

Biddulph Valley Park Management Plan 2024 – 2034



1. Foreword

This management plan seeks to recognise the importance of this park and how improvements at this site could be developed for the benefit of the residents, while considering opportunities for environmental and biodiversity improvements.

We have a commitment to care for the site, for the benefit of all users, by working with communities in identifying priorities and using available resources wisely. This management plan will recognise all the valuable work that has been done to date and focus on the future management and maintenance of the site. Considering sustainability, it will ensure that any developments or refurbishments are completed in a manner which are sensitive to local community needs and the nature of the site in terms of its historical, ecological, and environmental value.

2. Introduction

Biddulph Valley Park sits north of Biddulph, in between Thames Drive and Moorland Road, south of MyActive Biddulph Leisure Centre. A welcoming green space enjoyed and widely used by the neighbouring communities, it is currently used primarily for recreation and free play.

This plan will define the current and future management and maintenance of Biddulph Valley Park for a 10-year period from 2024 to 2034, with a review annually. In compiling the plan, we acknowledge the essential and valuable contribution from all key stakeholders, partners, councillors and community groups. Without their contribution, this plan would be severely limited.

3. The Purpose of the Management Plan

It is imperative that this management plan provides clear direction for the future management and maintenance of the green space, ensuring that the area is conserved and enhanced in its entirety whilst balancing the needs of visitors and residents alike.

This management plan seeks to: -

- Take a holistic approach to the future management of the green space, play development and supporting opportunities to be active by assessing professional and community needs and desires.
- To establish a shared vision and objectives for the green space.
- Ensure community involvement within the development and management of the space.
- Establish standards that are effective and accountable to ensure clear management and maintenance objectives are identified and implemented.
- Benchmark the green space and analyse the management regimes and policies against best practice.
- Prioritise resources and action to ensure effective management of the space and the success of any future developments.

4. Responsibility for the Plan

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is responsible for the overall management of all our parks and open spaces.

The Service Commissioning section of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, working in partnership with all stakeholders and the community, has compiled this plan. Implementation of the plan will also be led by the Service Commissioning section with specific project leads as shown in the Action Plan.

Likewise, the monitoring and review of the plan will be led by the Service Commissioning section. It is recognised that regular effective monitoring and review of the plan will ensure that the document evolves to meet changing priorities.

However, all key stakeholders and users of the park together with the wider local community will be engaged to ensure that future revisions reflect a combination of views, needs and aspirations.

5. Strategic Context of the Management Plan

The Green Spaces Strategy is the overarching document that sets out the strategic context which informs the management of all our parks and green spaces. For this strategy to focus on the future effectively, it is important to recognise the key influencing documents and evidence base which frame the provision and development of the green spaces. It is also equally important for people to understand the current context in which green spaces are managed and maintained, as this will play a part in decision making and delivery of future projects which aim to maintain and enhance these areas.

The purpose of our Green Spaces Strategy is to bring these key issues into focus and by doing so:-

- 1) Set the overarching context and direction for the management and development of our green spaces.
- 2) Outline the approach for managing, protecting and developing green spaces, which gives consideration to the council's resources, management and maintenance responsibilities, and the contributions from community and interest groups.
- 3) Highlight a set of principles which will guide future maintenance, investment, community engagement decisions and actions regarding our green spaces.
- 4) Agree a set of priorities which focus effort, resources and decision making, ensuring that our green spaces remain high quality spaces for everyone to enjoy.
- 5) Help secure additional investment and external funding towards enhancing infrastructure, facilities and opportunities for the benefit of the community.

6. Site Details

6.1 Site Address and Access

The site is an informal recreation area with a play area and a large area of open green space. It is situated to the northeastern side of Biddulph Town Centre, within the north ward of Biddulph and runs between Thames Drive and Moorland Road.

