
Land at former Cofflete Mill: A Community Nature Space

Project Plan and delivery



Document Version (control)

Version	Date	Created by	Reason
1	22 Nov 2018	Joe Parish	Initial draft for S106 funds
2	29 Jan 2019	Joe Parish	Revised costs excluding VAT
3	16 Sept 2019	Joe Parish	Pre public meeting updates
4	09 March 2021	Joe Parish	Coronavirus pandemic update
5	13 Sept 2022	Joe Parish	Phase 1 review and updates
6	Jan 2025	A Whish	Phase I and II – review and updates

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1. Project Definition

1.1 Background

South Hams District Council (SHDC) owned a 0.1 hectare (0.25 acres) parcel of land at head of Cofflete Creek on the site of the former Cofflete Mill which they offered to Brixton Parish Council (BPC) for use as a community asset. BPC commissioned a valuation to establish prospective acquisition purposes and identification of potential ownership risks.

The Parish completed full ownership in Spring, 2018.

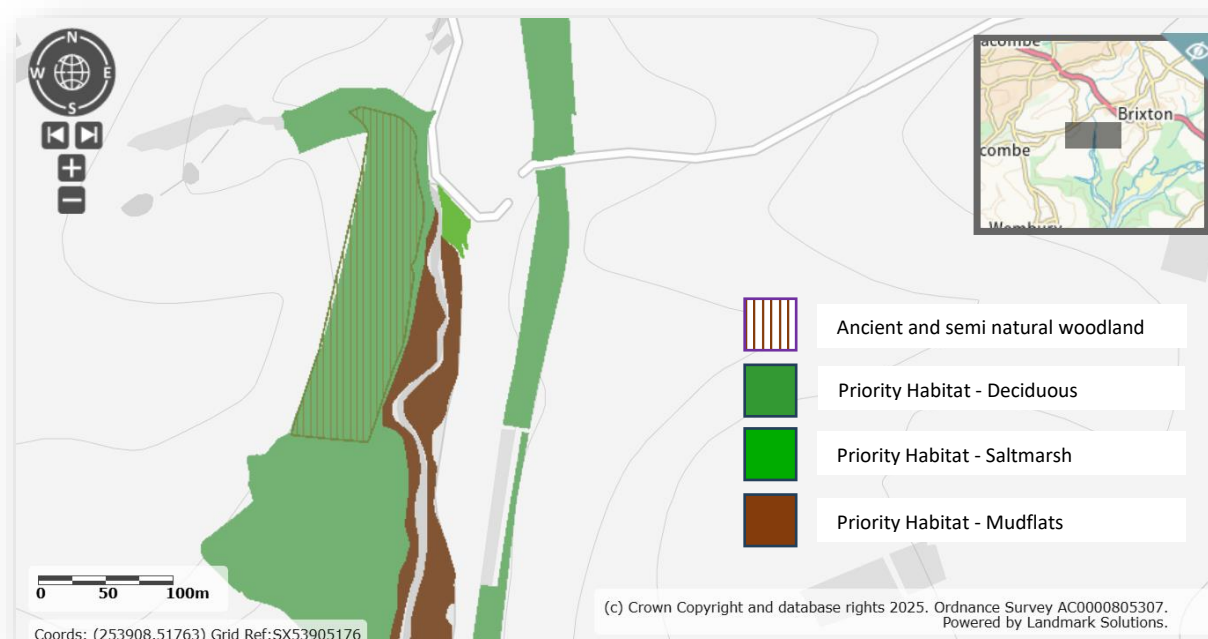
Cofflete Creek and Sherford Stream form a tributary of the River Yealm and is part of the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries' *Special Area of Conservation*. This designation means it is strictly protected under the EC Habitats Directive. It is designated for its extensive mudflats, attracting wading birds but this particular section is known to have a population of the nationally scarce Tentacled Lagoon worm (*Alkmaria romijni*) source: Natural England.

Other important designations include:

- South Devon National Landscape
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Coastal saltmarsh, mudflats and deciduous woodland
- Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland

The land comprises of a broadleaved wooded copse (eastern upper area) and mixed scrub vegetation abutting the saltmarsh and flood plain of Cofflete Creek (western lower area). The west and north boundaries consist of a natural stone retaining wall and timber post and rail fence, with stock fencing along the southern boundary. The eastern boundary is formed by a depleted Devon hedge.

