

Mugdock Country Park

STRATEGY 2022-2027



Report Prepared by Ironside Farrar
on behalf of
East Dunbartonshire Council

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Contents

1. **Introduction**
2. **Developing Concept Proposals**
3. **Engagement & Consultation**
4. **Masterplan Recommendations**
5. **Action Plan**
6. **Business Case**

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Visitor & Stakeholder Event Summary
- Appendix 2: Existing Park Assessment



1.0 Introduction

Mugdock Country Park is a major community asset in the Green Network of East Dunbartonshire & Stirling. The facility extends over 260ha of environmental greenspace asset including the SSSI site with a range of attractions and supporting facilities. The lands were gifted in 1982 by Sir Hugh Fraser for the 'sole purpose of providing a country park for the recreation and pleasure of the general public'.

Visitor numbers to Mugdock Country Park and the adjacent area were at an unprecedented level during 2020 highlighting existing vehicular and pedestrian pressures on the landscape and its neighbouring road infrastructure. The Country Park comprises a number of key parts:

- The Stables Visitor Centre & associated facilities
- Mugdock Castle
- Craigend Castle
- Mugdock Wood / SSSI
- Walled Garden
- WWII Gunsites

The aspiration for Mugdock Country Park's future is that all these constituent parts work together and with their adjoining communities to increase the overall visitor offer. East Dunbartonshire and Stirling Council 's are planning investment in the management and maintenance of Mugdock over the next 5 years to ensure a high quality, accessible and sensitively developed destination of choice for our residents and visitors.

East Dunbartonshire and Stirling Council 's are seeking to ensure the park remains fit for purpose and delivers the widest possible benefits for its communities and stakeholders and has commissioned this study to develop a clear strategy and investment led masterplan to regenerate and direct future investment in the Country Park.

The Masterplan

This masterplan has been shaped around a clear understanding of the asset and how the asset can support the delivery of national, regional and local policy goals and address the needs of its communities and users. Management and maintenance and the operational values of the park are as important as design elements with the need to:

- Develop Mugdock as a destination of choice
- Develop the quality of the attractions within the destination
- Develop an inclusive centre with the broadest range of appeal
- Develop stronger connections and links across the Green Network/ Communities
- Develop the connections with national/regional /local policy initiatives
- Develop the values and profile of the Country Park as a leading institution/asset

Mugdock needs to transform itself from the 1970's concept of a designated location for near countryside activity to a modern 21st century Country Park addressing the needs of communities today and having a role and contribution to the key challenges of our time:

- Health & Well Being
- Active Communities
- Free Recreational Access – Inclusion/Exclusion resulting from Poverty
- Biodiversity
- Education
- Green / Blue-Green Networks – connected places
- Climate Change
- Place Quality / Valued Places
- Empowered Communities

Mugdock Country Park

What could happen next?

Mugdock Country Park is an established important green network component providing inspiration for others.



An attractive, wildlife-friendly green wall could surround Craigend Castle.

Opportunities for innovative play and learning via forest Schools

Opportunities for sustainable, local business e.g. via Mugdock Honey.

The Vision

The ambition for East Dunbartonshire Green Network :

East Dunbartonshire is an attractive place to live, work and visit. Its built and natural environment improves the quality of lives, supports wellbeing and safe active travel, enables sustainable economic growth, improves connectivity and allows nature to flourish.

Stirling Council's Alive with Nature Plan 2021-2045 sets a clear Vision that places Nature at the Heart of life—Here and Now. It aims to transform the Stirling area into Scotland's greenest region, where our thriving natural environment is enjoyed and valued by everyone.

As part of EDC and SC identified Strategic Green Network's significant opportunities are highlighted for Mugdock to offer more.

Mugdock Country Park Vision:

A park of choice, of heritage, a park for everyone - a place of natural inspiration

What Does it Need to Be?

- An appealing, safe and attractive place to enjoy the natural environment
- A quality experience connecting with the natural world
- An exemplary habitat and natural heritage habitats
- Fun and an opportunity to participate / experience / acquire knowledge, understand the natural world
- A unique and special place

What Do We Need to Deliver?

- Investment in the park to strengthen its appeal
- An attractive, safe and inclusive environment to enjoy
- Sharing of sound environmental values and communication of the importance of conservation particularly within the SSSI
- Partnership working with others to deliver services of quality
- Strong outcomes for communities
- Best value

Wider Country Park Support

Vital to the development of a Vision for Mugdock Country Park is the continued support of organisations such as the Mugdock Trust, Clan Graham and the Astronomical Society of Glasgow.

Over and above these key stakeholder groups inputs from conservation volunteers, garden volunteers and Mugdock Castle volunteers are essential to both the current and future success of Mugdock.



Initial Assessment

Mugdock's key strengths and assets need to be re-assessed to shape a future strategy / masterplan.

Experience tells us that Country Parks to be successful need to offer:

- Multifunctional activity and appeal, based on quality experiences – maximum enjoyment for the widest possible audience
- Engagement with the natural environment
- Freedom to roam in a safe environment
- Connections to wider greenspace network & surrounding communities
- Destination offer – e.g. reasons to visit

Core Strengths

Mugdock Country Park's key strengths are assessed and confirmed through consultation as:

- Natural Environment Assets
- Woodland Assets and Wildlife
- Activities (Play / Walking Environment)
- Scenic Value
- Services eg Garden Centre/ Café etc
- Historic Environment
- Ecological Value—SSSI Mugdock Wood

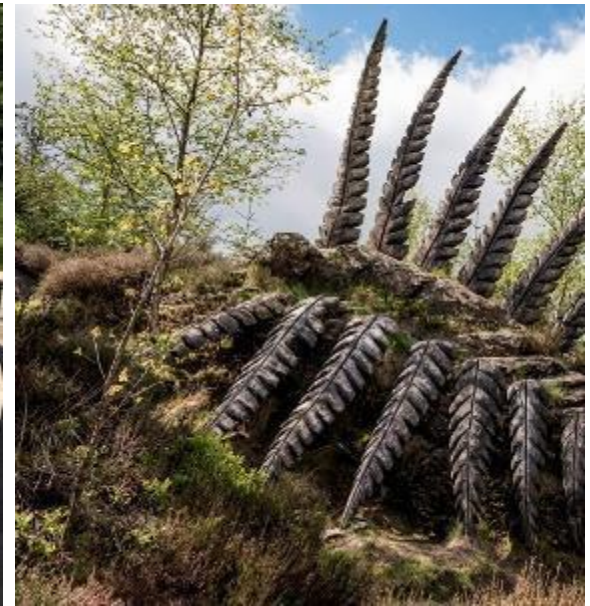
Core Weaknesses

Mugdock Country Park's key weaknesses are assessed and confirmed through consultation as:

- Public Transport Connectivity
- Lack of Investment
- Path Network
- Level of Activity / Facility
- Location & Accessibility
- Legibility-Brand-Profile
- Restricted Appeal
- Notable Quality

In looking at and comparing other Central Belt Country Parks, Mugdock currently has few distinguishing elements or specific attractions and facilities to offer anything other than a country park with local appeal.

Appendix 2 provides more detail.



Strategy

Developing a clear strategic direction for Mugdock is critical.

Building on strengths and addressing weaknesses suggests the strategy is to focus on:

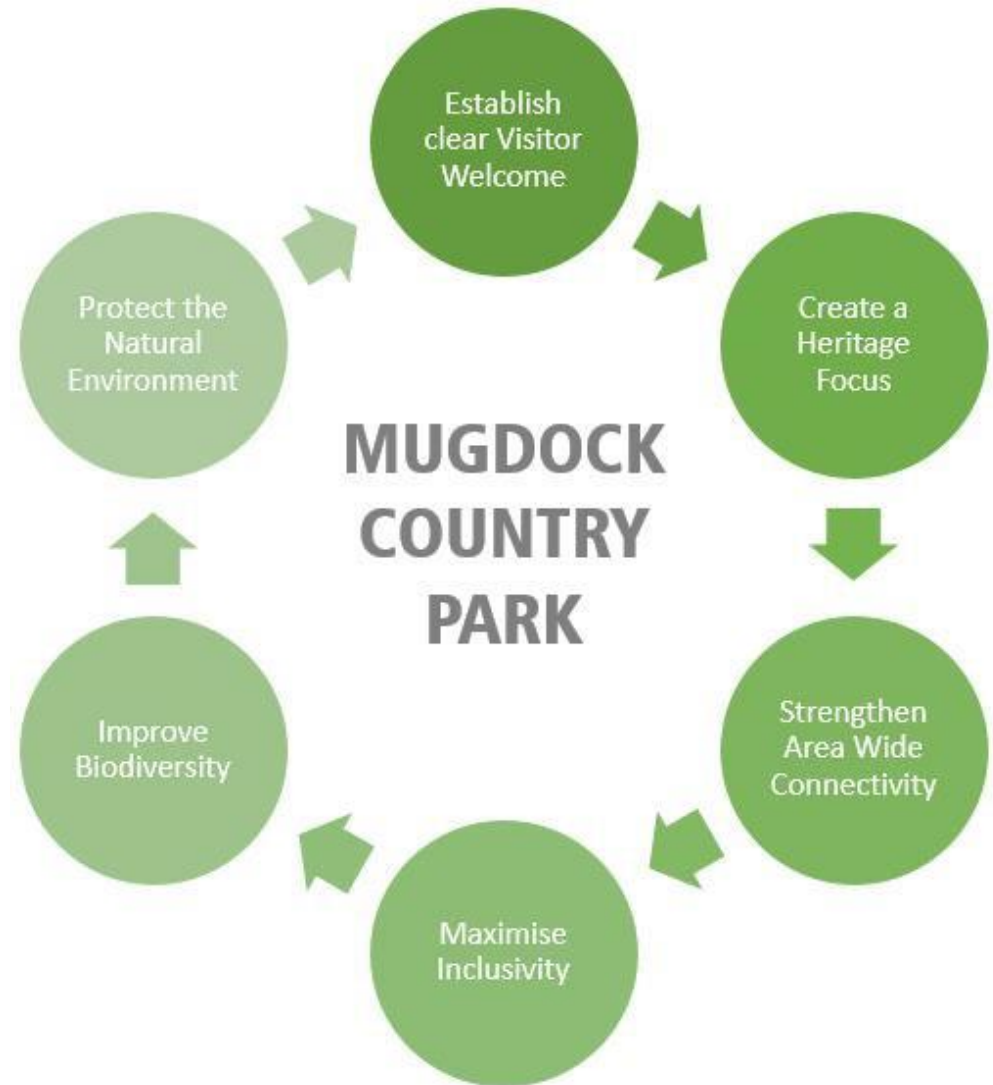
1. *Need to build meaningful experiences out of existing assets through education and interpretation – connecting/ linking visitors with the assets.*
2. *Build and enhance distinctive offer through activities and facilities that together develop the offer*
3. *Protection and enhancement of the SSSI to maintain site value*
4. *Address the locational challenge with stronger connection to Milngavie with a revised entrance/ entry to the park and sustainable travel opportunities*
5. *Reinvestment is an essential requirement to develop the quality / protect a regional asset of distinctive appeal*
6. *Inclusive barrier-free use on suitably defined trails / path networks*
7. *Need a clear Business Case based on developing the future viability of the destination*

Objectives

Mugdock is an established and well loved Country Park. However the consensus of public view is it needs investment and clear focus if it is to succeed and remain popular.

Country Park Objectives:

1. Invest to deliver a high quality, accessible and sensitively developed destination of choice for residents and visitors.
2. Create a quality / distinctive Country Park destination with strong visitor appeal based on core environmental and historic assets and user facilities. Building and enhancing distinctive offer through activities and facilities, that support a wide range of activity
3. Develop 'best in class' facilities that are comparable with current best attractions in Scotland (public or private).
4. Sustain user numbers but aim to maximise dwell time and spend to sustain facilities & operations
5. Address specific East Dunbartonshire and Stirling Council objectives including:
 - Encouraging Health and Wellbeing through a range of social, cultural & leisure activities
 - Transforming the natural environment to support wellbeing, inward investment and enhancements for future generations.



2.0 Developing Concept Proposals

Initial concept ideas were developed to explore opportunities, test viability and provide opportunity for stakeholders and public input and responses.