The postal address is as follows:

Biddulph Valley Park, Thames Drive, Biddulph. ST8 7HL

It should be noted, however that postal correspondence relating to this space should be directed to:

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, C/O Service Commissioning, Moorlands House, Leek, Staffordshire. ST13 6HQ.

A plan of the site is shown below:

Biddulph Valley Park



The site does not have a designated main entrance, however the car park for MyActive Biddulph Leisure Centre (off Thames Drive) is available for park users and is located near to the formal play area. There are several (pedestrian) entrances further down Thames Drive, and on the opposite side of the valley off Moorland Road. The site is easily accessible by foot for the surrounding community and neighbouring housing estates who can access it directly from their homes.

6.2 Ownership and Designations

The site sits within the Biddulph north ward of the Staffordshire Moorlands and is owned and managed by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. The town of Biddulph lies within the Staffordshire Moorlands area of Staffordshire with a resident population of approximately 17,488 (2021).

There are some formal (hard-surfaced) paths that run through the site which improve accessibility through this natural environment, while encouraging physical activity. One official Right of Way (Biddulph Town 40c) connects the southern part of the site to wider countryside and land extending to Biddulph Moor, towards Knypersley reservoir and beyond.

7. Physical Assets

It is essential to fully understand the assets of our green space, including natural and manmade features. This will assist in determining the strengths and weaknesses in the information base for the area. This in turn will provide a better understanding of the context of the land and inform how we develop and effectively manage the area.

Biddulph Valley Park provides good opportunities for informal recreation to the local population which it serves. It is regularly used for walks with and without dogs and many residents appreciate the beauty of the natural space and wildlife. It also houses a small community orchard and a children's play area with an extensive range of equipment for all ages.

Although surrounded by housing, the natural environment of this green space brings benefits to the locality, not only for the residents of the housing estates around it but also in terms of ecological value. Priority species, including bees, have the potential to thrive within the area. We aim to work together with the local community and the Wildlife Trust to ensure that we can mitigate climate change with the help of our natural environments and increase biodiversity within this area.

8. Value Assessments

8.1 Educational Value

The site provides a valuable educational resource for schools/nurseries and other community organisations, such as Brownies, Beavers and Cubs, to encourage outdoor activities and learning experiences.

8.2 Recreational and Amenity Value

The site is a valuable recreational and amenity resource. It is a naturally generated green space on the outskirts of the town centre, adjacent to the Leisure Centre, meaning that it can be used for complimentary outdoor exercise and activity. It could easily be linked into walks around the town and further afield. Having a green space near to where we live improves our quality of life and is known to help reduce the risk of physical inactivity.

The site incorporates a medium-sized play area, serving under 12's. The play area is identified in the Play Investment programme as requiring some refurbishment within the current 4-year cycle (2022 – 2026). Work will be undertaken to consult with the local community to understand what they would like to see at the site, before work is agreed.

8.3 Ecological Value

Having green spaces helps to contribute to a wide range of ecosystem services that improve urban space and enhance the lives of the residents, particularly their health and wellbeing. In addition to the benefits of climate change mitigation, green spaces can improve air quality, with trees in particular serving as natural air filters and helping to reduce the risk of respiratory problems. Providing an opportunity to reconnect with the natural environment can help to reduce stress, lower blood pressure and improve overall mood. Natural environments have also been proven to stimulate the mind and promote relaxation, reducing stress and fatigue.

Good quality and biodiverse green spaces can help to act as stepping stones for species moving between habitats and help contribute to nature's recovery. With the current nature crisis including many species threatened with extinction, it has never been more important to improve biodiversity in our local green spaces and help contribute towards 'bigger, better, more, and joined-up' habitats so that wildlife can flourish. Implementing changes in management and maintenance of green spaces will support the recovery of nature across the Staffordshire Moorlands in line with the aims and ambitions of the Council's Plan for Nature.

The Plan for Nature makes suggestions to increase carbon sequestration at the site through urban meadow creation, tree planting, and scrub/tree growth along the watercourse. Wider Nature Recovery Network mapping indicates that the location of the site is strategic in relation to wetland and pasture habitat creation and may also be an important stepping stone for woodland habitats.

