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Dock Branch Park Regeneration: Evaluability Assessment Report



June 2024

Prepared by the GroundsWell Consortium

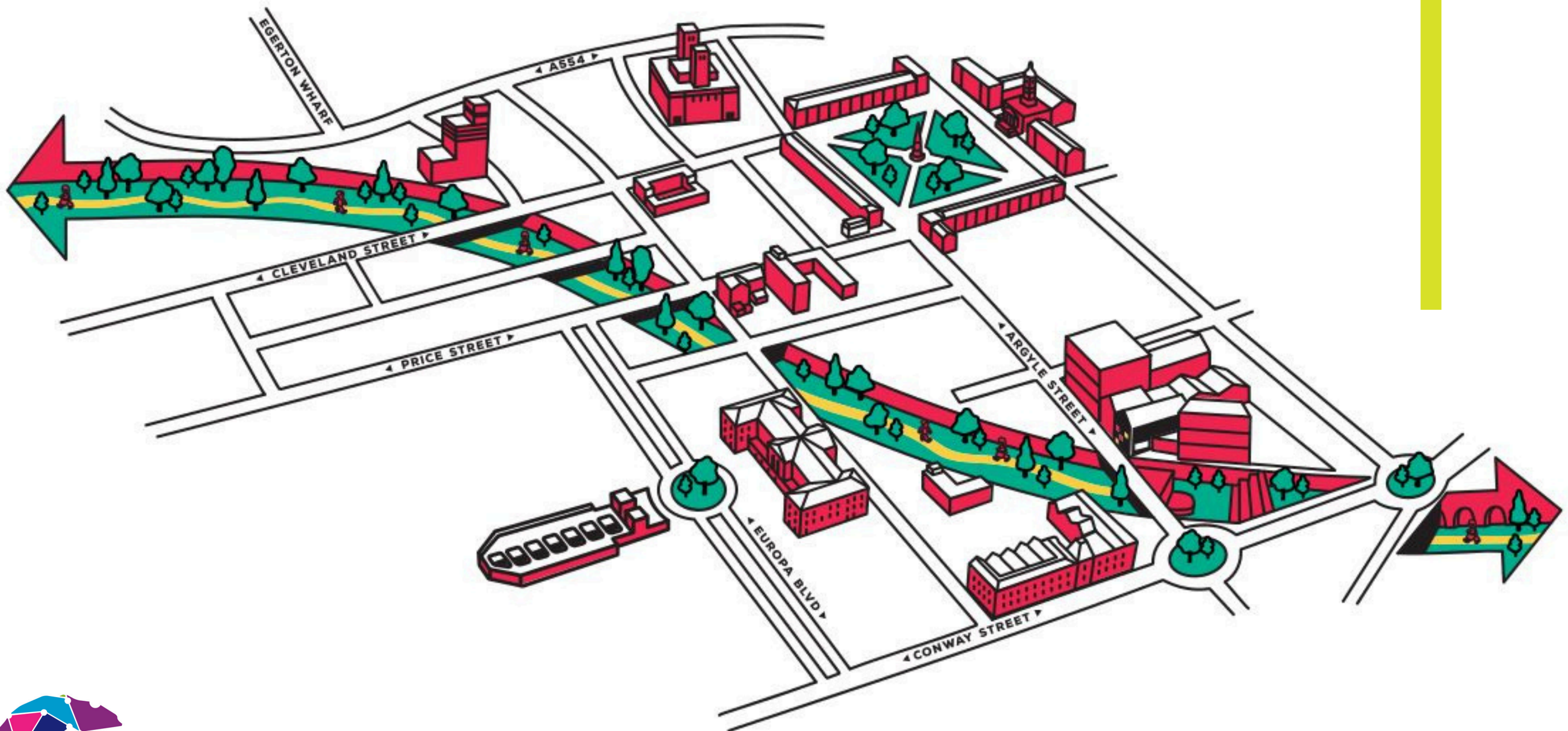




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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Dock Branch Park regeneration programme is a pivotal catalyst project in the Birkenhead 2040 framework that will turn a disused railway track into a green space through the heart of Birkenhead. It aligns with the framework's vision of creating a 'garden city' and will serve as a valuable asset for active travel. The regeneration programme will revitalize the historic railway line between Rock Ferry and Bidston Dock, closed since the 1990s, to benefit local communities. The park will offer designated routes for walking and cycling, connecting the town from Wirral Waters to Hind Street via Central station roundabout initially, with potential expansions in the future.

