



OUTLINE STRATEGIC PLAN

HOLYROOD PARK

SEPTEMBER 2023

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION



HISTORIC
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Holyrood Park is truly a city park like no other, a remarkable upland landscape at the heart of Scotland's capital city that shapes the City's identity and encompasses a range of habitats and heritage.

While it is recognised as a place of outstanding value and importance, it has vast potential to offer even greater benefits for people, nature and heritage. It offers opportunities to measurably improve peoples' lives and wellbeing; to help us adapt to the ongoing and deepening climate crisis; to support the City's visitor economy; and to provide an exemplary model of integrated 21st century approaches to land management and change.

This Strategic Plan seeks to deliver on these opportunities and place Holyrood Park at the centre of Edinburgh's life. The Plan has been prepared by Historic Environment Scotland (HES), supported by CBA Studios, and through engagement with a range of key stakeholders.

It is the starting point for realising the benefits that Holyrood Park can bring us all; and marks the first step on a journey that will need to be shaped with communities and stakeholders to ensure that a sustainable and bold future emerges for the Park. A future that addresses key emerging and existing challenges at the Park; and reflects and responds to national and local policy.

Central to the Plan is a new defined **Purpose** for the Park – an enduring statement of intent that provides consistency in a changing world and changing circumstances. This is supported by a suite of **Principles** to guide management and change, these situate “people and place” at the heart of all future decision - making.

A **Vision and Objectives** for the Park have also been set out to drive change over the course of the next decade and to achieve the Park's Purpose and to deliver real benefits for the people of Edinburgh.

Over the next 18 months HES will work with stakeholders and communities to refine the Strategic Plan, which will lead onto development of detailed Strategies, Plans and Proposals to deliver a new future for the Park that reflects community aspirations, the needs of the City and its inherent value and sensitivity.







STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Holyrood Park serves the City and people of Edinburgh by delivering health, well-being, climate and economic benefits – it connects communities to each other, to nature, and to the City’s history and identity. It is Edinburgh’s “Iconic Park”, a city park like no other.

Holyrood Park is Edinburgh’s iconic open space, it plays a pivotal role in the City’s identity and offers residents and visitors access to a remarkable and rugged environment in the heart of the City. It shapes Edinburgh’s skyline and identity with its distinctive hills and crags providing a dramatic backdrop to the City. It is Edinburgh’s premier open space and a place of national and international value. It contributes significantly to Scotland’s identity and visual iconography.

As the green heart of the City, Holyrood Park provides outstanding and accessible natural greenspace and a breathing space for Edinburgh’s residents and visitors. It provides physical health and mental well-being benefits by enabling people to escape the City, engage in a range of outdoor recreation activities, meet and engage with others, and enjoy nature in a rugged outdoor environment.

As a critical and fundamental element of Edinburgh’s wider green infrastructure network, the Park is vital to strengthening the resilience of the City to the global climate and ecological crisis by aiding the management of surface water, supporting nature recovery, providing carbon sequestration, and operating on a zero-carbon basis. It is an international living laboratory where approaches to integrated land management in an urban context and changing climate can be tested; a place that offers an exemplar for the future of urban green space.

Holyrood Park is an important element of the City’s tourism offer and economy, worth in excess of £1.8 billion per annum¹, it provides a unique and outstanding visitor experience that engages tourists and residents with the City, the Park, and their shared history.

1. 2019 data taken from Edinburgh in Numbers, Edinburgh City Council 2021

PRINCIPLES

1. PUT PEOPLE FIRST
2. SUSTAIN THE PARK'S SPECIAL QUALITIES AND VALUES
3. STRENGTHEN CLIMATE ACTION & RESILIENCE
4. BE GUIDED BY NATURE
5. ACCEPT HOLYROOD PARK AS A CONTESTED SPACE
6. EXPERIMENT AND LEARN
7. OPERATE SUSTAINABLY

VISION STATEMENT 2024-34

Over the next decade Holyrood Park will be transformed. Its landscape will rapidly and radically evolve, combining natural processes and human action to create a fundamentally sustainable 21st century landscape that responds to the climate emergency, community aspirations, and natural and heritage conservation priorities, all while retaining and strengthening its iconic status for Edinburgh and Scotland.

At a physical level, the zonal management of the park will allow for diversity of habitats and landscape types, with areas of vegetation largely left to naturalise, adapting and changing through natural processes of succession, while simultaneously responding to our changing climate. Within this regenerative landscape, areas will be more actively managed to conserve plots of important grassland habitat and to create wetlands to manage surface water and support climate resilience.

Woven through this mosaic of habitats and landscapes, a completely refreshed and rejuvenated network of paths and active trails will provide access to large areas of the Park, enabling residents and visitors to engage with nature, take in the views and explore the history and story of the Park and Edinburgh. All supported by new orientation and interpretation.

Major improvements to all entrances and the co-creation of new spaces and places in the Park will encourage existing and new users to come to the Park providing a safe place for all communities, residents and visitors to gather, meet, play and relax.

Vehicular traffic will largely cease, and active travel will become the primary mode of transport across the Park; reflecting wider societal trends away from a car dominated urban environment.

All this will be delivered by a new partnership between the people of Edinburgh and key organisations. Working together to deliver an exemplar of landscape management that fully integrates communities, with climate resilience, economic benefit and natural and historic conservation. Creating a Climate Positive asset for Edinburgh, Scotland and the Planet.





OBJECTIVES

Objectives have been defined across five key areas to support the Vision

FUTURE LANDSCAPE

- Objective 1: Plan and commence an integrated approach to the evolution of the landscape encompassing its natural, cultural and social values and assets
- Objective 2: Establish baseline, monitoring and feedback processes

ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

- Objective 3: Deliver a comprehensive network of paths and active travel routes across the Park for all users and visitors
- Objective 4: Create a truly inclusive park
- Objective 5: Make active travel the dominant travel mode through and to the Park

FACILITIES

- Objective 6: Deliver facilities to meet user and operational needs

INCLUSIVE LEARNING & EDUCATION

- Objective 7: Building on the existing educational offer

GOVERNANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

- Objective 8: Reduce and control operational subsidy
- Objective 9: Achieve Net Zero and Zero Waste by 2030
- Objective 10: Create a volunteer base to support conservation and other activity
- Objective 11: New Regulations for a New Park



SECTION I INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Holyrood Park is truly a city park like no other, a remarkable upland landscape at the heart of Scotland's capital city that shapes the City's identity and encompasses a range of habitats and heritage. While it is recognised as a place of outstanding value and importance, it has vast potential to offer even greater benefits than it currently does for people, nature and understanding our cultural heritage. It has the potential to measurably improve peoples' lives and wellbeing; to help us adapt to the ongoing and deepening climate crisis; to support the City's visitor economy; and to provide an exemplary model of integrated 21st century approaches to land management and change.

This Strategic Plan is the starting point for realising the benefits that Holyrood Park can bring us all. It establishes a clear **Purpose** for the Park to shape and guide its evolution; a purpose rooted in community, climate and place:

Holyrood Park serves the City and people of Edinburgh by delivering health, well-being, climate and economic benefits – it connects communities to each other, to nature, and to the City's history and identity. It is Edinburgh's "Iconic Park", a city park like no other.

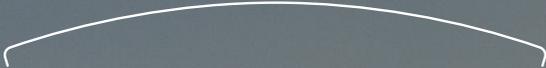
Alongside this, the Plan sets out a clear Vision and suite of Objectives to direct the evolution of its landscape over the next decade or so. The Plan provides a preliminary list of additional plans that will be developed to inform the brief and design stages to achieve the Vision and meet the Objectives.

This Plan is the first step on a journey that will need to be shaped with communities and stakeholders to ensure that a sustainable and bold future emerges for the Park. Three key steps have been identified to further develop the strategy and provisional project ideas: namely engagement with stakeholders and partners, public engagement and the development of the project. These would occur throughout 2023 and 2024.

METHODOLOGY AND ENGAGEMENT TO DATE

Development of the Plan has been informed by the review and analysis of a range of published and unpublished material, a review of the wider Policy & Strategy context, examination of a number of case studies, and discussion with a range of key stakeholders.

Their views, thoughts and suggestions have informed, but not constrained, the findings and recommendations of this Plan.



