



# Northumberland

## County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 7 November 2023

### **Summary of New Capital Proposals considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group**

**Report of Councillor(s)** Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources

**Responsible Officer(s):** Jan Willis, Executive Director for Resources & Transformation (S151)

#### **1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

The Council's Capital Programme is consistent with all of the priorities in the Corporate Plan 2023-2026, being 'Achieving Value for Money', 'Tackling Inequalities' and 'Driving Economic Growth'.

#### **2. Purpose of report**

This report summarises proposed amendments to the Capital Programme considered by the Capital Strategy Group.

#### **3. Recommendations**

3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:

##### **3.2 Kyloe House CCTV Upgrade**

- a) Approve the receipt of the capital grant of £0.221 million from the Department for Education (DfE).
- b) Approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to include the funding and spend.

##### **3.3 Replacement of Boating Pontoon in Wansbeck Riverside Park**

- a) Approve the proposed spend on the Boating Pontoon and amend the Capital Programme in 2023-24. Note that the project will be wholly grant funded under an agreement with Cambois Rowing Club.

### **3.4 Highways Laboratory Expansion**

- a) Approve the expenditure of the £0.615 million which is already included in the MTFP under Highways Laboratory Expansion project.
- b) Note that a portion of the allocation will be slipped into financial year 2024-25. This is currently anticipated to be 50% but will be dependent on the date of approval.

### **3.5 North East Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)**

- a) Note the agreement for the North East Joint Transport Committee (JTC) to release BSIP capital funding to assist scheme promoters with development of the programme.
- b) Approve the BSIP capital funding to develop the “Bus Priority Infrastructure – Tranche 1” programme.
- c) Approve the amendment to the Capital Programme to include £0.121 million funding from Transport North East (TNE) to enable development of the BSIP Tranche 1 programme.

### **3.6 Parks Enhancement Capital Programme**

#### **a) Cleasewell Hill Park**

- Approve capital expenditure of up to £0.240 million for the refurbishment scheme at Cleasewell Hill Park.
- Approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.200 million from the existing Parks Enhancement Programme and £0.040 million contribution from Choppington Parish Council which has been agreed in principle subject to formal approval.
- Note that if funding of £0.040 million from Choppington Parish Council is not received works will be scaled back and expenditure will be limited to £0.200 million.

#### **b) Gallagher Park**

- Approve capital expenditure totalling £0.019 million for car park repairs, overflow provision and fencing at Gallagher Park.
- Approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.010 million from the existing Parks Enhancement Programme and £0.009 million from Cllr Robinson, Cllr Taylor, and Cllr Wilciezk’s Members’ Local Improvement Scheme funds.

#### **c) Plessey Woods – Bouldering Park**

- Approve capital expenditure totalling £0.159 million for Plessey Woods Bouldering Park.
- Approve the reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.088 million from the existing Parks Enhancement Programme, £0.067 million from Section 106 contributions and £0.005 million from Cllr Robinson’s Members’ Local Improvement Scheme funds.

### **3.7 Strategic Regeneration Investment**

- a) Accept grant funding to establish the Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment Programme as follows, noting that the establishment of the programme and projects below was previously agreed by Cabinet in February 2023:
- Accept grant funding of £4.810 million including £2.000 million capital and £2.810 million revenue for the Northumberland Small Business Service (NSBS).
  - Approve the addition of the £2.000 million capital funding to the Capital Programme in line with the three-year funding profile further in the report.
  - Accept grant funding of £3.510 million including £1.543 million capital and £1.967 million revenue for the Rural Asset Multiplier Programme (RAMP).
  - Approve the addition of the £1.543 million capital funding to the Capital Programme in line with the three-year funding profile further in the report.
- b) Approve the below projects and the reallocation of capital funds of £0.600 million in 2023-24 from the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2). The Strategic Regeneration Projects budget will reallocate £0.600 million to the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2) project in 2024-25. Note that the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2) does not require the funds in 2023-24 due to slippage in the project delivery.
- Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.500 million in 2023-24 for Hexham HSHAZ Public Realm Scheme.
  - Approve the creation of a new capital project in 2023-24 for the Berwick Gateway and approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.050 million in 2023-24 for the Berwick Gateway.
  - Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.010 million in 2023-24 for the detailed design of the Royal Border Bridge Floodlighting Scheme.
  - Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.020 million in 2023-24 to finalise the successful Rural Business Growth Service project.
  - Approve the allocation of capital funds of £0.020 million in 2023-24 for the detailed design of the Alnwick Cobbles Streetscaping scheme.

### **3.8 Great Northumberland Forest Tenant Lead Pilot**

- a) Approve the proposed spend of £2.550 million for the Great Northumberland Forest Tenant Lead Pilot and note the funding of £2.550 million from the national Nature for Climate (NfC) fund.
- b) Approve the inclusion of an additional £2.550 million (2023-24 £1.500 million and 2024-25 £1.050 million) in the capital programme.

## **4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

The date this report was added to the forward plan was 26 September 2023.

## **5. Background**

- 5.1 This paper summarises reports considered by the Officer Capital Strategy Group on the allocation of funding within the Medium-Term Financial Plan to specific projects. The amendments to the Programme were considered by the officer Capital Strategy Group (CSG) on 27 September 2023.

## **Summary of New Capital Proposals Considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group on 27 September 2023**

### **6. Kyloe House CCTV Upgrade**

- 6.1 CSG was asked to consider capital funding of £0.221 million for Kyloe House CCTV upgrades. This spend is externally funded by the DfE.