- **Reinforce Heritage elements** – building upon existing core facilities to enhance setting and maximise place value and impact.
- **Enhance facilities & activities** - to better support Events use and generate increased income
- **Improve legibility** – through rationalisation of entrance and connections to key routes
- **Improve biodiversity** through developing projects across the Park – aiming to maximise the benefits to the natural asset
- **Secure Investment** – to deliver improved quality of facility & service throughout
- **Introduce at least ONE new attraction or facility** - to add to and strengthen the visitor offer
- **Provide full access** – for all user groups, to ensure no one is excluded wherever possible
- **Build meaningful experience** - through more & improved Education & Interpretation

Review highlighted 6 potential options. Each describing a core function and activity that sets the Parks profile.

Option 1: Do Nothing

Manage the park as existing with only minor changes to current vision and operating plan based on woodland management and non-intensive Country Park activity

Option 2: Mugdock Heritage

Develop the history and heritage of the Park creating first class facilities and develop a range of tourism options

Option 3: Mugdock - Eco-Park

Manage the park as an Eco-Park focussed on education/ interpretation/ natural environments and as a unique natural environmental resource

Option 4: Mugdock - Edu-Park

Manage the park as a centre for Outward Bound / Scouting/ Duke of Edinburgh training focussed on education, schools, skills, bush-craft, and as a centre of excellence

Option 5 : Mugdock – Play

Develop the concept of play as a multi-themed element running through the whole Park (adult/ young people/children) so all park elements embrace inter-active 'play' connecting interpretation, traditional, adventure and experience play .

Option 6: Mugdock – Active Leisure

Manage the park for a suite of active leisure activity including Play / Orienteering / Fitness Training / Zip-wire/ GoApe etc

These initial options were taken through the consultation process with clear guidance provided by the community.

Mugdock Country Park

VISION

The Mugdock Country Park Strategy 2022-2027 aims to:

- recognise and celebrate the heritage of Mugdock;
- build capacity to best utilise our outstanding natural assets;
- improve access and facilities for all;
- create new opportunities for our local community and visitors to enjoy and connect with Mugdock Country Park.

We need your help!

Visitor Survey

During 2020 Mugdock Country Park experienced higher visitor numbers than ever before. This has increased the pressure on the landscape and existing facilities. We wish to plan for better facilities and improved access for visitors whilst looking after the natural heritage for the future.

We want to hear from you as a visitor to guide our future plans to better enable all visitors to enjoy Mugdock and all it has to offer.

This visitor survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete and is being undertaken on behalf of the Mugdock Joint Management Committee.

The Site

Mugdock Country Park is located 10 miles north of Glasgow close to the populations of Milngavie and Strathblane. It was designated a Country Park in 1987 and combines woodland, heathland, marshland and moor along with formal walking routes, a loch, castles and gursites left over from WWII.

The area has a long and fascinating history as well as an outstanding natural environment which sees almost 70% of the Park designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Mugdock Castle designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Craigend Castle is C-listed and the Courtyard (former Stables building) is B-listed.

Mugdock Country Park is currently owned and managed by both East Dunbartonshire and Stirling Councils through a Joint Management Committee which meets quarterly.

Many thanks for taking part!



3.0 Engagement & Consultation

Engagement has been central to developing this masterplan. The Client team, Park Stakeholders (EDC/ Stirling Council and wider interests) and the local community have shaped and informed our approach and outcomes.

Given that the Strategy development took place during the Covid 19 pandemic large scale, in person consultation events were seen as inadvisable therefore four key activities have been undertaken to capture views and encourage participation:

- **Visitor Survey**
Online questionnaire
- **3no Stakeholder Workshops**
Supported by follow up online questionnaire

Over 1800 views have been captured through the above engagement process.

- 1800+ responses to on-line questionnaire
- 200+ face-to-face discussions with participants by Mugdock staff

The high response to the questionnaire stands testament to the high value and passionate regard with which Mugdock Country Park is held within the local community.

Comments raised addressed the following key topics:

- **Connectivity**—was a high priority for most survey respondents with the need to

improve sustainable access and connections to adjoining communities, outdoor resources like the Reservoirs and Milngavie Town Centre specifically noted. 59% of questionnaire responses sought improvements to public transport connections, currently the majority of visitors (85%) arrive by car.

- **Operation & Management**—need for investment widely recognised (44%) with concerns raised at lack of quality infrastructure and need for improvement to paths in particular (32%)
- **Conservation & Sustainability**— the Natural Environment and Woodland/ Wildlife were the highest scoring strengths noted at Mugdock with 86% and 67% respectively. This highlights that consolidating and protecting these natural resources whilst maximising its role in nature conservation and associated education is fundamental in taking any strategy for Mugdock Country Park forward. Also noted in the top 6 were Scenic Value and Ecological Value.
- **Activities**— were highlighted as the third highest park strength, as noted in initial Park assessments (Appendix 2) both the Ranger and Visitor Centre Staff engage continuously with an intense and well received programme of activities for a wide variety of interest groups.
- **Historic Environment** - 34% of survey responses noted the Country Park’s history as a key strength. Key buildings and structures within its boundaries provide a reference to its past and were seen as a a unique selling point.



- **Major issues of concern**—the concept of adding a big attraction to Mugdock was seen as undesirable, visitors love the essence of Mugdock and do not want this to be lost.
- **Development Options** -through the online workshops no one theme came out clearly as favourite, agreement was that a combination of approaches (Heritage/Eco Park/Play/ Active Leisure) would provide the best balance and would appeal to the widest range of visitors. The Stakeholder on-line survey identified Heritage and Eco-Park as the preferred options with 42% supporting these.

More detail on responses can be found in the Appendices.

Invitations to workshops included:

- * Councillors
- * Community members eg Milngavie Community Council, Strathblanefield Community Council
- * Council officials and staff from both EDC & SC
- * Mugdock Trust
- * Audit Scotland
- * Mugdock Staff
- * Mugdock Traders
- * Other interested organisations eg Milngavie In Bloom, Scottish Water, Caledonia Water Alliance, NatureScot, HES, Friends of Mugdock Reservoir, Strathblane Community Development Trust, Police Scotland, Landowners

Main outcomes were:

- Need to better connect the Country Park with surrounding areas sustainably
- Protect important natural assets - both wildlife and landscape
- Provide improved accessibility and infrastructure
- Encourage continued and increased Activities based around the Country Park's existing strengths
- Maximise the benefits of existing Heritage Assets... tell the story of Mugdock!

A Statutory Consultation has been undertaken by East Dunbartonshire Council on the Draft Strategy. Consultation took place between the 8th –29th November 2022.

Stirling Council were supportive of the Strategy:

The action plan appears an ambitious 5 year plan. Given the current outlook on the financial climate and the number of High priorities we would suggest an additional category of Very High/Essential. Income generation we feel should feature high on the agenda and note that car park charging is back on the discussion table.

In terms of climate change Stirling Council are seeking sites to plant trees and would welcome discussion on any potential within the park for this activity.

Thank you for giving Historic Environment Scotland the opportunity to comment on the draft Strategy. We are content with the draft for our historic environment interests and welcome that the draft Strategy seeks to maintain and enhance the historic environment of Mugdock Park.

This response from Trustees of Mugdock Trust.

Firstly, the Trustees offer a positive response to the wider strategy for the whole park. We also recognise that attention has been paid to our Mugdock Trust Action Plan 2022-2027. In particular the creation of a maze on the lower terrace with sculptural elements, timeline, references to Clan Graham and seating which would attract even more visitors to the Castle area. We have a sub-group currently investigating options for maze layout, installers and costs.

Our main focus is on Mugdock Castle. We are therefore supportive of the proposed general improvements in the Castle area

A number of traders within Mugdock highlighted that they welcome the 5 year Strategy and most of what it contains, however stated: *we are gravely concerned about the proposal for introducing Car parking Charges. deterring people from visiting Mugdock and discouraging people from spending time within the park, we believe this will encourage people to park along the access road to Mugdock, making it both dangerous and difficult to access.*

Another Trader noted *I hate to be negative as there are some really great ideas in the strategy that i think would really improve the visitor experience and attract new visitors and we all like that.*

Comments received from EDC Sustainability, Climate Change Biodiversity & Greenspace

Overall, Nature and the Green Network are mentioned throughout the document, but there is a missed opportunity to develop a strategic vision for the enhancement, protection and creation of opportunities for both throughout. There also appears to be a missed opportunity to implement nature-based solutions to climate change, or reference adaptation measures to improve resiliency of the park.

Closer liaison with EDC departments will be required in taking forward the associated Land Management Plan which looks to address many of the points raised.

Anonymous responses to the consultation were divided in opinion regarding parking charges:

Don't think there should be a parking fee for ordinary users. Perhaps all the dog walking businesses and other commercial users should be charged.

Do not introduce parking charges particularly at a time of austerity.

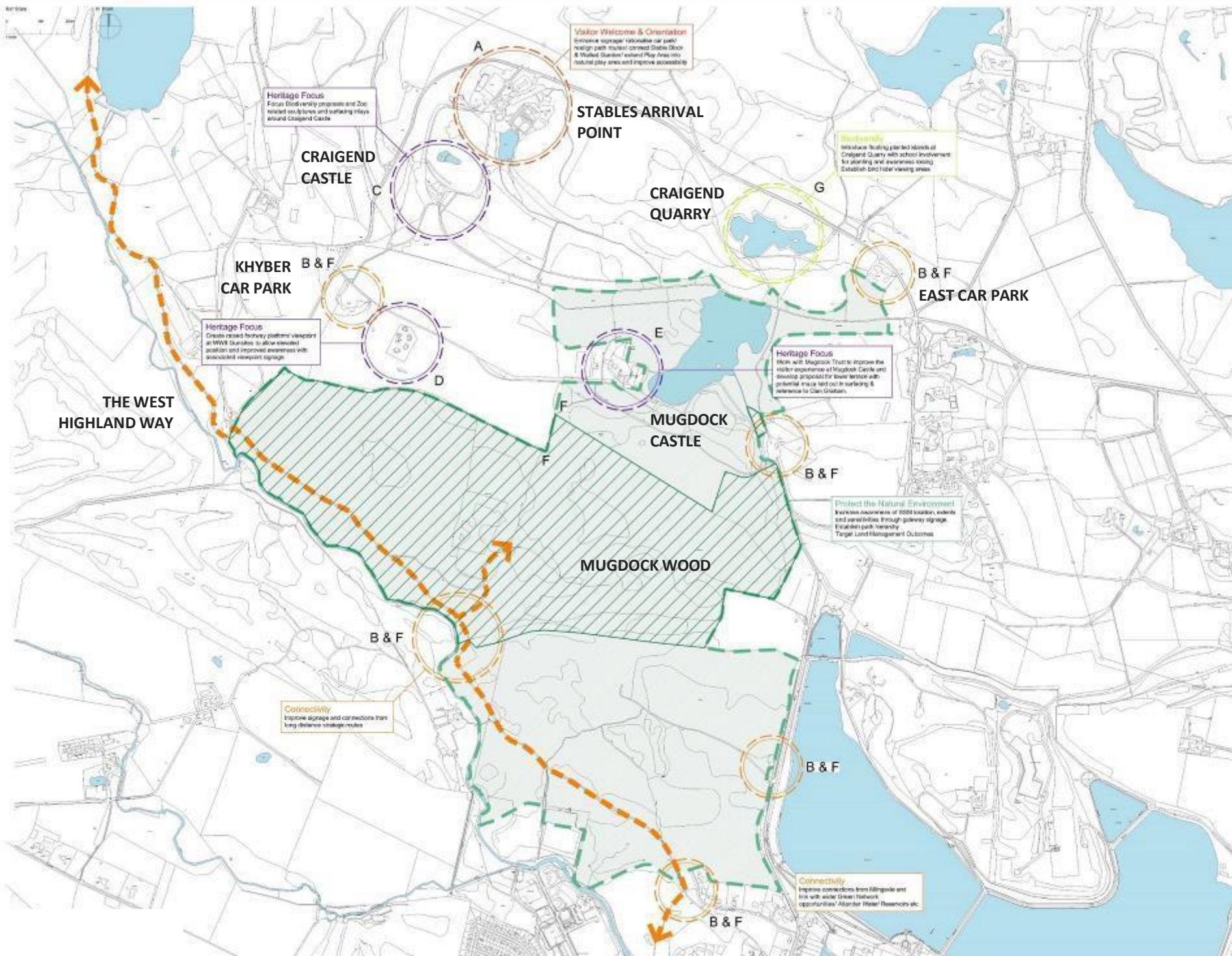
I think a small car parking charge is a good idea with an opportunity for an annual fee for regular users. However I think it may be very difficult to manage the problem of people parking irresponsibly on the road.

Other anonymous responses noted:

A very loose strategy. The emphasis seems to be very much on increasing the public footprint at Mugdock to the detriment of biodiversity.