SECTION 2
HOLYROOD PARK



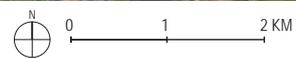
OVERVIEW

Holyrood Park is Edinburgh's largest, and arguably, most important open public space. Its rugged upland environment offers residents and visitors a remarkable outdoor experience and access to nature at the heart of the City. The contrast of the Park's rugged terrain, shaped by its unique volcanic geology, rising above Edinburgh's cityscape is striking. Encompassing the highest of the seven hills surrounding the capital, the opportunity to experience breath-taking views from Arthur's Seat is cherished by the many people who visit this remarkable mountain in a city.

The Park serves a diverse range of local communities, city workers, students and visitors to the City – all of whom have their individual requirements. While no exact figure exists for the number of visits to the Park per annum, it is likely that given Edinburgh's population of c. 530,000 residents, with c. 89,000 living within a 15 minute walk of the Park, plus c. 65,000 seasonal higher education students, and with over 4m tourist visits to the City (equating to c. 19m staying nights) the number of visits to the Park by users will be in the many millions per annum; making it the most visited HES property.



Holyrood Park - Edinburgh Context



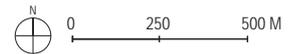
Holyrood Park shapes Edinburgh's skyline and identity with its distinctive hills and crags, particularly Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, providing a dramatic backdrop to the Cityscape and World Heritage Site. It is an iconic and central part of Edinburgh's identity and makes a clear contribution to the City brand. Additionally, it has a wider national role along with the Parliament, Royal Mile, and Palace of Holyroodhouse as a backdrop and stage for key events.

Its landscape is founded on a dramatic volcanic outcrop. Its geology displays all the component parts of a typical strato-volcano with sequence of the eruptions that can be traced with a continuity unique in Britain. The Park's volcanic geology has been studied for over two centuries and this study played a pivotal role in the early establishment of geological science, particularly due to the work of James Hutton. It is internationally valued and recognised for this role and the quality of its geology, and is one of the most well used geological educational locations in Britain.

Importantly, the Park is also an archaeological landscape with over 100 known sites covering millennia of human activity from Mesolithic hunter-gatherers to Bronze Age farmers and Iron Age hillforts. There is evidence of Roman activity and considerable medieval activity and agriculture.



Holyrood Park - Site Features



Since its enclosure in c. 1541 by James V, the Park has been largely undeveloped (excepting some quarrying, land drainage and military activity), with agricultural activity continuing until the 1970s. The sustained grazing of the site over the centuries created a network of grassland habitats, in particular unimproved acid and calcareous lowland grasslands. The habitats were a key reason, along with the remarkable geology, for the Park's designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1953, 1972, 1986 and 2011. Since the cessation of almost all grazing in the 1970s (HES believes due, to increasing conflict between the management of the sheep flocks and recreational users of the Park), these grassland habitats have been subject to different management regimes and are now in an unfavourable and declining condition. The Park is also of exceptional interest due to the diversity of plant species present including many rare vascular species.

The Park's current boundary was largely established when it was enclosed with a stone wall in 1541 as an extension of the Royal Palace of Holyroodhouse. By the early 19th century, the role of the Park as an industrial / agricultural landscape was being challenged and quarrying eventually ceased on Salisbury Crags in the 1830s, after the building of the Radical Road. In the mid-19th century, the Park became a public park primarily for recreation, but with some military and ceremonial functions. This period saw the various drives, gates, lodges and St Margaret's and Dunsapie Lochs constructed, and areas of marshland were also drained; creating the landscape structure which survives today.

Since the 1980s, park management has sought to blend recreation, nature conservation and access, with protection of archaeologically sensitive sites.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

Holyrood Park is a 'Property in Care' (PiC) looked after by Historic Environment Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Its staff structure includes a Ranger Team of 14 personnel, working with 7 personnel in the Parks Ground Staff team. They are supported by a number of specialist and skilled trades teams from the organisation's regional structure. These posts also support several other PiC locations across the Region. Operational costs significantly outweigh the income from car park charging, events, concessions, and filming.

Holyrood Park is designated as a Scheduled Monument. Any proposed works in the Park require Scheduled Monument Consent. This means that when HES Operations or Cultural Assets directorates want to carry out work, they have to apply for consent. HES Heritage directorate is then responsible for assessing and, if appropriate, granting the consent, guided by our [Scheduled Monument Consents Policy](#) as it would for any other applicant.

There are no formalised arrangements for the involvement of key stakeholders in the management of the site although there are close working relationships with a number of organisations including the City of Edinburgh Council, the Scottish Parliament, Palace of Holyroodhouse, NatureScot, and the emergency services.

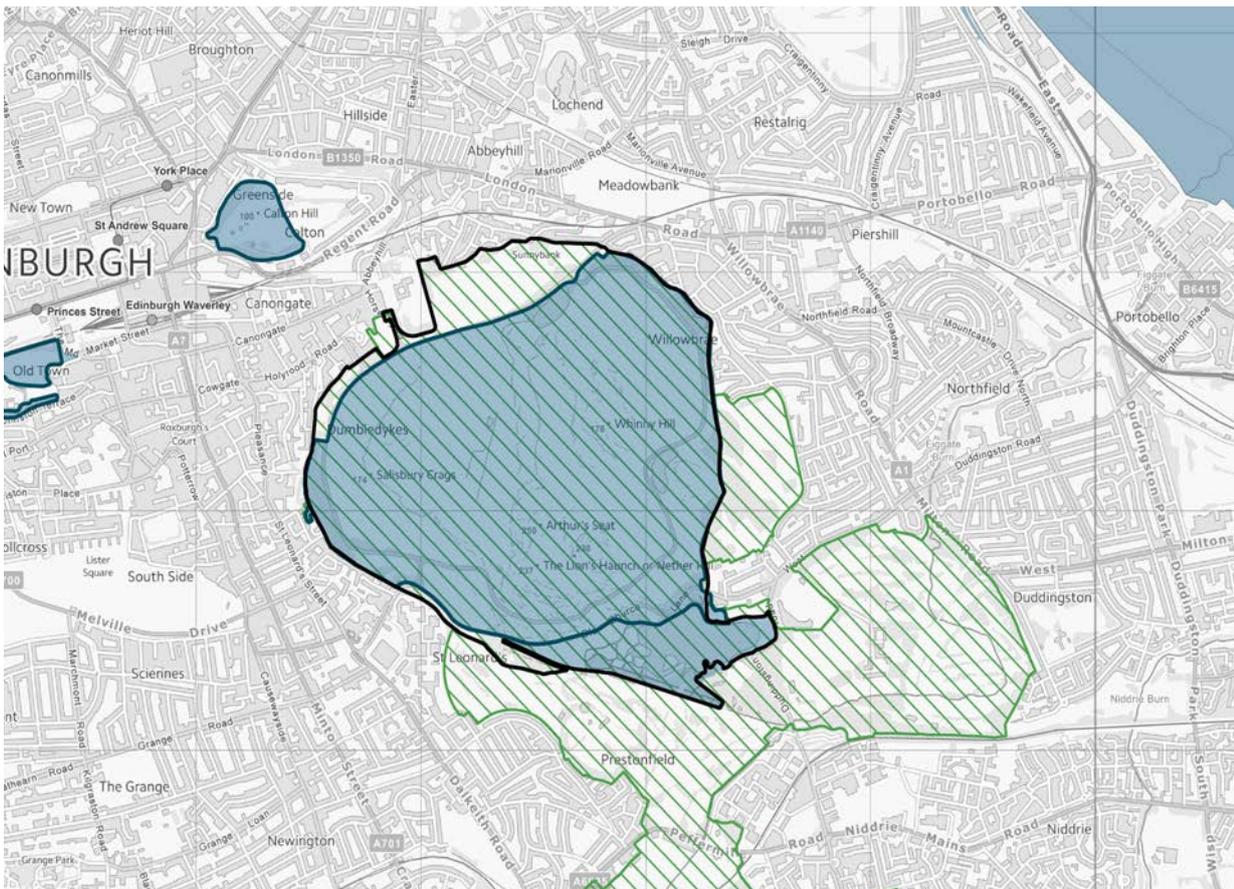
Duddingston Loch is managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust under the terms of a lease with HES.



