



Business Plan 2023 - 2028

Summary 2023

Business Plan Summary

This document summarises our 2023-2028 Business Plan and sets out our aims, strategy and key activities for the next five years.

We have a renewed vision and strategy for the park - building on past successes and setting a bold plan in place to ensure the parklands are well managed and maintained and that the visitor experience is central to our delivery.

This plan will define the direction of travel not just for the CVPT Board is but also that of the staff team, the café, our Friends group and our small band of volunteers. This document will be supported by several delivery documents.

There is much potential to improve the quality of park management and presentation, the visitor experience and to expand how people engage with and benefit from all that CVPT, not just the Park, has to offer.

We have set out a strategy to build capacity and capability to ensure a successful future for the park.

Our various volunteer groups should be recognised as a key resource for all aspects of delivery including fundraising, education & engagement and project development.

We also aim to harness support via partnerships with corporate and charitable organisations.

Background

Cuerden Valley Park Trust (incorporated as a Trust in 1986) owns and operates Cuerden Valley Park. It incorporates farmland and parkland, once the grounds to Cuerden Hall, which is now in private ownership.

There are pathways, cycle trails (part of the Sustrans network) and woodland walks for all to enjoy. The river Lostock runs through the site.

In 2015 a new visitor centre was built to provide a cafe and education space incorporating office space for the small management team. The cafe has become the second largest income provider for the Trust and demand remains high.

Our education provision is well-established and intrinsically linked to the educational syllabus for the surrounding schools. With strong support from local schools and it has become clear that additional space for the developing education and learning provision is needed to future-proof the trust and delivery of its charitable objectives.

Vision – Purpose, Values & Behaviours

Our Vision:

Cuerden Valley Park is an essential asset to the community, recognised for:

High value conservation & wildlife habitats, enabling access to health, well-being & nature

Cuerden Valley Park is a stellar example of:

Sound environmental practice balancing the needs of many diverse visitors to create a sustainable future

Purpose

Cuerden Valley Park Trust exists to:

*Provide education and recreation for the public
To conserve and maintain the park and its environment*

Values

As a charitable trust we value:

*The park and its built, cultivated and natural environment
Our people - staff & volunteers
Our local community, supporters & visitors
The impact we have on mental health and wellbeing*

Behaviours

In all we do, we are:

*Professional and considerate
Welcoming and inclusive, embracing diversity & equality
Proactive in protecting the environment
Transparent and Accountable
Prudent with our resources
Creative & collaborative*

Delivery

Cuerden Valley Park Trust was incorporated to deliver two broad objectives - namely Conservation and Education. Whilst these values remain core to the Trust it is committed to expanding its area of activity as follows;

A broad focus on Sustainability needs to be recognised as an important third strand that should run throughout any charitable trust with conservation at the heart of its mission.

Given the live and prominent climate challenges facing our planet, sustainability should be embedded in our values through to the activities of the Trust. The need to operate sustainably underpins everything the Trust does - not just in terms of the protected landscape environment but also culturally and perhaps even more importantly financially.

Access to the park is not just physical - engaging with the park can be experienced remotely, digitally, creatively and culturally. The refreshed staff team structure and new recruits, newly created posts and new members on the Board are real examples of how CVPT are committed to investing in equality and diversity of access.

Conservation

Cuerden Valley Park covers 650 acres and includes a wide range of habitat, amenity space, footpaths and heritage features.

We need to have a sustained, targeted focus on maintaining the park to a high standard of conservation for the benefit of the plants and animals which make their home here.

Footpaths should be open, providing safe and improved multi-use access where possible to ensure the park is available to all.

We aim to increase visitor engagement in all areas to improve understanding of the parks ecological value and, crucially, how visitor actions can help preserve and cherish it.

Key Conservation Objectives for 2023-2028

We aim to deliver an appealing, safe visitor experience in keeping with the natural habitat of the park and its surroundings, we will strive to be a national example of good practice;

We will:

- better understand the rich diversity of flora and fauna in the park and ensure our management of the park allows it to thrive naturally.
- manage our woodland, grassland and aquatic areas to maximise biodiversity.

To achieve this, we will:

1. Conduct/Instruct an ecological survey of the park. (*Where possible including volunteers and the public in the recording process, including an annual BioBlitz event*)
2. Define character areas within the Conservation Management Plan and implement bespoke management plans to account of individual habitats and species which are present

3. Encourage conservation activity by volunteer and educational groups, and support suitable natural history / historical research activity

Measurement of success: Performance against our Management and Maintenance plans

Education

Many local primary schools visit frequently as part of a well-established partnership of formal learning activities and Myerscough College students have undertaken work programmes relating to their Environmental Studies programme. During the school holidays, the Education Manager delivers a Forest School programme which is well-supported.