Nice to see the acknowledgment that there needs to be access by more than car. Just putting e-bikes in Milngavie won't work though as you can't safely cycle there. The WHW needs to have a section you can actually cycle branching off to the country park. It should be a park inclusive for all but at the moment anyone without a car can't use it as you can't cycle with a child to get there. The only possible route is too rocky and has a fixed stone gap that bikes can't get through.

In general it seems very good. I'm not sure about the review of the deer situation, in a decade of living near, cycling and walking in the park regularly (once a week) I've never yet seen a deer, and even if I did - they're part of the natural environment - there's not enough to be causing excessive damage.



THE MASTERPLAN

MILNGAVIE

4.0 Masterplan Recommendations

Mugdock is an important community asset and can play a key role in meeting the needs of the community and delivering health & well-being benefits alongside providing access to safe play and countryside facilities.

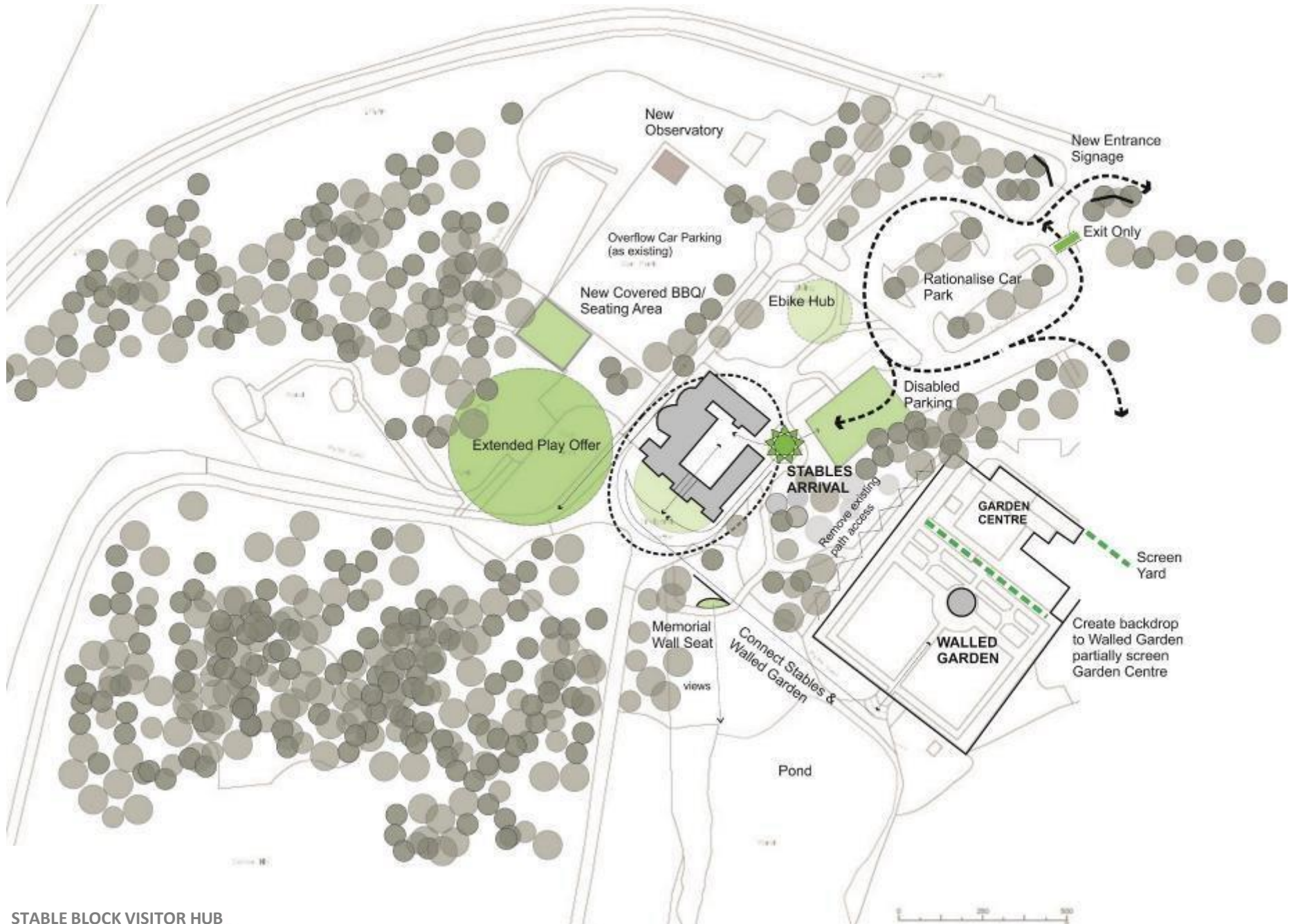
Major recommended actions/ investments give focus to building quality, distinctiveness and appeal including:

- **Visitor Welcome & Orientation**—consolidating Stables Café, Toilets, Visitor Centre/ Play Area Garden Centre to improve quality of experience. Introduce new covered area to improve visitor facilities
- **Heritage Focus**—invest in increased interpretation and improved directional signage to increase visitor awareness of offer
- **Protect the SSSI**—combine education with protection through better visitor information and emphasis on importance of national status
- **Biodiversity**—extend biodiversity offer to include areas where local schools can easily be involved and use tangible biodiversity as a stepping stone to fuller understanding
- **Trails, Routes & Signage**—develop clear routes for promotion to general public linked with Interpretive Strategy and all ability network
- **Connectivity**—**improve directional signage and** develop e-bike links with Town Centre/ Station and explore potential for seasonal bus connections to reduce car travel to Mugdock.
- **Promoting private sector investment & potential franchise operations**—for Café /Retail development of existing & new partnerships with charities, sports clubs, voluntary groups and environmental bodies

The Vision

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- protect its natural environment;
- build capacity to best utilise our outstanding natural assets;
- improve access and facilities for all;
- create new opportunities for our local community and visitors to enjoy and connect with Mugdock Country Park.
- create a sustainable and welcoming place for all



STABLE BLOCK VISITOR HUB

NEW PARK STRUCTURE:

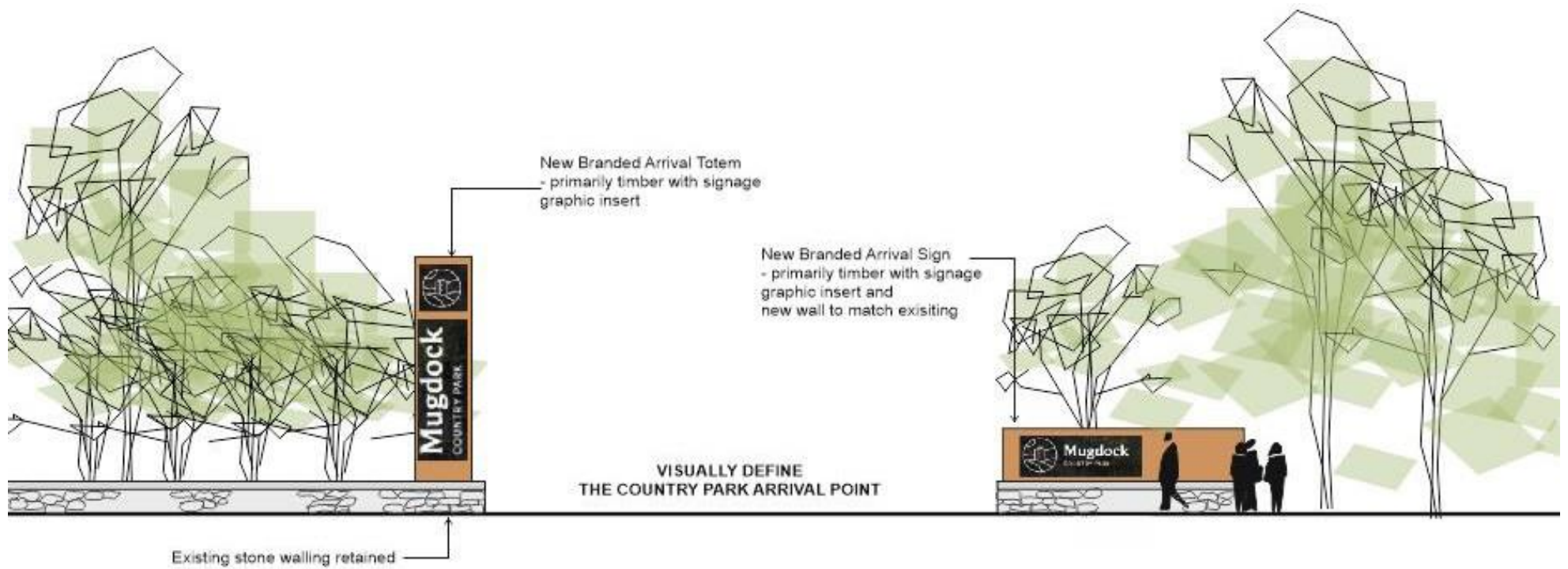
VISITOR WELCOME & ORIENTATION (LOCATION A)

- **Punctuate Entrance**
Establish a clear arrival at Mugdock with bold/ large scale entrance signage combining existing entrance walling with new timber and metal elements to clearly reinforce the website brand and reduce confusion with Garden Centre arrival.
- **Car Parking / Bus Drop Off**
Rationalise existing car parking to better orientate visitors and direct all to clear Stables Arrival entrance. Relocate disabled parking to closer location and establish suite of signage to support clarity/ relocate main Orientation point.
- **Existing Visitor Centre**
Has already been relocated to more prominent position in Stables Courtyard.
- **Create E-Bike / EV Hub**
Supporting wider concept of sustainable connectivity introduce E-bike and EV charging point hub within Stables car park.
- **Stables Seating Area**
Creating a spill out seating area in the south facing area which benefits from views and aspect. Using existing site levels to establish stepped informal seating and planting to improve setting and perception of the historic building..
- **New Covered BBQ/ Seating Area**
Taking on board consultation feedback create a covered area which can be used day-to-day but also as a hired facility maximising benefits for local people and responding to needs of larger organised groups..
- **Extended Play Offer**
Contemporary Play, providing distinctive & themed play opportunities, which are 'bigger, better, taller, larger...' promoting a unique multigenerational play facility of distinction that works alongside existing adventure play.
 - Located directly adjacent to the visitor hub
 - Fully accessible and highly visible
 - Maximising appeal/ dwell time /experience/ choice and diversity
 - Themed around wildlife & woodland
 - Creating a natural play transition to the wider Country Park

- **Walled Garden**
Strengthening the historic connections on site by directly linking the Stables and Walled Garden. Remove the current access completely to ensure visitors first experience view to the bandstand and of the Garden itself before retail opportunities. Create backdrop within the Garden through introduction of Pleached trees providing a partial screen. The character of this space is key to future success as a location for Events eg weddings to be held within EDC hireable marquee. Access required for vehicular delivery of supporting facilities. Screening of rear yard from Garden Centre car park is important to improve overall perceptions of area quality.
- **Memorial Wall Seat**
Opportunity identified when resolving levels adjacent to ramped access to create a Memorial Wall with associated seating. Considerable interest has been noted for memorial elements within Mugdock; a feature wall with Artist made birds or flowers in keeping with the overall themes of nature is recommended.



MEMORIAL WALL & SEAT CONCEPT



ENTRANCE SIGNAGE CONCEPT



Kids like discovery, challenges, movement and adventure. They thrive on being in nature – playing with water, climbing trees, jumping through puddles, hiding in dens.

WOODLAND PLAY
Using natural materials but larger scale equipment and creating a clear transition between organised and natural play areas.

HERITAGE FOCUS

- **Improvements to surroundings of Stables** to emphasise quality and maximise location opening up views to Pond and beyond wherever possible. As described in preceding section.
- **Connect to Walled Garden** south entrance to avoid visitors accessing through plant sales area of Garden Centre and establishing clear setting, as described in preceding section.
- **Craigend Castle (LOCATION C)** focus accessible biodiversity and Zoo related sculptures and surfacing inlays to link with unique site heritage.
- **WWII Gunsites (LOCATION D)** create raised footway platform/ viewpoint to allow elevated position and improved awareness of site's presence with associated viewpoint signage. Explore opportunities to reintroduce gun element to ease awareness of scale and site prominence.
- **Mugdock Castle (LOCATION E)** work closely with Mugdock Trust to improve the visitor experience and develop proposal for lower terrace with potential maze laid out in surfacing & reference to Clan Graham through computer animated design.

