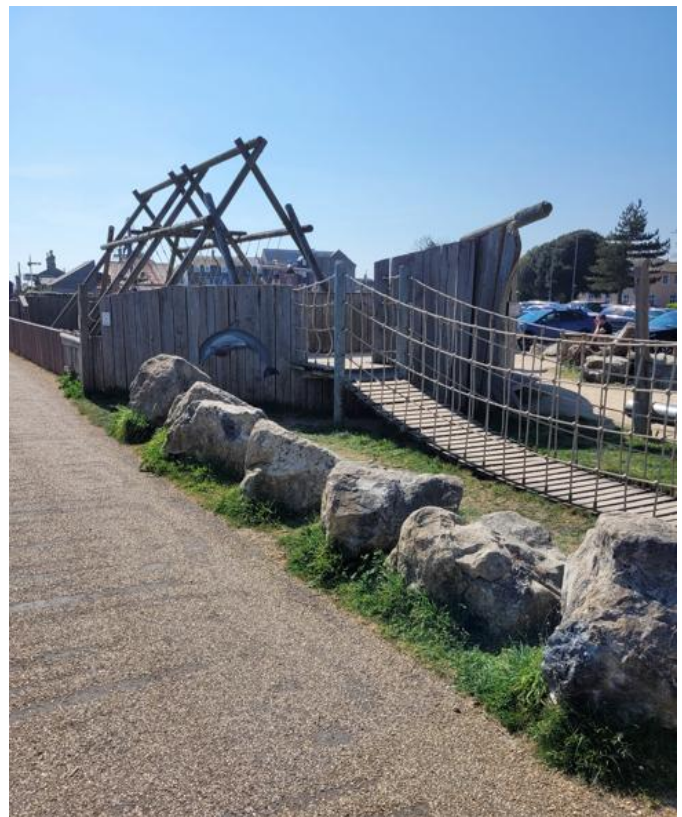


**Bridport Town Council
Burton Road to West Bay Trailway
Management Plan 2025-2030**



Document for Full Council approval Nov 2025 ENCL: 4062



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1. Background and vision statement

The railway runs along the north side of Burton Road from Chestnut Road to Marsh Gate, crossing the road taking in the green and moving to run adjacent to West Bay down to the public toilets in West Bay Road car park. The railway provides a right of way for pedestrians, cyclists, users of mobility aids and horse riders from West Bay to Burton Road, and also includes a play area, picnic area and riverside land.

The railway was transferred to Bridport Town Council by West Dorset District Council in June 2021 and Dorset Council retain ownership of the railway surface as a Right of Way.

Following the declaration of a Climate Emergency all management plans for Bridport Town Council's green spaces are being reviewed. This area has never been designated an open space and has never had a management plan. Hence this review to formalise this and hopefully work with a volunteer group to manage the area. The review considers current uses and looks to improve the area for wildlife, and community use.

The management plan process included a community consultation carried out from the 11th June 2025 to 31st August 2025 looking to define the aims, objectives and actions for the next 5 years. A total of fifty-two responses were received.

Vision Statement

Bridport Town Council's vision for the area is to maintain a traffic free and accessible safe route for all from Burton Road to West Bay whilst ensuring that the railway provides a well-managed habitat and connectivity for wildlife.



Management Plan Area:

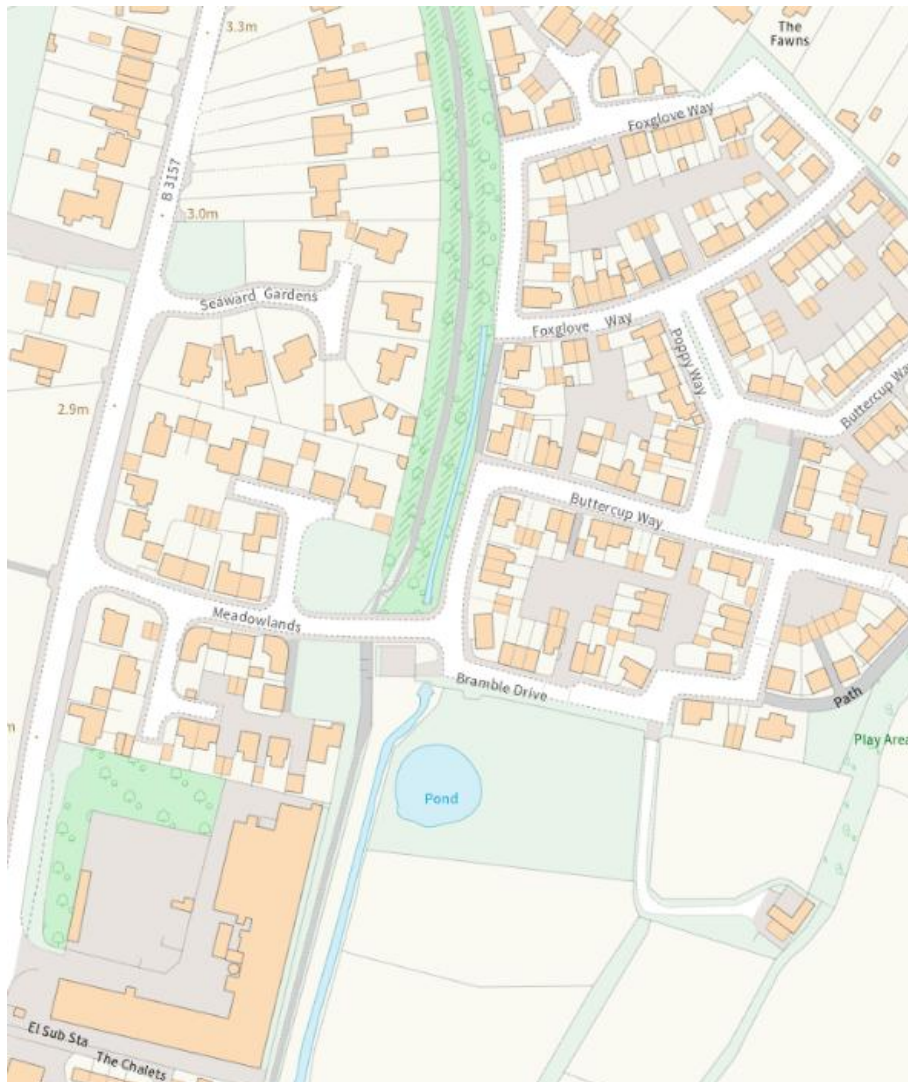


Permitted use of the land includes use as verge and ancillary land (with associated watercourse and infrastructure) to the public bridleway including stormwater ditches.

The public bridleway (owned by Dorset Council) must have a minimum width of three metres throughout its whole length where possible. Plus an open verge strip of land at least one metre in width along the length of each side of the trailway must be maintained, where possible. There are parts of the trailway where this is not possible due to pinch points, fencing, ditches, etc.

The area of grassland along Burton Road was previously recognised as a Site of Natural Conservation Interest which supports a diverse range of wildflowers and orchids and the site was surveyed by Dorset Wildlife Trust in June 2023 on behalf of Dorset Council.

There is a drainage ditch to the north of Meadowlands which must be maintained and kept clear as needed. The map below shows the location of the drainage ditch. Clearance of the stream is not taken all at once but is phased so that in some years, parts are left undisturbed whilst others are managed and reversed in subsequent years.



Brief history of the site:

2010 - Bridport Town Council opened a new play area at West Bay.

2016 - Bridport Town Council extended the play area to include sensory installations.

2019 - Dorset Council started vegetation clearance in January and completed the surface works on the bridleway in November.

2020 - Dorset Council installed new cycle parking stands located behind the toilets.

2021 - Dorset Council transferred site to Bridport Town Council.

2. Management Plan Consultation

It is important that the management plan for the railway ensures that the interests of wildlife and the many users are balanced, and mitigations are put in place to address community concerns.

A draft management plan was presented to Bridport Town Council for information at the Environment and Social Wellbeing Committee meeting on the 4th June and Full Council on the 24th June to be ratified to begin the public consultation.

- A letter and consultation postcard was hand delivered to all properties adjacent to the railway or nearby.
- A consultation postcard was available for user groups, residents and members of the public to complete.

The consultation postcard and form were available to collect from the Bridport Town Council office at Mountfield and Bridport Tourist Information Centre with drop off points at both of these locations plus the West Bay Discovery Centre. Councillors and Officers attended Bridport Food Festival (Saturday 14th June 2025) and Melplash Show (Thursday 21st August 2025) where copies of the Management Plan and consultation postcard were available to be completed on the day or taken away.

