

## Agenda Item 4

For decision – Review of community project to improve river access at Rodden Meadow

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### Summary

To decide if the council approves the community project to review options for improving river access at Rodden Meadow. The detail of the access proposal, together with the specific designs, will be drafted following active consultation with the local community.

Project key principles are a surfaced access-for-all path installed by FTC; a platform below the eyeline, near the riverbank; access steps from the platform to the river including information about river safety

### Background

Rodden Meadow is a much cherished natural riverside open space within Frome. It is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest site that FTC manages at just under 2 ha. The river forms the southern boundary where alder and willow grow on the riverbank. Mature oak and sycamore are also growing in and around the rest of the site.

The meadow is selectively mown to nurture biodiversity and wildflowers. FTC works with Friends of the River Frome and the Wild Trout Trust to enhance the river habitat and rural riverside appeal of the site.

Historically, the site was used for sheep grazing and teasel cultivation to support the textile trade. It is now a place of natural beauty and calm within easy reach of the town centre and is used for weekend picnics, scenic dog walks, and peaceful strolls.

It is also one of the main sites in Frome where the local community can feel close to the river – hear the water moving and see the fish, kingfisher, even occasional appearance of otter and beaver. A tarmac public footpath runs along the top of Rodden Meadow, but soft, uneven ground makes accessing the meadow with a wheelchair or buggy difficult, especially in wet weather.

There is enthusiasm amongst the community to enable better access to the river and opportunities to dwell end enjoy the riverside character, either paddling, or simply being next to the water. While there are a small number of places to access the river, and steps have been built into the bank in one location, the river remains quite difficult to access and is physically disconnected from the meadow

Figure 1 - Comments from the public about river access



## Existing Site Management Plan aims

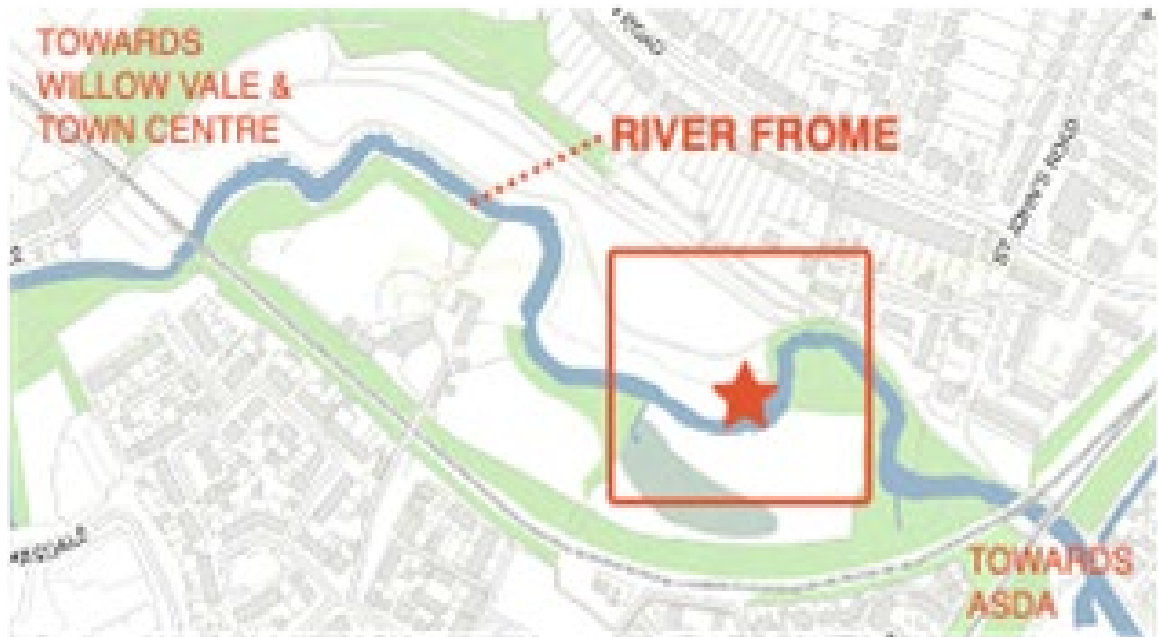
The current objectives within the site management plan are to manage Rodden Meadow for:

- Somewhere to stay a while – with opportunities for informal recreation, conservation and play.
- A riverside space and a cherished natural environment – important for people and wildlife
- And an essential part of Frome’s green infrastructure – welcoming walkers and cyclists.
- ‘Sit and watch the world go by’ (and forget you’re so close to the bustle of the town centre)
- More places to sit down and enjoy the space, with benches in sunny spots and under shade

## Vision

Creating a connection point along the River Frome to enable and support activities taking place at the river. By dwelling by the river, people are more likely to build a relationship with, therefore want to care for, its well-being into the future

Figure 2 - Map showing site for possible platform



### Proposal

- Create an accessible path/steps/platform/ additional seating and riverbank remediation
- Information, Health and Safety – QR code/notice board detailing safe ways to engage with river/live data for pollution levels as well as wildlife sightings and ways to love the river

*Figure 3 - Example of surfaced path, at Egfred Park*



Figure 4- Mood board for riverside access



What's already happening:

- Friends of River Frome - water sampling
- River detectives - family science citizenship
- Monthly litter picking

The project has been discussed with Friends of the River Frome, Wild Trout Trust, Frome Canoe Club and Wessex Water and connections begun with Frome and District Angling Association and an in-person meeting planned with Frome's MP, Sarah Dyke.

Figure 5 - Examples of existing riverside activities



Fit with Frome Town Council Plan 22-24

The plans to improve access and enable more residents to connect with their local green spaces is in keeping with the site’s management plan objectives and addresses key Nurture Open Spaces objectives withing the Frome Town Plan. Specifically:

- Nurturing places for residents and visitors to enjoy exercise and relax in that present an attractive 'face' for the town
- Foster a greater ownership of and control over our open spaces and their future use
- Work with residents in the maintenance and development of open spaces
- Ensure our parks and open spaces are places that people value highly to enjoy, are accessible and inclusive, and support a wide range of outdoor activities.

Engagement – Key Stakeholders

The following are recognised as key stakeholders to consult about the proposal:

- Friends of the River Frome
- Wild Trout Trust
- The Canoe Club
- Wessex Water
- River Frome Catchment Group (BART)
- Environment Agency
- Future Shed

- Green & Healthy Frome
- Sarah Dyke MP
- Frome Families for the Future
- Frome WI
- Staff and Residents at Frome Nursing Home and others
- Fair Frome
- Frome School communities
- Dog walkers (tbc)
- Users with accessibility needs (tbc)

The plan is for FTC and FFF to set up a wide range of activities to reach out to as many of these potential stakeholders as possible. These could include:

- Market stands and events (e.g. Climate Film Festival)
- Map/live drawings/activities
- Survey
- Walks of the river
- Lumi (otter lantern) tour - school assemblies
- FTC Noticeboard
- Social media/press/media
- Politics - Sarah Dyke meeting in Feb

### The Design

The proposal is to install a surfaced path from the Adderwell side of the meadow leading from the tarmac path to the river's edge. This would be on the same basis as the works in Egford Park and Broadway Community Gardens. This would be in keeping with the site's management aims of improving recreational access. The length of the access path is about 50m. At Broadway Community Garden's the length to date of the path is double this – 100 meters. The cost would be c. £5k

The surfaced path would lead to an area where there is a ledge beside the river slightly below the level of the field. At this point there could be a secure platform large enough for a small group to sit and relax, or river dip from, and this may include steps to reach the platform and more steps to access the river.

The exact design would be co-created with input from the community. The approximate cost would vary significantly depending on the scale of the ambition but could be in the thousands or possibly up to c. £40k, although it is acknowledged that a higher ask is harder to fundraise for and carries a higher risk of a funding gap. The practicalities of fundraising would be a factor in selecting the final design.

