

Report to: Strategic Planning Committee



Date of Meeting 27th April 2021

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Clyst Valley Regional Park Masterplan

Report summary:

SPC approved a draft masterplan for public consultation on 20th October 2020.

The consultation ran for 10 weeks (5th Nov 2020 to Mon 18th Jan 2021).

Despite lockdown, exhaustive efforts were made to ensure that all stakeholders were made aware of the consultation and given time to submit comments. We advertised the consultation via a press release, social media, posters at greenspaces and on Public Right of Way fingerposts (prior approval was obtained), and direct email/letter.

241 responses were duly received; 195 were submitted online using our 'SNAP' software and 46 via email. The analysis of responses is included as Appendix A (online responses) and B (emailed responses).

A final masterplan is now presented for approval.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Members approve the Clyst Valley Regional Park Masterplan as a guidance document to inform the future delivery of the Regional Park and to support decision making on planning applications within the policy boundary of the Regional Park.

Reason for recommendation:

The masterplan is detail supplementary to Strategy 10 – Green Infrastructure in East Devon's West End and is intended to be a material consideration in assessing planning applications that come forward **within the existing Clyst Valley Regional Park policy boundary only**. However, it should be noted that the full potential of the Regional Park cannot be achieved simply through development control. With objectives for health and wellbeing, nature gain, climate mitigation and adaptation, education and volunteering, soil and water, heritage, and jobs, this is a complex, multi-stakeholder initiative requiring coordination, innovative funding and the cooperation of private landowners. The masterplan is the first attempt to achieve a shared vision, objectives, and values, and agree on the priorities for the next five years.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

Climate Action and Emergencies

Coast, Country and Environment

- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Culture, Tourism, Leisure and Sport
- Democracy and Transparency
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information [Appendix 1 Consultation Analysis Emailed Responses](#)
[Appendix 2 Consultation Analysis Online Responses](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#):

Priorities (check which apply)

- Outstanding Place and Environment
- Outstanding Homes and Communities
- Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
- Outstanding Council and Council Services

Report in full

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The concept of the Regional Park originates from the Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy (Exeter & East Devon Growth Point Team, 2009). The GI Strategy was sponsored by East Devon District Council, Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Natural England, working in partnership with Devon County Council. In 2013, a GI Board was established to drive forward delivery of the projects within the strategy. In addition to the organisations named above, Devon Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency and the National Trust joined the Board, which was chaired independently. The Strategy was part of the evidence base for the present East Devon Local Plan (2013 to 2031).
- 1.2. In 2014, the GI Board commissioned a discussion document on the Clyst Valley Regional Park. What emerged from this was the idea to give the Regional Park traction by applying for funding from the Heritage Lottery for a project focussed on trees. The bid was successful, and 'Great Trees in the Clyst Valley' was born, with the aim of: "encouraging the public to explore, record and restore the heritage of trees in fields, hedges, parks and orchards across nine priority parishes." The project has been a great success, illustrated by the infographic on page 6 of the masterplan.
- 1.3. Keen to maintain the momentum that the partners in this project have achieved, EDDC pursued a second bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This was also successful and 'Routes for Roots' begun in July 2020 with the aim of: "working with the public, charities, landowners and public bodies to research, explore and plan a network of inter-generational, all ability routes; To use art, performance, and play to enable a wide spectrum of the public to discover their route way heritage; To create opportunities for young families, inactive people and those suffering from mental ill health to build new trails

and improve the quality of the existing network through better surfaces, signage and interpretation.”

- 1.4. In parallel with this work, a delivery plan was prepared for the Clyst Valley Trail and considered by Strategic Planning Committee in February 2018. Members asked for an entirely off-road alignment to be explored. Consequently, a revised delivery plan is being developed for consideration by SPC later in 2021.