Results from the postcard were discussed at the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting Monday 8th September 2025. Following this the second draft of the Management Plan was available for consultation with organisations (listed in 3.2) during September to October 2025. The draft Management Plan was discussed by Bridport Town Council at Finance and General Purposes Committee on Monday 10th November 2025 for final comments. It is important to note that the meeting was open to members of the public.

Finally in November the final plan was presented to Bridport Town Council's Full Council meeting on the 25 November 2025 for adoption.

Bridport Town Council with input from the local residents and users reviewed the delivery of management plan. It is important to recognise that the consultation postcard included a question asking respondents how maintenance work should be funded. Five options were included: sale of land/licence of land; increase in council tax; reduction of other council services; through voluntary groups; and other. Out of fifty-three responses the most popular option (whereby twenty-eight people agreed) is work should be carried out through voluntary groups. Followed by fifteen who agreed to an increase in council tax, seven to sale of land/licence of land and two to reduction of other council services. It's key to note that the overall number of responses is higher than the total of postcards received, as many respondents chose more than one option of how the work should be funded.

3. Vision for the railway



Key:

- Area 1 – Top of Burton Road
- Area 2 – Burton Road to West Bay – railway
- Area 3 – Meadowlands to West Bay Road Car Park railway
- Area 4 – River Area
- Area 5 – Picnic Area
- Area 6 – Play Area

3.1 Objectives/actions of the Burton Road to West Bay Trailway Management Plan:

(Section 4.1 (page 10) includes further objectives for the area)

Manage the habitats adjacent to and ancillary to the trailway appropriately to maximise the value for biodiversity and provide an attractive environment for users.

Actions to help achieve this objective might include:

- Undertaking surveys to understand the wildlife and botanical interest.
- Additional planting of trees or shrubs or introduction of locally sourced meadow seed where appropriate to enhance existing habitats.
- Managing vegetation where necessary for the safety and amenity of users.
- Provide interpretation to highlight key wildlife interests and engage users with the biodiversity of the site and the role of management undertaken.

Provide additional seating in areas along the trailway to encourage people to enjoy and get to know the area.

Actions to help achieve this objective might include:

- Establish a Management Group which includes volunteers from the local community.
- Installation of interpretation boards to inform users about the site.
- Provision of additional seating in suitable locations.

Carry out a wildlife, flora and bird survey to safeguard each species.

Actions to help achieve this objective might include:

- Working with volunteers and organisations to undertake surveys to understand wildlife, flora and birds.

Establish a Management Group to carry forward objectives with the help of volunteers

Actions to help achieve this objective might include:

- Bridport Town Council staff, volunteers and where necessary other organisations working together to carry out the year-by-year action plan for the area.

Maintain a safe walking route linking from West Bay and Burton Road

Actions to help achieve this objective might include:

- Safeguard walking and cycling access to ensure the route remains a traffic free area.

Cut back the vegetation each side of the pathway

Actions to help achieve this objective might include:

- Bridport Town Council staff and volunteers working together to maintain a clear route along the path.

Investigate properties who have gated access onto the trailway

Actions to help achieve this objective might include:

- Speaking with residents to investigate access onto the trailway.

3.2 Other groups for consultation during the second stage consultation

- **Bridport Tree Group**
- **Dorset Wildlife Trust**
- **Dorset Council Rights of Way**
- **Dorset Council Cycleways**
- **Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (previously Sustrans)**
- **River Group**
- **Environment Agency**

