

Subject:	Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) project manager resourcing		
Date of Meeting:	1st July 2021		
Report of:	Max Woodford		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 To update members about the progress of The Aquifer Partnership (TAP), and specifically about the Wild Park Rainscape¹ Project. TAP has won funding to improve a small part of Wild Park in north Brighton, creating an attractive wildlife landscape. It will be designed around several shallow planted basins – or rainscapes - that can hold water during heavy rainfall, and which help to reduce pollution and improve the area for people and nature. An introductory presentation to the Wild Park Rainscape is provided in Appendix 1
- 1.2 To set out a case for the creation of a dedicated BHCC strategic Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) programme lead to deliver capital SuDS projects using the Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Fund (SCRIF). This role would have responsibility to project manage the Wild Park Rainscape scheme working with TAP, and to work collaboratively with TAP partners in supporting the development of the broader strategic sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) programme for the city.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That members note the updates of TAP and its broader urban and rural programme.
- 2.2 That members agree to proceed to detailed design and delivery of the Wild Park Rainscape project, authorising the Executive Director Economy Environment & Culture to take all necessary steps to procure and award contracts.
- 2.3 That members recognise the current resource gaps within BHCC for leading the Wild Park Rainscape project and the wider strategic urban SuDS programme and allocate £*tbc* of SCRIF funding for a dedicated project management resource to lead on delivery of the Wild Park Rainscape scheme and urban SuDS programme.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

¹ Sustainable Drainage (SuDS, or rainscapes) are specially designed, engineered and landscaped solutions to manage surface water to reduce flood risk, improve water quality, and provide better biodiversity and community value in the urban environment. They can capture water from roofs, roads and car parks, slowing and holding it to reduce the risk of flooding. They help to remove pollutants from road and car park run-off through natural processes including time, sunlight, microbes in the soil and vegetation

TAP background

- 3.1 TAP (formerly known as ChaMP, the Chalk Management Partnership) was established in 2015 to protect and improve the quality of groundwater in the Brighton Chalk Block (aquifer) as a valuable natural resource for public water supply. 100% of Brighton & Hove residents' drinking water comes from this aquifer.
- 3.2 The partnership is a collaboration between the South Downs National Park Authority, the Environment Agency, Southern Water and Brighton & Hove City Council, working together with the Brighton and Lewes Downs UNESCO Biosphere (The Living Coast), other local authorities, universities, land managers and interested parties to protect the aquifer.
- 3.3 The main focus for the project is:
 - Promoting best practice in sustainable land management to protect the aquifer, providing good advice to landowners and managers, informed by sound science
 - Rural: testing new approaches to reducing chemical inputs and improving soil health, while maintaining environmental and economic sustainability for land managers.
 - Urban: promoting better delivery of solutions to protect groundwater including rainscapes (Sustainable Drainage or SuDS) and encouraging best practice in amenity land and industrial site management.
 - Raising awareness, building understanding and stimulating improvement of groundwater protection in the rural and urban environment.
 - Contributing to and undertaking robust research; drawing on recognised sources to inform our work in promoting groundwater protection, and increasing knowledge and skills.
- 3.4 Since 2015, TAP has delivered focused interventions in the rural and urban environment supported by a proactive communication programme to raise awareness and influence behaviour change; and a programme of research to inform and learn from academic and sector knowledge and expertise.
- 3.5 Rural interventions include specialist advice and visits to farmers and landowners; incentives to reduce chemical application rates and the amount of pollutants lost through soil into groundwater; and events and activities to promote shared learning and improved land management practice.
- 3.6 On the urban side, TAP is bringing forward exemplar rainscape projects, with sites selected against criteria for pollution prevention, flood risk, biodiversity and amenity value opportunity, as well as awareness impact and other benefits. TAP is designing its projects to demonstrate alignment with partner green / blue infrastructure plans and climate objectives, with good quality urban design as well as promoting better understanding of natural capital and ecosystem services, nature recovery and biodiversity net gain. TAP is targeting best practice collaboration. Performance monitoring will be designed in, and learning will be captured to promote greater uptake of SuDS in the city.

- 3.7 TAP plans are designed to help build climate change resilience into the city, promoting rainscapes in new developments, opportunistic schemes (e.g. integrated into planned road works) and retrofits, while building up capability, skills and confidence in rainscape implementation. A programme of workshops, visits and communication is in place to build awareness, engagement and capability to take projects forward.
- 3.8 TAP directly supports the city's climate and biodiversity emergency declarations and the council's broader climate commitments as set out in the Carbon Neutral 2030 action plan. It specifically helps to deliver practical projects to support climate adaptation, making the city more resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- 3.9 As the lead authority of The Living Coast (TLC) Biosphere programme this work supports the council's commitment to support collaboration and partnership working in delivering on the wider aims and objectives of the Biosphere programme for protecting of our natural resources and enhancing natural habitats.
- 3.10 In January 2020 a report was brought to Environment, Transport and Sustainability (ETS) Committee updating members on the work of the TAP partnership to date, and its 2020-25 Strategic Delivery Plan and to update members about the Wild Park Rainscape Project.