KEY DESIGNATIONS

The following apply to all, or parts, of the Park

- Arthur's Seat Site of Special Scientific Interest (Geological and Ecological)
- Duddingston Loch Site of Special Scientific Interest (Ecological)
- Palace of Holyroodhouse Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape
- Holyrood Park Scheduled Monument
- The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh World Heritage Site (partial)
- Old Town Conservation Area (partial)
- Duddingston Conservation Area (partial)
- Seven Listed Buildings
- Greenbelt



Ecological Designations

-  Holyrood Park (Properties in Care Boundary)
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest
-  Geographical Conservation Review Site
-  Green Belt



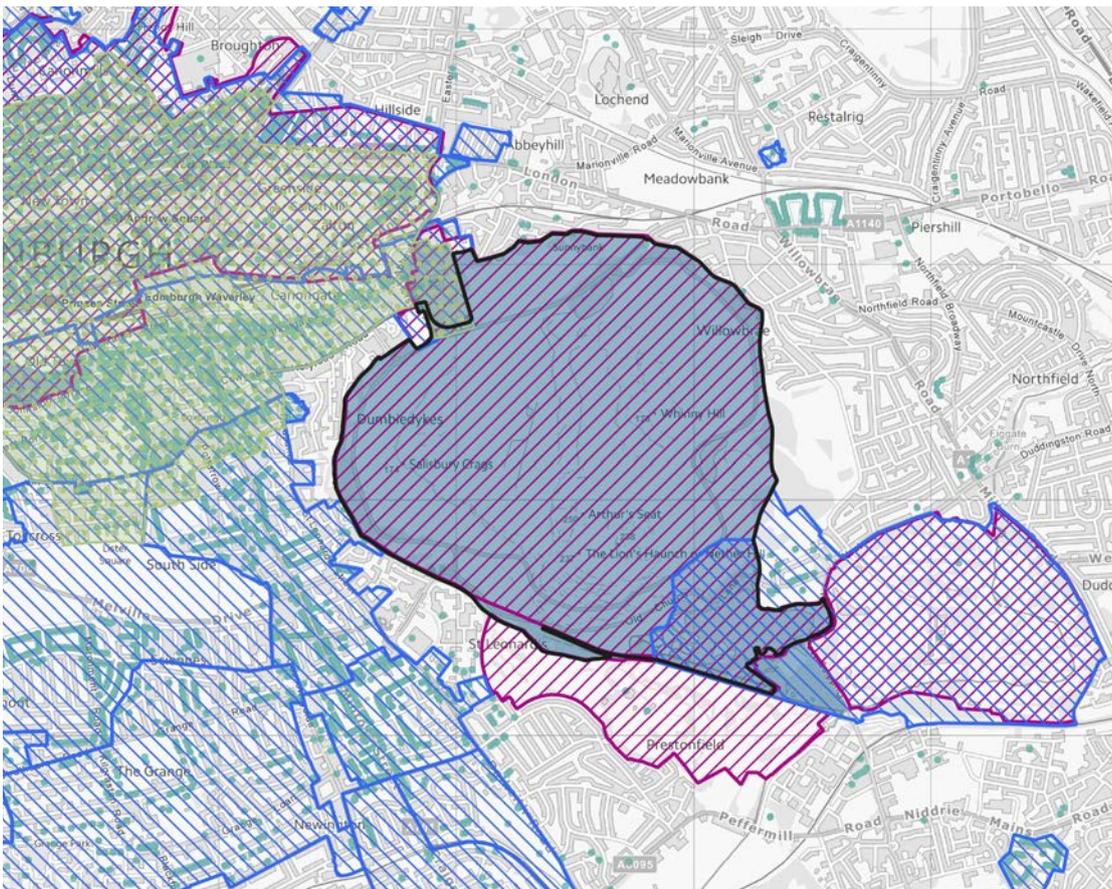
REVIEW OF HERITAGE DESIGNATIONS

Holyrood Park is covered by several national designations for both natural and cultural heritage.

The Park encompasses a wide range of archaeological and historic sites and monuments, and the entirety of the Park is designated as a scheduled monument (with some exclusions). It is also wholly designated as an Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape.

Scheduled monuments are monuments of national importance designated under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (the 1979 Act). The 1979 Act provides for the protection, conservation and preservation of the cultural significance of scheduled monuments, under Scheduled Monument Consent Policy, Designation Guidance and Selection Guidance, and through a series of consents, compliance, enforcement and monitoring procedures managed by Historic Environment Scotland. These procedures are separate from planning and other consenting requirements such as for conservation areas.

A review of heritage designations is proposed, this will ensure an up-to-date understanding of how the Park is valued and will inform decisions about the best ways to recognise and protect its significance. It is expected that the initial consultation process will be undertaken in 2023.



Heritage Designations

-  Holyrood Park (Properties in Care Boundary)
-  World Heritage Site
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Gardens and Designed Landscapes
-  Conservation Areas
-  Listed Buildings

EDINBURGH'S GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CONTEXT

The City of Edinburgh Council recently consulted on a draft Vision and Strategy for their greenspaces "Edinburgh's Thriving Greenspaces 2050" (October-December 2022). This encompasses all the assets managed by CEC and which form the core of Edinburgh Green Infrastructure network.





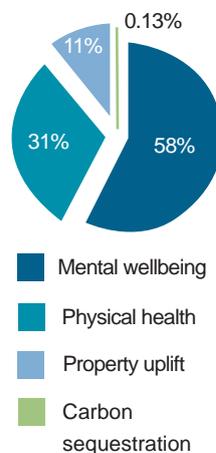
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Wider Green Infrastructure Context



Holyrood Park is a fundamental component of this wider green infrastructure network and, outside of the Pentland Hills Regional Park, is the largest single accessible greenspace in the City. The Thriving Greenspaces strategy clearly articulates the value of the green infrastructure in Edinburgh setting out that a “Natural Capital Account” by Vivid Economics estimated that Edinburgh Council’s parks and greenspaces generate benefits of £174m per year, with mental wellbeing and physical health benefits being estimated at c. £22 per visit (combined); with further amenity and carbon benefits on top of that.

This assessment predates the COVID-19 pandemic which highlighted the value that people place on greenspaces for their own health, wellbeing and quality of life.

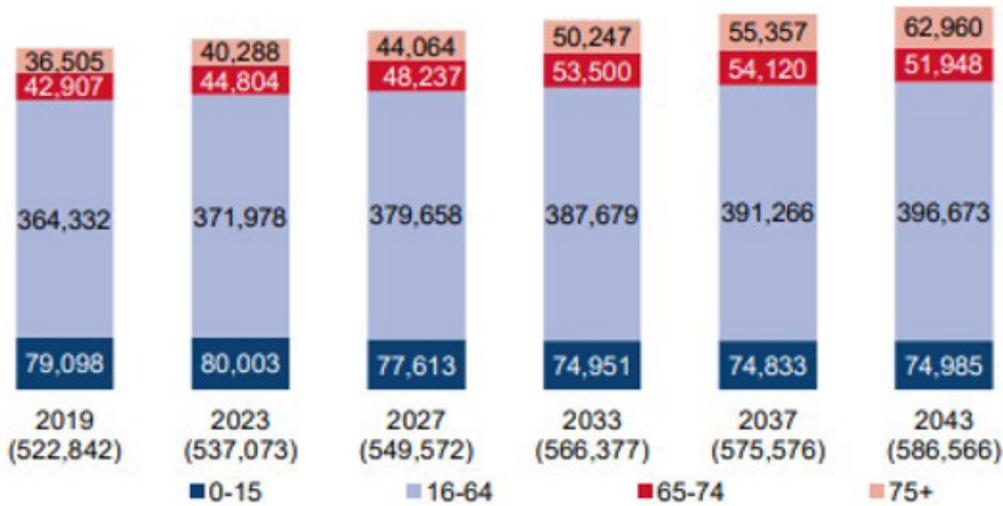


Ecosystem service	Estimated benefits
Mental wellbeing benefits	£100m total per year £14 per visit
Physical health benefits	£55m total per year £7.70 per visit
Amenity value	£19m total per year
Carbon sequestration	£0.2m total per year

Extract from Edinburgh’s Thriving Greenspaces 2050

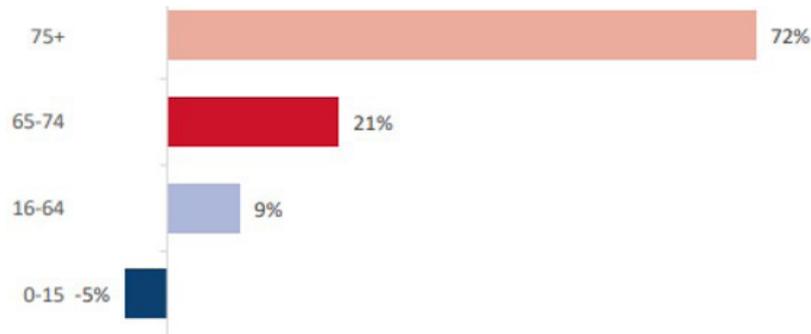
COMMUNITY AND USER CONTEXT

Edinburgh is a growing and changing city, with the population expected to increase by 12% to over 580,000 by 2043 in an uneven manner.