2. Process leading up to development of masterplan

- 2.1. A Task & Finish Group (TFG) was established to support the development of the masterplan. The TFG is supported by officers and councillors from Broadclyst Parish Council, Cranbrook Town Council, Devon County Council, East Devon District Council, Environment Agency, Exeter City Council, LiveWest, National Trust, Natural England, and Sustrans.
- 2.2. To support the development of the draft masterplan the following engagement activities were undertaken:
 - July 2019 - a questionnaire was sent out via direct email and social media channels with the aim to understand which places people visit in the Clyst Valley; what they regarded as special or unique; and what was understood by the phrase ‘regional park’. 80 responses were received to the questionnaire.
 - October 2019 – Officers attended the Killerton Apple Festival. Conversations were held with more than 200 people and 36 signed up to receive the masterplan once out to consultation. During the weekend, a draft logo for the Regional Park was also tested.
 - Presentations have been offered to all Parish/Town Council’s and Aylesbeare, Bishop’s Clyst, Broadclyst, Clyst St George, Cranbrook, Plymtree, West Hill and Whimble all took up that offer between October 2019 and January 2021.
 - Conversations with many (but not all) of the landowners in the Regional Park have taken place either to explore the possible route of the Clyst Valley Trail, or to broker support for activities delivered during the two Lottery-funded projects.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. The consultation was carried out in accordance with the [Statement of Community Involvement](#). However the process was adapted due to Covid-19 restrictions, with exhibitions and roadshows being replaced with online communication.
- 3.2. The masterplan was published on the Clyst Valley Regional Park and East Devon District Council webpages. Printed copies of the document were available in local libraries, and sent on request to consultees.
- 3.3. A total 218 people received direct emails with links to the documents. This included 44 county and district council members and officers, 40 businesses, 36 private landowners, 29 charities, 17 parish/town councils, 16 statutory agencies, and 10 schools/colleges/universities.
- 3.4. In addition to the excellent level of response, we now have 600+ people/organisations signed up as ‘Friends of the Clyst Valley’ and receiving updates on the Regional Park.

4. Main alterations made in response to representations

- 4.1. Appendices 1 & 2 summarise the representations we received (‘you said’) and the changes we have made to the masterplan in response (‘we did’).

4.2. Whilst the majority of comments were supportive, Members attention is drawn to objections that were received from Turley, McMurdo Land Planning and Development Ltd, and Church Commissioners. These consultees principally objected to Figure 26, a plan of potential projects, which they maintained was attempting to control land outside the approved Regional Park policy boundary. As a result of these objections, Figure 26 has been removed from the final masterplan.

4.3. However, four new Figures in the final masterplan do show land outside the approved Regional Park policy boundary; Fig 11 Nature Recovery Network, Fig 28 Green commuting routes, Fig 29 Green recreation routes and Fig 37 Recreational zones/hubs. Text has been added to all of these Figures and the supporting text on pages 45, 49 and 66 to make explicit that they are indicative only, and that they are technical guidance only in support of relevant policies and strategies of the approved East Devon Local Plan, most notably Strategy 10 on the Clyst Valley Regional Park.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Every effort has been expended to ensure that all stakeholders have sight of the draft masterplan and the time to comment. Considering the limitations of Covid, the number and geographical distribution of consultation response has been excellent.

5.2. Every single response has been read and in the vast majority of cases, changes have been made to reflect those individual requests. The final Clyst Valley Regional Park masterplan will support the implementation of Strategy 10. Major funding will be sought to implement the action plan. Evidence will be gathered to inform changes to the boundary of the Regional Park to be proposed, alongside any revisions to policy, in the new Local Plan.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications in the recommendation. There will however be funding implications flowing from the Masterplan but these will be assessed and presented to members separately for consideration when they arise.

Legal implications:

As this report relates to a planning policy related document it is within the powers of the Committee to consider and adopt. Once adopted this Master Plan will become a material consideration in determination of any planning applications falling within the policy boundary of the Clyst Valley Regional Park.