#### **Background**

- 6.2 This project is for the upgrade of the existing CCTV System at Kyloe House. The system required an upgrade for the following reasons:
- a) The existing NVR recorder units needed to be replaced as they suffered a major failure in early 2021 which led to the loss of data.
  - b) The existing cameras were analogue based and needed to be IP cameras which offer a better resolution and clear image. IP cameras were also required as the existing analogue cameras would not be compatible with the new NVR units.
  - c) Additional cameras were required to cover known blind spots.
- 6.3 Kyloe House is a Secure Children's Home. The CCTV system is a fundamental component of the security system which is essential for the successful operation of the home.
- 6.4 If the system was not upgraded there was a high potential for further breakdown of the system. This would compromise the service that Kyloe House provides. All secure Children's Homes can only operate if they are licensed to do so by OFSTED. Licensing inspections include a review of the adequacy of the security systems. The need to address the failures experienced in 2021 had been noted by OFSTED. If the system was found to be inadequate at a future inspection it could have precluded the renewal of the license.
- 6.5 As a result of the urgency noted above once confirmation of funding from the DfE was received the works commenced, prior to the funds being transferred. The key dates are as follows:
- Order issued: April 2022
  - Site Start: End of April 2022
  - Completion: August 2023
- 6.6 As a result of the urgency noted above once confirmation of funding from the DfE was received the works commenced, prior to the funds being transferred. The key dates are as follows:

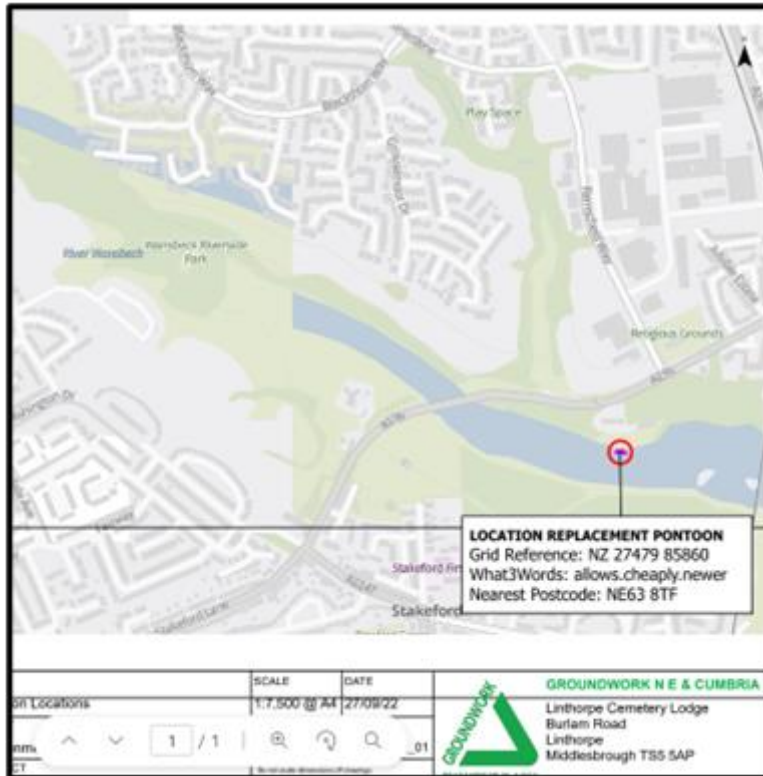
## **7. Replacement of Boating Pontoon in Wansbeck Riverside Park**

- 7.1 CSG was asked to consider capital spend of £0.120 million to replace the existing Boating Pontoon. This spend would be funded by Cambois Rowing Club through a grant agreement.

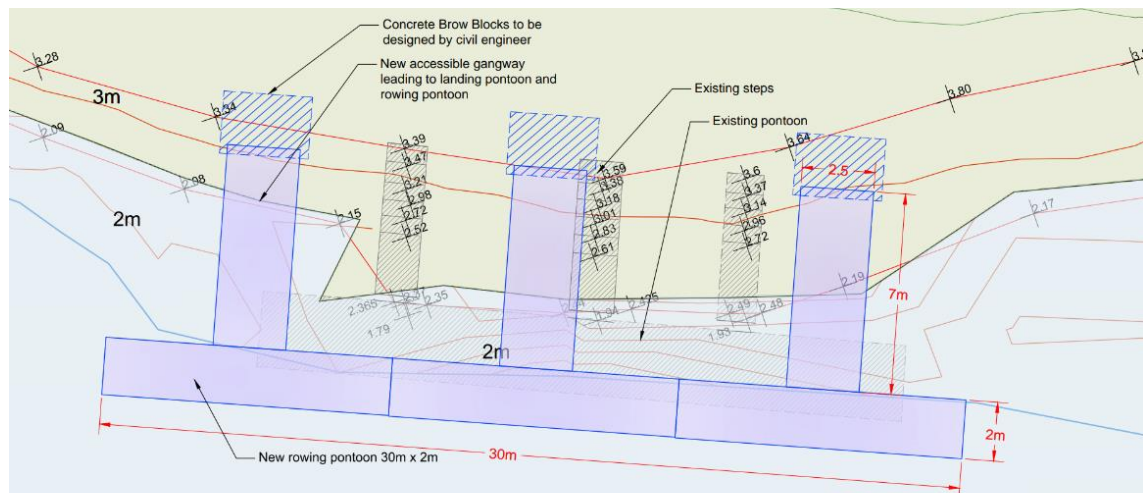
### **Background**

- 7.2 The council owns a boating pontoon in Wansbeck Riverside Park. The pontoon is maintained by Cambois Rowing Club under the terms of their lease from the Council of nearby buildings on the bank of the Wansbeck. The pontoon is used by members of the rowing club along with members of kayaking, canoeing and paddleboard clubs and groups and by members of the public.
- 7.3 The rowing club have approached the Council with a request for the pontoon to be replaced with a newer and larger pontoon, to provide better and more inclusive access to the water for club members and members of the public. NCC staff have worked with the rowing club (with support from Groundwork North East) to develop specifications and are working to secure permissions for the project.
- 7.4 A tender process is underway, it is expected that the costs of the scheme will be in the region of £0.120 million.
- 7.5 Cambois Rowing Club have committed to meet 100% of the costs associated with the works. A deed of grant will identify Cambois Rowing Club as grant donor and the Council as grant recipient. No work will take place until the deed of grant is signed and in place.
- 7.6 Cambois Rowing Club require a solution to replace the existing pontoon system with one that will cope better with the current and future water conditions. One that will provide safe and easy access for all members no matter their physical and mental abilities. The proposal is to increase the current size to at least 30m in length with the possibility of it being larger if achievable in the area available.