Projected population of Edinburgh by age group 2019 to 2043 (2018 based on projections)

Extract from Edinburgh by Numbers 2021 (CEC)



Percentage change in population from 2019 to 2043 by age groups

Extract from Edinburgh by Numbers 2021 (CEC)

Edinburgh is an affluent city with relative poverty levels below wider Scotland; but it does have sustained pockets of inequality and is home to a range of excluded communities.

Year	Scotland	Edinburgh
2014-15	18.8%	15.3%
2015-18	19.0%	15.9%
2018-19	19.2%	15.4%
2019-20	19.3%	15.1%

Relative poverty in Scotland and Edinburgh 2014-2020

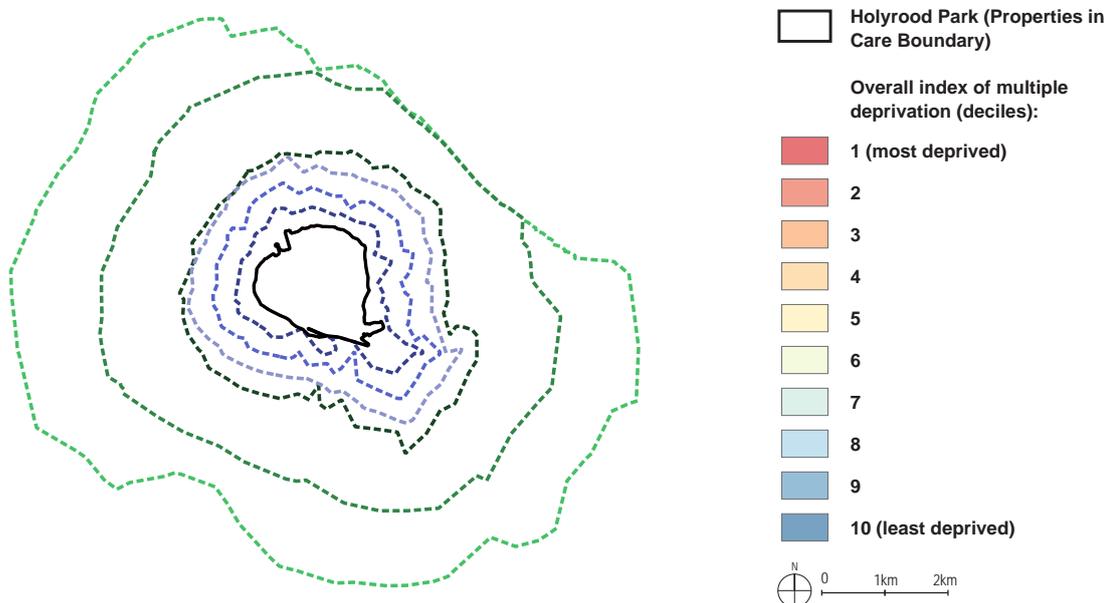
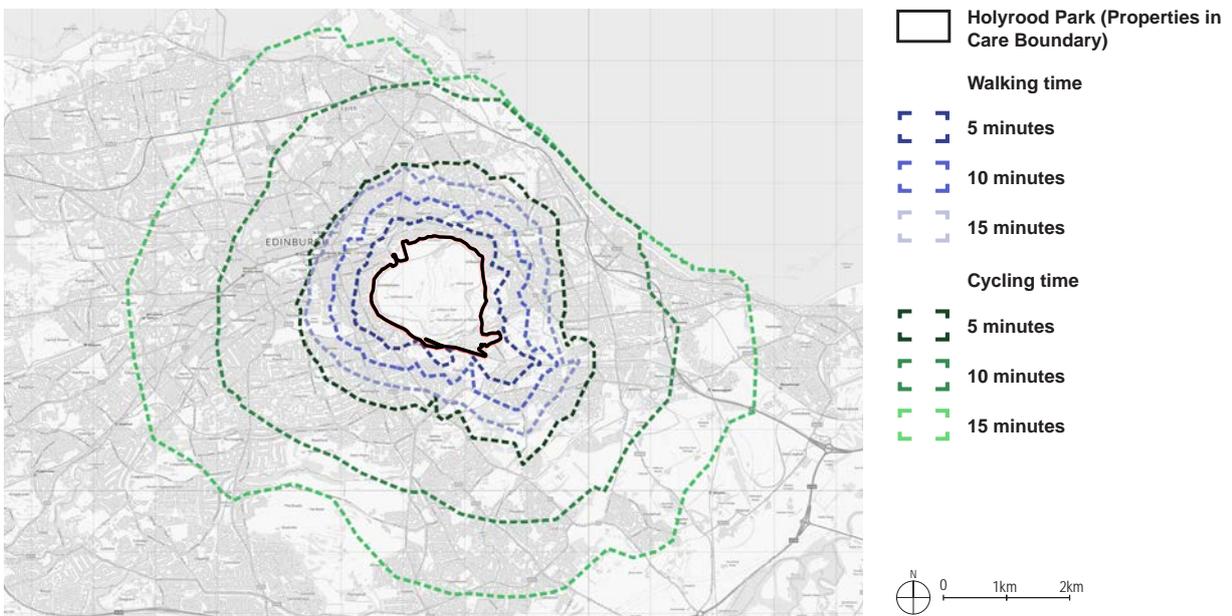
Extract from Edinburgh by Numbers 2021 (CEC)

While Holyrood Park is technically within reach of every resident of Edinburgh, it has a closer relationship with communities in its more immediate environs. Based on a series of walking and cycling time analyses, the following profiles those more immediate communities (see Figure 5 and Appendix A - Population Context)

In total, there are c. 317,000 residents in a 15 minute cycling catchment and c. 89,000 in a 15 minute walking catchment. These populations are predicted to grow by c. 10-12% over the coming decades.

In terms of population ages, the closest catchment areas have a much higher proportion of 20-24 and 25-34 year olds than Scotland as a whole, reflecting the local student base. Conversely, both children and people over the age of 45 are under-represented in all local catchment areas compared to the Scottish average. The populations around the Park are also more ethnically diverse than Scotland as whole.

In socio-economic terms, on the whole the catchment areas cover populations that generally trend above Scottish averages. There are, however, distinct areas of deprivation further south from the Park and to a lesser extent to the north, as well as local pockets adjacent to the Park.



CURRENT AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

Holyrood Park is a large, complex and challenging place set in a mixed and changing urban environment. There are many existing challenges with further on the immediate horizon. The following briefly highlights these:

CLIMATE CHANGE

Inevitably our rapidly changing climate will affect the Park, with periods of extreme drought, flooding, heat and cold occurring more frequently over the coming decades, alongside steadily rising temperatures. This will change the landscape, vegetation and habitats of the Park; as well as affecting user patterns and requirements. It will also impact on the archaeology of the Park: increased waterlogging, erosion and drought can have significant impact on archaeological remains.

There is a clear obligation and responsibility for the Park to contribute to Edinburgh's wider need for climate action and resilience. The Park has much to offer in terms of improving surface water management, ameliorating urban heat island effects and delivering nature-based solutions, and these have to form a fundamental component of the future direction of the Park if Scotland's declared climate emergency is to be addressed.

USER NUMBER GROWTH

Edinburgh's population continues to grow³ as do tourist numbers (pre- and post-pandemic). This inevitable trend will see more people use the Park, more frequently; placing pressure on services, operations (e.g. litter and health and safety), paths, open spaces, habitats and archaeological sites; and also simultaneously delivering greater health, well-being and economic benefits. Significant investment is required to provide facilities and information to support the growing numbers of users and visits.

DECLINING HABITAT AND WATER QUALITY

All the habitats that contribute to the SSSI designations are in 'unfavourable' condition and require intervention. While many are the result of long-defunct land management regimes i.e. extensive grazing, there is still a need to address their decline in some manner.