Following the decline of the Cofflete Mill building, becoming uninhabited in the mid-1900s, the site has reverted to natural vegetation, mixed woodland species and shrub - its historical significance being hidden and forgotten. In 2013 a timber post and rail fence was erected to prevent unauthorised vehicles parking. It suffers from varying degrees of dog fouling and littering.



Extract from Magic Maps showing key designations [Magic Maps](#)

Following the publication of the *valuation report* in June 2018, BPC voted to progress the purchase of the land in line with the adopted BP Neighbourhood Plan and vision to:

1. *Conserve and enhance the rural and historic environment of Brixton Parish with its beautiful landscape of woods, farmland and estuary.*
2. *Retain the identity and the independent character of Brixton village and its surrounding hamlets*
3. *Nurture thriving communities across the parish by providing improved facilities and taking opportunities to meet the needs and wishes of the community*

This project contributes to the following relevant parts of the Council's *Environment objectives*:

1. *To proactively conserve, protect and enhance landscape features of local significance including the River Yealm estuary*
2. *To promote the creation of new Local Green Spaces*
3. *To protect and encourage biodiversity within the Parish*
4. *To conserve and maintain historical features*

Additionally, it follows the *Community objective*, to encourage new facilities within the Parish and the *Sport & Recreation objectives* to encourage initiatives that will improve the health and wellbeing of parishioners.



Image Copyright: Richard Moore on behalf of *South Devon Protected Landscape*

1.2 Project Aim

The aim of this project is to create a community amenity space for the residents of Brixton Parish with careful consideration to the significant historic and environmental value of this site.

1.3 Project Objectives

To achieve this aim, the project objectives are to create:

1. A space where members of the community and visitors can sit, relax and absorb the natural beauty of the area
2. A learning environment for Brixton St. Marys Primary School and visitors to discover the environmental significance and rich historic importance that Cofflete Creek has to offer
3. A space that demonstrates to the community, adjacent landowners and visitors to the creek just how important it is to respect the environment we live in. This will encourage visitors to control their dogs, eradicate fouling and to take their litter home with them.
4. Develop good partnership working with the stakeholders such as the South Hams District Council, Devon Wildlife Trust and the South Devon National Landscape.



1.4 Project Deliverables


1. To clear and control bramble and nettle growth from the ground, the stone walls and to remove any rubbish from the land
2. To identify the saplings and trees for retention or removal/pruning where valued as features of the amenity space
3. Conduct a walkover and review so a landscape scheme can be designed, identifying specific areas for works including:
 - a. defining the site boundaries
 - b. any structural improvements needed for access into, out of and through the land
 - c. areas for sitting/standing to relax and for observing the wildlife present in the creek
 - d. information and interpretation boards
4. Conduct a public safety risk assessment to identify any measures required to mitigate against the risk of injury to users of the space.

1.5 Project Outcome

A small, yet valuable community asset that Brixton Parish can be proud of through the creation of a nature space to be enjoyed by all without detriment to quality of life for wildlife and the nearby residents of Brixton Torr.

2 Initial Timescales and Milestone setting

Milestone		Milestone detail	
1.	Structural survey of walls, legal advice on liability and Purchase of land	Brixton Parish Council secures purchase of land, following completion of surveys, and receives confirmation from South Hams District Council that there is no transfer of outstanding liabilities	
MILESTONE 1 COMPLETE – JAN 2020			
2.	Ecological survey and tree felling	Ecologist survey by Peter Beale to identify ecological opportunities and trees for felling/pruning for ecological improvement and public safety	
MILESTONE 2 COMPLETE – FEB 2020			
3.	Rebuild perimeter/retaining walls and fencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fencing required due to clearance work having taken place, exposing boundaries to adjacent fields and increased access to site exposing risks of falling from height Commission dry stone wall contractor to rebuild collapsed sections of the old mill garden walls. 	
MILESTONE 3 COMPLETE – MAY 2020			
4	Fencing and signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In agreement with the adjacent landowner (Kitley estate Contacts: Jonny Fraser and Rodney Bastard) boundary line installed with stock proof fencing (July) – resolved landowner concerns. Signage installed on existing fence and top entrance access gate. 	
MILESTONE 4 COMPLETE – SEPTEMBER 2020			
5.	Install entrance fence with pedestrian gate	Install fence and access gate adjacent to public highway to formalise entrance. Install small section of fence at rear of site to prevent access to higher site.	
MILESTONE 5 COMPLETE – FEB 2022			
6.	Conduct a Public Safety Risk Assessment	To ensure the public do not come to harm upon accessing the site (unauthorised access before being open to the public and when officially open for community use), a public risk assessment is required for any risk mitigation measures e.g. fencing a signage.	
MILESTONE 6 COMPLETE – DRAFT APRIL 2022; FINAL SEPT 2022			
7.	Lower site open to the public	Commissioning and installation of interpretation board. Public safety information/warning signs installed	
MILESTONE 7 COMPLETE – OCT 2022			
8.	Purchase bench	Needs to be sustainable, but resilient to damp and salt water ground conditions as well as theft and vandal proof	
MILESTONE 8 COMPLETE – OCT 2022			