PROTECT THE SSSI

- **Establish a Path Hierarchy** focusing signage on key most accessible routes and supporting Ranger Service in ongoing works to minimise disturbance of valuable natural resources.
- **Increase awareness of SSSI location (LOCATION F)** and sensitivities through gateway signage located at all key entrance points to the SSSI, signage to welcome visitors whilst identifying the site sensitivities and need to stay on paths/ keep dogs under close control.
- **Bracken encroachment** seek external funding to tackle extensive encroachment within the SSSI which is suppressing other species and eroding the existing quality.
- **Re-evaluate deer** issues following NatureScot spring survey to identify ideal numbers for future culling to minimise grazing of areas and degradation of the SSSI.
- **Tackle path braiding** through increased public information notices and temporary fencing erected by Country Park Rangers.
- **Woodland Management** following initial survey works to identify clear

management approach regarding where restocking or felling is desirable for the SSSI, close working with NatureScot is required.

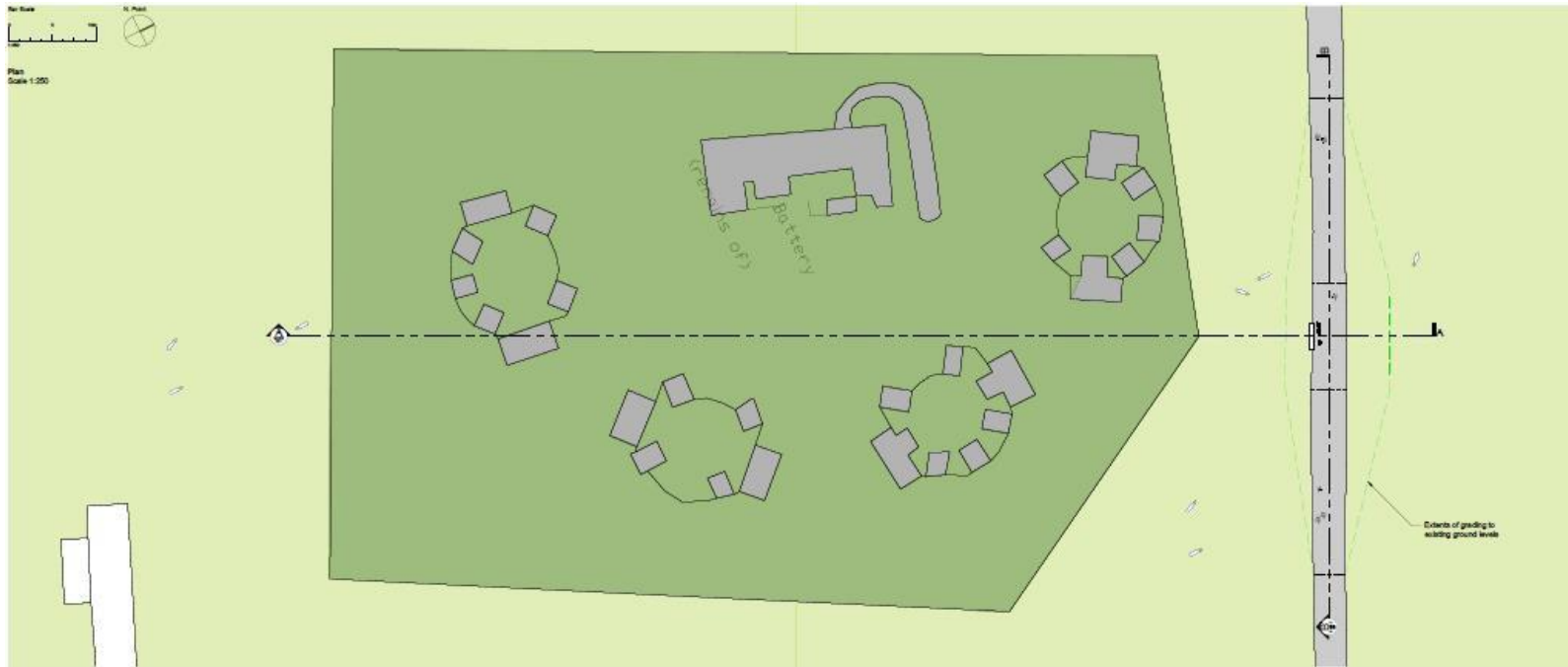
- **Beetle assemblage surveys** to establish clear current status and update records allowing future actions to be identified.
- **Develop updated Land Management Plan** utilising plans digitised through the current Strategy process and forming a baseline for future works.



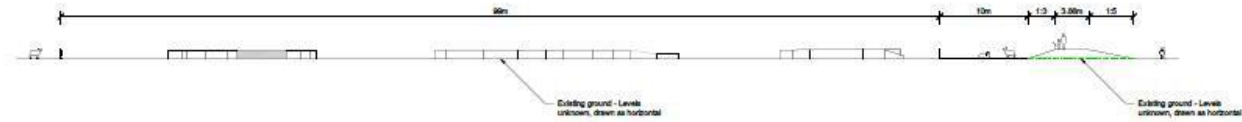
CRAIGEND CASTLE BIODIVERSITY & ZOO INTERPRETATION



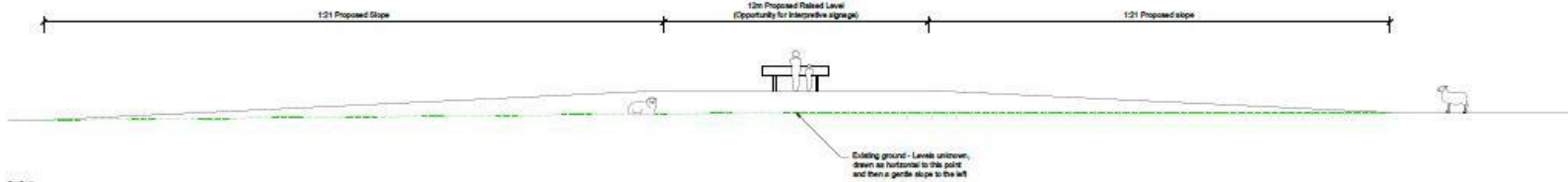
SSSI GATEWAYS



Section A-A
Scale 1:250



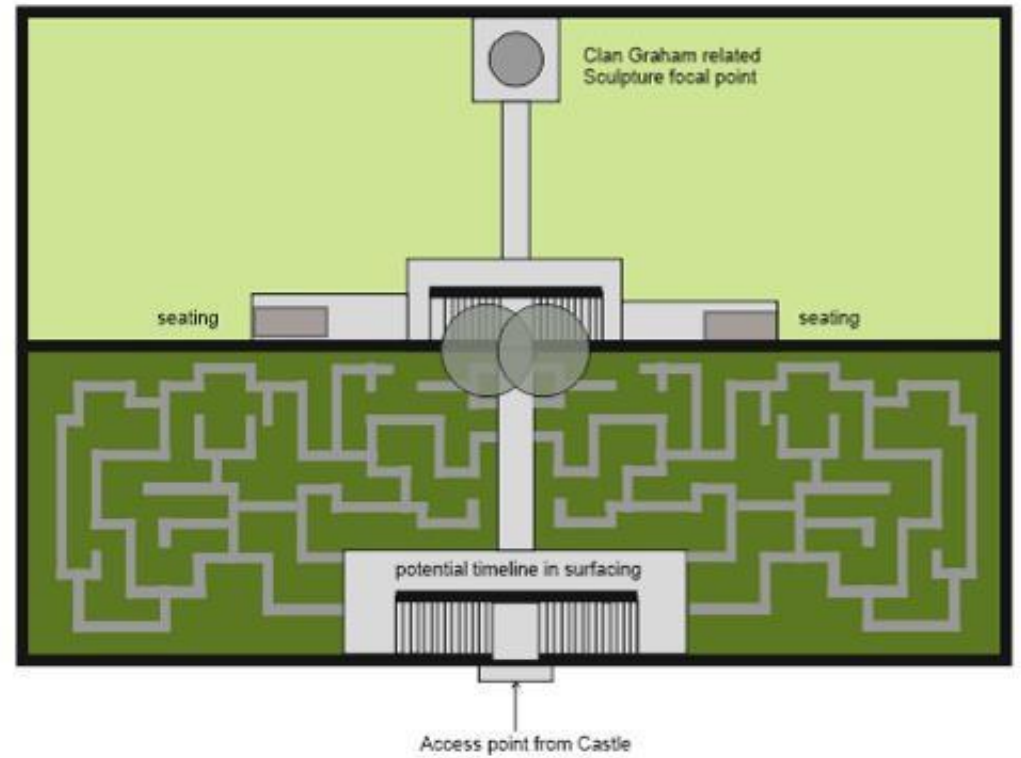
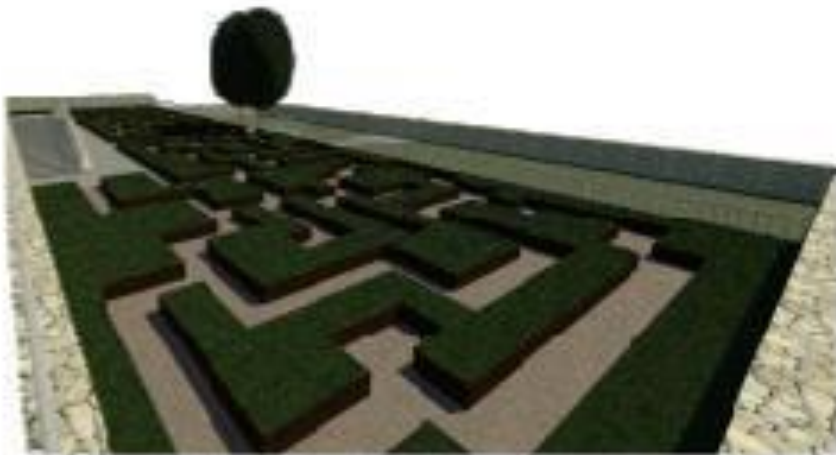
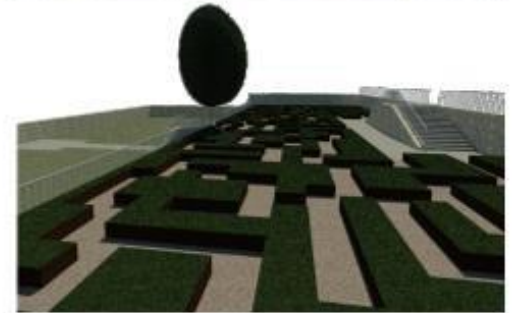
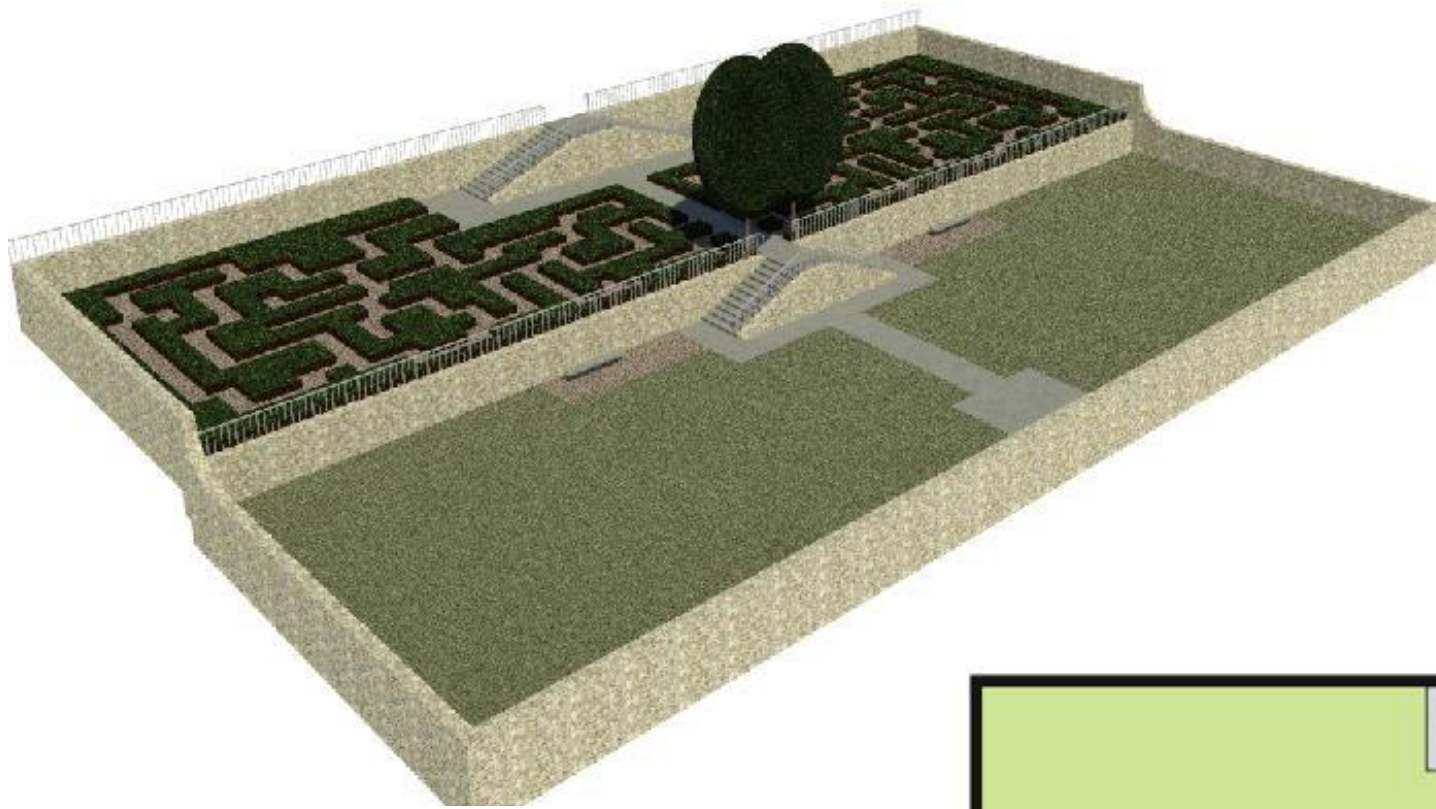
Section B-B
Scale 1:100