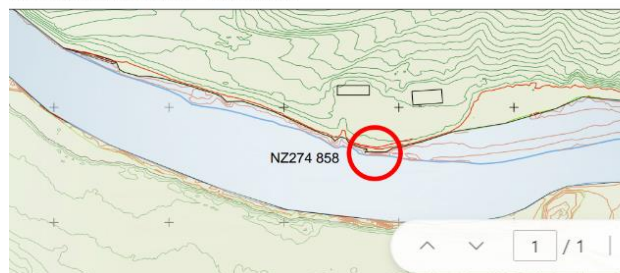
## 7.7 Pontoon location



## 7.8 Proposed Pontoon Layout and Design:



PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT PLAN 1:100



TITLE	Proposed Site Layout	SCALE	1:100	DATE	Sept 2022
CLIENT	Cambolis Rowing Club	DRAWN BY	MM	DESIGNED BY	TV334_CP
PROJECT	Cambolis Rowing Club Pontoon	Do not dimension off drawings. The contractor must check all dimensions on site at all times and report any variations to the project manager immediately.			
		GROUNDWORK N E & CUMBRIA Linthorpe Cemetery Lodge Burlam Road Linthorpe			

## **8. Highways Laboratory Expansion**

- 8.1 CSG was asked to consider capital spend of £0.615 million for the Highways Laboratory Expansion Project. This project is already included in the Capital Programme at £0.615 million so no additional spend is being sought. CSG was also asked to note that roughly 50% of the spend on this project will be slipped into financial year 2024-25.

### **Background**

- 8.2 As a UKAS accredited laboratory the Highways Materials Laboratory provides an essential and invaluable independent materials compliance testing service, ensuring that investments in highway improvements and maintenance are fully effective and maximised for the benefit of all highway users.
- 8.3 The NCC laboratory is the only local authority UKAS accredited highways materials laboratory in the North East of England. As such, much of the external workload is for neighbouring local authorities, helping them to maximise the effectiveness of their highways maintenance improvements.
- 8.4 The Highways Materials Laboratory has grown its operating turnover from £0.316 million in 2012-13 to over £0.700 million per annum. Over the same period external income has grown from £0.106 million to over £0.330 million.
- 8.5 There is significant scope for expansion of the current service given that external work is regularly turned down due to capacity restrictions.
- 8.6 Although the numbers of laboratory staff have increased with the increase in workload, the current limitation has become the physical size and internal arrangements of the laboratory building itself. In order to increase the capacity to accommodate additional work, and the additional staff required, the efficiency and size of the building needs to be increased.
- 8.7 The increasing numbers of staff have led to difficulties in providing sufficient working space also welfare issues regarding the adequate provision of canteen space and workwear drying facilities.
- 8.8 In order to provide a minimum acceptable welfare provision the staff are currently using a portable canteen and drying facility located in the rear car park.
- 8.9 Recently there have been health and safety issues with the fume extraction equipment in one part of the laboratory where hazardous chemicals are used. These issues have been managed short-term. Whilst a stop-gap solution is being implemented there are wider issues with the ventilation of the building as a whole which require remedying in order for any replacement fume extraction facility to be effective.
- 8.10 Some preliminary investigations were undertaken in association with Property Services where it was clear that the best option (lowest cost / least disruptive) would be to remodel the internal arrangements of the current building along with a garage extension. These works would need to be undertaken in a phased approach in order to minimise disruption. It was these preliminary works that lead to the estimate of £0.615 million which is included in the MTFP Capital Programme agreed by Council in February 2023.

- 8.11 At this stage more detailed work has been carried out with architects and structural engineers and the following refined budget has been proposed:

Activity	Budget Estimate £ million
Preparation of design, drawings, and specification, including all necessary planning requirements, suitable for procuring a building contractor. Inclusive of all third-party fees.	0.052
Main building works including internal re-modelling and refurbishment, new garage building, new entrance lobby, and new chemical store.	0.435
Specialist equipment and fittings. Including fume extraction equipment, dust extraction benches, hazardous chemical handling equipment, dismantling, moving, and recommissioning the soils testing room.	0.055
Contingency	0.073
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.615</b>

- 8.12 It is anticipated that following member approval construction works could commence in February 2024 with completion in June 2024. This will coincide with the busier period in the laboratory and there will be some disruption.
- 8.13 It is anticipated that due to the project delivery timeline 50% of the funding will be slipped into financial year 2024-25.

## 9. Bus Service Improvement Plans

- 9.1 CSG was asked to consider capital spend of £0.121 million for the Bus Priority Infrastructure Programme. This project aims to improve bus journey time and reliability. The project will be fully funded by TNE.

### Background

- 9.2 The National Bus Strategy was published by the Department for Transport (DfT) on 15 March 2021. The strategy set out central government's vision and the opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered.
- 9.3 Since then, the North East BSIP bid was submitted in response to the National Bus Strategy which was published in October 2021. Both the Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan and EP Scheme have been developed and agreed by the DfT, in partnership with TNE, Northumberland County Council and the bus operators.
- 9.4 Earlier this year the leader of the Council took the delegated decision, as agreed by Cabinet in May 2022, to authorise the Council's participation in the making of an Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan and Scheme. These mechanisms were required to enable the release of BSIP capital funding for the "Bus Priority Infrastructure – Tranche 1" programme.
- 9.5 On 18 July 2023 the North East JTC agreed in principle to release £20.251 million of BSIP capital funding noting that £2.025 million of this funding will be released early to assist scheme promoters with development of the programme.