Several areas around the site have been identified as suitable for reduced mowing regimes, resulting in improved grassland habitats. Changing to an annual 'cut and collect' meadow mowing regime in these identified areas will lower nutrient levels in the soil and encourage grass and flower diversity. After 3 – 5 years, the soil may be tested to determine whether additional seeding of wildflowers would provide further benefit to biodiversity. Framing strips or similar will be cut next to footpaths where these border with areas of longer grass.

Tree planting opportunities have also been identified in several locations – primarily to connect existing lines of trees, and increase depth and breadth of tree lines, without impacting viewpoints or accessibility. Similar native species to those already present at the site should be chosen, including hawthorn.

Along the brook that flows through the site, there is potential for improving wetland habitats and incorporating natural flood management techniques. There are sewage overflow points along the brook, which could lend themselves nicely to the creation of pooling reed bed areas (natural wetland areas) to assist in removing pollutants. Any proposed tree planting along the bankside should comprise 'wet woodland' species such as willow or alder.

Any improvements to the ecological value of the site will be carefully considered in the context of the amenity value of the site, including maintaining access via footpaths.

9. Management Responsibilities

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council will be responsible for the overall management of the green space. Working with partners, the community, and other interest groups to develop and deliver projects that improve the green space.

Alliance Environmental Services (AES) are the Council's delivery partner and, as such, would be responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the site and also hold the budgetary responsibility regarding maintenance. A schedule for the associated standards of maintenance is defined by the contract with AES, and the site has a specific maintenance schedule.

Community and interest groups are a vital and valued support network and play an important role in assisting with maintenance and development projects. These groups can also provide additional capacity, undertake selected maintenance tasks, and could attract additional funding to improve the site.

10. Health and Safety

Health and safety is of primary concern to the Council. AES will be responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and management of the site, and this includes keeping the area safe for the public to use. Regular site inspections, six monthly in-depth surveys and regular tree inspections are all part of the suite of checks and procedures which are in place. These will ensure that all issues, repairs, and replacements are identified quickly and scheduled into the work programmes as necessary.

The park has a site-specific risk assessment which is reviewed and updated annually by the Operations Service Lead (AES). All AES staff are given specific training to ensure they are always operating in a safe manner. Any work on our parks and open spaces which is carried out by external contractors, partners or community groups/volunteers is governed by the Council's health and safety policies, which they must abide by and follow.

11. Involving Communities

It is well recognised that for any park or public open space to be successfully managed it must respond to the needs of the local community and users. Actively engaging and encouraging community participation and involvement is essential in the continued development of the site.

The establishment of a community group in this area would help to achieve the following:

- Provide a community focus for the site
- Take practical action to improve the area
- Raise the profile of the space
- Help to raise funds to improve the site
- Sustain and enhance the flora and fauna of the green space and its habitats.
- Preserve public access into and throughout the space in perpetuity.

12. Marketing and Communications

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is responsible for managing Biddulph Valley Park and has a variety of communication mechanisms that can be utilised to give feedback on the performance and continued relevance of this Management Plan. As the Council is committed to reducing the need for paperwork, there is an increased reliance on the use of the relevant sections of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council website and social media platforms.

The Council has both a Facebook page and an X account:

- Facebook - <https://m.facebook.com/staffsMoorlands>
- X (Formerly Twitter) - <https://x.com/StaffMoorlandDC>

For anything specific to Biddulph Valley Park, the link below gives several options for how you might get in touch.

- <https://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/article/899/Biddulph-Valley-Park>

The Council can also be contacted by writing to:

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, c/o Service Commissioning, Moorlands House, Stockwell Street, Leek, ST13 6HQ.