No Scale



WW1 GUNSITES CONCEPT PLAN & SECTIONS



MUGDOCK CASTLE TERRACES CONCEPT PLAN & VISUALS



WOODLAND SCULPTURE TRAIL



BIRD HIDES & PLANTED ISLANDS

BIODIVERSITY

- Craigend Quarry (**LOCATION G**) introduce floating planted islands with school involvement for planting and awareness raising. Extensive areas required to limit opportunities for tomb stoning. Scope to further explore boardwalks and access within the area following water and cliff surveys for safety.
- Craigend Quarry (**LOCATION G**) establish bird hide/ viewing areas allowing focus on wildlife and tranquil setting.
- Craigend Castle (**LOCATION C**) create wildflower meadows and potentially bee hives within boundary of ruins enabling accessible biodiversity as a stepping stone to education about more complex Mugdock site ecology.

TRAILS, ROUTES & SIGNAGE

- Establish a suite of signs for Trails through remounting of existing quality interpretive signage within timber structures to provide consistency –clear message and clarity of style alongside timber fingerposts and inkeeping with character of Country Park.
- Introduce brass rubbing elements on key waymarkers to add interest for children and encourage exploration and understanding of wildlife/ insects which can be found on site.
- Establish Path hierarchy in line with wider Country Park Ranger service routes providing easily accessible for all primary promoted routes and clearly identified trails for those who are keen to explore wilder areas.
- Create seating areas at key locations, easing accessibility with rest or perch points at 50m spacings along primary routes.

CONNECTIVITY

- **Establish Clarity on all Arrival Routes** through signage strategy to address both road and pedestrian routes to the Country Park. White on Brown Road signage and standardised pedestrian fingerposts to be provided.
- **Milngavie Town Centre BID** establish strong links to Town Centre and explore opportunities for connected activities. E-bike connections from the Railway Station and scope to develop clear connections from the West Highland Way. Maximise overall benefits in proximity. Explore opportunity for seasonal Low Emission Bus connections to limit existing car parking pressures.

COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY/ FACILITIES

- **Car Parking charges** identified to support the need to reduce car travel to the Country Park and in line with wider Climate change policy.
- **Children’s Trail** building upon existing seasonal events success with a high quality permanent installation
- **Light Show Experience** maximising Mugdock as a venue for activity and run by a private operator
- **Outdoor Nursery Support Space** utilising existing rooms to encourage education further within the Country Park
- **Filming Location** with added support space marketed as a longer term opportunity
- **Theatre Events** building on existing investment and a unique selling point
- **Chainsaw training** exploring opportunities through EDC provider as part of wider Tree Management
- **Wellbeing Tranquillity Hub** initially as part of an annual event
- **Venue hire** at Walled Garden for weddings using EDC marquee
- **Unleashed Dog fields** as scope to use underutilised fields without compromising nature value
- **Memorial plaques & benches** enabling a strategic approach which can support the community
- **Friends of Mugdock** scheme relaunch
- **Craigend Quarry Outdoor Recreation** opportunities and feasibility study





Wilderness Trails & Interpretation

Consistency of wayfinding information and signage family



SIGNAGE utilise existing signs but remount in timber structures. Combine interpretive material with Corten Steel to create unified effect with WHW signage in Milngavie.



5.0 Action Plan

Delivery of the masterplan requires progressive testing and development of key elements to build clarity around project components, build support, identify project partners, establish certainty of cost and identify appropriate operating mechanisms.

Key actions include:

- **Approvals**— progression of process to secure full EDC/ SC support and funding commitments to move project development forward
- **Feasibility Studies** developed with stakeholders & key EDC/ SC departments to test, develop and progress key project elements
- **Detailed Business Plans**—supporting project feasibility including market testing to prove viability, capital and revenue funding/ identify commercial partners
- **Design Development**—progressing design proposals for key elements to RIBA Stage 3
- **Delivery Plan**—developed for implementation , identifying delivery partners, funding mechanisms and timescales for project delivery
- **Project implementation** - delivering projects in a prioritised sequence giving focus to achieving impact and meaningful change



5.1 Early Action Projects : *Visitor Welcome & Orientation*

Project	Location	Task	Priority	Partners	Description
VISITOR WELCOME & ORIENTATION					
Entrance signage	A	Outline Design	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Establish high impact entrance signage of scale in timber providing clarity of site brand aligned with online content
Rationalise Stables car park & upgrades to Khyber & East Car Parks	A	Full Topographic Survey & Outline Design	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Establish clarity of arrival and logical parking circulation focusing on Stables Visitor Centre. Upgrade surfacings
Welcome signage	B	Signage & interpretation strategy	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	Establish clear arrival points to provide visitor welcome and orientation at all key arrival points car parks incl pedestrian. Provide considered message about what the site offers with Heritage and Natural Environment focus to encourage exploration
Courtyard and arrival area upgrades	A	Outline Design	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	Ensure accessibility and focus of courtyard through surfacing, signage and potential toilet upgrades. Reinstall the sundial clock and carved steps to improve arrival.
Road signage		Implementation	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Introduce white on brown Visitor Road signage to provide clarity on all surrounding key routes. Focus on Stable Car Park.
Directional signage	SITE WIDE	Signage strategy	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	Concentrate signage within arrival area to provide visitor confidence that routes will be clearly signed
Interpretation (Site Wide)	SITE WIDE	Interpretive Strategy	HIGH	EDC/SC	Establish clear themes and opportunities for whole site to establish clear visitor message and encourage wider exploration and multigenerational understanding through both signage and sculptural elements.

5.2 Early Action Projects — *Focused on strengthening existing park assets*

Project	Location	Task	Priority	Partners	Description
HERITAGE FOCUS					
Create plaza to front of Stables	A	Outline Design	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Establish seating area and setting for Stables, focus on views out and scale of space to improve pedestrian comfort and accessibility
Connect Stables to Walled Garden South Entrance	A	Outline Design	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Introduce direct link to south entrance of Walled Garden removing circuitous route to north end completely and establishing level access to ensure visitors arrive to garden not shop.
Introduce Zoo related sculptures and surfacing inlays around Craigend Castle	C	Interpretive Strategy	MEDI-UM	EDC/ SC	Encourage increased use of the area and added interest for children and visitors through links to site heritage. Maximise site benefit of unique history, exploring aspects of the original zoo. Size of lions paw in slab, height of elephant, list of animals and their names
WWII Gunsites	D	Outline Design	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Create raised platform via 1:21 slopes up to a new viewing area establishing a raised platform to facilitate views over Gunsites to increase awareness but also establish connections to wider views which were the reason for the emplacements. Supported by new interpretive signage as part of the handrail. Fencing and path upgrades within gunsite itself to improve access. Explore opportunity for sculptural Big Gun to add scale and drama.
Mugdock Castle	E	Outline Design & Artist Brief	MEDI-UM	EDC/ SC/ Mugdock Trust	Work with Mugdock Trust to improve the visitor experience and interpretation at Mugdock Castle and develop proposal for lower terrace to create a maze or labyrinth and incorporate sculptural elements referencing Clan Graham. Scope for Clan timeline within path routes to add value. Replace boardwalks and in Castle furniture as necessary.

5.3 Early Action Projects : *Securing the Natural Environment for the Future*

Project	Location	Task	Priority	Partners	Description
PROTECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT					
SSSI Gateway signage	F	Outline Design	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Rangers	Establish signage at boundaries of SSSI within path network to convey positive message and increase awareness of site sensitivity
Establish path hierarchy	SITE WIDE	Outline Design	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Rangers	Work closely with rangers to establish key path routes for promotion/ signage
Bracken Encroachment		Implementation	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Rangers/ NatureScot	Phased removal of extensive areas of bracken encroachment Develop being undertaken by external contractor over 5yr period
Re evaluate Deer issues		Evaluation	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Rangers/ NatureScot	Review approach to Deer culling following NatureScot survey
Path braiding		On site works	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Rangers	Tackle path braiding with signage and physical measures
Woodland management		On site works	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Rangers/ NatureScot	Following survey develop next layer of Woodland Management proposals
Beetle assemblage surveys		Survey	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Rangers/ NatureScot	Establish clarity of baseline status to inform future management
Landscape Management Plan	SITE WIDE	Strategy	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Rangers/ NatureScot	Create plan update to inform management and protect/ enhance the SSSI status

5.4 Early Action Projects : *Creating Wider Benefit*

Project	Location	Task	Priority	Partners	Description
BIODIVERSITY FOCUS					
Create wildflower meadows around Craigend Castle	C	Outline Design	MEDI-UM	EDC/ SC/ Rangers/ NatureScot	Mixed wildflowers, bee hotels and potentially hives within the Castle compound
Floating planted islands at Craigend Quarry	G	Feasibility Study	LOW	EDC/ SC/ Rangers/ NatureScot	Planting of islands involving schools groups and establishing new habitats, explore opportunities for boardwalks and/or pontoons
Introduce bird hides and viewing areas near Craigend Quarry	G	Outline Design	LOW	EDC/ SC/ Rangers/ NatureScot	Using visually permeable materials establish clear areas for nature focus
CONNECTIVITY					
Improve connections from Milngavie and Strathblane	SITE WIDE	Transport Strategy	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Milngavie BID	Scope for E bikes from Milngavie station/ Town Centre. Explore opportunity to reintroduce Bus service at weekends.
Improve links to wider Green Network & Town Centre	SITE WIDE	Signage Strategy	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Milngavie BID	Connect with Town Centre, WHW, Reservoirs, Allander Water and explore opportunities. Works to include White on brown Visitor Road signage on surrounding road network.
Establish a suite of signs	SITE WIDE	Signage Strategy	HIGH	EDC/ SC/ Rangers	Build on existing quality elements to improve consistency and continuity of message

5.5 Early Action Projects : *Income Generation*

Project	Location	Task	Priority	Partners	Description
INCOME GENERATORS / FACILITIES					
Extend Play Area into Natural Play Area	A	Outline Design	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	Replace equipment and extend area into Natural Play area to establish play facilities within woodland setting. Key elements will allow imaginative play and improve accessibility of surfacing and multigenerational enjoyment
Covered Seating	A	Outline Design	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Introduce covered seating area to enable year round use with potential for hire and additional BBQ
Woodland Sculpture Trail		Outline Design	LOW	EDC/ SC	Add value and interest to woodland experience through introduction of large scale woodland sculpture elements working with local artists
Unleashed dog fields	C	Feasibility Study	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	Introduce new facility to encourage dog users to maximise experience at Mugdock within designated areas
Venue Hire at Walled Garden	A	Detailed design	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Marquee use for Events within Walled Garden requires separate power connection, lighting and location / access for portaloos
Additional BBQ site & upgrades to existing	A	Outline Design	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	Introduce larger BBQ site for hire with associated covered area. Upgrades to existing successful BBQ sites.
Memorial plaques	A	Artist's brief	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	Scope with wall with seating overlooking key view. Artist competition to create a bird which can be commissioned to create impact and mounted as birds on a wall.
Memorial benches	SITE WIDE	Establish preferred bench	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	Establish a seat for use throughout park, consistency of approach to site furniture
Wellbeing Tranquility Hub	A	Events Programming	LOW	EDC/ SC	Viable once site quality is established. Current use of Campsie Room as part of a Wellness Week to be continued
Chainsaw Training	SITE WIDE	Feasibility study & Surveys	LOW	EDC/ SC	As part of wider Tree Management explore opportunities to provide chainsaw training via existing EDC provider
Children's Trail		Design brief	LOW	EDC/ SC	Permanent feature