- 9.6 Delegated decision has been approved following the appraisal of the Tranche 1 business case. TNE are in a position where they can now progress Grant Funding Agreements with scheme providers.
- 9.7 Allocation for each local authority have been calculated at 10% of the scheme costs of their high-level scheme proposals within the programme level Business Case for the Bus Priority Tranche 1 programme. For Northumberland County Council the amount allocated is £0.121 million.
- 9.8 The focus of the Bus Priority Infrastructure Programme is to develop and deliver infrastructure which will assist in improving bus journey times and reliability by removing congestion pinch points along existing bus corridors. This will allow users to rely on the bus and encourage more people to use their local bus services.
- 9.9 The following schemes have been identified for intervention following a feasibility study of public transport pinch points across the TNE geography.

<b>Northumberland Highway Schemes</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Total Capital Costs</b>
Blyth A189 Southbound to A193 Eastbound bus lane.	Widen carriageway to provide an additional bus lane to facilitate bus movement through the A189 roundabout.	£475,233.00
Cramlington Low Main Place to B1326 right turn bus lane.	Widen the road and signalise the junction to facilitate a right turn bus movement and provide a new left turn entrance to the supermarket car park in advance of the junction to ease volume of traffic moving through junction.	£736,829.00
Cramlington Dudley Lane southbound bus lane at A1171 roundabout.	Widen southbound carriageway to provide a bus lane facilitating movement through A1171 roundabout.	

- 9.10 The expected project outcomes and outputs are:
- a) Improve journey times
  - b) Improved journey time reliability
  - c) Increased patronage
- 9.11 The key milestones for scheme delivery are set out below:
- a) Preliminary design in October 2023 to January 2024
  - b) Consultation in February 2024
  - c) Detailed design in March to July 2024
  - d) Assurance Statement sign off in August to September 2024

e) Construction October 2024 – March 2025

- 9.12 The programme will contribute to a sustainable transport system capable of supporting Northumberland's environmental, social, and economic objectives. It seeks to reduce car dependence and increase sustainable travel, thereby contributing to the reduction of carbon emissions.
- 9.13 The main risk associated with the programme is that any significant underspend, overspend or failure to deliver schemes that have external funding linked to them may lead to a loss of that funding and jeopardise the potential to secure additional funding in future years. The risk of overspend is mitigated by the inclusion of a significant risk layer added to the total scheme costs.

## **10. Parks Enhancement**

- 10.1 CSG was asked to consider capital spend of £0.418 million for projects involving three different parks. The main source of funding would be via reallocations from the existing Parks Enhancement Capital Programme and Members' Local Improvement Scheme Funds along with contributions from Choppington Parish Council and Section 106.

### **Background**

#### **Cleasewell Hill Park**

- 10.2 Cleasewell Hill Park is located off the A1068 at Sheepwash Road, Choppington and looks across the river Wansbeck with the popular riverside footpath connecting Wansbeck Riverside Country Park just a short walk away.
- 10.3 In partnership with Choppington Parish Council there is an opportunity to re-activate the park to make it feel more welcoming and secure for the local community. It is proposed to undertake a refurbishment scheme involving the provision of a new inclusive play area, improved access, resurfacing of footpaths, steps, and improved landscaping.
- 10.4 There is £0.200 million already included in the Council's Capital Programme which was approved at February 2023 Cabinet. The remaining £0.040 million will be funded by Choppington Parish Council. In addition, community asset transfer and an enhanced maintenance programme are still in dialogue.

10.5 View of the existing Children's play area:



10.6 Estimated costs:

Description	£ million
Play area & landscaping	0.120
Footpaths, steps & handrails	0.090
Signage, & park furniture	0.010
Arboriculture, shrubs & vegetation	0.006
Contingency	0.014
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.240</b>

10.7 Proposed funding:

Description	£ million
Parks Capital Enhancement Programme	0.200
Choppington Parish Council	0.040
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.240</b>

10.8 Choppington Parish Council have expressed a willingness to make a significant financial contribution towards the cost of the scheme.

10.9 It is also envisaged that upon completion of the capital works the park will be community asset transferred to Choppington Parish Council who will take on future maintenance responsibility.

10.10 Without any capital contribution from the Parish Council the project will be scaled accordingly to stay in line with Northumberland County Council's £0.200m commitment.

### Gallagher Park

10.11 Gallagher Park is in the Northeast of Bedlington. The park was created as part of a large colliery reclamation project in the 1980s. The regeneration of the site has resulted in a variety of woodland environments being created as well as open spaces for a variety of leisure purposes including football and cycling.

10.12 Gallagher Park was designated Queen Elizabeth II playing fields as part of a national initiative to provide long-term safeguards for outdoor recreation areas in 2012.

10.13 The park is extremely popular for sport and recreation and as a result the parking facilities come under pressure at peak times bringing health and safety concerns regarding emergency access and safe use.

10.14 Recent photos provided by The Friends of Gallagher Park:



10.15 It is therefore proposed to increase the parking provision by installing approximately 12 additional parking bays, helping to reduce congestion on match days and improve site safety.

10.16 In addition, surface repairs will be undertaken on the existing car park and new boundary fencing will be installed to prevent unauthorised parking.