NATURAL REGENERATION AND RECOLONISATION

The Park's landscape is evolving and changing rapidly following the end of grazing in the 1970s. This is leading to new habitats emerging while historic habitats e.g. grasslands are changing. This process is not inherently "wrong" or negative, but it does require consideration and management.

HIGHLY DEGRADED PATH NETWORK

The path network across the Park is under significant pressure from increasing user numbers and there is widespread damage and erosion across the core of the Park with user numbers far outweighing the capacity of the current paths. This is scarring the landscape, degrading habitats, damaging archaeology and negatively affecting user safety and experience.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT

Through traffic is a historic consequence of the Victorian remodelling of the Park. Current levels of vehicle traffic create severance and pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle conflict leading to accidents and a perception of risk. There is a critical issue with the main visitor route along Horse Wynd from the end of the Royal Mile, past Parliament and the Palace of Holyroodhouse and into the Park.

3. See Edinburgh by Numbers 2021, CEC





ACTIVE TRAVEL PATTERNS

Patterns of urban movement are changing with a growing re-emphasis on active travel i.e by foot and cycle. The Park's location presents an opportunity to connect communities through active travel as well as providing active leisure opportunities.

USER SAFETY ISSUES

The terrain, mix of users, number of users and urban location all result in Holyrood Park recording more health and safety incidents than any other Properties in the Care of HES. In 2021 the Ranger Team was involved with over 290 incidents, including missing persons, fires, graffiti, rock falls, vandalism, threats of suicide, Park-user disagreements, damage to property, drug use, as well as vehicle and cycling accidents. Incident numbers include those collated by HES or reported to HES by other organisations.

ROCKFALL

The closure of the Radical Road and the management issues associated with Samson Ribs above the Low Duddingston Road both highlight the continuing and, ultimately, permanent challenge and risk that exist in the Park with regards to rock fall.

A separate exercise is currently underway with specialists, to determine how to assess and manage rock risk safety and how to best strike a balance between the current risk from rockfall and allow access that will provide benefit for all, whilst meeting HES's statutory obligations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Opportunity exists to work closely with a range of communities around the Park, to shape the future of the Park. This will require a long-term commitment to build on the existing contacts and work with local communities and schools.

FUNDING AND FINANCE

In common with all public parks, a significant operational subsidy is required for the day-to-day management of the Park. Regular capital funding is also required to improve facilities and maintain paths etc. For Holyrood Park a very significant injection of capital is required to address the current condition of the site.



SECTION 3
POLICY &
STRATEGIC
DRIVERS

INTRODUCTION

Holyrood Park operates within a broad legislative and policy framework that reflects current and emerging priorities for Scotland and its communities. This framework has been reviewed during the development of this Strategic Plan to understand and highlight key policy and strategic driver considerations and the direction of travel for policy and legalisation. The following summarises aspects of this policy context, with further information in Appendix B – Policy & Strategic Drivers Context.

Key elements of the legislative framework include:

Legislative Context

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT LEGISLATION:

- Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014
- Historic Environment (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 2011
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997
- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
- Scheduled Monument Consent Policy

ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION:

- Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats Etc) Regulations 1994
- Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019
- Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005

OTHER LEGISLATION:

- The Parks Regulations Acts 1872 to 1974
- The Holyrood Park Regulations 1971 (as amended 2001 & 2005)
- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)
- The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- Scottish Land Commission, Community Engagement
- Equalities Act 2010
- Relevant Health & Safety legislation
- Roads Traffic Acts



NATIONAL CONTEXT

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 places a legal duty on public bodies to have regard to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and its National Outcomes in carrying out their functions. To help achieve its Purpose, the Framework sets out 11 National Outcomes that reflect the values and aspirations of the people of Scotland, and are aligned with the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) as listed:



At the national level, the National Performance Framework includes a number of outcomes that are key drivers for shaping the approach to the sustainable management of Holyrood Park. These are:

Health – we are healthy and active

Outcome focussed on healthy and active lives, with health and wellbeing prioritised at a national level. Based on a whole system approach to address harmful behaviours from a number of angles, including through sport and exercise. All these are aspects relevant to the use of Holyrood Park by local communities.

Environment – we value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment

Outcome that recognises both the inherent value of natural landscapes and their value to Scotland's way of life and identity. Strong focus on safeguarding and managing natural habitats and enabling access to nature and heritage. Also emphasis on resource and carbon management. Future management of Holyrood Park can address these outcomes.

Communities – we live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

Focus on quality of communities, with a priority for access to greenspace and nature, which is noted as enhancing health and lives in general. Provides encouragement for volunteering and highlights need for engagement with communities when planning change and making decisions. In this context, community involvement and benefit is a priority for the future of Holyrood Park.

Economy – we have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy.

Focus on driving a competitive and fair economy, with a strong ecological and social responsibility theme. Opportunity for the development, management and conservation of Holyrood Park to contribute to job creation, skills development and economic outcomes.

Other elements of the national policy & strategy context include:

- Place Principle
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland
- Climate Ready Scotland: Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme, 2019-2024
- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)
- Biodiversity Strategy (consultation)
- Land Reform in a Net Zero Nation (consultation)
- Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible tourism for a sustainable future
- Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation



LOCAL CONTEXT

At an Edinburgh level, the emerging City Plan 2030 sets out the Council's approach to becoming a sustainable and net zero city and achieving greater wellbeing and equality. This is supported by:

- The **draft 2030 Climate Strategy** – which is leading the actions for change across Edinburgh by identifying what actions the city needs to take to improve resilience as well as achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.
- The **City Centre Transformation Strategy** – that aims to change the future way people move around the city and city centre. Proposals for Edinburgh's Low Emission Zone is due to be enforced from June 2024 and will be an important part of improving the city air quality.
- The **City Mobility Plan** – which promotes walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and car sharing in preference to single occupancy car use to help meet targets for a reduction in car kilometres by 20% and for people to travel with zero emissions by net zero transport infrastructure.
- The **Vision for Water Management in the City of Edinburgh** – that sets out key principles of how the city should manage its water environment, considering the increasing severity and complexity of challenges facing Edinburgh arising from the climate emergency.
- The **Edinburgh's Nature Network and Green Blue Network project** – which is developing a coordinated network of multifunctional green blue infrastructure to serve the City of Edinburgh and new development.
- The **Edinburgh Open Space Strategy** – which identifies opportunities to improve provision and access to Edinburgh's open spaces.
- The **Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan** – which raises awareness of the City's biodiversity and the opportunities for positive actions to protect and enhance this, reflecting national objectives set out in the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2019-2029, Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and the Scottish Pollinator Strategy 2017-2027. Holyrood Park plays a significant role in this plan.
- The **City Plan 2030** – that proposes a place-based policy approach to delivering greater equality in health, wellbeing and sustainability outcomes through the delivery of 20-minute neighbourhoods.



HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CONTEXT

The 2020 Historic Environment Scotland (HES) “Heritage for All: Corporate Plan 2022 Onwards” is a key driver for shaping the approach to future sustainable management of Holyrood Park. The Plan promotes an aspirational vision for Scotland's historic environment that is “...cherished, understood, shared and enjoyed with pride, by everyone.” Drawing on earlier work, the Park's potential to support the Corporate Plan's five outcomes is summarised below:

- **Outcome 1: The Historic Environment makes a real difference to people's lives** – future management of the Park should make a tangible difference to people's lives in terms of increased wellbeing (health, happiness and life satisfaction), increased engagement with a greater diversity of people, and increased integration into city place-making activities.
- **Outcome 2: The Historic Environment is looked after, protected and managed for generations to come** – management of the Park should ensure its cultural and natural significance is sustainably managed, including championing delivery of the HES Climate Action Plan (see below) and protecting the environment through enhancing biodiversity and improving sustainability.
- **Outcome 3: The Historic Environment makes a broader contribution to the economy of Scotland and its people** – management of the Park should ensure potential economic benefits to the City of Edinburgh are recognised and enhanced in terms of its role as a venue for events, supporting health and well-being, and supporting tourism.
- **Outcome 4: The Historic Environment inspires a creative and vibrant Scotland** – future management could aim to ensure that the Park's intangible value as a place of creative inspiration, events and inclusive learning and outdoor recreation activities continue to be recognised, and the Park's visitor experience enhanced in innovative ways.
- **Outcome 5: The Historic Environment is cared for and championed by a high-performing organisation** – effective governance, operational structures, resources and funding requirements will need to be in place to meet this outcome, including the potential to increase partnership working and funding, implement new ways of working and increase the diversity of income sources.