5.5 Early Action Projects : *Income Generation*

Project	Location	Task	Priority	Partners	Description
INCOME GENERATORS / FACILITIES					
Car parking charges	A	Review	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Concern re potential impact on Craigallan Road and issues with Caulders Garden Centre
Annual Craft Market	A	Events Programming	LOW	EDC/ SC	Potential conflict with Milngavie?
Light show experience		Events Programming	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	2/3 wk run in December private operator
Outdoor Nursery Support space	A	Review	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	Previously discussed as EDC facility however could be a Private operator if this does not come into being
Filming Location	SITE WIDE	Events Programming	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Market with support space of Campsie Room to gain additional benefit
Theatre Events	A	Events Programming	MEDIUM	EDC/ SC	Maximise benefit of newly refurbished facility
Friends of Mugdock Country Park		Review	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Relaunch existing scheme
Craigend Quarry Outdoor Recreation	G	Feasibility study & Surveys	LOW	EDC/ SC	Explore opportunities and establish safety requirements for outdoor pursuits located at the quarry. Options may include fishing, water pursuits, zip wire.
Waste Water Treatment Tank Replacement		Implementation	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Functional requirement which will minimise ongoing maintenance costs.
Craigend Quarry Fencing	G	Implementation	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Essential works to minimise safety risks and concern regarding anti social behaviours.
Yard Improvements	A	Outline Design	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Works to improve quality, rationalise and screen the existing yard from the car park improving perception of arrival quality.
ICT Improvements	A	Implementation	HIGH	EDC/ SC	Community Broadband Scheme establishing high speed connection for the Country Park and increasing potential for multi media use associated with development projects

6.0 Business Case

Introduction

Mugdock Country Park is East Dunbartonshire Council's only Country Park it welcomes approximately 800,000 visitors a year and is managed by a dedicated Country Park Team that operates the park as a free to access public facility providing environmental, educational and leisure support services. Stirling Council provides financial support for Mugdock but additionally has Plean Country Park within its boundary.

Existing Funding & Business Case Arrangement

Mugdock Country Park is an outdoor facility which is shared with Stirling Council. It is managed by a Joint Management Committee representing the interests of both Councils. The Country Park provides a range of services, facilities and events.

Securing Best Value & Prioritising Spend

The Councils are keen to maintain services and support development in a manner that secures best value and secures high quality and efficient service delivery. The Councils are seeking to maintain the delivery of services in line with budget commitments whilst also achieving the major efficiency targets which have been identified across all areas of Council activity.

Budgetary constraints require the Council to continuously review operations and prioritise investment and revenue spend to address community needs and identify opportunities for partnership collaboration (third-sector and commercial) to deliver existing and/or enhanced service levels. Areas that can support investment and revenue costs include commercial operations (café/retail/etc); land leases (forestry/ equestrian use/etc); building event rentals (halls/visitor centres) and other activity not impacting on the core mission and purpose of the Country Park.

Developing Mugdock Country Park

Mugdock is a highly valued and attractive asset. It has an important and growing role in the delivery of the Council objectives in maximising the use of the outdoor environment, country parks and greenspace assets and encouraging enhanced levels of physical activity, walking, cycling, supporting health and well-being and other organised and informal leisure activity.

The masterplan outlines opportunities for income generation that can play an important role in enabling the Country Park to remain open and provide high quality facilities and services for local people and visitors from further afield. It is important that development proposals are balanced alongside other important factors, such as environmental considerations and ensuring equal access to the park.

The table overleaf sets out a series of proposals – some of which are new, some of which build on existing activity – that present opportunities for the Country Park to increase generated income.

Visitor Numbers and Income

Income potential at Mugdock closely correlates to the number of visitors that are coming to the park. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, between 630,000 and 640,000 visitors were recorded each year through the footfall counters at the park's main entrance. Counters stopped functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic but have since been reinstated, with annual visitor numbers trending in excess of 800,000 people. This growth reflects the upsurge in popularity of accessible outdoor spaces during the pandemic.

Project	Current set-up	Income potential and other benefits	Risks	Timeline & required
Introduce a charge for car parking	Parking is currently free across the Country Park, with 85% of Mugdock's 800,000 annual visitors arriving by car. The introduction of car parking charges has been discussed for some time. Existing donation posts within the car park bring in c. £2,000 a year.	<p>Presents high income potential, which could be used to support ongoing revenue costs for the Country Park and a capital investment programme. Commonly used across other similar sites, including by Forestry & Land Scotland and the NTS, and recently introduced at Pollok Country Park (£2.50/4 hrs).</p> <p>Based on the total footfall, there are in excess of 200,000 trips by car to Mugdock each year. Even setting a low parking fee of £1.50 (all day) and accounting for different variables would generate substantial gross income of £250,000-£350,000 per year. The working for this is set out below. The VAT position would need clarified although guidance from HMRC indicates it could be made exempt.</p> <p>A complementary 'Friends of Mugdock' membership scheme – offering free parking – would generate further income (see below).</p> <p>The introduction of parking charges will help manage the number of cars on peak visiting days and incentivise sustainable travel choices.</p> <p>In the absence of any firm monitoring/enforcement, the scheme would depend on a degree of goodwill (emphasising the importance of communicating how this supports the</p>	<p>As parking has always been free at Mugdock, the introduction of charges may initially be controversial with regular park users - the scheme will need to be carefully framed as vital to support the long-term sustainability of the park and go alongside visible improvements to infrastructure. An annual membership scheme would offer free parking (an accepted model elsewhere e.g. National Trusts).</p> <p>It may exacerbate anti-social parking issues on nearby rural roads, requiring assistance from Police Scotland and local authority parking wardens to manage.</p> <p>There no scheduled public transport connections to MCP - introduction of parking charges would need to be considered alongside improved active travel options, particularly from Milngavie and Bearsden.</p> <p>Any impact on footfall/spend for Mugdock's independent traders would also need to be monitored.</p>	<p>2023-24 - investment would be required to bring all car parks up to standard and to install barriers (pay by card or scan membership card on exit) and/or payment machines.</p> <p>To tie to one car, visitors could have a barcode (physical or on their mobile) that allows a free ticket to be printed at a machine, including the reg. plate. This model is now used by the NT, replacing window stickers (stickers are a cheaper alternative, but need replaced each year).</p>
Screen productions	The Country Park has been used extensively over recent years for a variety of screen productions of different scales and budgets, including films, TV programmes, and adverts. In 2020-21, location and facility hire fees were around £10,000.	The aim should be to retain this at the current level and grow where possible, particularly given the strong performance of the screen sector in Scotland over the last few years. Being able to provide an indoor space for productions to base themselves – as is now the case with the Campsie Room - will improve the attractiveness of the Country Park as a location. The Country Park will continue to actively promote itself through Screen Scotland's Locations Network.	There is a need to ensure that screen productions do not come into conflict with other uses and public access to the Country Park – this should be managed on a case by case basis.	Ongoing – no specific investment required.

Project	Current set-up	Income potential and other benefits	Risks	Timeline & required
Friends of Mugdock scheme	A Friends of Mugdock scheme was revived in 2015, with an annual membership cost of £15 for individuals and £25 for a family. However, it was not widely promoted and then paused.	<p>Annual membership fees could be raised from the previous set-up, particularly if free parking was included – this would be the key incentive to join.</p> <p>If around half of regular (weekly) visitors join and lower proportions of monthly/less frequent visitors, this would amount to around 6,000 members and £150,000 gross income, based on £19.99 individual membership and £29.99 family membership. The working for this is set out below.</p> <p>Members could also be entitled to other benefits, such as a 10% discount in the shop and a discounted ‘members rate’ for barbecue hire and ranger activities.</p>	The Friends scheme itself is relatively risk free although it will be important to continue to emphasise that the Country Park remains free and open to all.	Initial marketing costs and ongoing administration costs, particularly if a large membership was achieved. Can happen immediately but will be given impetus by the introduction of parking charges – this would also require members being given some way of operating barriers/payment machines.
Dog field	Mugdock is popular with dog walkers and dogs are permitted in most areas of the country park. However, there is no dedicated, secure area where dogs can be allowed off the lead.	<p>A secure dog walking field where dogs can be allowed off the lead. Similar facilities work on the basis of exclusive hire – with online slots available and PIN coded gate entry, charging from £6.50/30 mins to £15 for 50 mins (for e.g. up to 4 dogs). This would be an effective way of generating income from land within the Country Park with minimal running costs. Agility equipment can add to the appeal of the site.</p> <p>Four 45 min bookings a day @ £7, averaged out over a whole year, would bring in gross income of around £10,000/year.</p>	<p>The market may be becoming saturated – there are now a considerable number of these facilities across central Scotland. Nonetheless, a pilot could be justified.</p> <p>It would also take away some land from other users – although the space requirement would not be vast.</p>	<p>Once a site has been identified, this could proceed relatively quickly.</p> <p>Fencing costs approx. £90K for 1.8m high deer fencing or alternatively adding mesh to existing 1.2m high fencing approx. £40K</p>

Project	Current set-up	Income potential and other benefits	Risks	Timeline & required
Weddings and private events	There has been no real effort to push the country park as a destination for weddings or similar private events (although this is mentioned on the website and there are frequent requests). The walled garden would provide a suitable location for events, and has undergone recent improvements with new steps/paths, and a freshly painted bandstand. A marquee is also available for hire.	<p>There are approx. 200 to 250 weddings in East Dunbartonshire each year. This is lower than council areas with a similar population, indicating that people are looking further afield for venues.</p> <p>Wedding venues typically start from £1,000 for site-only, full-day hire, and lower amounts for ceremony-only. A range of venues and pricing info within Glasgow and the surrounding area are listed on Bridebook.</p> <p>Those booking the site for wedding events would need to hire their own toilet facilities (depending on the number of guests) and catering.</p>	<p>Weddings would require exclusive use of the walled garden, limiting access to other users. There would also need to be time for assembly and disassembly of the marquee.</p> <p>Wedding parties would also require parking to be put aside for them, placing additional pressure on the car park. Coaches would need space for turning.</p>	<p>Dedicated electricity supply for the garden and necessary health and safety requirements (e.g. emergency exit signs).</p> <p>Wedding parties may need to reserve and pay for an exclusive area of the car park.</p>
Memorial walls	There is no clear strategy for memorial plaques or benches in the park. Memorial trees can be planted if requested. Many other parks/local authorities charge a set fee for standardised benches.	<p>Use a wall between the end of the stable block and walled garden to create a memorial wall with nature-inspired, decorative cast metal structures installed – forming an attractive art work and an opportunity for the public to purchase a permanent memorial to a relative or loved one.</p> <p>Similar walls within other gardens typically charge £200 to £250 for a basic plaque.</p>	This is relatively risk free – memorial walls/benches are common across gardens and parks and it is generally accepted that a charge goes alongside this.	Agree design of plaques and arrange who will install and maintain them.
Additional barbecue site	The Park has 3 BBQ sites that can be booked in advance, at £40 for <30 people & £50 for >30 people for the outdoor sites and £80 for 4 hours for the BBQ Hut. These have proved very popular, particularly on weekends during the summer. Disposable or portable BBQs are not allowed anywhere within the park.	An additional site would help to meet the proven demand for barbecue hires within the park.	The existing barbecue sites work well – an additional site would not present any additional risk.	Ready for summer 2023.

