

Happy Valley Access and Biodiversity Improvements

Summary

Happy Valley Local Nature Reserve (LNR) includes an area of mature woodland crossed by a small watercourse, a more recently planted woodland area and three additional fields, one of which contains a freshwater pond and wildflower-rich grassland.

The Council wishes to improve access through the Reserve. We seek to achieve this by installing a recycled plastic boardwalk through the 'pond' field which has been, until recently, little used by visitors to the site. This would enable the creation of a circular route which would reduce pressure on the existing woodland paths. We also wish to create two sheltered seating areas where people may rest and appreciate the natural heritage interest and tranquillity of the Reserve, as well as its extensive outward views over the loch basin landscape of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site.

The pond, created in 2013, has colonised somewhat and emergent water plants such as bog pondweed and water star-wort are growing well; however, the surrounding margins remain relatively bare of vegetation, so we intend to plant up these areas, using wildflower species that are appropriate to the location, with plug plants grown from locally sourced seed.

Project Aims

The aim of the project is to improve access through the LNR by creating a circular route, thus reducing wear and tear on the path through the mature woodland, and improving the visitor experience. One of the main aims and objectives is a shared desire, on the part of the Council and the Friends of Happy Valley, to open further areas to people who otherwise have limited access to the reserve. The Council therefore wishes to improve access by installing a 160-metre boardwalk path crossing an area of wet meadow, accessed via a new self-closing pedestrian gate. This would enhance accessibility for people with mobility issues and would make a wider area available for people to visit.

The proposed boardwalk will be constructed of recycled plastic and will be wide enough to allow access for wheelchairs and/or pushchairs. This type of material is durable and long-lasting and is also designed to be slip-resistant. It will require minimal maintenance and will therefore be cost-effective.

The aim of creating two sheltered stone seating areas, one in the wet meadow and the other in a recently planted woodland area, is to provide accessible areas where people may rest and appreciate the natural heritage interest and tranquillity of the reserve, as well as its extensive outward views over the loch basin landscape of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site.

The project includes the following elements:

Financial Information	£	%
Total project costs	£49,385.00	
Total eligible costs	£44,885.00	100%

LEADER funding	£22,442.50	50%
EB Scotland	£21,442.50	45.5%%
Friends of Happy Valley	£1000.00	4.5%