Working in partnership with the key stakeholders of the Dock Branch Park, including the Wirral Borough Council and the Dock Branch Community Panel, researchers from the Groundswell consortium conducted an evaluability assessment of the Dock Branch Park regeneration programme to assess programme activities to date and to recommend options for evaluation.

The evaluability assessment included a review of relevant literature and online workshops with the named stakeholders resulting in the development of a logic model. Workshops revealed that stakeholders were most concerned with assessing the impact that the Dock Branch Park regeneration programme has on the mental health and wellbeing of the local community. They also wanted to investigate the community involvement and engagement in the regeneration programme. The Dock Branch Community Panel is a voluntary group of community-collaborators for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Dock Branch Neighbourhood; this is a novel approach to regeneration in Wirral and stakeholders were keen to understand how best to involve the community in the Dock Branch regeneration so that best practice could be replicated in other regeneration programmes across Birkenhead.

The Groundswell research team concluded that the Dock Branch Park regeneration programme would require both an outcomes evaluation (to assess the impact on health outcomes), and a process evaluation (to understand the processes of community involvement and engagement).

Consequently, the research team have outlined three options for evaluation in this report detailing how outcomes and processes could be measured. Option 1 is what can be completed with current capacity and funding within the Groundswell Consortium. Option two builds on this recommendation, including additional input from the partners (Wirral Borough Council and the Dock Branch Community Panel). Option three is our preferred recommendation but requires additional funding for a longitudinal evaluation to monitor outcomes and processes as the regeneration programme develops over time.

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an evaluability assessment of the Dock Branch Park regeneration in Birkenhead, Wirral conducted by the GroundsWell Consortium in collaboration with the Wirral Borough Council (the Council) and the Dock Branch Community Panel (the Panel). The creation of Dock Branch Park is part of the wider Birkenhead 2040 regeneration framework. Community engagement has been taking place in the area since 2021, with separate commissions to design the Dock Branch Neighbourhood and Park progressing simultaneously.

GroundsWell

GroundsWell is a partnership of researchers, local communities, implementers, and policymakers, funded by UKPRP. We envision a community and data-led systems transformation of how to plan, create, maintain, and promote use of urban green and blue spaces. These spaces, shaped by and for the benefit of everyone, should make a significant contribution to improving population health, specifically reducing the levels of and inequalities in non-communicable diseases.

Dock Branch Community Panel

The Dock Branch Community Panel are the lead community-collaborator for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Dock Branch Neighbourhood, with residents, businesses and partners working together to revitalise the neighbourhood, increase economic opportunities, and leverage the creativity and diversity of the community. The purpose of the Panel is to provide an open channel for the two-way exchange of knowledge, by bringing together the community's local expertise in their neighbourhood with the masterplan team's technical expertise in regenerating places, and the regeneration delivery team (comprising designers, economists, planners, and advisors commissioned by Wirral Borough Council) and the developers and construction teams taking sites forward. Its role is to empower the local community in planning for, creating and controlling a vibrant, diverse, and high-quality neighbourhood in collaboration with partners. In so doing the Panel will enable more locally rooted development proposals that better respond to specific opportunities, wants and needs, for the collective benefit of those who live, work, and spend their time in Birkenhead town.

Evaluability assessment

The purpose of an evaluability assessment is to inform decision-making in terms of whether or not to evaluate a programme or intervention, as well as how to evaluate if the intervention is appropriate (Belford et al., 2015). GroundsWell facilitated an evaluability assessment of the Dock Branch Park regeneration in collaboration with the Panel and Council between September 2023-January 2024. The following report provides an overview of this work and different options for evaluation with a final recommendation from the GroundsWell consortium to be considered by the Council and the Panel.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Birkenhead 2040 Framework outlines Wirral Council's vision and the broader prospects for the transformative regeneration of Birkenhead. It lays out a comprehensive twenty-year strategy, delineating nine distinct neighbourhoods, each with its own implementation plans. Notably, Dock Branch Park is a pivotal 'catalyst' project, with a surrounding neighbourhood capable of accommodating approximately 1200 new homes within the next 5-15 years. While the neighbourhood masterplan integrates Dock Branch Park, the design for the park itself is being developed separately (Maccreanor Lavington, 2023).