10.17 Based upon submitted estimates the following costs have been identified:

Description	£
Gallagher Park Car park repairs Over-flow provision and fencing.	18,260
Contingency	740
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,000</b>



#### 10.18 Proposed funding:

Description	£
Parks Capital Enhancement Programme	10,000
MLIS Funds Cllr Malcolm Robinson Cllr Christine Taylor Cllr Rebecca Wilciezk	9,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,000</b>

#### Plessey Woods Bouldering/ Climbing Rocks

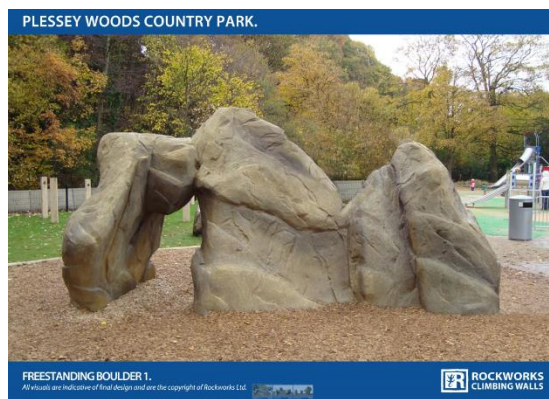
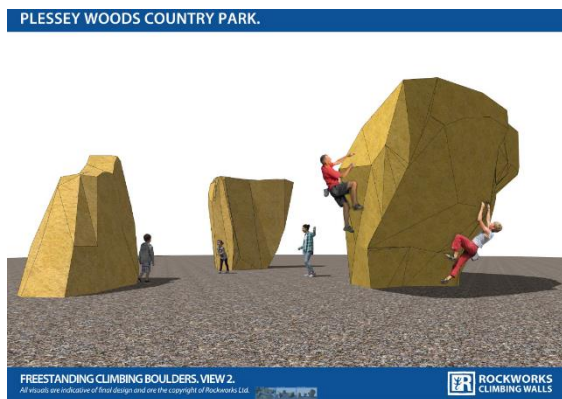
10.19 Plessey Woods Country Park is located near Hartford Bridge, off the A192, mid-way between Bedlington and Cramlington and about five miles south of Morpeth.

10.20 The park offers 100 acres of woodland, meadow, and riverside to explore.

10.21 A visitor centre, café, toilets, children's play area and parking are all available for visitors. It is a fantastic location for a family day out to walk, play and explore.

10.22 To complement the proposed works to the Café / Visitor Centre is it proposed to install an outdoor climbing / bouldering facility.

10.23 Rockworks climbing boulders provide a variety of highly realistic, free standing climbing structures that will enhance any outdoor environment. The boulders are unique in introducing challenge and adventure into free to access playgrounds and are designed and constructed to recreate any rock type or style of climbing.



10.24 Following research undertaken by NCC staff there is a clear appetite among the climbing community for this type of facility. However, it also presents an opportunity for the wider community to get involved in outdoor physical exercise that is both challenging, fun, and free.

10.25 It is anticipated that the new facility will enhance the reputation of Plessey Woods Country Park as destination park resulting in additional visits to the Café and Visitor Centre and increasing revenue income from car parking and café sales.

10.26 The initial costs were thought to be around £0.145 million but inflationary cost pressures have seen the costs rise to £0.159 million.

10.27 There has been uncertainty relating to previously identified Section 106 funding, which has now been allocated to Northumberland Play zones. As a result, this is now

a request for capital funding allocation from the Parks Enhancement Capital Programme to enable the project to proceed.

10.28 Proposed funding:

Description	£ million
Parks Capital Enhancement Programme	0.088
Section 106 (confirmed)	0.049
Section 106 (proposed)	0.017
MLIS (Local Councillors)	0.005
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.159</b>

10.29 If the Section 106 proposed funding was not approved then consideration would be given to remove one of the larger boulders, thus reducing the cost or to accommodate the spend through changes in other Parks Enhancement Projects.

## 11. Strategic Regeneration Investment

11.1 CSG was asked to consider capital spend of £2.000 million for the Northumberland Small Business Service and £1.543 million for the Rural Asset Multiplier Programme (RAMP). All of the spend will be fully funded by the North of Tyne Combined Authority. Additionally, CSG was asked to consider a reallocation in the Capital Programme of £0.600 million from the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2) to 5 different Strategic Regeneration projects.

### Background

#### Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment Programme

11.2 The Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment Programme was presented to Cabinet on 14 February 2024. Following on from this business cases have been developed, submitted, and approved by the North of Tyne Combined Authority for two of the projects identified in that report:

- a) The Northumberland Small Business Service (NSBS)
- b) The Rural Asset Multiplier Pilot (RAMP)

#### The Northumberland Small Business Service

11.3 The objective of this programme is to provide a comprehensive business and enterprise support service to small businesses (those employing less than 50 employees, with a turnover of less than £10 million) located within Northumberland in order to help unlock barriers to business resilience, investment, productivity, enterprise creation and economic growth.

11.4 Northumberland County Council will act as the Accountable Body and Strategic Lead for the NSBS programme with Advance Northumberland Ltd being the delivery partner. Advance Northumberland will commission specialist expertise to support delivery. This will include commissioning Northumberland National Park to provide bespoke farm growth and resilience support to eligible rural farm businesses across the county. This specific market segment has been identified as a key audience that is typically under-represented in standard business support services.