4. Burton Road to West Bay Trailway Management Plan 2025 - 2030

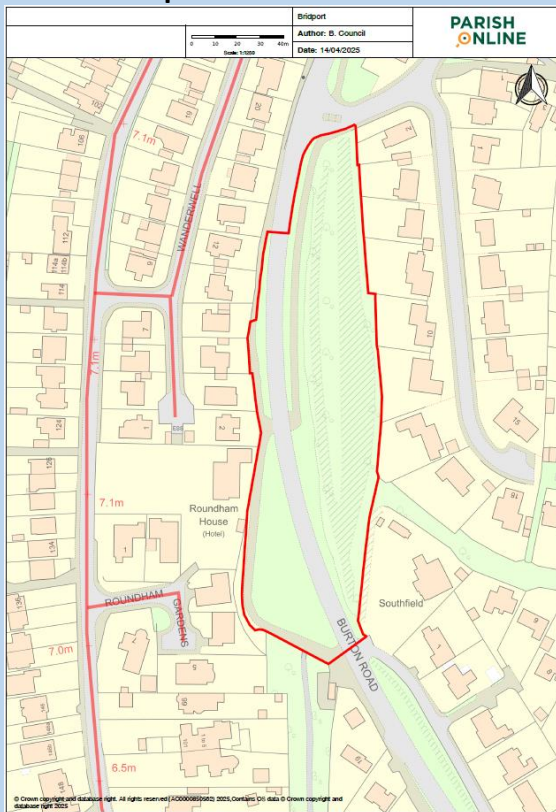
4.1 Overall Plan Management plan objectives in priority order: • Access for all • Extended areas for tree planting and wildflowers • Maintain wildlife and bird species • Greater community use of the area • Provide natural play and fitness opportunities	
4.2 By Habitat Type:	
Access/paths/boundaries	Maintain and promote open access for all along the trailway. Dorset Council to maintain cycle path and promote as link route to the Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (previously Sustrans) route 267/2. Maintain 1m cut verges (where possible) to all access routes through regular mowing. Additional signage to warn people of walkers/cyclists. To be located in areas where it does not cause a safety hazard to path users i.e. a certain height and distance from the path. Additional bins along the trailway and regular litter picks. Liaison between Bridport Town Council and residents in regard to possible land grabs.
Riverbanks/drainage ditch	Maintain drainage ditch clearance north of Meadowlands to West Bay. The work is phased, in some years parts are left undisturbed whilst others are managed, and then it is reversed in subsequent years. Work is to be undertaken at appropriate times of the year. Working with specific organisations.
Trees/tree planting	Manage safety issues through a 5 yearly insurance arboriculture survey. Deal with dangers, remove dead wood either standing or on site.

	Homeowners and or tenants to be advised that all requests for tree works be sought through Dorset Council's Planning Portal. If Dorset Council's Tree Officers approve the request the applicant must pay for the works to be carried out. https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/w/trees-in-conservation-areas • The trees are checked against the 5 yearly reports. Bridport Town Council carry out on all trees for insurance purposes. • If the reports show no works, we the inform the applicant of this. The applicant can then seek approval from Dorset Council to carry our works through the Tree Officer. • The Tree Application will go through the normal application process, advertised and consulted on, cost to be met by the applicant • If Planning is granted Bridport Town Council would agree to the works, but the cost to be met by the applicant. • The works will also only be approved if the applicant uses a contractor agreeable to Bridport Town Council. Plant native standards alongside the river to replace trees removed due to health issues. Permission for memorial trees to be planted along the lower end of the trailway near the car park and play area. Working with Bridport Tree Group on tree planting. The planting of Beech, Birch, Hazel is not recommended in some areas due to the soil and salt wind. Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Corsican Pine and various Willows do well in this type of area. To consider 'non spikey' options alongside pathways. Trees should enhance the existing biodiversity.
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	Tree planting should be avoided in area 1 (top of Burton Road) which has been recognised as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI).
Wildflower Area	Plant native spring bulbs and native wildflower plugs in all areas. Cut grass following flowering in the Autumn and again in October each year. Maintain a 1m cut/scalloped verge from footpath (where possible). Maintain the areas where Bee Orchids grow. Encourage birds, butterflies and planting of native plants. Wildflower area should be avoided area 1 (Burton Road) which has been recognised as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). Dorset Wildlife Trust can assist with sourcing of local seed for grassland enhancement.
Management	To ensure the drainage ditch at Meadowlands is kept clear in the water channel. To ensure eradication treatment of the Water Primrose. Continue working with the Environment Agency until eradicated. To ensure checks on all trees are carried out and to take appropriate actions when advised. Cut back hedgerows to a metre either side where possible to be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March – August). Cut grass and strips on a monthly basis when necessary, including play area, picnic area and river area. All grassed areas to be cut in late October with cuttings to be removed.

4.3 By Management Block:

AREA 1 – Top of Burton Road



Area owned by Dorset Council and cut by Bridport Town Council.

Regular maintenance leaving a wild area for wildlife.

Consult with users, residents and members of the public to inform them of the wildflower area including Bee Orchids.

Future link to cycleway at The Crown roundabout.