The presence of the newly built Dock Branch Park is expected to impact residents from a wider area across the Wirral. There will be opportunities for people to use this park for active travel (walking, cycling). The take-up depends on the design of the park, the engagement and involvement of the population on the design (empowerment, 'ownership') and efforts to make the much-needed physical and community connections.

Planning, regeneration and health in a UK context

In the last two decades regeneration practices in the UK have focused on a more comprehensive approach to improving neglected neighbourhoods incorporating placemaking and place-keeping approaches to neighbourhood development. Whereas before, the focus was on housing developments without the benefit of other amenities, the potential broader impacts of regeneration projects on health, wellbeing, and quality of life are now recognised. Although research has shown mixed results for just how impactful regeneration can be on health and wellbeing outcomes, regeneration and its funding mechanisms remain a key investment approach to be leveraged by local authorities to impact the quality of places for local residents (Kearns et al., 2021). Further, while health benefits can result from improvements to housing, greenspace, and other amenities, displacement of the original population can also cause harm (Mehdipanah et al., 2015).

Projects like Dock Branch Park regeneration have the potential to lead to better health outcomes for current and new Birkenhead residents, however, care must be taken to ensure any new, large regeneration programme contributes to reducing health inequalities in the region rather than widening the gap.



THEORY OF CHANGE

A theory of change, or ‘logic model’, describes and illustrates the causal processes of how an intervention or programme is understood to achieve immediate outputs, intermediate outcomes, and long-term impact. For the Dock Branch Park regeneration, GroundsWell researchers reviewed existing literature (e.g., the Dock Branch masterplan consultation documents and report) to identify any existing programme theories for the park regeneration. One existing theory of change for Dock Branch Park was identified in the ‘Birkenhead Town Investment Plan 2021’ which included contextual information, brief details of financial input for the regeneration, and outputs and outcomes (including improved health and wellbeing of Birkenhead’s residents); these have been reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into the new logic model^[1]. Other literature and research that had been conducted through community engagement activities (see: Placed Education, 2023), or by the Council’s Insights team (see: Qualitative Insight Team & Council, 2023) were reviewed and existing causal pathways were extracted and collated; these data were used by GroundsWell to draft a preliminary logic model for the Dock Branch Park regeneration.

GroundsWell hosted two online workshops with key stakeholders, including members of the Council, the Panel, and other representatives from local organisations and businesses. The first workshop helped us to understand the outcomes stakeholders would like to see from the park regeneration and what they would like to evaluate – i.e., research questions they would like to address. The second workshop focussed on the types of evaluation that would help to answer the agreed research questions.

Stakeholders were keenly interested in evaluating if the Dock Branch Park regeneration would impact the **health and wellbeing** of people living and working in the neighbourhood. With the Panel being established as the lead community-collaborator for the redevelopment of the Dock Branch Neighbourhood, stakeholders were also interested in understanding this role, and the role of the wider community in ‘**stewardship**’ of the park, and ‘**meanwhile use**’ of green spaces while the processes for park design and build are underway. These overarching aims would likely help understand not only what happened as a result of the park regeneration (i.e., evaluating outcomes – does the park have an impact on the health and wellbeing of the community?), but also understanding how and why any change occurred, specifically evaluating the processes of community engagement and stewardship, and how this approach can affect the regeneration programme. The preliminary logic model has been revised following the workshops to reflect the priorities and objectives agreed with stakeholders. Following these workshops, GroundsWell updated the logic model depicting the co-produced theory of change (Fig 1).

[1] Note: When consulting with Wirral Borough Council GroundsWell researchers were informed that the Birkenhead Town Investment Plan 2021 includes details around funding for Dock Branch Park that, as of April 2024, were no longer up to date. Revisions have been made to the logic model for the Dock Branch Park regeneration (see pg. 7) so that funding sources are correct as of April 2024.

