

## Update on the Larkhill Open Space Project

Lead Officer:

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### Purpose of the Update

This report is intended to update members of the public and Councillors on the current situation, and to inform them as to how the project has progressed against the Planning for Real outcomes and identify the future of the scheme.

### Background

Since the inception of the Larkhill Open Space Project (LOSP) in 2006, great steps have been undertaken in order to ensure the successful implementation and continuance of the project. Including the initial *Planning for Real* exercise with the local community and school and the final agreement reached between SSDC and the Parish Council to joint finance both officer expertise and the part time ranger.

The project was awarded a 'Somerset Business award' in recognition of its partnership arrangements in 2007, and a South West in Bloom neighbourhood award in 2009.

In 2008 we successfully appointed Darren Lashbrook as the ranger, initially on site for 2 days per week this has now been extended to 5 days per fortnight.

### Progress against the '*Larkhill provisional plan*' and '*Draft management plan*': - enhancements and improvements.

The '*Larkhill provisional plan*' identified 24 key tasks / improvements which were formulated following the consultation exercises, these were used to shape and influence the draft management plan, which was prepared in 2008.

#### Significant achievements.

The '*provisional plan*' identified several tasks, which required either long term planning or significant financial investment. We are pleased to identify that the following tasks have been completed over the last few years:

- Installation of the new bridge and Abbots way footpath
- Resurfacing of the footpath from Thorne gardens to the wiggly path bridge.
- Adoption of the 'David Wilson' development (wiggly path / badger sett area)
- Adoption of the Centurion park development
- Installation of the parish notice board.

Also many of the smaller but equally important tasks have been completed and the following table identifies the current projects progress, in relation to the tasks itemised in the '*Larkhill provisional plan*'.

Completed	Partially completed	Not completed
1	2	3
8	4	5
10	6	7
11	9	
13	12	
14	18	
15	22	
16	23	
17	24	
19		
20		
21		

The main bulk of the rangers duties over the previous years have been directly influenced by the key tasks identified and his regular duties include the following:

- ◆ Works to maintain the stream, which includes large amounts of bramble removal next to the stream path
- ◆ Regular overgrowth clearance from all pathways.
- ◆ Regular clearance and removal of flytipping (mainly supermarket trolleys and mattresses) within the stream and neighbouring areas
- ◆ Repainting the new bridge
- ◆ Various small arboricultural works
- ◆ Herbicide application to pathways and re-emergent bramble
- ◆ Additional litter picking
- ◆ Filling in pot holes in gravel path
- ◆ Liasing with members of the public
- ◆ Ad hoc shrub pruning and additional weeding
- ◆ Pond clearance

## What's next?

### Increase in the Rangers area of responsibilities

Currently the ranger covers the Larkhill stream corridor area; Oak Tree Park and the Higher Ream play area. Due to the adoption of the new developments and the increase in his working time his 'working' area has now increased to encompass the Bluebell road estate (Alvington), the Centurion park developments area, certain 'rights of way' and some areas of the Chamberlain Phipps development.

### What's coming up next?

Apart from the more general routine maintenance, there are several high priority tasks that will be occurring this year:

- Management of the bramble, scrub and removal of rubbish in the stream area at Alvington
- Installation of the gates on the main path (*items 9 & 22 on the provisional plan*)
- Improve the Abbots way entrance (*item 23 on the provisional plan*)
- Installation of a 'duck board' walkway in Alvington open space
- Undertake a nature evaluation of the stream corridor / meadow areas

- Installation of interpretation boards

As well as the higher priority tasks we will be endeavouring to accomplish the following over the coming year:

- Working with the Preston Junior School, to encourage them to use the pond areas in Oak Tree Park
- Assess the seating throughout the site and install where appropriate
- Install bat and bird boxes, where suitable
- Production of LOSP leaflet
- Consolidate of the woodland footpaths