Possibility of more benches and shared space signage.

Keep the area as an open space.

Grassland in this area has been recognised as a Site of Natural Conservation Interest. The recognition is for the road verge grassland which supports a diverse range of wildflowers and orchids. The site was surveyed by Dorset Wildlife Trust in June 2023 on behalf of Dorset Council.

Further advise on the management of this area via Dorset Wildlife Trust.



AREA 2 – Burton Road to West Bay



Rationalise, restore and were required provide new interpretation boards.

Plant areas of native spring bulbs and wildflower plugs in natural sweeps.

Maintain area by mowing and removing cuttings with frequent cuts in the summer period.

Maintain a 3 metre 'scalloped' cut verge alongside path through this area and onto Area 3.

Remove and eradicate invasive species and Bamboo. (Highlighted by a number of respondents during the consultation phase.)

Discuss with landowners' entrances out onto the railway and agree a way forward.

Possibility of more benches and shared space signage. This could include sponsorship of benches.

Signage at the end of the railway where it meets Meadowlands to warn vehicles parking along the road that this is a walking route.

Signage to warn cyclists when approaching the road where the footpaths join the railway and to be aware of pedestrians.

Signage to be located where it does not cause a safety hazard to path users i.e. a certain height and distance from the path.

Respondents asked for solar lighting on this section to be

	installed to make the pathway safer. Additional dog bins along the route.
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AREA 3 – Meadowlands to West Bay Road Car Park



Maintain 8m riverside margin as clear green space as part of Environment Agency flood management scheme, where possible.

River and drainage ditch clearance to prevent water run-off.

The functioning ditch running south from Meadowlands down to West Bay car park contains invasive non-native Water Primrose (*Ludwigia grandiflora*). This is under third party management. Important for bio-security reasons that the ditch and its vegetation is not included in conservation proposals at this stage (Environment Agency).

The dense strip of coarse grasses/bramble/scrub running parallel to the ditch supports important habitat for birds, butterflies and Harvest Mouse.

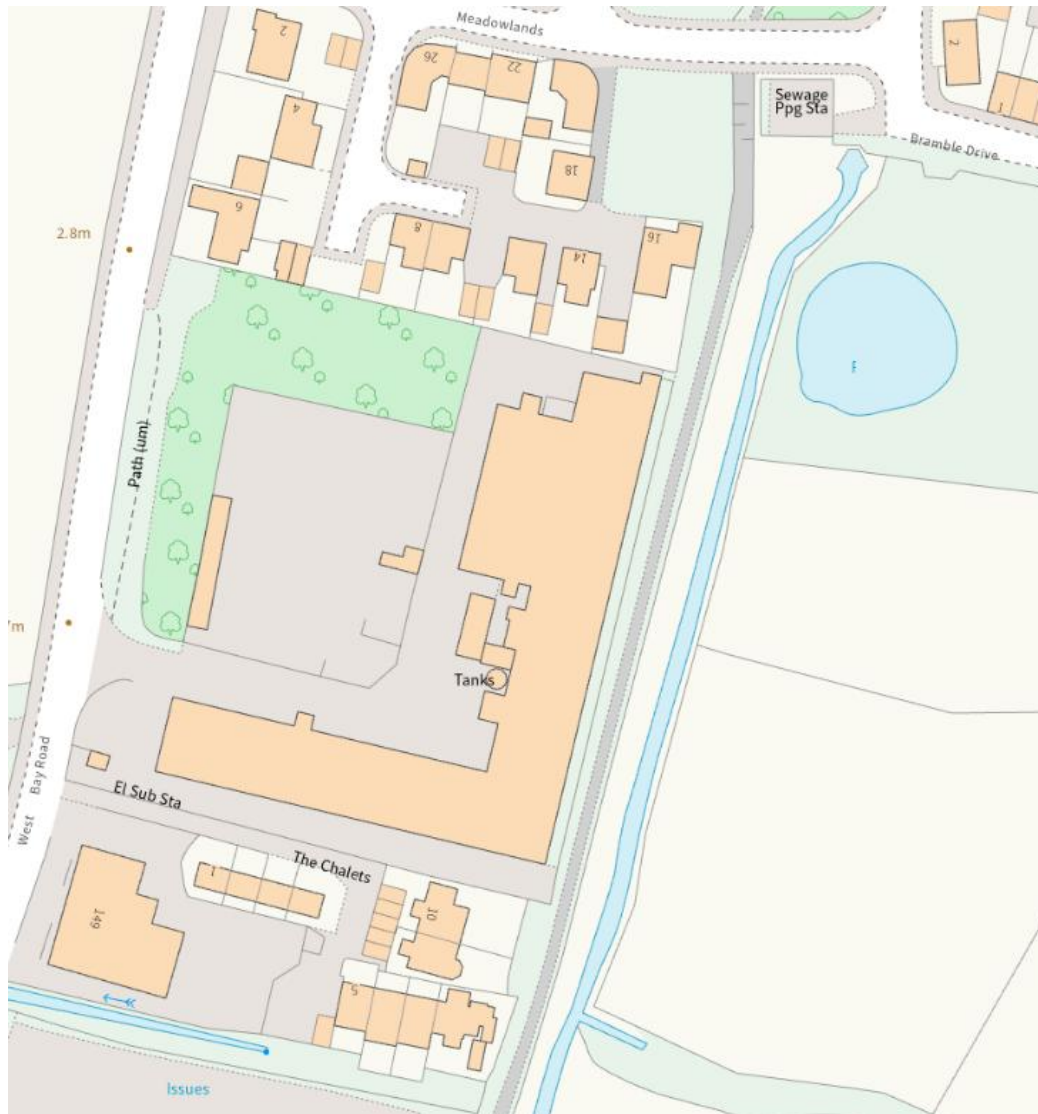
Historically the ditch/channel has supported European water vole, damselfly and dragonfly species.