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Outer context

The area where the Dock Branch Park is situated is in the 20% most deprived areas in England for both the Health Deprivation and Disability, and the Living Environment domains. It is also relatively more deprived than other areas in the Wirral region.

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic lung disease, are collectively responsible for 74% of all deaths worldwide. NCDs share five major risk factors: tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and air pollution (WHO, 2023).

Inputs and resources

Funding
Approx. £15m has been sourced through different funding deals, investments and budgets.

Urban planning and landscape architecture expertise
Maccraenor Lavington urban designers (DB Neighbourhood master plan) and Optimised Environment (OPEN) urban designers and landscape architects (DB Park design).

Groundswell consortium expertise
Co-development of new theoretical frameworks, novel data science, health economics and policy analysis, community engagement and partnership.

- Stakeholders' time and expertise**
- Local Government bodies – Wirral Council (incl. Qualitative Insights, Public Health, Projects and Engagement, Regeneration Delivery)
 - Dock Branch Neighbourhood Community Panel (DBNCP)
 - Local residents
 - Local businesses

Activities

People
Community involved in the DP park design and management.

Place
Public art will be exhibited, and culture and heritage spaces will be exposed.
Include security measures in the park e.g., lighting and multiple entry/exit points.
Provide facilities for visitors e.g., toilets and shelter.
Make the park colourful and attractive.

Health
Linear park providing an active travel route with signage for local attractions.
Incorporate green spaces e.g., gardens with benches, allotments.
Spaces build for accessible and affordable outdoor activities
Include facilities for those with accessibility needs – e.g., lift for moving between levels.
Make the park 'recovery friendly'.

Outputs

People
Dock Branch Neighbourhood 'cultural stewardship framework'.

Place
Heritage features are maintained, publicised and accessed.
Improved spaces available for community activities, events and meetings.
Improved quality and safety of public space.

Health
Improved and safer environment for all park users, including pedestrians and cyclists.
Improved travel routes for places of interest in the DB neighbourhood.
Dock Branch park is accessible to all.

Intermediate outcomes

- People**
- Community wealth building through public stewardship / ownership of public spaces
 - Opportunities for skills development and civic engagement for residents by contributing to the regeneration
 - People feel more connected to nature
 - Bridging communities, improving social connection and capital
- Place**
- Improved sense of place, belongingness, pride in the area
 - Birkenhead becomes a destination 'arrived at and enjoyed' rather than a place that is 'passed through and ignored'
 - Existing natural habitats and biodiversity will be encouraged to flourish and prosper alongside Birkenhead's rich industrial heritage
- Wellbeing, health and safety**
- More journeys made on foot / bicycle
 - Increased physical activity among local residents
 - Reduce social isolation
 - Reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour

Long-term outcomes and impact

- People in places affected by other Masterplans / Regeneration Frameworks in Wirral and beyond may see benefits and consider matching cultural stewardship frameworks to their own Masterplans.
- Improved perceptions of Birkenhead for residents and potential inward investment.
- Facilitate placemaking and 'place keeping' to deliver new homes of benchmark quality to support the viability of the wider Birkenhead area, avoiding displacement of current park users and those residing in the area.
- Improved health and wellbeing of Birkenhead's residents.
- Reduction in health inequalities in Wirral and reduction in non-communicable diseases in Dock Branch Neighbourhood.
- Improved accessibility across the heart of Birkenhead.

Inner context

A disused railway line in Birkenhead offers significant opportunity to develop a new park. Increased green open space is needed to meet the demands of the substantial new development at Wirral Waters and growing population of Birkenhead.

People who need to be considered in the DBP regeneration: existing local residential and business community; the next generation; socially isolated; those wanting to live a healthier lifestyle; those wanting to move to the area; those wanting to build a stronger, more resilient community.

Figure 1. Logic model for the Dock Branch Park regeneration. Further detail for each logic model component is given in the report.

OUTPUTS

Workshop discussions involved stakeholders voting on prioritised outcomes to evaluate. These were then explored in more detail in smaller groups in ‘break out’ rooms. Notes were collated and reviewed, and key desired outputs from the park regeneration were identified, and the intended intermediate and long-term outcomes were agreed. Arrows in the logic model for the Dock Branch Park regeneration (see Figure 1) show expected causal pathways from activities and outputs to intermediate outcomes, to long-term impact. These are described in more detail below.

