

Aquadrome Management Plan Consultation

Response from the Colne Valley Regional Park

June 2022

In general terms the management plan is supported. We welcome the recognition that the site acts as a northern gateway to the Colne Valley Regional Park but as well as recognition in the text of the document this must be clearly included in the objectives and actions.

We make the following specific points:

Location plan – page 4. Explain the site context better:

- Within the CVRP (as a northern gateway to the RP) by including the CVRP boundary on the map
- Context within the wider waterway/environment network by adding the Colne and Canal to the map.

Green space action plan map. Page 6. Change NCN route 6 to “NCN Route 6 and Colne Valley Trail”

Page 9: Add “and the Cone Valley Trail” after NCN cycle routes.

2.4.2.2 and 3.1.6.2

- There is no reference to amphibians in section 2.3.2.2 of the man plan. Expand this section to include reference to Amphibians too. I would presume that at least common frog, common toad and smooth newt are present on site.
- For poorly recorded (and difficult to find in the case of reptiles) species it will be worth looking for records near the site too (eg within 1 mile)
- Given the suitable habitat and connectivity with other suitable habitat nearby reptiles (esp. grass snake) and amphibians are likely to be present and should be actively encouraged through suitable habitat management (Hibernacula, egg laying sites, ponds etc) - refer to the excellent Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust habitat management handbooks.

2.4.2.6 and 3.1.6.6. There is no reference to Floating Pennywort, this may be because it currently doesn't exist on site but... it is coming! There are significant infestations in the Colne Catchment upstream and downstream of the Aquadrome and it is regularly inadvertently transported on boats travelling up and down the canal. The management plan should refer to this coming threat and have a plan in place to deal with it. This should link into the ColneCAN and Colne Valley Regional Park invasive species work and the catchment-wide approach to tackle this. One approach to this is by installing booms at key entry points eg from the Grand Union Canal and regularly checking and clearing these. Groundwork South can advise on this.

2.5.3.3 add “...and Colne Valley Trail” to the title. To the text add “The Colne Valley Trail, a shared-use country route, starts at the Aquadrome and runs south through the Colne Valley Regional Park past Denham Country Park and Uxbridge to Colnbrook with an additional branch running to Langley. It shares much of its route with the National Cycle Network and links with the Ebury Way to the north. There are aspirations to extend the Trail to meet the Thames Path at Staines. “

2.5.3.4 The Aquadrome paths form an important part of the path network of the Colne Valley Regional Park. The Aquadrome plays an important role as a northern gateway to the Colne Valley Regional Park, we would like to see TRDC work with the CVRP to enhance the Aquadromes role as a northern gateway.

2.6.2 Change “Colne Valley Park Community Interest Company” to “Colne Valley Park Trust”

2.6.6 We note the concerns about visiting after dark but would oppose additional lighting because of the impact on wildlife, especially bats

2.8.2 and 3.2.2 Branding (especially at site entrances/major visitor information points) should include recognition of the sites context within the CVRP and as the northern gateway to the Park.

This should include:

- CVRP logo
- Text along the lines of “Welcome to The Aquadrome, part of the Colne Valley Regional Park”
- A map of the Park showing the location of the Aquadrome and other key visitor attractions.

We can share with you examples of signage at other key visitor sites managed by Buckinghamshire Council, Spelthorne Borough Council, Thames Water etc.

The Colne Valley Trail should be included on directional signage and on interpretation.

3.1.1 In general terms we support the ‘non intervention’ policy for wet woodland. However, in some specific areas exceptions should be made when informed by good ecological practice – eg to achieve the optimal light/shade ratio around rivers and any ponds.

We query why a blanket policy of “any fallen trees or deadwood within 5m of paths removed or used to create habitat piles further into the woodland” Is needed. Standing deadwood is amongst the rarest habitats in the country and can be very valuable for wildlife. In places where there is little health & safety risk this should be left in situ, or if some has to be removed then it could just be topped leaving a pole of standing wood. If you are concerned about public perceptions of ‘untidy’ woodland then you could use interpretation to explain that this is a LNR and the wildlife benefits of standing and fallen deadwood.

3.1.2.1 Guidance recommends the balance of light and shade as 60% open water, 40% shade – rather than 50/50 proposed in the management plan. E.g:

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1761/keeping-rivers-cool.pdf>

3.1.2.3 The Lower Colne Fish passage assessment should be used to inform any decisions on weir removal or adaptation for fish passage. A copy can be made available by contacting Chloe Crompton at Groundwork South. Assessment of this weir should be planned in liaison with ColneCAN.

3.1.4.1 I would imagine that wave action from water ski boats is the single biggest cause of bank erosion and should be dealt with through reduction in usage, zoning, creation of ‘islands’ in front of the fastest eroding banks or the measurers already mentioned in the draft management plan.

3.1.5 We fully support the action to create wildflower areas on some of the amenity grassland

3.2.2.1 Signage from the station should be multi-purpose: “to The Aquadrome and Colne Valley Trail” This should follow through into the actions section 5.0.

3.2.3 and 3.2.5.4 The opportunity should be taken alongside improved signage from Uxbridge Road along footpath 65 to create a ‘gateway’ to the Colne Valley Regional Park and the Aquadrome. This could include signage, interpretation and functional artwork (eg an entrance arch or similar). This will help signpost to local residents the beautiful green spaces that lies beyond the currently scruffy/unattractive entrance point off a major road and next to a carpet shop.

We think the statement in 3.2.5.4 that this path is outside the scope of the management plan is taking an unnecessarily blinkered view. Improvement of this path as a gateway to the Colne Valley Regional Park and the Aquadrome is essential.

3.2.3.1 We support the aspiration to enhance Riverside drive entrance as a gateway to the Aquadrome and the Colne Valley Regional Park.

3.2.5.1 We support the flooding management proposals, particularly “Flooding here should be considered a normal event and public access managed accordingly.”

3.3.4.2 Add that another problem with dog access to the river is pollution eg from Flea treatments.

4.2 and 5 In the objectives there must be clear reference to the Aquadrome as a northern gateway to the Colne Valley Regional Park and managing the site informed by its context within the wider landscape. This should be added to the bullet points under either objective B or D. This new bullet point to be linked into relevant actions in section 5 including (but not limited to) 5.2.1, 5.2.10, 5.4.1, 5.4.6, 5.4.13, 5.4.14, 5.8.1, 5.8.2