13. Action Plan

The Green Spaces Strategy provides the guiding principles and headline priorities for the management and development of our green spaces and following on from this, we can develop specific site action plans. These plans identify our priorities, linked to the Strategy, and ensure they are appropriate, relevant, resourced and provide a flexible and realistic approach to realising the aims of the Management Plan.

Green Spaces Strategy Objectives

We will:

1. Review maintenance regimes to ensure that our green spaces are maintained to a high standard, in an affordable and sustainable way, and make improvements to increase and enhance biodiversity. (Addresses priorities 1,2,3,4 & 5)
2. Ensure that infrastructure and heritage features are protected and well maintained, in accordance with the resources available to the council. (Addresses priorities 1 & 2)
3. Encourage and enable positive physical and mental well-being by developing strong partnerships with community groups, sports clubs and other stakeholder groups. Ensuring that our green spaces fulfil their potential for enabling healthy lifestyles for all ages, encouraging all residents to move more. (Addresses priorities 1, 2, 4 & 5)

4. Plant more trees within our green spaces to help combat climate change (carbon storage) and increase canopy cover, providing future new habitats for wildlife and additional shade for our communities in periods of extreme heat. (Addresses priorities 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5)
5. Ensure our green spaces are safe, welcoming, and accessible places for all of our communities and that the highest possible standards of health and safety are maintained by our service providers, event organisers and when engaging the community in projects. (Addresses priorities 2, 4 & 5)
6. Actively encourage community engagement and involvement in the protection, maintenance, development and positive environmental impacts of our green spaces. (Addresses priorities 1,2,3,4 and 5)
7. Effectively manage internal budgets and attract external funding wherever possible towards the ongoing maintenance and the future development of our green spaces. (Addresses priorities 1,2,3,4 and 5)
8. Review management plans and their associated action plans annually to ensure these objectives are being delivered effectively. (Addresses priorities 1,2,3,4 and 5)
9. Create a green spaces development fund to make improvements to our green spaces. (Addresses priorities 1,2,3,4, and 5)

Action Plan 2024/25 & 2025/26

Objective 1: To protect and enhance biodiversity, address the effects of climate change and ensure the park is sustained for the future

Action	When	Estimated Cost	Responsibility	Resources	Partners	Comms	Status
Identify opportunities to protect and enhance biodiversity of the site.	Summer 2024	N/A	SMDC	Existing budget / External Funds	SMDC / AES / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Other industry recognised professional bodies	Signage on site / PR / social media	Complete
Explore opportunities for creating naturalised areas across the site.	Summer 2024	N/A	SMDC	Existing budget / External funds	SMDC / AES / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust / community groups	Signage on site / PR / social media	In – progress
Review current maintenance regimes to identify best practice that reflects emerging principles which address climate change.	Summer 2024	N/A	SMDC	Existing budget / External funds	SMDC / AES / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Recognised industry professionals in this field	Signage on site / PR / social media	In - progress
Implement mowing regime changes.	April 2025	Unknown	SMDC / AES	Existing budget (whole project may require extra capital funding)	SMDC / AES	Signage on site / PR / social media	In - progress
Improve wetland habitats and natural flood management along the brook.	To be determined in 2025	Unknown	SMDC / AES	Existing budget	AES / Community groups	Signage on site / PR / social media	Not started

Objective 2: Ensure that infrastructure and heritage features are protected and well maintained

Action	When	Estimated Cost	Responsibility	Resources	Partners	Comms	Status
Ensure the infrastructure of the site is maintained. All infrastructure to be monitored on regular site checks.	Ongoing	Individual repair and maintenance issues covered by AES	AES	Existing	SMDC / AES	PR / social media if appropriate	Ongoing
Review the existing play equipment.	Summer 2025	N/A	SMDC	N/A	AES / Community groups	Need to carry out full consultation with community	Not started

Objective 3: Ensuring that our green spaces fulfil their potential for enabling healthy lifestyles for all ages, encouraging all residents to move more