9.	Progress higher site (old Mill Garden) – Landscape and ecological plan; PSRA	Decide on entrance point and can it be access for all abilities. Public safety risk assessment of higher site and mitigation measures (fencing vertical drops) identified. Option for circular route through site. Purchase benches and small site info/interpretation board	
MILESTONE 9 COMPLETE – MAY 2023			
10.	Review Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in project team • Set new milestones 	
MILESTONE 10 TARGET DATE – AUTUMN 2023			

3 Revised Timescales and milestone setting from Autumn 2023

	Milestone	Milestone Detail	Completed
11.	Site Visit and assessment Winter 2023	Site visit with Cllr Neil Pope and A Whish to review site condition and consider design options	
12.	BPC site visit 19 th October 2024	Cllrs to meet on site and review ideas	
13.	Initial designs and presentation to BPC 4 th November 2024	A Whish shared presentation (Zoom Meeting) with BPC Cllrs	
14.	Public Consultation 16 th November 2024	Display boards prepared and shared with Community in St Marys Church. 2 Options given: Option 1: Open up upper and lower areas to access with landscape works and path Option 2: Open up lower area in Phase 1 with bird hide; initiate hedgerow planting along upper boundaries	
15.	BPC to agree new programme and designs 29 th January 2025	BPC to consider designs following Community Consultation and feedback; Updated Project Plan shared	

4 Project Scope and Exclusions

This plan is for the small piece of land purchased by Brixton Parish Council. Although it is hoped that the adjacent land, landmark twin arch bridge and Mill Lane will benefit in terms of preservation and protection from the creation of this community asset, they are identified but will not be included for funding improvements in this plan.

5 Constraints and Assumptions

Constraints

The following have been identified as constraints to the project:

1. Volunteer time
2. Funding
3. Improvements to boundary fence may not be negotiable and will detract from the aesthetics of the space – **update version 4: this was removed in Winter 2019 when tenants left the site and BPC replaced with stock proof fence**
4. Managing use and expectations as parking is limited for residents and visitors. The highway by the dyke bridge is used as a turning circle for residents now that the through road is impassable so encouraging active travel for visitors with walking and cycling the priority
5. Adverse impacts from wider visitors who do not respect the beauty of the natural environment or nearby residents. There is history of frequent littering, dog fouling and speeding traffic.

Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made:

1. Following unanimous support at the Brixton Parish Council meeting on 18th April 2018, the residents will volunteer their time to the project either through physical work, project management or fund raising.
2. Brixton St. Marys Primary school will use the community asset, as they already visit the creek during the academic year.
3. The asset will boost visitor numbers who access the area on foot or by bike and may support future efforts to improve cycling connectivity from Otter Nurseries to Brixton village
4. Having a well-managed Creekside area will encourage visitors to respect the special qualities of the estuary, the residents and other visitors.
5. This project will not impact on local pheasant shooting arrangements or visitors of organised pheasant shoots present on the creek and in the adjacent private woods.

6 Users and Interested parties

6.1 Users

The following are likely users of the future community asset:

1. Residents of Brixton village, Brixton Torr, Spriddlestone, Fordbrook, Holehay and Coombe.
2. Residents of Elburton who have accessed via the Sustrans cycle network (NCN27)
3. Residents of Newton Ferrers, Noss Mayo and Wembury who access the creek on spring tide for water-based activities
4. Visitors staying at holiday lets in the nearby area

- Children attending Brixton St. Marys Primary school

6.2 Interested parties

The following are likely parties interested in the project:

- Residents of Brixton Torr
- Adjacent landowners
- Devon Wildlife Trust
- South Hams District Council
- South Devon National Landscape (formerly called the *Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*)

7 Funding

7.1 Current funding

This project plan has been written for two main reasons:

- For Brixton Parish Council to demonstrate to the community that it has well thought out and documented objectives to achieve a space for the benefit of the community and,
- To demonstrate to prospective funders and funding sources how the project will achieve its objectives and identify where funding is required.