Other key National and Historic Environment Scotland documents include:

- 'Our Past, Our Future' (Scotland's new strategy for the historic environment).
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland
- HES Climate Action Plan
- NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland Landscape Position Statement and Action Plan
- HES Responsible Tourism Framework (consultation closed 30 November 2022)
- Climate Ready HES
- Green Recovery Statement for Scotland's Historic Environment
- Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's historic environment sector
- Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible tourism for a sustainable future
- Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation

Further information is provided in Appendix B - Policy & Strategic Drivers Context.

SECTION 4
PURPOSE AND
PRINCIPLES



INTRODUCTION

A “Purpose” is an enduring statement of intent that provides consistency in a changing world and changing circumstances.

Through engagement with stakeholders, it has become clear that Holyrood Park’s purpose has become clouded and undefined. The changing population of Edinburgh (in terms of size and demographics), shifting economic priorities, the growth of tourism, ongoing and worsening climate change dynamics, and a resurgence of interest in the value of green space during the COVID pandemic, have all shifted the world within which the Park now operates.

A clarification of its purpose in this changing world is therefore required to shape and guide the next stage of the Park’s evolution. Critically, this needs to reflect the fact that as a major public open space, Holyrood Park is not a typical HES property, and its purpose will consequently differ from other properties in its care.

The following Statement of Purpose should be read in conjunction with the Principles. If the Purpose is to be achieved, then considerable physical and operational change is required.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Holyrood Park serves the City and people of Edinburgh by delivering health, well-being, climate and economic benefits – it connects communities to each other, to nature, and to the City’s history and identity. It is Edinburgh’s “Iconic Park”, a city park like no other.

Holyrood Park is Edinburgh’s iconic open space: it plays a pivotal role in the City’s identity and offers residents and visitors access to a remarkable and rugged environment in the heart of the City. It shapes Edinburgh’s skyline and identity with its distinctive hills and crags providing a dramatic backdrop to the City. It is Edinburgh’s premier open space and a place of national and international value. It contributes significantly to Scotland’s identity and visual iconography.

As the green heart of the City, Holyrood Park provides outstanding and accessible natural greenspace and a breathing space for Edinburgh’s residents and visitors. It provides physical health and mental well-being benefits by enabling people to escape the City, engage in a range of outdoor recreational activities, meet and engage with others, and enjoy nature in a rugged outdoor environment.

As a critical and fundamental element of Edinburgh’s wider green infrastructure network, the Park is vital to strengthening the resilience of the City to the global climate and ecological crisis by aiding the management of surface water, supporting nature recovery, providing carbon sequestration, and operating on a zero-carbon basis. It is an international living laboratory where approaches to integrated land management in an urban context and changing climate can be tested; a place that offers an exemplar for the future of urban green space.

Holyrood Park is an important element of the City’s tourism offer and economy, worth in excess of £1.8 billion per annum, it provides a unique and outstanding visitor experience that engages tourists and residents with the City, the Park, and their shared history.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles have been established to guide the future management and development of the Park as it evolves to meet its defined Purpose. They represent the Ethos or Values inherent in the future management of the Park.

They will shape decision-making at both the strategic and operational level, ensuring that decisions of every scale and impact are aligned in their ethos and approach and contribute to the Park's Purpose:

1. PUT PEOPLE FIRST
2. SUSTAIN THE PARK'S SPECIAL QUALITIES AND VALUES
3. STRENGTHEN CLIMATE ACTION & RESILIENCE
4. BE GUIDED BY NATURE
5. ACCEPT HOLYROOD PARK AS A CONTESTED SPACE
6. EXPERIMENT AND LEARN
7. OPERATE SUSTAINABLY

PRINCIPLE 1 – PUT PEOPLE FIRST

Holyrood Park's primary purpose is to serve the people of Edinburgh by providing accessible green space, access to nature and climate resilience benefits. To achieve this purpose, the needs and requirements of people must be central to all decisions in the Park. This should drive investment priorities and key management decisions with the aim of strengthening the relationship between people and the Park. It is critical that residents, interest groups and local communities play a leading role in shaping the future of the Park, and that the shape of its future use and development is created in partnership with them through a people-centred approach.

This does not mean that other values and factors should not balance the needs of people (see Principles below) but a primary focus should be on the aspirations, drives and needs of people, particularly the people and communities of Edinburgh.

PRINCIPLE 2 – SUSTAIN THE PARK'S SPECIAL QUALITIES AND VALUES

Holyrood Park is a landscape of outstanding value, for its geology, habitats and heritage; and for the role it plays in the City's identity. As such there is a clear need to sustain, safeguard and enhance the unique character and special qualities of Holyrood Park as a mountain in the city; this includes conserving key heritage assets, enabling positive nature conservation outcomes and creating a landscape setting at the heart of the City.

When deciding on investment and management actions, these key factors need to inform the balance between change and conservation – the aim is to achieve the Park's Purpose without harming the very qualities that makes it "...a city park like no other".

PRINCIPLE 3 – STRENGTHEN CLIMATE ACTION & RESILIENCE

Scotland has declared a climate emergency and Edinburgh is targeting becoming a Net Zero City by 2030. It is critical that all actions and decisions relating to Holyrood Park seek to make a positive contribution to these vital goals. Climate resilience, led by nature-based solutions, must be at the very heart of everything that is achieved in the Park.

PRINCIPLE 4 - BE GUIDED BY NATURE

Historically, arable and pastoral agriculture have been carried out in the Park since the Bronze Age, with pollen analysis in the Park suggesting woodland clearance around 2000BC which never recovered. More recently the landscape has continued to be managed through human intervention, extensive grazing has shaped much of the current landscape and this coupled with land drainage, road building and the creation of the lochs in the 19th century, has led to an ultimately, non-sustainable landscape shaped by and sustained by very particular forms of human action. The future of Holyrood lies in a broader approach, including zones of nature-led landscape where it is shaped by natural forces that respond to a changing climate.

Strategic and operational management decisions, particularly relating to land management, should be founded on the principle of letting natural processes lead the way. This will inevitably lead to changes to the landscape of the Park.

PRINCIPLE 5 – ACCEPT HOLYROOD PARK AS A CONTESTED SPACE

Holyrood Park is not a homogenous space, valued and used by everyone in the same way – it is a contested space with often competing views on the appropriateness or acceptability of different actions, whether that be actions of protest, or management, or daily use. This will continue and future management decisions should acknowledge the fact that Holyrood Park will continue to be a “contested space” at the centre of everyday life in Edinburgh.

Decisions should be taken accepting that not all parties will accept or welcome the decision but in a manner that is open and transparent and encourages communication and discussion.

PRINCIPLE 6 – EXPERIMENT AND LEARN

There is no template or fixed manual for the future of Holyrood Park. There should be a readiness to experiment with different approaches and monitor outcomes and learn from them. Management should embrace the potential for Holyrood Park to become a “living laboratory” for developing, testing and sharing innovative ideas around the role of urban green spaces in addressing contemporary urban living challenges associated with adapting to climate change, reversing biodiversity loss and improving health and well-being.

PRINCIPLE 7 – OPERATE SUSTAINABLY

All decisions should contribute to the environmental and operational viability of Holyrood Park by moving towards a net zero operational model, and increasing revenue to support investment and reduce subsidy requirements.



An aerial photograph of a city, likely Edinburgh, with a couple sitting on a rocky hillside in the foreground. The city is densely packed with buildings, and a large castle is visible on a hill in the distance. The sky is hazy, and the overall tone is warm and golden. The text 'SECTION 5 VISION AND OBJECTIVES 2024-34' is centered in the upper half of the image, with two white curved lines above and below it.

SECTION 5
VISION AND
OBJECTIVES
2024-34

VISION STATEMENT 2024-34

Over the next decade Holyrood Park will be transformed. Its landscape will rapidly and radically evolve, combining natural processes and human action to create a fundamentally sustainable 21st century landscape that responds to the climate emergency, community aspirations and natural and heritage conservation priorities, all while retaining and strengthening its iconic status for Edinburgh and Scotland.

At a physical level, the zonal management of the Park will allow for diversity of habitats and landscape types, with areas of vegetation largely left to naturalise, adapting and changing through natural processes of succession, while simultaneously responding to our changing climate. Within this regenerative landscape, areas will be more actively managed to conserve plots of important grassland habitat and to create wetlands to manage surface water and support climate resilience.