Project	Current set-up	Income potential and other benefits	Risks	Timeline & required
Ranger activities	The rangers in the country park run a programme of events and activities throughout the year. Charges are generally £12 for 3 hour events, £8 for 2 hours and £5 for 1 hour. Cheaper rates are available for school/ youth groups.	The current programme of events and activities is successful and engages a large number of people of all ages each year. Nonetheless, there are felt opportunities to further develop this offer – helping to meet demand for outdoor and nature-based learning and activities.	Minimal risk – builds on existing activity.	Ongoing.
Wellbeing events	The park has hosted different health/ wellbeing classes, with different spaces hired by practitioners.	The park has spaces that can be hired for a range of health/ wellbeing activities, including the refurbished bandstand and the Campsie Room (which can also be used as a base for film/TV productions, birthday parties, meetings, events, etc). This could be developed into a more coherent programme, in coordination with individual practitioners offering pilates, forest mindfulness, yoga, etc. A themed ‘wellbeing week’ could be organised to give this activity a focus. The main income generated would be through room hire.	Minimal risk – builds on existing activity.	Ongoing.
Craft fayre	There is an aspiration to run an annual makers/craft fayre, which does not currently happen at the park. This could make use of the park’s marquee.	The event would attract people to the park. Stallholders would be charged a set fee for a pitch. By way of comparison, the monthly Milngavie market, held every third Friday, charges £45/pitch and £70/hot food trader.	There is a monthly farmers/makers markets in Milngavie town centre – the Mugdock event should be careful not to directly compete/displace activity from this. Therefore, this is proposed as an annual special event rather than a more regular market.	Winter 2022

Project	Current set-up	Income potential and other benefits	Risks	Timeline & required
Light show experience	Light and sound shows are a popular seasonal attraction at other urban parks and country parks across Scotland. They typically feature different installations and artworks on a trail around the park, and are often themed.	The event would take place over 2-3 weeks during the winter months e.g. in the run up to Christmas. An initial pilot could be undertaken by a private operator, who would rent the land from MCP. In future years, the park could put this out to tender and have a more direct role and retain a larger proportion of the ticket income. Tickets for outdoor light show/trail events typically start at £20 for adults and £12 for children, taking around 60 to 90 minutes, and with entry from dusk until 7-8pm (closing around 9pm). Street food/drink is typically offered alongside the trail.	Minimise impact of the event on other park users and the park environment. Event itself would be taking place outside of usual park opening hours (from dusk into evening).	Nov/Dec 2022 (if possible) or Winter 2023.
Rental income	Rental income from the shop and café units brought in around £90,000 each year prior the pandemic. One unit (the cycle shop) has moved on to other, larger premises, but the remainder are leased.	The aim should be to retain this income at the current level – aiming for full occupation and small annual increases. The former cycle shop unit in the courtyard has been fitted out as the park's visitor centre and the previous visitor centre as a hireable space (largely offsetting the loss of rental income). The idea of an outdoor nursery at the park, with some indoor space, has been explored. This would be a good fit with the park's aims and ethos, and could be an important source of income. This would also make use of currently under-used indoor space.	A detailed risk assessment would naturally be required before a nursery was located on site. The primary risks would be carried by the nursery operator. Income from rental of shop/café units is an important source of income for the park. The existing tenants are a good fit with the park and there are no conflicts with wider park activity. The impact of changes to the park's operations (e.g. introduction of parking charges) on traders would need to be monitored.	Ongoing.
Options study for Mugdock Quarry – to explore zip wire and water-based activities	There are long standing health and safety concerns with the quarry, which is a popular cliff jumping location. Security fencing and warning signs are in place.	Quarry attractions could provide exciting and safe activities in a currently underused (and misused) part of the Country Park. A zip wire could be managed and run by a private operator, in a similar way to Bungee Jump Scotland at the NTS Killiecrankie site (charging £39 for 9 zip lines, taking 90 mins). There is also scope for other water-based activities such as kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding or fishing.	The quarry is located on the edge of the Country Park and these activities would not need to intrude on the wider park. It would help manage the current dangerous use of the quarry. Not all of the suggestions may be compatible with one another – an options study can explore this in more detail.	Study to take place in short to medium term, with a view to introducing quarry activities over a longer timeline.
License charges for commercial activity in the park	There are no charges or regulation of informal commercial activity in the park, such as use by professional dog walkers or personal trainers running outdoor fitness classes.	An annual charge for use of the park for commercial activity could be introduced. This would be monitored by park wardens/rangers. The Royal Parks in London have licensed both dog walkers (£225-£300 ex. VAT) and fitness instructors (£280 -£1,500 ex. VAT) since 2013. However, charging at Mugdock would be lower than this and could offer discounts for multi-year licenses. It would also help manage this activity and ensure those undertaking activities as have appropriate insurance, training etc.	Currently no charges – could be negative publicity around introduction. If introduced alongside car parking charges, dog walkers/fitness instructors would also be required to pay for this each visit (or join FoM scheme). May also be difficult to monitor – would require spot checks by wardens/rangers.	Charging structure and licensing arrangements would need to be agreed. Could be introduced 2023 or 2024.

Visitor Numbers and Income

Income potential at Mugdock closely correlates to the number of visitors that are coming to the park. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, between 630,000 and 640,000 visitors were recorded each year through the footfall counters at the park’s main entrance. Counters stopped functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic but have since been reinstated, with annual visitor numbers trending in excess of 800,000 people. This growth reflects the upsurge in popularity of accessible outdoor spaces during the pandemic.

Working backwards from the figure of 800,000 annual visitors, the table below uses evidence from the visitor survey (undertaken in late 2021 and early 2022 with 1,834 responses) to estimate how many are visiting on a weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual basis. This works out at around 102,000 unique visitors each year.

Table 1: Unique Visits and Frequency of Visit

How often do you visit?	Survey response	Individuals	Visits/year	Total visits
Annually	3%	24,000	1	24,000
Quarterly	22%	44,000	4	176,000
Monthly	43%	28,667	12	344,000
Weekly	32%	4,923	52	256,000
Total visitors	800,000	101,590	-	800,000

A Friends of Mugdock scheme is likely to appeal to more regular visitors, who will feel a closer affinity to the park and will be obtain more benefit from the incentives on offer, such as discounts on activities/purchases and free parking (assuming the scheme is introduced in parallel with parking charges). The table below provides an illustration of the potential income a membership programme could generate, based on relatively cautious assumptions that half of weekly visitors and 10% of monthly visitors would join the scheme, and small numbers of less frequent visitors.

There will be administrative and marketing costs associated with such a scheme, particularly if it is successful in attracting a large number of members. The mechanism for members to receive free parking would need to be explored in further detail. This could mean a smart card to operate a parking barrier and/or receive a free ticket from a parking meter.

Table 2: Friends of Mugdock Scheme Membership - Estimates

How often do you visit?	Number of Visitors (Unique)	Joining Membership Scheme	Gross income potential @ £24.99/ membership ¹
Annually	24,000	1% (240)	£5,998
Quarterly	44,000	1% (440)	£10,996
Monthly	28,667	10% (2,867)	£71,638
Weekly	4,923	50% (2,462)	£61,514
Total visitors	101,590	6% (6,008)	£150,145

¹Based on an individual membership rate of £19.99/year and family membership of £29.99/year, averaged at £24.99/year.

On the same basis, we have also estimated how much income could be generated from car parking charges. A more reliable estimate of the number of cars using Mugdock’s car parks could be obtained by installing vehicle counters on a temporary basis. However, the below provides an illustration of the income potential from car parking charges based on the data that is currently available. A range of variables have been taken into account, each of which can be adjusted as necessary. This includes:

- the total number of visitors – this could decline if visitors opt to travel to other locations. However, most visitors are local, with 91% travelling less than 10 miles to get to Mugdock;
- the proportion of visitors who are members and therefore get free parking – the assumptions follow through from Table 2;

- the proportion of visitors arriving by car – this is currently 85% but parking charges may encourage more to walk/cycle;
- the average number of people per car – although we do not have data specifically for Mugdock, a review of evidence from similar locations indicates that this likely falls between 2 and 3 people, including children;
- the amount charged per car – the below model has used a low daily rate of £1.50, but other similar locations often charge a higher rate.

Table 3: Parking Income - Estimates

How often do you visit?	Unique visitors (excluding members)	Visits per year	Arriving by car (85%)	Cars (2.5 people per car)	Gross income potential @ £1.50 per car
Annually	23,760	1	20,196	8,078	£12,118
Quarterly	43,560	4	148,104	59,242	£88,862
Monthly	25,800	12	263,160	105,264	£157,896
Weekly	2,462	52	108,800	43,520	£65,280
Total	95,582	-	540,260	216,104	£324,156

If visitors reduced to 630,000 per year, and other variables remain unchanged, total gross income would reduce to £255,000.

If the membership scheme grew to take in 90% of weekly visitors, and other variables remain unchanged, total gross income from parking would reduce to £272,000.

However, this would be offset by an increase in membership income.

Investment Funding (Order of Investment)

Mugdock Country Park is a public asset operated and maintained by East Dunbartonshire Council and Stirling Council for the benefits of communities and as a regional visitor attraction. Developing the asset and maximising the value of the park to communities requires significant reinvestment if it is to secure the project objectives.

The park needs a comprehensive programme of capital investment and this needs to be public sector led reflecting the nature of the asset. Commercial opportunities have been identified at the Stables Arrival Hub and where charging for services might allow. These are modest in extent. Further commercial opportunities may exist (Venue Hire/ Events/ Market/Wellbeing/ Children’s Trail) but are likely to be generated from confidence in the destination and confirmed levels of footfall and customer service needs. The capital funding programme envisages:

Mugdock Country Park Capital/Revenue Investment

- Continued Revenue / Operational Funding as required
- Capital Funding Programme (EDC/SC) suggested programme being:
 - * Year 1/2—£292,000 2022/23
 - * Year 2/3—£590,000 2023/24
 - * Year 3/4—£310,000 2024/25
 - * Year 4/5—£197,000 2025/26
 - * Year 5/6—£30,000 2026/27
- Grant Support & Leverage Funding (Commercial Partners)
 - * £560,000 Years 1– 5 2022/27

Grant Support

A wide range of grant support programmes exist. For Parks many of these focus on heritage assets and more traditional park development. Securing significant external funds for Mugdock will be challenging. The primary focus will be to seek to develop projects with partners focussed on Natural Environment/ Heritage/ Active Travel and Community Initiatives.

- **Grant Applications Environmental & Woodland/Woodland Management Projects**
Grant support funding from external bodies is likely to focus on partner activity and support for areas of development that align closely with external funder remits and objectives. Potential opportunities to explore include NatureScot; Central Scotland Green Network, Forestry Commission Scotland; Sustrans and a range of potential new funding streams associated with Climate Change Action Funds.

■ **Grant Applications Active Travel Projects**

Sustrans have invested heavily in active travel and the development of national/ regional cycle routes. Paths for Everyone / Places for Everyone funding supports projects that encourage and make it easier for people to walk and cycle for everyday journeys. Sustrans categorise projects 1-4 with funding support typically 50% of capital costs, dialogue on specific projects is recommended to explore opportunities /determine levels of funding support associated with developing active travel routes, in particular town centre links.

■ **Grant Applications Community Based Projects**

A wide range of funding support vehicles are available to 3rd Sector /Trust and wider Community Partners. Small grant sums support a wide range of environmental, access; community; educational; arts projects and projects targeted disadvantaged and excluded groups. Funds are typically small and frequently support programmes and participatory initiatives rather than solely capital projects.

Leverage Funding & Complementary Investment

Commercial applications within Mugdock are limited. The opportunities are strongest where commercial operations could complement activity and represent a viable commercial operation (potentially at the Stables Hub) or where development obligations would allow cross funding.

■ **Investment by Co-Partners & Service Operators**

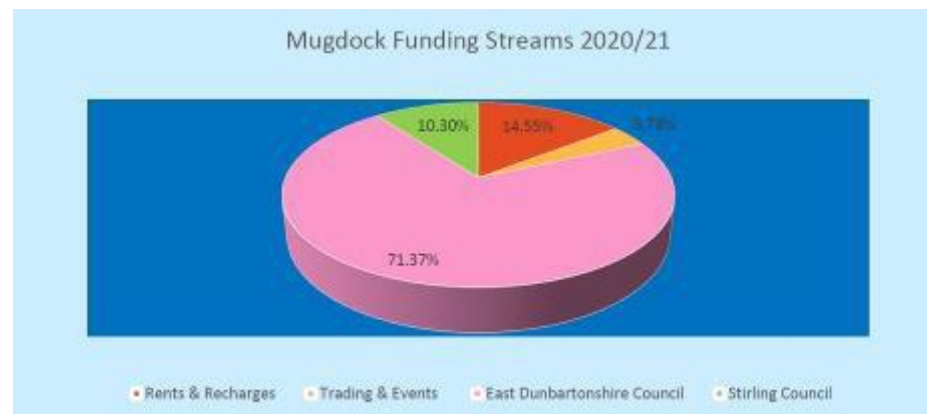
Limited areas of activity in the park could be attractive to private operators. Outward Bound/Wellness/Unleashed Dog field type activities offer a limited opportunity for capital/revenue funding. These are unlikely, in our view to raise significant new capital funds and in some cases require considerable initial outlay.