This project currently has s106 monies allocated as well as community together funds

7.2 Possible future funds required

Table 1 below identifies the anticipated costs.

NB: At this stage expectation are that much of this community project will be achieved by community volunteers

Table 1:

Item	Cost (ex VAT)	Source of cost/quote	Source of funding (tbc)
Purchase of land	£10 000	SHDC estates and verified by valuation report commissioned by BPC	S106 monies
Conveyancing costs	£5 000	Conveyancer	S106 monies
Structural survey of stone wall adjacent road	£360	Maurice Parker structural engineers Ltd	S106 monies
Recommended work to wall	£450	Maurice Parker structural engineers Ltd	S106 monies
Tree work recommended from tree surgeon	£4 650	Quote from	S106 monies
Picnic bench: Timber Recycled plastic	£455	Online Playgrounds.co.uk	Communities Together Funds
Bench: Timber Recycled plastic	£280	Sustainable Furniture UK Ltd	Communities Together Funds
2 No. Interpretation boards (1 re Mill history, 1 re creek importance)	£1600 (recycled plastic lectern)	Filcris Ltd	Communities Together Funds
Timber fencing (post and rail to rosipa standards)	£2000 (est)	Estimate based on similar fence area of Brixstix play space and additional fencing requirements	S106 monies

Kissing gate access sets (2)	£430	Jacksons Fencing Ltd	Communities Together Funds /Lottery/ composters/Yealm energy
Sundries (Brushcutter fuel, brushcutter cable, nails, screws)	£30	N/A	Communities Together Funds /Lottery/ composters/Yealm energy
Estimated Total funds needed	£25255		
Total confirmed contributions	S106 monies - £23055 CTF – £4 820.02		

An expenditure plan will be kept up to date in Appendix B

8 Communication plan

The communication plan sets out the stakeholders and interested parties who the project team will engage with and inform of the project, its objectives and any requirements of them for the project to succeed. A separate communication plan will be kept up to date and as an appendix to this document:

Stakeholder	Method of communication	Reason for communication
Brixton Torr residents	Monthly Parish Council meetings; Parish magazine; Verbally from project team; Email Public meetings	Support and request for volunteers
Adjacent landowners	In writing/verbally	Awareness and cooperation with any boundary issues
Brixton Parish community	Monthly Parish Council meeting Parish magazine	Project progress updates; BPC supported project
Brixton St. Marys Primary school	Email Verbally from project team	Beneficiary of community asset
Tree specialist	Email/phone/verbally	Tree advice
SHDC	Email/phone/verbally	Planning advice and any permissions

9 Risk Management plan

The following risks have been identified and will be monitored in the risk register in appendix c:

1. Funding shortfalls
2. Not enough volunteers will slow project delivery
3. Unsupportive landowners may prevent some objectives/deliverables being achieve.
4. Vandalism to equipment and structures
5. Unforeseen issues on site following initial clearance

10 Future management of community asset

Having purchased the land from SHDC, Brixton Parish Council assumes full responsibility for the future management of the site from liabilities to successful delivery of the project aims and objectives. The community, especially the residents of Brixton Torr, who supported the purchasing of the land to protect and enhance the site are also assumed to take and inherit responsibility for the general upkeep of the land.

Appendices

Appendix A – Photos and images



explore south devon

Cofflete Creek

The name Cofflete comes from the Old English 'flet', or 'foet' meaning an arm or inlet of the sea, a tidal estuary.

History
On this site stood Cofflete Mill. It was built here to take advantage of the tidal flow from the local estuary, providing power to turn the mill wheels. The mill was in operation until 1833, after which it was turned into a house and renamed Crook House, Cofflete. In more recent times it became derelict and was demolished.