5-Year Strategic Delivery Plan (2020-2025)

- 3.11 TAP has developed a 5-year Strategic Delivery Plan (2020-2025) to progress both the urban and rural programmes. The urban programme focuses on the delivery of 3 capital projects in Brighton & Hove, the Wild Park Rainscape Project and two 'SuDS in Schools' projects. These projects complement the EU funded SCAPE² project led by Brighton & Hove City Council,

Wild Park Rainscape Project

- 3.12 Brighton and Hove City Council is acting as lead partner on behalf of TAP to deliver the Wild Park Rainscape Project, which will create a rainscape in Wild Park to manage polluted road run-off water originating on the A27.
- 3.13 This project is designed to mitigate the risk of groundwater contamination by addressing the issue of polluted runoff from the A27. Surface water from the A27 passes through a flow control chamber at 'The Keep' detention pond before discharging into soakaways in Wild Park.
- 3.14 The site lies in a Source Protection Zone, with evidence of pollution which has a pathway to the chalk aquifer via soakaways. It introduces a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) to prevent polluted highway runoff infiltrating directly into the underlying groundwater. The existing highway drainage and detention basin form the first element of an innovative SuDS treatment train, linked to additional wetland elements in Wild Park.

² Shaping Climate Change Adaptive Places (SCAPE) is a project partly funded through the EU Interreg 2 Seas Programme. It aims to use landscape led design to retrofit sustainable drainage, which aims to mimic natural drainage to allow surface water to infiltrate into the ground rather than to rely on the traditional road drains/ gullies into sewer/ soakaway.

- 3.15 Benefits include: greater flood resilience through improved surface water management; a more visually interesting landscape, with a range of natural habitats enhancing biodiversity, increasing amenity value and attracting community engagement.
- 3.16 Following production of initial concept options in 2018, BHCC led the feasibility investigation on behalf of TAP partners in 2019, funded by Highways England. TAP bid for and won funding in 2020 of £1.73m from Highways England to complete detailed design and construction.
- 3.17 BHCC is currently leading a tender exercise for the design, which will inform the completion date, currently estimated to be early 2023. TAP partners are working together on a comprehensive community engagement programme.

SuDS in Schools Projects

- 3.18 At the same time, TAP is undertaking three 'SuDS in Schools' projects: two in Brighton and one in Lewes, each adjacent to a planned rainscape, bringing multiple, cumulative benefits. Benefits are enhanced through linking the schemes, for example with plans to link Wild Park and Moulsecomb Primary School through innovative artistic interpretation and planting schemes.
- 3.19 SuDS in Schools projects can be highly informative, innovative and an attractive addition to the school, and pupils can be involved throughout the design, planning and implementation of the rainscape. Learning and education can benefit the whole school community and can be supported by communications and engagement of the community local to each school.

TAP urban programme

- 3.20 TAP partners have agreed a set of urban objectives, targeting pollution prevention interventions in the city over the next 5 years. These include building up a better joint understanding of the current situation, mapping current drainage infrastructure and land use with groundwater catchments and source protection zones to establish risks and opportunities; as well as influencing new developments through the planning system; and developing a more strategic approach to delivering practical SuDS in the city.
- 3.21 Best practice is being established on a sector-by-sector approach, for example covering sports grounds & golf courses, parks and allotments, retail and industrial sites including vehicle washing. This will lead to guidance, campaigns, training and events and case studies to engage diverse audiences to promote greater understanding of the importance of groundwater, and to support behaviour change.
- 3.22 A key element of the programme is to establish an achievable SuDS strategy for Brighton & Hove and promote wider SuDS uptake in the city, raising capability and capacity to deliver practical actions to meet BHCC policy objectives (climate change, biodiversity, green infrastructure and flood risk).