11.5 The NSBS programme will be delivered over a 3-year period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026.

- 11.6 The programme is fully funded by external funding from the North of Tyne Combined Authority. A total budget of £4.811 million consisting of the following elements has been awarded:
- a) £2.211 million revenue grant from a combination of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Rural Growth) and North of Tyne Investment Fund
  - b) £0.600 million revenue grant from UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Enterprise)
  - c) £1.500 million capital grant from the Rural Economy Prosperity Fund (REPF)
  - d) £0.500 million capital grant from North of Tyne Investment Fund
- 11.7 The £2.000 million capital grant will be awarded to businesses for capital projects. It is anticipated that the grants will support 40 businesses, leveraging in £3.000 million of private sector funding for the projects.
- 11.8 The funding profile is as follows:

Description	2023-24 £ million	2024-25 £ million	2025-26 £ million	Total £ million
NTCA UKSPF Capital	0.500	1.000	-	1.500
NTCA Investment Fund Capital	-	-	0.500	0.500
NTCA UKSPF Revenue	0.579	0.171	-	0.750
NTCA UKSPF Revenue	0.269	0.331	-	0.600
NTCA Investment Fund Revenue	-	0.541	0.919	1.460
<b>Total NTCA</b>	<b>1.348</b>	<b>2.043</b>	<b>1.419</b>	<b>4.810</b>
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>0.500</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>0.500</b>	<b>2.000</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>0.848</b>	<b>1.043</b>	<b>0.919</b>	<b>2.810</b>
<b>Grant Rate %</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

### Rural Asset Multiplier Pilots (RAMP)

- 11.9 The objective of this programme is to progressively develop a place-based approach to ensure that investment and impact are focused rather than dispersed through the integrated delivery of multiple elements of the Stewardship and Rural Growth Plan within specific localities.
- 11.10 Through RAMP programme the Council will test an innovative, place-based approach to investing in unique natural, economic, and cultural assets in a way that will simultaneously enhance the environment, grow the rural economy, and improve opportunity and prosperity in the community. In this initial phase, activities will be concentrated in two defined pilot geographic areas of rural Northumberland, each presenting distinct opportunities and challenges relating to environmental stewardship and rural growth.
- 11.11 On this basis the initial phase of the RAMP programme will focus predominantly on two place-based pilots in the following defined geographic areas:

- a) Area A Northumberland Coast RAMP – Targeting the area of the Northumberland Coast AONB, this RAMP will focus on better managing the challenges and opportunities of the seasonal influx of visitors (for trips, holidays and second home residences) to improve the sustainability of local communities, reduce the areas carbon footprint and better protect the inherent value of the coastal landscapes, habitats, and species.
- b) Area B Northumberland National Park Authority RAMP (Bridging the North to South Tyne River)- Targeted on the South-Western part of the National Park bounded by Bellingham and Haltwhistle, this RAMP will focus on unlocking the natural capital potential of an extensive, unspoilt area of countryside whilst sensitively promoting access for educational and health and well-being purposes. As part of this RAMP, a Natural Capital Accounting Pilot will be initiated to both inform the subsequent preparation of the RAMP Delivery Plan and to provide an exemplar of this technique that can be replicated in other parts of the county. Natural capital accounting is the process of calculating the total stocks and flows of natural resources and services in a given area, as the basis to invest in enhancing these assets.

11.12 Alongside this, a small number of suitable projects will also be supported in other similarly rural parts of the county.

11.13 Northumberland County Council will act as the Accountable Body and Strategic Lead for the RAMP programme with Northumberland National Park Authority and Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership acting as key strategic partners.

11.14 The initial pilot phase described in the business case will run from September 2023 until March 2026.

11.15 A total budget of £3.510 million consisting of the following elements has been awarded:

- a) £1.967 revenue grant from a combination of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Rural Growth) and North of Tyne Investment Fund
- b) £1.544 million capital from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

11.16 The £1.544 million capital grant will be awarded to organisations for capital projects.

11.17 The funding profile is as follows:

Description	2023-24 £ million	2024-25 £ million	2025-26 £ million	Total £ million
NTCA UKSPF Capital	0.200	1.343	-	1.543
NTCA Investment Fund Capital	-	-	-	-
NTCA UKSPF Revenue	0.322	0.178	-	0.500
NTCA Investment Fund Revenue	-	0.681	0.786	1.467
<b>Total NTCA</b>	<b>0.522</b>	<b>2.202</b>	<b>0.786</b>	<b>3.510</b>
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>0.200</b>	<b>1.343</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1.543</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>0.322</b>	<b>0.859</b>	<b>0.786</b>	<b>1.967</b>
<b>Grant Rate %</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



### **Reallocation of Ashington North East Quarter capital funds in 2023-24**

- 11.18 In order to progress the following capital projects as part of the Council's significant regeneration programme £0.600 million is requested to be reallocated in 2023-24 on a project-by-project basis as set out below from the Ashington North East quarter allocation in the Capital Programme.
- 11.19 The Strategic Regeneration Projects budget will reallocate £0.600 million to the Ashington North East Quarter Redevelopment (Phase 2) project in 2024-25.

### **Hexham High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Public Realm Scheme**

- 11.20 The Hexham HSHAZ scheme was established as a £2.400 million scheme in October 2020 as part of a national programme and funded by Historic England, NCC and private sector match funding contributions. It seeks to deliver heritage led regeneration to address multiple issues of town centre decline and improve Hexham Town Centre making it a more attractive, engaging, and vibrant place for people to live, work, invest and visit.
- 11.21 The scheme, which runs until Spring 2024, is particularly targeted at the rapid deterioration of the condition of the Conservation Area, now 'at risk', including visible decline in the condition of multiple buildings resulting from lack of maintenance and limited custodianship of heritage assets.
- 11.22 The Hexham HSHAZ programme has resulted in significant improvements in the target area of Priestpopple, Cattle Market and Battle Hill including:
- a) 9 historic buildings repaired, repurposed or improved, significantly improving the streetscape and frontages as well as creating new employment and bringing commercial floorspace back into viable use.
  - b) 500sq.m of public realm improved and new street trees introduced by Spring 2024.
  - c) Multiple training and skills opportunities and "hard hat" tours for the local community and students.
  - d) New app promoting a heritage based walking tour and support for guided tours with local volunteers.
  - e) Strong engagement from community groups and local schools.
  - f) Development of a Conservation Area Management Plan to provide a framework for future developments and protect the legacy of the HSHAZ investments.
  - g) Overall improvement in the condition of the Conservation Area.
- 11.23 The investment programme for the scheme consists of several linked interventions which together are intended to create a lasting change in regenerating the area. This includes the public realm improvement scheme.
- 11.24 Works commenced on 3 July 2023 focussing on the key corridor of Priestpopple, Cattle Market and Battle Hill within the Hexham HSHAZ boundary and have progressed well, with a positive response from the local community and businesses. It is expected that the scheme will be complete in Spring 2024.