The history of Cofflete in the creek goes way back before the mill. It is known from a legend of the time when a woman named Mary was married to a man named John. They had a son named John and a daughter named Mary. John was a fisherman and Mary was a weaver. They lived in a small cottage on the bank of the creek. One day John was out fishing and Mary was at work. A large storm came and the creek burst its banks. The water was so high that it carried away the mill. John and Mary were both killed. The creek was so angry that it carried away the mill. John and Mary were both killed. The creek was so angry that it carried away the mill. John and Mary were both killed.

Wildlife
There is more wildlife in and around this little creek than you might first think. Great local interest will be rewarded with many natural encounters.

Flora
The banks are lined with a variety of trees and shrubs. Some of the most common are Hawthorn, Dogwood, and Dog Rose. There are also many wildflowers and ferns. The water is clear and the banks are lush with greenery.

Conservation
The creek is a protected area and is managed by the local council. There are several signs and markers throughout the area to help visitors understand the importance of the site. The council has taken many steps to protect the creek and its surroundings. This includes planting trees and shrubs, and removing any rubbish or litter. The council also monitors the water quality and the health of the creek. This helps to ensure that the creek remains a healthy and beautiful place for everyone to enjoy.

South Devon Wildlife Trust
The poster also features logos for South Devon Wildlife Trust and other local organizations. It includes contact information for the trust and a website link.

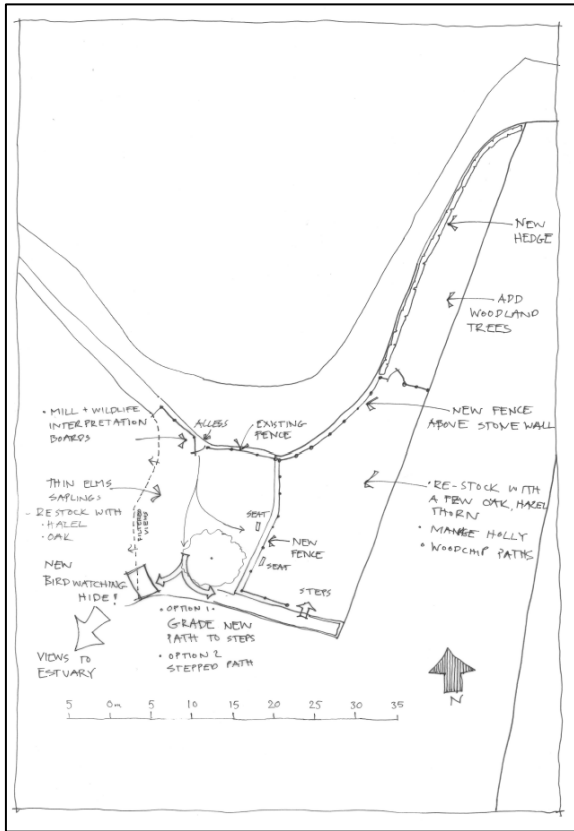


Image: Initial concept Landscape Plan
Included in public consultation November 2024