Key Education Objectives for 2023-2028

We will:

- Continue to deliver and build upon a creative programme of education and learning activities for a broad range of audiences.
- Explore the potential for a broader heritage and green skills training offer within the park

To achieve this, we will:

1. Create a future-proof, fit-for-purpose learning and education base within the park that provides safe, accessible facilities within both indoor & outdoor environments
2. Develop a new Heritage and Environmental skills training provision (this will link to and supplement engagement)
3. Review our secondary school provision to align with the upcoming changes to the GCSE curriculum

Measurement of Success: Performance against the annual activity plan document

Engagement

Engagement with park visitors has fallen off over the last few years. This is partly due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are many community groups and organisations which present ideal partners to support the work of CVPT, the Trust will broaden and diversify the way we engage with visitors, volunteers and our wider community.

Whilst the bulk of our engagement takes place in the park, we need to provide opportunities for people to engage with us virtually.

We will:

- Encourage a diverse public to visit and enjoy the park as an attractive and intriguing day out
- We will review current activity and create a new engagement strategy seeking to improve our 'offer' and increase participation with individuals, groups and organisations

To achieve this, we will:

1. Update and relaunch our volunteer offer, widening the opportunities for volunteers to get involved – April 2023
2. Create a new engagement and communication strategy to better utilise our digital platforms ensuring we communicate regularly with a renewed focus on appealing and engaging content
3. Deliver an annual programme of engaging events and activities in keeping with the distinctive character of the park
4. Embed equality of access, promotion of diversity and culture of inclusivity across the trust, its people, policies and operations

**Measurement of Success: *Performance against the annual Activity Plan document
Growth of our online presence and offer***

Sustainability

Creating and embedding a culture of sustainability throughout the policies, objectives and operations of CVPT is not a new initiative but one that needs clearer articulation within strategic planning. Broadly there are two principal areas where CVPT needs to demonstrate a commitment to operate sustainably:

Financial

There is sufficient scope for increasing income from existing revenue streams, exploring new and securing external funding and other support. The capacity and capability to support these strategic objectives are in place following recent recruitment. CVPT are well placed to advance our eligibility for external funding and to further diversify our income sources.

We will create an Income Strategy document which seeks to diversify and increase income generation for the Trust. This should include the keystones of the Café whilst communicating the value of car park charging to visitors and embracing several small enterprises and events.

We will:

- Be financially robust, with a minimum of six months' budget surplus, and a diverse income stream generating an income surplus
- Better exploit the charitable status of the Trust and our fundraising potential

To achieve this, we will:

1. Create a board level Income strategy document
2. Prioritise actions and identify capacity needed.
3. Empower budget-holders with the responsibility for setting stretching but realistic targets for income generation and cost efficiency

Measurement of Success: Annual Financial Statement

Environmental

As a charity CVPT commits to mitigate our impact on the environment. We will introduce systems and procedures that mitigate that impact and makes prudent use of our resources. Our priority is to manage and maintain the park for optimum benefit to wildlife, education and enhancing the visitor experience. Trading activities should be reviewed with the objective of lessening the impact on the environment, seeking 'greener' solutions to energy and capacity building.

We will:

- Become a regional example of good practice for environmental sustainability

To achieve this, we will:

1. Embed a culture of sustainability, minimising waste and purchasing ethically across our staff and volunteer teams
3. Review our trading activity and explore ways of minimising our energy use, waste and carbon footprint

Measurement of Success: Annual review of performance against Policy

High Level Objectives

The Cuerden Valley Park Board have identified three high level objectives to ensure the smooth running of the Trust and the safe management of the park.

They are:

1. Management and Delivery

A clear and robust management and support structure will be in place (with well-defined roles) successfully delivering the management of the park.

Measurement of success: Assessment against KPI's/Risk Register

2. Financial

CVPT will be financially robust, with a minimum of six months' budget surplus, and a diverse income stream generating an income surplus.

Measurement of Success: Annual Financial Statement

3. Visitor Facing

CVPT and the Park will be well recognised, and with a strong engagement, both locally and from the wider (Northern England) area, including a very active and well managed volunteer presence.

Measurement of Success:

- **Footfall**
- **Feedback from regular stakeholder reviews (public, sponsors, volunteers)**
- **CVPT and FOCVP AGMs**

Diversification

In addition to these three high level objectives, we have identified the following specific projects:

- Create a new Education and Training Facility within the park.

It is important that we have a clear plan for the new space and the scope of activities it will need to deliver.

This new home may be split across locations but must have a cohesive plan and be clear about its requirements.

There is a clear opportunity to develop an education provision which grows beyond the school visits and begins to encompass traditional crafts and wellbeing. We should also consider the provision of accommodation to support weekend courses and maximise our income potential from these activities.

- Conservation & Development of Walled Garden area to improve visitor experience and enable additional venue for dedicated events

Annual Documentation

Management and Maintenance Plan

The Trust has a new Management and Maintenance plan.

This includes the identification of 'Character areas' for specific flora and fauna and a zoning approach to park maintenance. This will enable the public to continue to enjoy the park whilst protecting the flora and fauna creating a legacy for the future.