Activities, outputs, and intermediate outcomes were clustered into three themes: people, place, and health; while these themes provide structure to the model there is overlap between components – e.g., some outputs in the model for ‘place’ are also related to ‘people’, and some relating to ‘people’ are also relevant for ‘health’ etc.

People

Stakeholders see the value in people living and working in the area being actively involved in the regeneration programme, and in the park design and management. This approach should lead to community wealth building through public stewardship and ownership of public spaces, and opportunities for skills development and civic engagement for local residents by contributing to the regeneration.

Place

Place-related activities and outputs refer to things that need to happen to improve sense of place, belongingness, pride in the area, and make Birkenhead a destination ‘arrived at and enjoyed’ rather than a place that is ‘passed through and ignored’.

Health

Components for ‘health’ in the model refer to ways in which the park regeneration can provide a safe and accessible environment for visitors and commuters, that could lead to improved physical and mental health, and wellbeing.

OUTCOMES

Intermediate Outcomes

These are outcomes that should occur as a result of the Dock Branch Park regeneration if the outputs are produced and/or achieved. These include:

People

- Community wealth building through public stewardship / ownership of public spaces
- Opportunities for skills development and civic engagement for local residents by contributing to the regeneration
- People feel more connected to nature
- Bridging communities, improving social connection

Place

- Improved sense of place, belongingness, pride in the area
- Birkenhead becomes a destination 'arrived at and enjoyed' rather than a place that is 'passed through and ignored'
- Existing natural habitats and biodiversity will be encouraged to flourish and prosper alongside Birkenhead's rich industrial heritage

Wellbeing, Health and Safety

- More journeys made on foot / bicycle
- Increased physical activity among local residents
- Reduce social isolation
- Reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour

OUTCOMES

Long Term Outcomes

The model includes six long-term outcomes that stakeholders would like to see happen as a result of the Dock Branch Park regeneration programme.



PEOPLE IN PLACES AFFECTED BY OTHER MASTERPLANS AND REGENERATION FRAMEWORKS IN WIRRAL AND BEYOND MAY SEE BENEFITS AND CONSIDER MATCHING CULTURAL STEWARDSHIP FRAMEWORKS TO THEIR OWN MASTERPLANS

The Dock Branch Neighbourhood ‘cultural stewardship framework’ output refers to a co-produced framework that will provide guidance and governance for stewardship of the park. It is anticipated that, with support from GroundsWell, the Panel and wider community will establish principles for a stewardship model for the park, including meanwhile use projects and activities, and that this approach could be replicated in other regeneration programmes.



IMPROVED PERCEPTIONS OF BIRKENHEAD FOR RESIDENTS AND POTENTIAL INWARD INVESTMENT

Stakeholders agreed that perceptions of Birkenhead need improving, both by residents and non-residents. If activities and outputs are successfully achieved, the Dock Branch Park regeneration should improve the image of Birkenhead so that residents feel proud to live there and it becomes an attractive destination for visitors.



FACILITATE PLACEMAKING AND ‘PLACE KEEPING’ TO DELIVER NEW HOMES OF BENCHMARK QUALITY TO SUPPORT THE VIABILITY OF THE WIDER BIRKENHEAD AREA, AVOIDING DISPLACEMENT OF CURRENT PARK USERS AND THOSE RESIDING IN THE AREA.

Stakeholders see the Dock Branch Park regeneration as a pivotal catalyst programme in the Birkenhead 2040 framework with a surrounding neighbourhood capable of accommodating approximately 1,200 new residences within the next 5-15 years.

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IMPROVED HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF BIRKENHEAD'S RESIDENTS

This is a key outcome for stakeholders. Stakeholders envisage the new park improving the health and wellbeing of residents by activating intermediate outcomes around wellbeing, health and safety, which will lead to long-term impact.



