Council has statutory duties relating to climate emissions and biodiversity. The Council

*“must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets”*

(Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019), and

*“in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”*

(Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004)

- 8.2 The City of Edinburgh Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to work towards a target of net zero emissions by 2030 for both city and

corporate emissions and embedded this as a core priority of the Council Business Plan 2023-27. The Council also declared a Nature Emergency in 2023.

### **Environmental Impacts**

- 8.3 Investment in Parks and Open Spaces not only ensures the Council meets its duty of care for a critical social and green infrastructure, but it also helps revitalise tired spaces and enriches lives and wellbeing through improving access to the natural environment.
- 8.4 Investment in nature restoration projects has a positive impact on local wildlife and habitats and contributes to mitigating both climate and nature emergencies.

## **9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact**

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- 9.1 Prioritisation has been given to those assets whose failure will present a potential danger to the public and staff and/or which could result in the closure of grounds.
- 9.2 There are significant health and safety, liability, and service delivery failure implications by not addressing the maintenance and remediation needs of infrastructure assets.

## **10. Background reading/external references**

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- 10.1 Response to motion by Councillor Thornley – Playparks Investment – [report](#) to Culture and Communities Committee, 7 March 2023.
- 10.2 Response to motion by Councillor Hyslop – Safer Parks – [report](#) to Culture and Communities Committee, 7 March 2023.
- 10.3 Guidance on Park Lighting – [report](#) to Culture and Communities Committee, 11 May 2023.
- 10.4 Parks and Greenspace Investment Prioritisation – [report](#) to Culture and Communities Committee, 15 June 2021.

## **11. Appendices**

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Appendix 1 – Capital Expenditure 2023/24

Appendix 2 - Parks and Openspace Investment Programme 2023/24

## APPENDIX 1 - Investment Capital Budget Allocation

### Current and Predicted Capital Allocation - Parks and Open space Assets

Financial Year	2023/24	2024/25	Total
£m	4.053	0.25	4.303

Allocation for 2023/24	Budget £m	Actual & committed todate £m
Park Lighting Improvements (includes £0.1m carried forward from 2022/23)	0.50	0.50
General Accessibility Improvements to Paths	0.50	0.55
Permanent, Publicly Accessible Toilets	0.60	0.60
Ongoing and new investment priority rated 01 and 02	2.30	1.05
Operational equipment	0.05	0.04
Parks and open space investment support	0.10	0.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.05</b>	<b>2.84</b>



## Appendix 2 - Parks and Openspace Investment Programme 2023/24

### Path Lighting Improvements

Ward	Location	Summary of Project	Comments
3	Gyle Public Park and Recreation Ground	Improve park lighting.	Completed April 2023. Project was part-funded by the Friends Group.
All	City-wide	Park lighting projects city-wide	New post created to take forward the park lighting investment programme. Park lighting guidance to be published. Four park lighting projects scheduled for completion in March 2024.

### General Accessibility Improvements to Paths

Ward	Location	Summary of Project	Comments
16	Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park	Refurbish path network	Completed December 2023.
6	Corstorphone Hill Local Nature Reserve	Path network improvements - John Muir Trail	Completed October 2023.
2	Juniper Green - Fishshop Steps	Refurbish steps.	Works scheduled for February 2024.
13	Water of Leith - Bonnington Road	Resurface path.	Completed August 2023.
11	Magdala Crescent - Steps	Refurbish steps.	Works scheduled for February 2024.
12	Montgomery Street Park	Refurbish hard standing area.	Works scheduled for February 2024.
Various	Water of Leith - Lanark Road to Balerno	8km of flexi pave.	Completed February 2024.
All	City-wide	Other path access improvement projects	This work is on-going.

### Permanent Publicly Accessible Toilets

Ward	Location	Summary of Project	Comments
5	Inverleith Public Park and Allotments	Installation of permanent toilets	Procurement specification developed. Tender / installation scheduled by summer 2024.
13	Leith Links	Installation of permanent toilets	Procurement specification developed. Tender / installation scheduled by summer 2024.
15	Meadows	Installation of permanent toilets	Procurement specification developed. Tender / installation scheduled by summer 2024.

### On-going Priority Investment rated 01

Ward	Location	Summary of Project	Comments
2	Bloomiehall Park	Boundary Wall	Completed September 2023.
8	Campbell Park	Safety Fencing	Completed November 2023.
8	Colinton Dell Forest Public Park	Refurbishment of Rustic Bridge at Redhall Weir	Completed July 2023.
8	Colinton Dell Forest Public Park	Landslip between Bogsmill Road and Katesmill Pipeline Bridge	Completed March 2023. Some residual costs in 2023/24.
8	Colinton Dell Forest Public Park	Replacement of Katesmill Pipeline Bridge	Contract awarded December 2023. Construction works, subject to weather, to commence February 2024.
8	Colinton Dell Forest Public Park	Landslip on Water of Leith Path to Dell Road	Tenders higher than available funding. The path remains closed. Discussion on-going to determine if an alternative solution will permit the safe re-opening of the path.
17	Craigmillar Castle Jubilee Park	Refurbishment of wall, fences and gates	Tender prepared for works.
1	Ferry Glen Public Park and Back Braes	Landslip Investigation and Remediation	An update on the geotechnical model for the site is still ongoing. Top path remains open and is subject to regular monitoring.
	Hailes Quarry Park	Leachate investigation	Full scale trial established to test the stripping of methane from leachate.
10	Hermitage House	Refurbishment of roof	Urgent remediation works ongoing.
15	Inch Park, Depot and Nursery	Refurbishment and resurfacing projects across the site	Wall and electrical safety works completed August 2023. Polytunnel replacement completed November 2023.
7	Saughton Park and Gardens	Stabilisation of riverbed/weir/wall - adjacent to micro hydro plant on the Water of Leith.	SEPA CAR Licence obtained. Engineering Consultants commissioned to prepare design and specification. Construction works to be scheduled for June - Sep 2024 in compliance with the species protection plan.
7	Sighthill Public Park	Refurbishment of car park area	Completed June 2023.
5	Water of Leith - Miller Row	Refurbishment of walls.	Damaged/dangerous walls cleared of vegetation, dismantled and rebuilt. Project is paused until conditions improve for repointing and permission obtained for near riverside stonework.
8	Spylaw Park	Wall assessment and remediation	Completed July 2023.
9	Wester Craiglochart Hill	Vegetation clearance and rock bolting	This work is on-going.

### Other

Ward	Location	Summary of Project	Comments
4, 5, 6 and 13	Inverleith Park, Leith Links, Victoria Park and St Margarets Park	Redevelopment of tennis courts	Completed August 2023.

2	Pentland Regional Park Office and Harlaw House Visitor Centre	On-site improvements	Scheduled for completion summer 2024. This project is part-funded from external sources and the Council has agreed to contribute to the cost of these improvements, which include: improved car parking facilities; improved visitor facilities; public toilets; EV charging points; bicycle repair stations; and improve parking arrangements for people with disabilities.
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