The Management and Maintenance plan will be reviewed annually and updated as required. It is likely that this renewal process will be a sustained activity over the coming years.

Activity and Engagement Plan

The Activity and Engagement Plan sets out our work plans each year, we expect a similar pattern of activities every year, although the detail will vary.

The Trust already deliver a range of engagement events as part of the Activity plan. Ranging from guided health walks to Forest Schools and regular Food and Craft markets, most are extremely popular and collectively they contribute a modest level of income to the project, although fundraising is not their prime purpose. Each event takes a varying amount of time to plan, procure, set-up deliver and take down. They form the backbone of our annual engagement.

Major events, which are typically associated with fundraising, are outlined as follows:

Fundraising Events

These are events we deliver at scale and, whilst acknowledging that they enhance engagement significantly, they have fundraising as their primary purpose.

They are treated separately to the Activity and Engagement plan above for two reasons:

- They target income after costs of at least £8,000 per event
- They require a significant level of staff and volunteer time to develop and deliver

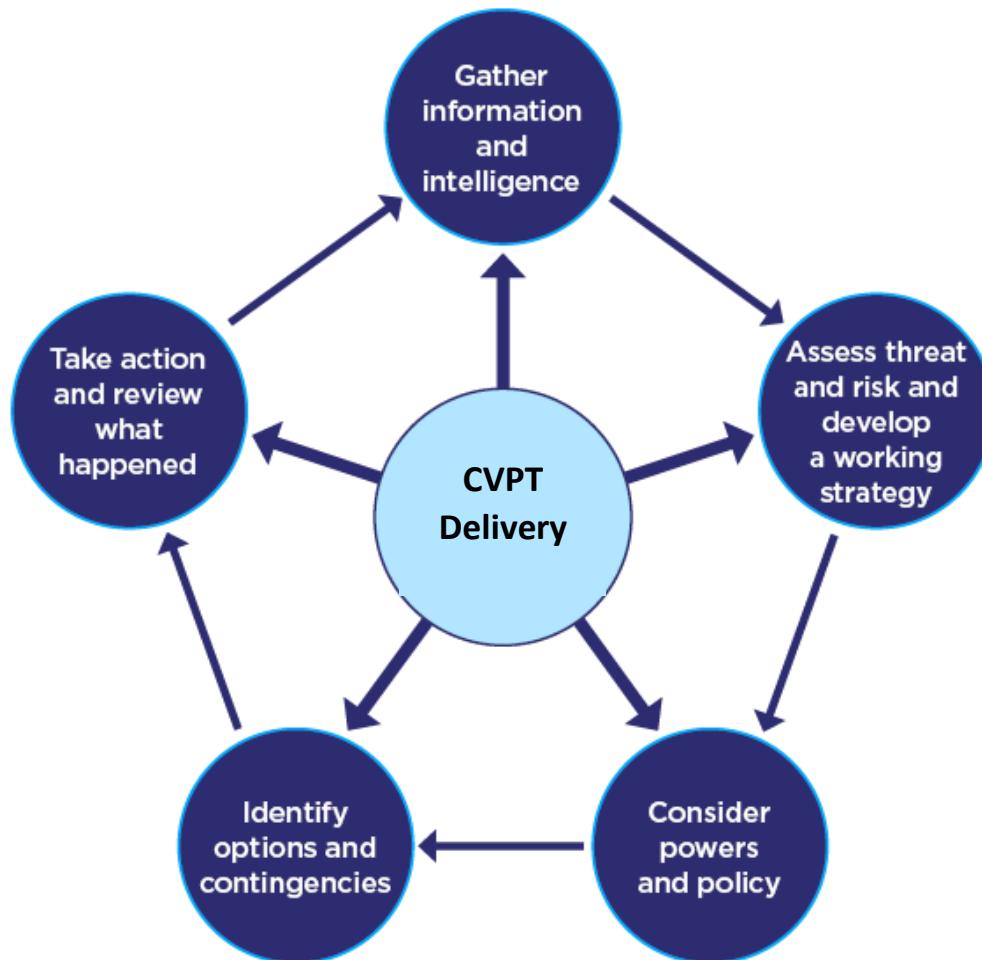
Our long-term strategy would be to host three major events each year, with a committee comprising a Board representative, the staff team, a member of the Friends group and volunteers being responsible for all aspects of development and delivery.

Planning for these three events would begin each Autumn.

Risk Management

The management of risk is a critical activity for any business. The CVPT Board recognise this and have therefore implemented a business risk process.

Actively assessing and managing risk across all CVPT's activities is a fundamental principle of our Risk Management Process. Our approach can be summarised in image 1 below.



Risk Steps

To ensure a balanced approach to managing business risk, a broad selection of categories have been selected that cover our principal activities as well as supporting our business objectives and mission statement. The current risk categories are set out below together with risk owners.