- 11.25 The budget for the construction of the scheme was agreed by Cabinet on 13 December 2022 as £1.380 million with a contingency of £0.347, totalling £1.727 million. This was based on pre-tender cost estimates from August 2022, which were predicated on externally contracting the works and a start date of 1 April 2023.
- 11.26 Since the cabinet meeting the budget forecast has been impacted by several factors outlined below:
- a) Cost increases on materials following a three-month delay to the start date which was agreed as a response to the tragic events that occurred earlier in the year on Priestpapple. The cost of paving materials and tree support infrastructure in particular are increasing rapidly each quarter.
  - b) Agreement on the final traffic management arrangements around the construction works, which has seen a one-way system introduced for the duration of the scheme (up to 39 weeks). This is labour intensive as it requires additional operatives to be on site throughout and therefore will lead to a higher cost than originally envisaged.
  - c) The works are now being undertaken by NCC's Highways Construction Team. The cost for the construction of the works at the time of their award exceeded the estimates produced during the development of the scheme.
  - d) The works are currently 4 weeks behind schedule, due to a range of factors including long lead times for the delivery of materials. Every week of slippage equates to higher costs. Additional NCC technical resource is being allocated to progress urgent design modifications quickly in order to limit 'downtime' on-site and work phases have been altered to enable full deployment of staff in 2 sections of the scheme area.
  - e) As the new high-quality paving is being installed it has become apparent that existing poorly maintained ironworks e.g., drain and access covers etc and rising/damaged signage will detract from the overall impact of the scheme. This was not costed into the original scheme due to budget constraints.
- 11.27 The additional budget required to cover the costs highlighted to achieve successful scheme completion are estimated to be £0.500 million which will increase the overall budget to £2.227 million in relation to construction and contingency costs. This is comparable to other NCC schemes of this scale.

### **Berwick Visitor Gateway**

- 11.28 As part of the wider regeneration programme in Berwick the Council has been working with the Berwick Harbour Commission on the opportunity to create a Visitor Gateway at Berwick Harbour, including car parking, new commercially operated restaurant, EV charging, publicly accessible toilets, and an orientation point for visitors to Berwick and critically for the new Destination Tweed long distance walking and cycling route being developed under the Borderlands programme.
- 11.29 This outline proposal relates to the development of the existing Port office facilities to make a multipurpose statement building to support traditional port activity and local amenity, leisure, and tourism.
- 11.30 The plan is to replace the existing single-story office with a two-story multi-purpose facility. This will include the relocation of staff offices upstairs to a new second floor area, to allow development of the downstairs, primarily a restaurant / dining area with

outdoor seating. The downstairs also includes provision of facilities for visiting yachts and crew members.

11.31 There is also space available and the opportunity to build public toilets including disabled toilets. These would be managed by the Harbour Commission but made publicly accessible.

11.32 The proposals include the provision of car parking along with EV charging points, which would be available for public use by cars and coaches. The site would then act as a key orientation point to visitors to Berwick and critically an orientation point / gateway to the Destination Tweed long distance walking and cycling trail.

11.33 The capital costs initially estimated by Berwick Harbour Commission, based on outline plans are £0.600 million, this includes:

- a) Construction of statement Port building (taking into account increased material costs / labour etc).
- b) Softening of outside area appearance / flags / sail structures.
- c) Tourism related expenditure: information boards, port and wildlife viewing area and seating.
- d) New entrance to public area of car park to separate from commercial port (Gates, Planning with Highways).
- e) Professional fees for architect, civil engineers, and project management.
- f) Marketing and associated costs.
- g) Legal fees associated with tenancy.

11.34 The profiling of the budget is set out below:

	<b>2023-24 £ million</b>	<b>2024-25 £ million</b>	<b>2025-26 £ million</b>	<b>TOTAL £ million</b>
Spend	0.050	0.400	0.150	<b>0.600</b>

## Royal Border Bridge Floodlighting

11.35 The Royal Border Bridge is the iconic railway viaduct crossing the River Tweed at Berwick. There have long been issues with the floodlighting illuminating the Bridge and a condition / asset survey was commissioned which was completed earlier this year. This put forward several options and scenarios for bringing the floodlighting back into full operation.

11.36 The preferred solution is a full replacement of all equipment linked to wireless technology for full control, and by replacing all equipment, it allows for better maintenance and a reliable installation going forward.

11.37 The overall estimated cost for this project at this time is in the region of £0.400 million and approval is being sought for the release of £0.10 million from the Strategic Regeneration Projects budget in 2023-24 to allow the Detailed Design to move forward. This will enable a further CSG report to be submitted in due course, which will detail the overall project cost and proposals for potential delivery in 2024-25.

## **Rural Business Growth Service (RBGS)**

11.38 The RBGS provided discretionary grants to rural businesses across the County, funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The project has been highly successful, however including the project a limited amount of ineligible activity has been supported. Under the grant funding procedure, the Council is obliged to fund this activity, which has been expended by a business but will not be eligible for the grant. It is therefore proposed that £0.020 million is allocated from the Strategic Regeneration Projects to cover this limited ineligible activity and close the RBGS project.