Woven through this mosaic of habitats and landscapes, a completely refreshed and rejuvenated network of paths and active trails will provide access to large areas of the Park, enabling residents and visitors to engage with nature, take in the views and explore the history and story of the Park and Edinburgh. All supported by new orientation and interpretation.

Major improvements to all entrances and the co-creation of new spaces and places in the Park will encourage existing and new users to come to the Park providing a safe place for all communities, residents and visitors to gather, meet, play and relax.

Vehicular traffic will largely cease, and active travel will become the primary mode of transport across the Park; reflecting wider societal trends away from a car dominated urban environment.

All this will be delivered by partnership between the people of Edinburgh and key organisations. Working together to deliver an exemplar of landscape management that fully integrates communities, with climate resilience, economic benefit and natural and historic conservation. Creating a Climate Positive asset for Edinburgh, Scotland and the Planet.



KEY OBJECTIVES

Delivering the Vision and meeting the Purpose will involve action across five broad areas:

- (1) Future Landscape
- (2) Access and Movement
- (3) Facilities
- (4) Inclusive Learning & Education
- (5) Governance and Stewardship

Key Objectives have been defined for each of the five areas. Section 7 provides a preliminary list of key Plans that will be developed to inform the brief and design stages to achieve the Vision, meet the Objectives and align Holyrood Park with its Purpose.

FUTURE LANDSCAPE

OBJECTIVE 1: Plan and commence an integrated approach to the evolution of the landscape encompassing its natural, cultural and social values and assets

First and foremost, the evolution of the landscape in the Park will be planned, change will be directed through a combination of natural processes and human management to create a complex mosaic of habitats and landscape types that will deliver ecological, climate, heritage and experiential outcomes including:

- Significant improvement to surface water management to help safeguard Edinburgh
- Improved resources and spaces for amenity and leisure designed with, and for, communities
- Greater variety and complexity of terrestrial and aquatic habitats across the Park
- Key surviving vascular / grassland habitats safeguarded and sustained
- Increased carbon sequestration through vegetation and soils
- Climate resilient vegetation and habitat to minimise management inputs and support a nature-driven response to climate change
- Conservation improvements for archaeological and built heritage resources with assets fully integrated into the landscape, access and wider management proposals
- Maintenance of the dramatic form of Salisbury Crags and Arthur's Seat in views from the City and
- Accommodating the functioning of the Palace of Holyroodhouse & The Scottish Parliament.

OBJECTIVE 2: Establish baseline, monitoring and feedback processes

Critically, the evolution and development for the Park will be closely monitored and lessons learnt as change progresses. This will require the development of robust baseline information e.g. habitat surveys, landscape characterisation, surface water modelling etc, followed by a process of monitoring and feedback to guide the development of management actions.

This should include open and transparent publication of data and information to support best practice elsewhere. Opportunities for collaboration and information sharing with other organisations should be sought.





ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

OBJECTIVE 3: Deliver a comprehensive network of paths and active travel routes across the Park for all users and visitors

Movement across the Park will be transformed to improve human experience and safety and provide new opportunities for all residents and visitors to explore the landscape while safeguarding and sustaining habitats and heritage. Key outcomes to be delivered include:

- Ease of user movement around the Park very significantly enhanced with improved access to the majority of the Park, with attendant experience and safety benefits
- Active travel needs for less able users and those with mobility requirements including manual and powered wheelchairs and other mobility devices, integrated into proposals with significant access improvements (also see Objective 4)
- Visitor / tourist experience diversified and improved to reduce pressure on Arthur's Seat and offer a wider range of experiences to reflect the diversity of the visitor population
- Visitors and users have an enhanced understanding of the Park, its history, its environment and its offer, while also encouraging dispersal and appropriate behaviours.

Additionally, as part of wider access proposals, entrances to the Park will be improved, signage will be implemented, and offsite information revised and improved.

OBJECTIVE 4: Create a truly inclusive Park

Safe, easy and attractive access to the Park for all communities and users around the Park is vital to ensuring that it is a welcoming place that supports residents and communities. Access for All will be facilitated across the Park through appropriate measures based on a robust Access Audit that unlocks barriers to access and helps develop a truly inclusive Park.

This will address physical and non-physical disabilities, as well as barriers associated with social, cultural and economic aspects. Analysis will identify which groups of people with Protected Characteristics⁴ are particularly under-represented in the Park user base and these harder to reach groups will be engaged in decision-making regarding the development of the Park.

OBJECTIVE 5: Make active travel the dominant travel mode through and to the Park

Steps will be implemented to very substantially reduce, or remove all, vehicular through traffic from the Park to significantly reduce conflict between users and vehicles and improve the quality of user experience in the Park.

Active travel will be promoted as the primary method for moving through the Park and for access to the Park; this will include better signposting of routes to the Park and communicating active travel and public transport options.

4. Protected characteristics include: age, including young people aged 11–25, and older people; disability, including mental health, learning disabilities, and dementia; gender reassignment; race, religion or belief; and sex and sexual orientation

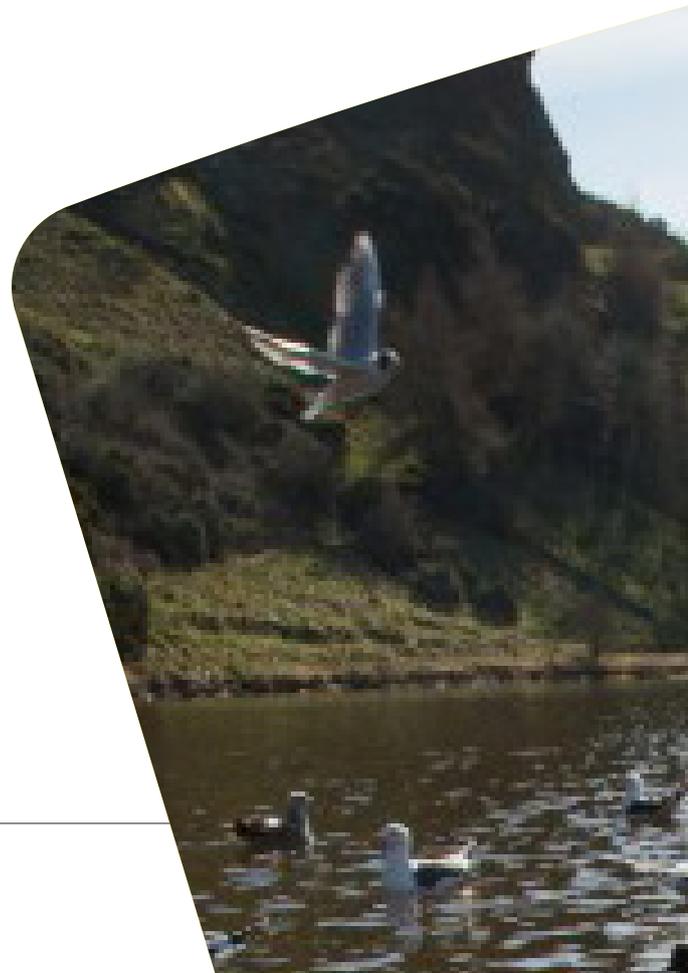
FACILITIES

OBJECTIVE 6: Deliver facilities to meet user and operational needs

Current facilities across the Park do not meet user requirements and do not support a high quality visitor experience. Opportunities exist to address this shortfall and improve operational viability through the delivery of new / refreshed built facilities. Investment will be made to address the following key areas:

- Educational facilities
- Orientation spaces
- Interpretation space
- Toilets, including disabled and Changes Places⁵ provision
- Office and back-of-house provision

All new / upgraded facilities will minimise or ideally avoid construction and operational carbon emissions and improve sustainability of operations (both financial and environmental).



5. <https://www.changing-places.org/>

INCLUSIVE LEARNING & EDUCATION

OBJECTIVE 7: Building on the existing educational offer

Continue to develop and enhance a broad range of formal and informal educational / learning opportunities that are open and accessible to all will be developed and delivered using the Park's history, landscape, built heritage, ecology and environment as key resources. These will deliver positive learning and skill-based outcomes that reflect national and local needs and policy agendas. This will encompass:

- Learning at nursery, primary and secondary school levels;
- Bespoke opportunities and support for children and young adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND);
- Lifelong learning opportunities for residents and visitors e.g. guided walks and talks, lectures etc;
- Physical conservation activity and training without formal certificates or outcomes e.g. vegetation management, ecological surveys, path maintenance etc;
- Apprenticeships with external partners and contractors; and
- Accredited technical and skills training leading to qualifications at a variety of levels as part of developing local career pathways.



GOVERNANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

Objective 8: Reduce and control operational subsidy

As with all public parks, a degree of operational subsidy will be required, now and into the future. The scale of this subsidy will be managed, and steps will be taken to significantly increase revenue from the Park to offset and reduce subsidy levels and support long term investment in the management and development of the Park and its facilities.

Objective 9: Achieve Net Zero and Zero Waste by 2030

Holyrood Park can contribute to both Scotland's 2045 ambitions of reaching net zero, and transitioning to a fully circular economy. Ensuring the Park becomes a Climate Positive force, acting as a sink for more carbon than it produces, by:

- Better understand and manage carbon captured and sequestered in soil and vegetation
- Undertake more detailed climate risk assessment
- Embed climate adaptation to increase resilience against risks
- Improved measuring of carbon from operations, and decarbonise in stages
- Transition park management to a circular economy model
- Procure using sustainable design, specification and supply chains.

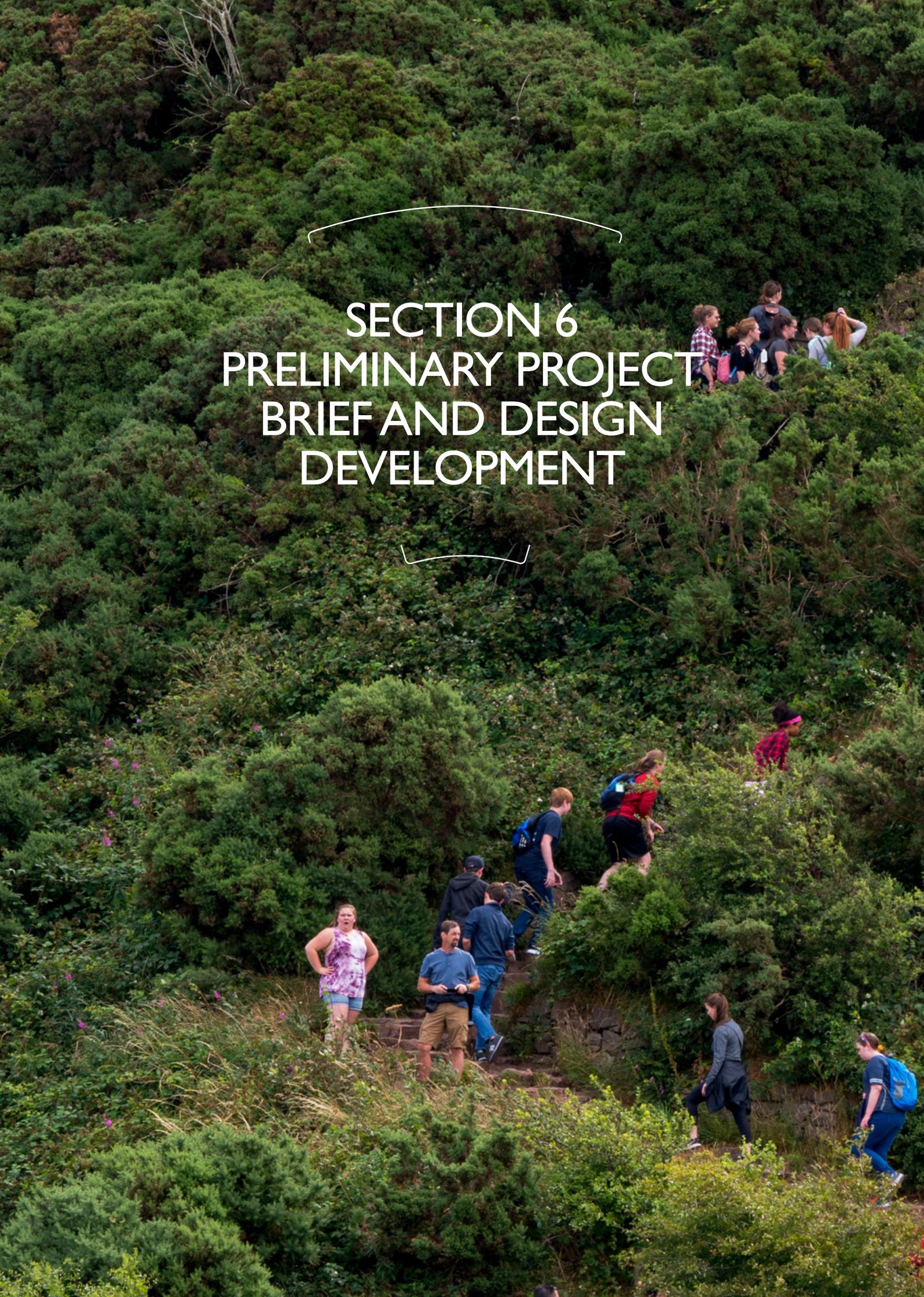
Objective 10: Create a volunteer base to support conservation and other activity

We will develop a wider 'Friends of' group to support the management of the Park through assisting with conservation and learning activities, support fundraising and offering wider volunteer opportunities. This could be modelled on long established conservation groups such as the Peak Park Conservation Volunteers, the Parks Foundation in Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch or the Friends of Edinburgh greenspace groups who support City of Edinburgh Council with its greenspace management. This approach will help drive engagement in with the community, provide an avenue for skills and learning, while also supporting activities across the Park.

Objective 11: New Regulations for a New Park

We will work with Scottish Ministers to develop and implement a new suite of Park Regulations to aid the function, management and future operation of the Park in line with its refreshed Purpose. These will be subject to formal review every five years, and on an 'as required' basis between the quinquennial reviews.





SECTION 6
PRELIMINARY PROJECT
BRIEF AND DESIGN
DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

This section provides a preliminary list of key Strategies and Plans that will need to be developed to inform the brief and design stages to achieve the Vision, meet the Objectives and align Holyrood Park with its Purpose.

Engagement will shape how the project develops and what the outcomes might be. The visions and objectives set a bold direction of travel for the Park, with fundamental landscape change envisaged over the coming decade. The physical interventions required to achieve this may be relatively subtle and management-led.

Key Strategies And Plans For Development

- **Conservation Management Strategy, including:**
 - Landscape Conservation Management Plan: Understanding the Cultural, Historic & Natural Significance of the Park; Biodiversity Assessment & Protected Species Surveys; Zonal Management and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
 - Conservation Plan: Conservation of Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings & Boundary Walls; Utilities and Services Survey; Erosion and Rockfall Assessments; Archaeological Investigations
 - Biodiversity Action Plan: Habitat Assessment; Species Survey; Threats; Opportunities; Management; Monitoring

- **Climate Action Strategy, including:**
 - Climate Action Plan: Climate Risk Assessment; Climate Adaptation; Ecosystem Services; Carbon Sequestration; Low and Zero Carbon Technologies; Whole Life Carbon Assessment

- **Master Planning & Design, including:**
 - Master Planning & Design: Park Overview; Design Brief
 - Place Plan: Place Principle Alignment; Historic Environment Policy for Scotland; Stakeholder Engagement
 - Movement Strategy: Visitor & Traffic Surveys; Access Audits; Road Safety Reviews and Audits; Carparks, Roads & Paths Assessments; Visitor Flow & Desire Lines; Travel Plan; Sustainable Transport & Movement Strategy
 - Interpretation & Orientation Plan: Cultural, Historic & Natural Significance; Wayfinding; Interpretation; Communications and Branding; Digital Strategy; Equality Impact Assessments; GDPR Privacy Impact Assessments

- **Business Plan, including:**
 - Business Plan: Organisational Resilience; Economic Benefits; Local Economy; Income Generation; Skills & Training; Risk Appraisals; Options Appraisals; Costs & Funding
 - Operational & Maintenance Plan: Infrastructure; Lodge Use Appraisal; Toilets; Drainage; Power; Lighting; Erosion and Rockfall Strategy; Operational Structures & Resources; Park Regulations

- **Activity Plan, including:**
 - Activity Plan: Stakeholder Engagement Plan; Learning Plan; Skills & Training; Inclusion & Wellbeing



HISTORIC
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