Agree with adjacent properties any ongoing issues over management and ownership.

Planned clearance of some areas before new planting can commence.

Possibility of more benches and shared space signage.

	Maintain area by mowing and removing cuttings with more frequent cuts in the summer period and cutting back of brambles. Responses to the consultation highlighted the need to cut back the area by Bridec Ltd. Assess the fencing from the railway onto Meadowlands. Tree planting (native species).
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AREA 4 – River Area



Maintain tree planting and undertake thinning at 5, 10 and 15-year intervals to create glades and space for new planting.

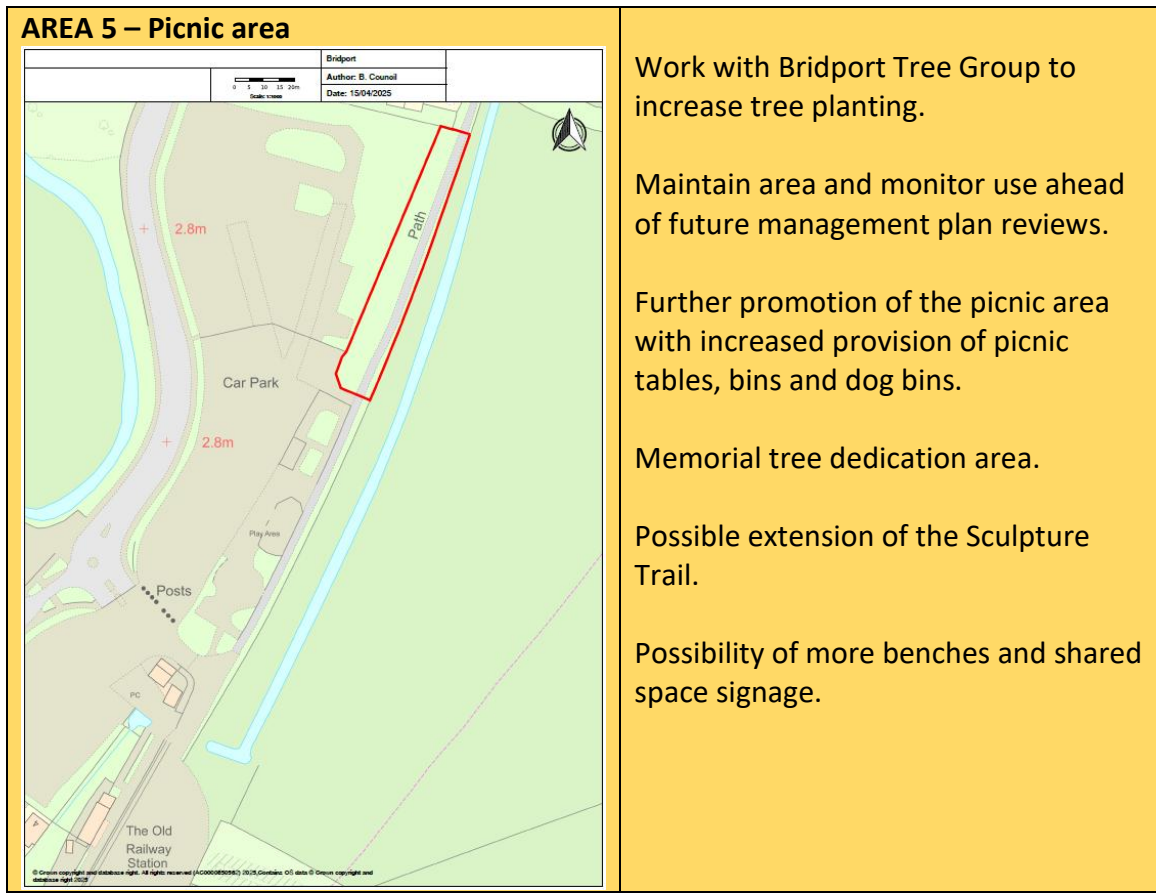
Specific river maintenance with the Environment Agency by specialists to eradicate Water Primrose an invasive plant.