Resource to Deliver the Rainscape Project and Urban SuDs Capital Programme

- 3.23 Brighton and Hove City Council has been involved in TAP since its inception and is committed to its collaborative approach in delivering common objectives to reduce pollution risk to the aquifer. Significant learning and experience has been accumulated among partners to date, with involvement in the partnership leveraging a broader range of skills and innovation through collaborative working and diverse perspectives; providing practical opportunities to meet multiple BHCC policy objectives. Investment in the city through the Wild Park Rainscape scheme has been leveraged through the partnership.
- 3.24 TAP's ambitious programme is challenging but achievable and demands specialist input from all partners to address complex strategic issues. A dedicated BHCC strategic SuDS programme lead would add impact to project outcomes. Their primary responsibility would be to project manage direct delivery of the Wild Park Rainscape capital scheme. They would also work on developing and delivering other capital projects to support the development of the broader strategic SuDS programme for the city.
- 3.25 The role would enable better co-ordinated engagement across BHCC teams to help avoid costly and frustrating project delays and enable BHCC to participate more effectively in the TAP programme - maximising the benefits of this partnership opportunity. Due to the importance of this work in delivering key sustainability outputs, and the capital nature of the work, it is proposed that this role is funded via SCRIF funding. A two year post at the expected grade for such a project management post would require an allocation of £xxx to fund the post for two years (the expected project delivery period for the Rainscape project). A view would need to be taken after two years about how the post could be funded into the future if it adds value above and beyond the delivery of that project.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 This is an opportunity for the city to take a bold step, with a focus on the future. The city is lacking a co-ordinated approach to SuDS delivery compared to other cities.
- 4.2 Lack of a project management resource presents a significant risk to the successful delivery of the Wild Park Rainscape. There have been costly delays and frustrations in delivering current projects, through competing priorities, and resource and skills gaps across relevant teams.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Community engagement is a critical aspect for the success of the Wild Park Rainscape. A two phased community engagement plan has been established by communications and community engagement specialists from partner organisations.
- 5.2 Phase 1 has commenced, designed to provide a project overview to local councillors and community leaders to gauge feedback and support and to inform Phase 2.
- 5.3 Phase 2 will introduce the project to local people and promote engagement, showing clear scope for influence. Updated concept visualisations and consultation materials will be adapted to suit each audience, showing where local input would

be valuable – e.g. seating, pathways, interpretation, planting – trees and plants, some landscaping. Learning from other schemes in the London Borough of Enfield, active engagement will be encouraged, with activities designed to inform people about rainscapes and provide opportunity for local input.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The collaborative approach adopted by TAP helps to achieve more together than each organisation would be able to achieve individually by pooling expertise and avoiding gaps and duplication of effort. TAP's Strategic Delivery Plan is designed to achieve greater ambition, focus, and impact in delivering quality projects and interventions.
- 6.2 The Wild Park Rainscape project is a key sustainability project for the council, which represents opportunities to bring multiple benefits to a park and community in a deprived ward. The project team would like this to be noted by the committee and for members to support the project.
- 6.3 As lead project partner for the Wild Park Rainscape scheme and urban SuDS programme, BHCC need to have dedicated SuDS capacity to be able to drive this work forward and support the work of TAP.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The total value of the Wild Park Rainscape Project is anticipated to be £1.73 million which is to be funded through Highways England's Environment and Wellbeing Designated Fund (EDF). A grant of £50,000 was secured for the feasibility study which was completed in 2019.
- 7.2 SuDS in Schools projects are funded by the TAP partnership budget, supplemented by the Environment Agency's Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF), a S106 contribution, an additional contribution from the South Downs National Park Authority and an award from the Adur and Ouse Catchment Partnership.
- 7.3 A match funding contribution from BHCC of up to £50,000 will be required to support the delivery of the Wild Park Rainscape Project. The funding will be met from the SCRIF Fund that was approved at Budget Council. The contribution matches that of the three partners in the project. Capital funding is able to support specific posts that enable the delivery of assets and capital projects such as the £1.73m Wild Park Rainscape Project.

Finance Officer Consulted: Rob Allen

Date: 11/06/21

Legal Implications:

- 7.4 The Council will need to comply with its Contract Standing Orders when undertaking the procurements outlined in this report.

Equalities Implications:

- 7.5 The urban projects will all involve an equalities impact assessment, as is standard for all urban engineering and highways projects.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.6 TAP was established to improve the quality of groundwater through sustainable interventions in rural and urban areas. The interventions aim to reduce pollutants in our groundwater and help protect our chalk aquifer which provides 100% of the city's drinking water. Sustainable urban drainage projects can also support natural habitat creation and biodiversity, and play an important role in reducing the impacts of surface water flooding in vulnerable areas helping the city adapt to the impacts of climate change and severe weather events. TAP supports the climate and biodiversity commitments of the council and the priorities ambitions of the Carbon Neutral

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.7 Other case studies of rainscape creation in a park shows that improving amenity value of park will increase visitor numbers (See [Firs Farm Wetlands](#) case study).
- 7.8 Increasing visitor numbers improves actual and perceived safety in a park due to passive supervision.
- 7.9 The rainscape will be visible from the road.
- 7.10 The rainscape will be designed to ensure that sightlines across the park are maintained and crime/anti-social behaviour is designed out.
- 7.11 Neighbourhood Policing Teams will be consulted during design process and engaged throughout the project.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.12 An active risk and opportunity register is maintained for TAP and for the Wild Park Rainscape, which are regularly reviewed and updated by the Project Board. Discrete ChaMP projects and activities are risk assessed on an individual basis.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.13 This project will improve amenity (both recreation and education) and opportunities for a community in a deprived ward through engagement in the project and creation of the rainscape itself
- 7.14 Access to nature is widely recognised to improve mental and physical health outcomes.

- 7.15 The provision of natural play opportunities in the rainscape design will encourage children and families to be active outdoors
- 7.16 TAP supports the council's Climate Emergency commitment and ambition to make the city resilient to impacts of climate change.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Wild Park Rainscape Presentation

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None