## **Alnwick Cobbles Streetscaping Scheme**

11.39 The cobbles are located in Alnwick town centre and are mainly used for car parking. The current surface is uneven and difficult to walk on. Those with mobility issues find the area impossible to walk on and cannot use the pedestrian routes that run through the area. There is little pedestrian space and existing historic features like Robertsons Pant are therefore relatively inaccessible.

11.40 The project aims to significantly improve the streetscape in this area. The current cobbles will be replaced with flat-top materials suitable for pedestrians, including those with mobility problems. Disabled access will be improved by providing accessible routes across the area, linked to existing pedestrian routes and crossings. Greater pedestrian space will be created, focussed on Roberstons Pant, allowing this historic feature to be more easily visited and appreciated. Natural materials and planting will enhance the streetscape.

11.41 The overall estimated cost for this project at this time is in the region of £1.000 million, expected to be funded from a combination of Strategic Regeneration Projects budget and Local Transport Plan Capital Programme. Approval is being sought for the release of £0.020 million from the Strategic Regeneration Projects budget in 2023-24 to allow the Detailed Design to move forward. This will enable proposals to be firmed up and a further CSG report to be submitted in due course, which will detail the overall project cost and proposals for potential delivery in 2024-25.

## **12. Great Northumberland Forest Tenant Lead Pilot**

12.1 CSG was asked to consider capital spend of £2.550 million for the Great Northumberland Forest Tenant Lead Pilot programme. All of the spend will be fully funded by the Nature for Climate (NfC) Fund.

### **Background**

12.2 The Great Northumberland Forest (GNF) initiative was announced by Government in September 2019 to facilitate and support an increase in tree and woodland cover through Forestry Commission Grants, Forestry England delivery, Countryside Stewardship, Green Recovery and private financed schemes.

12.3 To help facilitate this work, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) gives the Council an annual revenue allocation from the national Nature for Climate (NfC) Fund that funds a dedicated delivery team of 4 staff to be employed. The role of this team is to coordinate and promote tree and woodland planting, particularly in “low risk areas” in collaboration with the Northumberland Woodland Creation Partnership (WCP).

- 12.4 To complement this, the GNF was successful in securing capital funding over three years from the NfC Fund. This funding is targeted at filling the gaps in the existing national tree planting grant opportunities with the aim being to facilitate positive experiences, build confidence and unlock opportunities to do more. This capital was previously approved by CSG and Cabinet in 2022. To date, over £0.491 million has been approved, and spent or allocated to woodland creation projects which will result in over 82,000 trees being planted. There is a strong pipeline in place for 2023-24 with two further funding panels due in September and October.
- 12.5 The GNF secured further capital from DEFRA to support an additional project within the GNF programme – A restoration response to storm Arwen damage. This additional capital was previously approved by CSG and Cabinet in 2023. The scheme launched in June 2023 and to date, the pipeline for 2023-24 is currently at 100ha with an estimated spend of £0.500 million.
- 12.6 The GNF has now secured additional capital from DEFRA to pilot and test an innovative tenant-lead woodland creation approach. This will be a separate capital project to those covered above but still managed by the Great Northumberland Forest team.
- 12.7 The funding package is detailed below:

Item	Description	CDEL	RDEL
150HA Tree planting (capital & maintenance costs only)	@£15k per HA	£2.550 million	Existing resource allocation – supplemented through capitalisation of reserves if required
Directly attributable GNF overhead costs/contingency (drought, fire etc)	@£2k per HA (in reserve)		
Total: £2.550 million			

- 12.8 Northumberland has a significantly high percentage of farmland occupied by tenants (50-60%) compared to the national average (30%). This can make accessing woodland creation grants more challenging due to permissions required, future management options and cash flow – with the latter being the most challenging for tenants to progress woodland creation at scale.
- 12.9 This project will allow the partners to implement a new landlord tenant model as a test bed to lever in private finance for future years. We are hoping the 2023-24 Northumberland sites will provide a working model for tenant led agroforestry and farm woodland creation.
- 12.10 This pilot looks to gain commitment by encouraging tenant farmers and landlords to work together to find solutions and enable tree and woodland establishment such as agroforestry planting on tenanted land.

### 13. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	The schemes identified in the report support all of the priorities within the Corporate Plan 2023-26.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	The report outlines proposed project allocations and amendments to the approved Capital programme 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26. The financial implications of these proposals are outlined in the main body of the report. The projects and the proposals identified in the report will be funded from either external funding or existing funding in the Capital Programme.
<b>Legal</b>	Subject to any contractual implications arising from the receipt of grant funding, there are no direct legal implications. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council
<b>Procurement</b>	Procurement will follow the Council's standard procedures and financial rules. The Corporate Procurement team will be consulted as appropriate.
<b>Human resources</b>	Not applicable
<b>Property</b>	Not applicable
<b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	No - not required at this point EIA is not applicable to the subject of this report. EIA is not applicable to the subject of this report.
<b>Risk assessment</b>	The risks associated with the proposals are regarded as acceptable, but these risks will continue to be reviewed up to and during implementation of the proposals.
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	There are no specific crime and disorder implications within this report.
<b>Customer considerations</b>	The proposals will carefully consider the impact upon both customers and residents of Northumberland.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	Carbon Reduction measures have been considered within the proposals.

<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	The Council's Capital budget is founded on the principle of promotion inclusivity.
<b>Wards</b>	(All Wards);

**14. Background papers**

Summary of New Capital Proposals Considered by Officer Capital Strategy Group  
Cabinet report 13 December 2022

Northumberland Stewardship and Rural Growth Investment Programme Cabinet  
report 14 February 2022

North East Bus Service Improvement Plan Cabinet Report 9 May 2023

**15. Links to other key reports already published**

Not applicable

**16. Author and Contact Details**

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