REDUCTION IN HEALTH INEQUALITIES IN WIRRAL AND REDUCTION IN NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES IN DOCK BRANCH NEIGHBOURHOOD

Related to outcome 4, the area where the Dock Branch Park is situated is in the most deprived 20% of areas in England for both the Health Deprivation and Disability, and the Living Environment domains. It is also relatively more deprived than other areas in the Wirral region. Improving the health and wellbeing of residents should reduce health inequalities in the area, including a reduction in non-communicable diseases (e.g., heart disease).



IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY ACROSS THE HEART OF BIRKENHEAD

Stakeholders want to see a regeneration programme that is inclusive for all. That means providing safe and accessible spaces for visitors and commuters, and active travel routes linking places of interest.

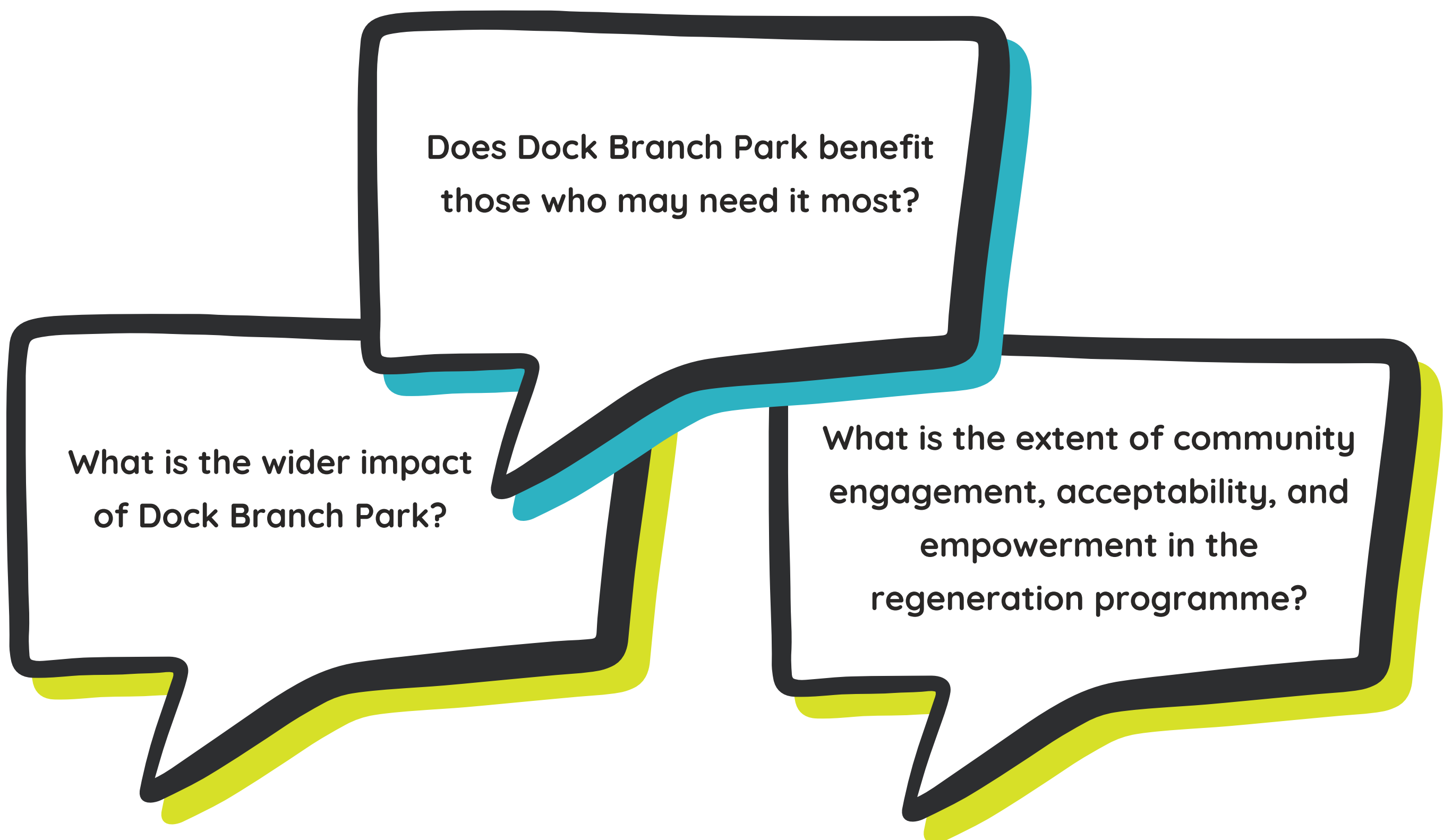
Outcome 1 would be best evaluated as a **process**, aiming to understand how best to facilitate this approach in future regeneration programmes. Outcomes 2-6 would be best evaluated in an **outcomes** evaluation, investigating what changes occur as a result of the park regeneration.