Figure 6 - Site plan showing indicative options

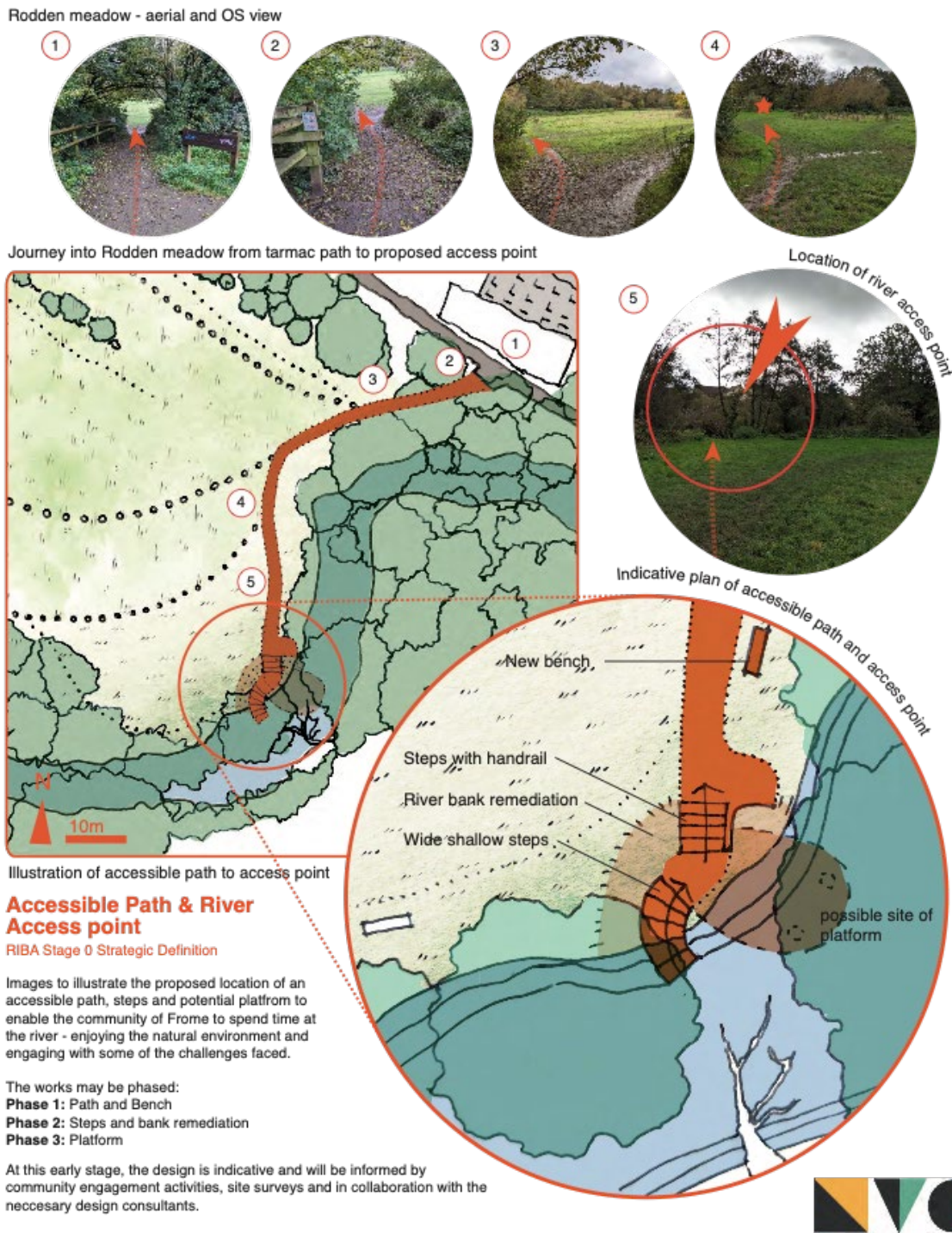
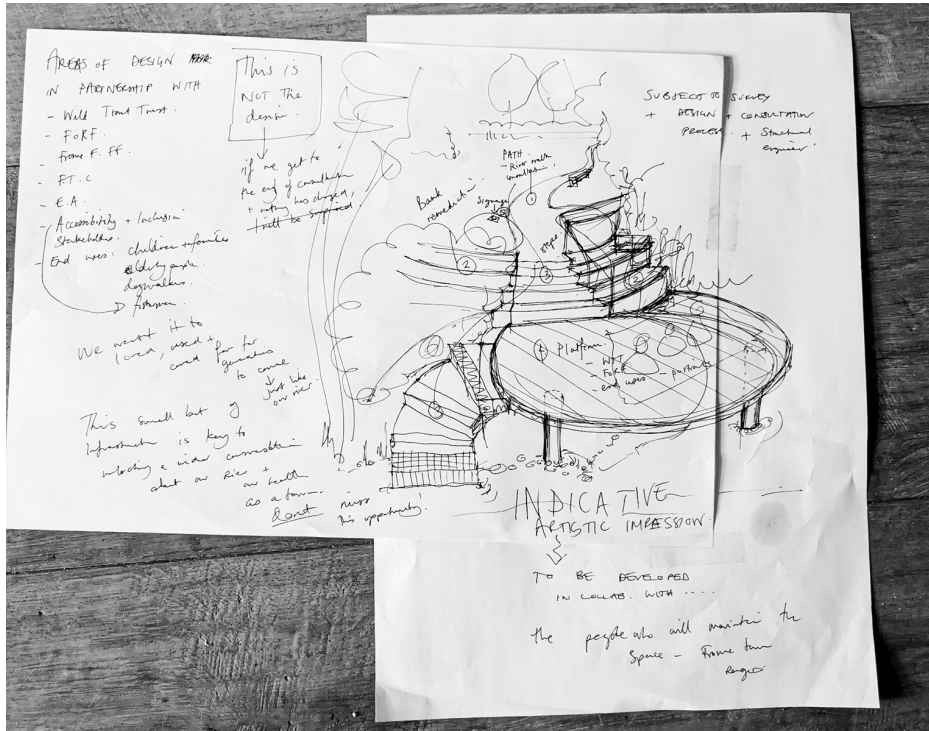