No metre verge maintenance due to fence line.

Possibility of more benches and shared space signage.

Clearance of the stream is phased so that in some years parts are left undisturbed whilst others are managed, and then it is reversed in subsequent years.







AREA 6 – Play area



To regularly inspect and maintain the area. As well as regular replacement and upgrades.

Bridport Town Council Grounds Team attend daily to empty bins.

Possibility of more benches and shared space signage.



5. Action Plan - Actions Year by Year:

As below is a list of actions for the next five years. This is subject to change.

5.1 2025/26 Actions

What	When	Who
Trees		
Plant native broadleaved trees to create small, wooded copses where appropriate	Winter/Spring	BTC, volunteers and Bridport Tree Group
Maintain new tree planting, watering and removing growth competition	Summer	BTC, Volunteers and Bridport Tree Group
Wildflower Area		
Plant native spring bulbs and wildflower plugs in natural sweeps	Autumn	BTC and Volunteers
Carry out a wildlife, flora and bird survey	Spring/Summer	Work with Dorset Wildlife Trust
Grassed Areas		
Mow 1m verges, where possible	April – May	BTC
Cut wildflower and tree planting areas	October	BTC
Information/ interpretation		
Interpretation boards to be installed at the top of the railway near Burton Road	October	BTC
River		
Planned clearance including Water Primrose removal	Spring / Summer	Work with river volunteer groups and the Environment Agency
Boundaries		
Engage with adjacent properties in regard to ongoing issues over management and ownership	Winter/Spring	BTC

5.2 2026/27 Actions

What	When	Who
Trees Maintain new tree planting, watering and removing growth competition	Summer/Autumn	BTC, Volunteers and Bridport Tree Group
Grassed Areas Mow 1m margins to all paths where possible Cut wildflower and tree planting areas	Monthly May- Aug October	BTC BTC
River Planned clearance including Water Primrose removal	Spring / Summer	Work with river volunteer groups and the Environment Agency
Roadside Boundaries Create opportunities to diversify planting with native shrubs	Winter	BTC

5.3 2027/28 Actions

What	When	Who
Trees Maintain new tree planting, watering and removing growth competition	Summer	BTC, Volunteers and Bridport Tree Group
Grassed Areas Mow 1m margins to all paths, where possible Cut wildflower and tree planting areas	Monthly October	BTC BTC
River Planned clearance including Water Primrose removal	Spring / Summer	Work with river volunteer groups and the Environment Agency

5.4 2029/30 Actions

What	When	Who
Trees Maintain new tree planting, watering and removing growth competition	Summer	BTC, Volunteers and Bridport Tree Group
Grassed Areas Mow 1m margins to all paths where possible Cut wildflower and tree planting areas	Monthly October	BTC BTC
River Planned clearance including Water Primrose removal	Spring / Summer	Work with river volunteer groups and the Environment Agency
Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Discuss the possibility for the Trailway to be registered as an open space in the next Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan review.	Dependent on the next review this could be earlier/later than proposed	Bridport Area Neighbourhood Plan Joint Councils Committee