Action	When	Estimated Cost	Responsibility	Resources	Partners	Comms	Status
Continue to promote and maximise the opportunities for physical activity within the park.	Ongoing	Unknown	SMDC	SMDC / Together Active / Public Health	Public Health / Together Active / Move More Partnership / MyActive	Signage on site / PR / social media	Ongoing
Review opportunities for new bench seats to be installed encouraging activity and rest.	Spring 2025	Unknown	SMDC	Existing budget	AES / Community groups / Biddulph Town Council	PR / social media	Not started
Review opportunities for creating an Active Trails loop and signage	Summer 2025	Unknown	SMDC	Existing budget	Move More Partnership / Community groups / Biddulph Town Centre	PR / social media	Not started

Objective 4: Plant more trees within our green spaces to help combat climate change (carbon storage) and increase canopy cover, providing future new habitats for wildlife and additional shade for our communities

Action	When	Estimated Cost	Responsibility	Resources	Partners	Comms	Status
Plant trees in identified areas.	Winter 24/2025 & 2025/26	£450	SMDC / AES	Existing budget	AES / Community groups	Signage on site / PR / social media	Not started
Improve wetland habitats and natural flood management along the brook (planting).	To be determined in 2025	Unknown	SMDC / AES	Existing budget	AES / Community groups / Staffs Wildlife Trust	Signage on site / PR / social media	Not started

Objective 5: To ensure our parks are safe, welcoming and accessible for the communities they serve

Action	When	Estimated Cost	Responsibility	Resources	Partners	Comms	Status
New entrance signage to include 'welcoming' message and important contact details.	Spring 2025	Unknown	SMDC	Existing budget	AES	PR / social media	Not started
Review the path network for quality and accessibility.	Summer 2025	N/A	SMDC	N/A	AES / Community groups / Biddulph Town Council		Not Started

Objective 6: Actively encourage community engagement and involvement

Action	When	Estimated Cost	Responsibility	Resources	Partners	Comms	Status
Invest time to encourage better community links and potential for a 'Friends of the Park' group to be established.	Ongoing	N/A	SMDC	Unknown	AES / Biddulph Town Council / other organisations	PR / social media	Not started
Continue to engage with key stakeholders in the park.	Ongoing	N/A	SMDC	Unknown	AES / Biddulph Town Council / other organisations		Ongoing
Explore opportunities to increase educational activities in the park.	Ongoing	Unknown	SMDC/Move More Partners/SSP	Unknown	Local schools / children and youth services		Not started

Objective 7: To ensure effective financial management of resources

Action	When	Estimated Cost	Responsibility	Resources	Partners	Comms	Status
Ensure that the existing budgets are used to gain best value and maximise opportunities.	Ongoing	N/A	SMDC / AES		AES		Ongoing
Review and investigate opportunities to apply for external funding, where appropriate.	Ongoing	N/A	SMDC		Community groups / Biddulph Town Council		Ongoing
Working in partnership with both internal and external colleagues to expand the impact of relevant projects.	Ongoing	N/A	SMDC		AES / Staffordshire Wildlife Trust / Public Health / Move More Partners / Biddulph Town Council / Community groups		Ongoing

Objective 8: Review and Monitoring

Action	When	Estimated Cost	Responsibility	Resources	Partners	Comms	Status
Annual condition review of park infrastructure including seating, bins, paths and built structures.	Annual (April)	N/A	SMDC / AES	SMDC / AES	AES		Ongoing
Annual review of action plan for the park.	Annual (January)	N/A	SMDC	Existing	AES / Community groups / Biddulph Town Council / wider community		Ongoing
Ensure that all health & safety aspects are annually reviewed.	Annual (April)	N/A	SMDC / AES	Existing	AES		Ongoing

Objective 9: Green Spaces Development Fund

Action	When	Estimated Cost	Responsibility	Resources	Partners	Comms	Status
Continue to look at opportunities where the GSDF could be used to improve the site.	Ongoing	N/A	SMDC	SMDC	All stakeholders		Ongoing