Figure 7 - Example of possible Platform Design



### Responsibilities

- The river path – FTC
- The consultation, communication and engagement with residents and stakeholders – FTC and FFF
- Fundraising for the Platform - FFF

Activity		<b>Frome</b> <small>TOWN COUNCIL</small>	Funded by?
Community Engagement	Delivery	Client (providing in-house resource to support delivery)	FTC Community grant? / Wessex Water Environment Grant? / Volunteer time
Fundraising	Delivery	Client (representing the Frome Community) with inhouse resource to support delivery	FTC Community grant? / Wessex Water Environment Grant? / Volunteer time
Design	Delivery	Client (representing the Frome Community) with inhouse resource to support delivery	FTC Community grant? / Wessex Water Environment Grant? / Volunteer time
Tender & Tender Evaluations	Delivered in partnership	Delivered in partnership	FTC Community grant? / Wessex Water Environment Grant? / Volunteer time
Construction	Kept informed + partnership with FTC on communication	Delivery	Path costs - FTC Platform and steps - community funded
Event to celebrate completion	Delivered in partnership	Delivered in partnership	Community Funded / FTC
Post-completion Evaluation	Delivered in partnership	Delivered in partnership	FTC

## Fundraising

FFF will be taking the lead on raising funds for the project and the following is a draft list of possible fundraising opportunities:

- Sponsored Walk - from the source of the River Frome to the point that it connects to the River Avon
- Crowd fundraising - website donations button
- Adopt a section of the river Frome
- Choir/climate film video - to promote the cause
- Environmental grants

## Future maintenance

Once installed, the structure would become an FTC asset and FTC would be responsible for ongoing maintenance, safety and eventual replacement.

## Total Cost

The estimated costs, as above are very approximately £45k. £5k for the path to come from FTC, the remainder to be raised by FFF. FTC staff costs for the project and future maintenance would be borne in-house.

### Recommendations

1. Approve the project of FTC working with FFF to consult with the community about a possible path and river platform to improve access to the river at Rodden Meadow

If there is community support for the project, and subject to FFF successfully fundraising, then:

2. Install a surfaced path to the platform site
3. Work with FFF for a community co-designed platform and facilitate contractors undertaking the platform installation works