Donation Schemes

Over and above the existing donation posts which are located within the Stable Car Park possible donations schemes to plant a tree, sponsor a bench, donate for grasslands, wetlands etc should be explored. It is noted however that careful monitoring is required to ensure the Country Park does not become saturated with these elements and that they are only permitted within the key visitor areas and do not encroach on the SSSI.

Staff Resources

A key asset for Mugdock Country Park is its staff. Current resourcing includes for 10.5 full time employment posts. In taking forward a 5 year Strategy for MCP a review of current staff levels will be necessary to ensure staffing is appropriate to the strategic direction of the Park and allows suitable commitment to key Action Plan projects.



Project Element	Item	EDC/ SC funding	External funding (incl Grants)	Timeline					Potential Support Funding
				Years 1-2 2022/2023	Years 2-3 2023/2024	Years 3-4 2024/2025	Years 4-5 2025/2026	Years 5-6 2026/2027	
VISITOR WELCOME & ORIENTATION	Entrance signage	£ 60,000			£ 60,000				
	Rationalise car park	£ 5,000				£ 5,000			
	Signage Strategy	£ -			£ -				
	Welcome signage	£ 5,000	£ 10,000			£ 15,000			Lottery
	Courtyard upgrades (incl painting works)	£ 20,000		£ 5,000			£ 5,000	£ 10,000	Lottery and Others
	Road Signage	£ 5,000			£ 5,000				
	Directional signage	£ 15,000	£ 15,000		£ 15,000	£ 15,000			Lottery
	Interpretation (Site Wide)	£ 15,000	£ 15,000		£ 15,000	£ 15,000			Lottery
HERITAGE FOCUS	Create plaza to front of Stables	£ 50,000	£ 50,000			£ 50,000	£ 50,000		Lottery
	Connect Stables to Walled Garden South Entrance	£ 40,000	£ 40,000			£ 80,000			Lottery
	Introduce Zoo related sculptures and surfacing inlays around Craighend Castle	£ 10,000	£ 10,000		£ 20,000				Lottery
	WWII Gunsites	£ 30,000	£ 30,000			£ 60,000			Lottery and Others
	Mugdock Castle	£ 50,000	£ 80,000		£ 80,000	£ 50,000			Clan Graham/ FVL and Others

Project Element	Item	EDC/ SC funding	External funding (incl Grants)	Timeline					Potential Support Funding
				Years 1-2 2022/2023	Years 2-3 2023/2024	Years 3-4 2024/2025	Years 4-5 2025/2026	Years 5-6 2026/2027	
PROTECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	SSSI Gateway signage	£ 35,000	£ 35,000			£ 70,000			NatureScot/ Lottery
	Establish path hierarchy	£ 20,000	£ 50,000		£ 20,000	£ 50,000			Sustrans
	Bracken Encroachment	£ 10,000	£ -	£ 5,000			£ 5,000		NatureScot
	Re evaluate Deer issues (Impact Assessment)	£ -	£ -						NatureScot
	Mugdock Loch Condition Survey	£ -		£ -					NatureScot
	Path braiding	£ 5,000	£ -		£ 5,000				
	Woodland Management Plan & required Implementation	£ 15,000	£ 15,000		£ 15,000	£ 15,000			Forestry Grant Scheme / Climate Change Funds/ Woodland Trust
	Beetle assemblage surveys	£ -	£ -						NatureScot
BIODIVERSITY FOCUS	Create wildflower meadows around Craigend Castle	£ 5,000	£ 5,000		£ 5,000	£ 5,000			NatureScot
	Craigend Quarry Biodiversity Infrastructure	£ 10,000	£ 10,000				£ 10,000	£ 10,000	Biodiversity Challenge Fund if reopened
	Introduce bird hides and viewing areas	£ 10,000	£ 10,000				£ 10,000	£ 10,000	Lottery
CONNECTIVITY	Improve connections from Milngavie	£ 10,000	£ 10,000		£ 10,000	£ 10,000			BID
	Improve links to wider Green Network & Town Centre	£ 10,000	£ 10,000			£ 10,000	£ 10,000		BID/ Sustrans

Project Element	Item	EDC/ SC funding	External funding (incl Grants)	Timeline					Potential Support Funding
				Years 1-2 2022/2023	Years 2-3 2023/2024	Years 3-4 2024/2025	Years 4-5 2025/2026	Years 5-6 2026/2027	
FACILITIES	Extend Play Area into Natural Play Area	£ 150,000	£ 150,000			£ 150,000	£ 150,000		Lottery
	Woodland Sculpture Trail	£ 10,000	£ 10,000				£ 20,000	£ 0	Creative Scotland
	Unleashed dog fields	£ 5,000			£ 5,000				
	Venue Hire at Walled Garden	£ 5,000		£ 5,000					
	Additional BBQ site & Shelter	£ 100,000			£ 50,000	£ 50,000			
	Memorial plaques	£ -							
	Memorial benches	£ -							
	Wellbeing Tranquility Hub	£ -							
	Chainsaw training	£ -							
	Children's Trail	£ 5,000	£ 5,000			£ 10,000			
	Car parking charges at Stable Car Park	£ 10,000					£ 10,000		
	Annual Craft Market	£ -							
	Light show experience	£ -							
	Outdoor Nursery Support space/ Business space	£ -							

Project Element	Item	EDC/ SC funding	External funding (incl Grants)	Timeline					Potential Support Funding
				Years 1-2 2022/2023	Years 2-3 2023/2024	Years 3-4 2024/2025	Years 4-5 2025/2026	Years 5-6 2026/2027	
	Filming Location	£ -							
	Theatre Events	£ -							
	Friends of Mugdock Country Park	£ -							
	Craigend Quarry Options Plan	£ 15,000			£ 15,000				
ESSENTIAL	Waste Water Treatment Tank	£ 160,000			£ 160,000				
ESSENTIAL	Craigend Quarry Fencing	£ 170,000		£ 170,000					
	Litter Bin upgrades site wide	£ 5,000			£ 5,000				
ESSENTIAL	Park Maintenance Vehicles	£ 24,000		£ 12,000			£ 12,000		
	Walled Garden planting plan & implementation	£ 200,000		£ 50,000	£ 150,000				
ESSENTIAL	Tree Survey	£ 5,000		£ 5,000					
ESSENTIAL	Outlying Car Parks upgrade	£ 60,000			£ 60,000				

Project Element	Item	EDC/ SC funding	External funding (incl Grants)	Timeline					Potential Support Funding
				Years 1-2 2022/2023	Years 2-3 2023/2024	Years 3-4 2024/2025	Years 4-5 2025/2026	Years 5-6 2026/2027	
ESSENTIAL	Replacement BBQs	£ 20,000		£ 20,000					
ESSENTIAL	Electrical upgrades	£ 5,000		£ 5,000					
ESSENTIAL	Yard Improvements	£ 20,000			£ 20,000				
ESSENTIAL	ICT Improvements	£ 15,000		£ 15,000					
TOTALS		£ 1,419,000	£ 560,000	£ 292,000	£ 715,000	£ 660,000	£ 282,000	£ 30,000	

Grant Body	Funding Priorities	Mugdock Potential	
Aspiring Communities Fund	Community Grants	High	Eligible
Bank of Scotland Foundation	Community Grants	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Biffa Awards	Community Buildings / Cultural Facilities / Biodiversity	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Big Lottery / Heritage Lottery	Parks for People – Historic Parks	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Big Lottery	Awards for All – Community Projects	High	Eligible
Central Scotland Green Network	Partnership Funding – Woodland Management	High	Eligible
Communities Food & Health Scotland		Moderate	Discussion recommended
Climate Change Action Fund	Small Community Grants. Projects reducing Carbon	High	Eligible
CAF Tourie Foundation Fund	Small Community Grants	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Empowering Communities Fund		Moderate	Discussion recommended
Ernest Cook Foundation	Apprenticeships Environmental Work / Training	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Esme Fairbairn Foundation		Moderate	Discussion recommended
EventScotland	Events Support	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Forestry Commission Scotland		High	Eligible
Field Studies Outreach Education	Supporting Disadvantaged Young People- Environment	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Greggs Foundation	Small Community Grants	Moderate	Discussion recommended
LIFE Programme (EU)	Climate change Adaption	High	Eligible
LEADER		Moderate	Discussion recommended
Groundworks	Bags for life – Greenspace Community Initiatives	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Grow Wild	Community Gardens / Orchards /Native Woodlands	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Growing Greener Britain	Greenspace-Community Crowdfunding	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Morrison Foundation	Local Good Causes	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Nineveh Charitable Trust	Small Communities/Environment Grants	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Smarter Choices Smarter Places – Paths for All	Encouraging Communities in Active Travel	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Social Enterprise Fund		Moderate	Discussion recommended
Regeneration Capital Grant Fund		Moderate	Discussion recommended
Renewable Energy Funds		Moderate	Discussion recommended
Robertson Trust	Small Community Grants	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Scottish Natural Heritage Grant Programme	Small Environmental Management Grants	High	Eligible
Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP)		Moderate	Discussion recommended
Scottish Landfill Tax Community Funds		Moderate	Discussion recommended
SportScotland	Small Grants- Upgraded facilities / Outdoor Adventure	Moderate	Discussion recommended
Sustrans	Active Travel / Cycling / Place	High	Eligible
Woodland Trust		Moderate	Discussion recommended
Weir Charitable Foundation		Moderate	Discussion recommended
Veolia Environmental Trust Awards		Moderate	Discussion recommended

Appendix 1:

Visitor & Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Appendix 2: Existing Park Assessment

Activities

Elements Core Facilities	Assessment of Asset			
	Weak Requires Invest- ment	Good Requires Invest- ment	Positive Requires Invest- ment	Notes
Access/Town Connections				Weak connections.
Public Transport Connectivity				No public transport. No direct connections from Town Centre or Station
Internal Path Networks / Trails				Good range of paths surfaced and unsurfaced trails / routing clear but lacking hierachy
Wider Green Network Links				Wider network connections unclear. Mid forest connections. Legibility poor
Visitor Centre Facilities				Requires consideration regarding relocated facility
Theatre				Unique offer.
Secondary Bldgs / Facilities				Hireable facilities & Educational use primary purpose
Mugdock Castle				Adds to site character and offer
Craigend Castle				Good interpretation would benefit from more work on setting
Play Facilities				Lack accessible play and site specific character
Interpretation & signage				Good quality information would benefit from creation of legible sign family
Woodland Assets				Core environmental assets
Ranger Service				Positive comment. Enthusiastic and customer focussed team. Dedicated sense of commitment and interest
WWII Gunsites				Lacks Interpretation

Events

Elements Core Facilities	Assessment of Asset			
	Weak Requires Invest- ment	Good Requires Invest- ment	Positive Requires Invest- ment	Notes
Commercial Arrangements				
Caulders Garden Centre				Brings a lot of people to MCP
Mugdock Makers				Good quality range of merchandise
Charlies Coffee Shop				
Stables Tearoom				

Activities

MUGDOCK	
Walking/ Dog Walking	Most popular activity, paths mainly unsurfaced.
Running	Paths not surfaced/ no changing facilities, use limited.
Cycling	No on site cycle hire
Play	2 areas, at visitor centre & within woodland area
Wildlife/ Bird Watching	Offering opportunities to see a variety of animals/ birds
Toadstool Sculpture Trail	In Woodland areas
BBQ	Covered BBQ areas, popular and well used
Picnic Areas	Well used, in proximity to play area
Horse Riding	Paths used by local stables
Seasonal Trails	Fairy Trail in Craigend Wood. Christmas Trail & Santa Workshop
Wildlife/ Bird Watching	Offering opportunities to see deer, badgers, pine martins, birds of prey etc
Forest Schools	Offering education in the Park

Events

MUGDOCK	
Walks/ Talks/ Activities & Events	Programme of Formal/ Informal Learning offered by Ranger Services including Lads & dads Map reading/ Sensational Safari/ Wildlife Weans/Forest Schools
School Outings	Nursery Groups & Lower Primary School outings
Traditional Craft/ Woodland Courses	Hosted by Rangers
Volunteer Days	Opportunities to work in wider park
Stargazing at Mugdock	Led by Rangers with future Astrological Society connections
Pantomime	Hosted at Mugdock
Pop Up Opera	Scottish Opera
Cross Country Dog Agility	Covering wide areas of the park
Theatre Events	Plays & Filming
Weddings	Held in Walled Garden and available marquee for use