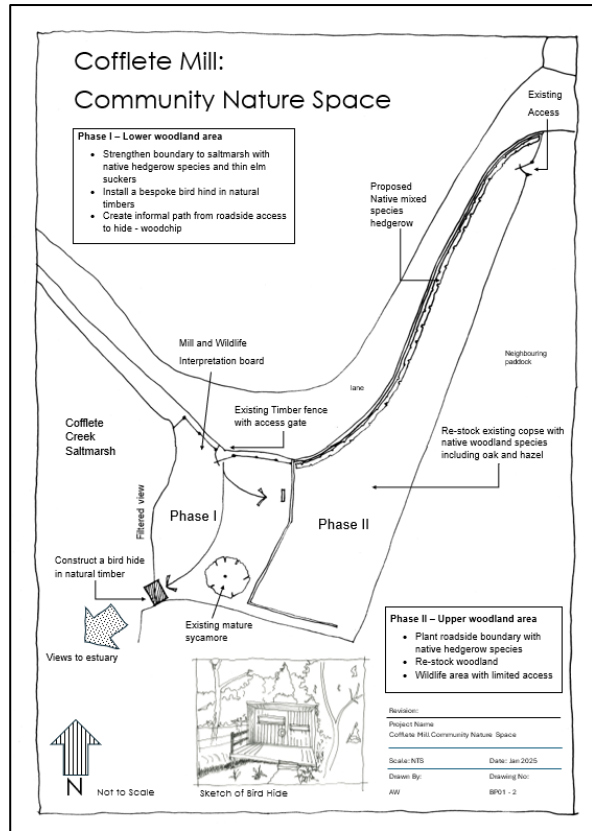


Image: Updated Landscape Plan Jan 2025

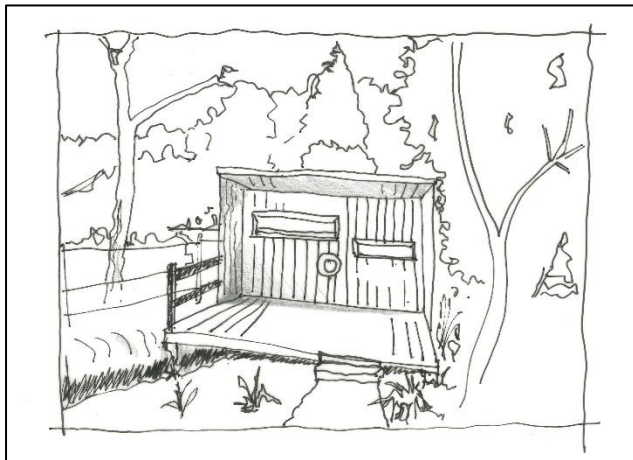


Image: Sketch of Bird Hide

Tree packs



Hedge

Make a natural screen or connect existing woodland to help wildlife stay on the move. You will get a variety of each species for 8 metres of full, easy to manage hedging.

For a longer length, our Wild Harvest, Year Round Colour, Wildlife, and Wild Wood packs also make great hedgerows and are available with 105 or 420 saplings.

- **Trees:** 30
- **Species:** dog rose, hawthorn, hazel, crab apple, dogwood
- **Size of land:** 6-8 metres of double-row hedging



Copse

Plant a mini forest, school classroom or a peaceful spot that's an oasis for birds. You will get 10 of each species for a small, tranquil copse.

- **Trees:** 30
- **Species:** silver birch, rowan, wild cherry
- **Size of land:** tennis court

Image: Native trees list options

Appendix B – Communication plan

Stakeholder	Date	Reason	Result/comments	Action
SHDC - Estates	2018	Initial discussion re purchasing land	Progress purchase	BPC to obtain community support
Community	June BPC meeting	Support to acquire land to protect from private market	Unanimous support to protect land and create a simple valuable space without impacting residents of Torr	BPC to commission land valuation
Community	17 th Sept 2019	Presentation of pros and cons should BPC acquire land to protect from private market		BPC to progress purchase of site for fair market value
Kitley Estate (Mr Rodney Bastard)	July 2020	Agree boundary line for stock proof fencing	Established clear boundary and allowed to encroach by 1.5m onto Kitley land for southern boundary	Commission fencing contractor for stock proof boundary fence
Kitley estate (Jonny Fraser and Rodney Bastard)	August 2020	Landowner unhappy with quality and position of fencing at NE boundary (adjacent gateway) and southern boundary.	Agreed to ask for several posts to be replaced – acknowledged groundworks plant driver knocked corner post.	NE boundary fence and gate needs to be moved to highway not access over corner of Kitley land as they will be moving the access gate
Community	5 March 2022	volunteer day	Positive day with many local residents giving up their time for vegetation clearance and path laying	None
Community	June 2022	Opinion on type and number of benches to install	Single bench with back rest	

Appendix c – Project costs tracker

Supplier	Type of expense	Date	Total Paid	Net	VAT	Funding
Stratton Creber	Conveyance	Jul-18	£672.00	£560.00	£112.00	s106 funding
Maurice Parker	Structural survey of wall	May-19	£360.00	£300.00	£60.00	s106 funding
Howard & Over	Conveyance	Aug/Sept 2018	£450.00	£450.00		s106 funding
Howard & Over	Conveyance	Jan-20	£8,181.42	£7,775.42	£406.00	s106 funding
C & H Tree Surgery	Tree felling and pruning	Feb-20	£4,650.00	£3,875.00	£775.00	s106 funding
B Battenson Dry Stone Walling	Wall repairs	May-20	£450.00	£450.00		s106 funding
West Plant Ltd	Boundary stock proof fence	Sep-20	£3,324.00	£2,770.00	£554.00	s106 funding
Totals			£18,087.42	£15,620.42	£1,795.00	

Note – any VAT paid is reclaimed

[Appendix D – Risk Register](#)

[Appendix E – Public Safety Risk Assessment](#)