Displacement

The model, and outcome 3, refer to avoiding the 'displacement of current park users and those residing in the area'. Stakeholders were concerned that developments in the park area, which is currently a disused railway line, might displace current users of the space and local residents, including people with No Fixed Abode ('rough sleepers'). This was acknowledged in early stakeholder discussions and is associated with a piece of research conducted by the Council's Place and Investment team who identified four target groups they would like to engage to support the development of Dock Branch Park, including people with experience of street drinking and people with experience of rough sleeping. The Panel and Council want to ensure that the Dock Branch Park regeneration includes the views and experiences of these people in evaluation work.

KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

During the workshop, three key evaluation questions were formed that were applicable to each of the intermediate and long-term outcomes of interest.



These key evaluation questions have been taken into consideration while developing the evaluation options.

As the park regeneration is likely to go beyond the funding for the GroundsWell consortium (end date August 2026), evaluation options proposed in the report include what is achievable with current funding, and what could be possible with additional funds and time.

POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES

Existing literature surrounding the park regeneration, including previous research and community engagement has been reviewed for the evaluability assessment; these data will be used where appropriate in the evaluation – i.e., to build on existing findings from qualitative interviews with target populations, or to understand processes of community engagement activities to date.

As no formal evaluation of the park regeneration or community engagement has taken place, there are no pre-existing data to draw from. Subsequent data will have to be collected through accessing routinely collected data or through primary data collections.

1

ROUTINE DATA

The research team recommends that agreement is reached in conjunction with stakeholders on a ‘must-have minimum set’ of routinely collected data that should be monitored to assess resident health and the area’s economic growth. This assessment should include measures that are based as far as possible on readily available data.

2

PRIMARY DATA

Routinely collected data can provide evidence on changes to residents’ health and the area’s economic growth. However, these types of data cannot provide information on whether the population uses Dock Branch Park, or on mental wellbeing and physical activity within and around the DBP. To evaluate the impact of DBP on these types of outcomes, we would need to collect our own data.

EVALUATION OPTIONS

Option 1 This is what can be achieved with existing resources available from the GroundsWell consortium.

Methods (what will we do?)

<p>Whole Population Routine Data</p>	<p>We will establish a baseline of health care use for people living within 1 mile of the Dock Branch Neighbourhood compared to people living in similar areas across Wirral using individual level General Practitioner records (events, medications, referrals), emergency care data (A&E), hospital admissions (due to emergency care), mental health services and social services.</p> <p>We will establish baseline environmental, neighbourhood and sociodemographic indicators to link to health baseline data.</p> <p>We will develop a protocol describing the extraction of health care use and analysis of the routinely collected health outcome data; this document will be used to create the baseline prevalence of health conditions and will serve as the blueprint for future studies/evaluations.</p>
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<p>Primary data collection (outcomes)</p>	<p>We will develop and administer a cross-sectional household survey (N=2000) collecting data on demographics, mental health and wellbeing, active travel, engagement with the regeneration programme, physical activity, connection to nature, and use of green space.</p> <p>Participants include Birkenhead residents living within 1 mile of the Dock Branch Neighbourhood (see A1. Proposed Dock Branch Park evaluation/study area) and residents living further away (as a control group). The survey will be administered online. Participants will be invited by post to participate.</p> <p>This will be a cross-sectional survey in the first instance but will be set up with the potential to become a longitudinal survey, allowing for follow up of the same people over time, should funds be allocated (see option 3).</p> <p>An estimated 5 months will be needed to develop the survey (inclusive of ethical approval), 4 months to administer, and 5 months to analyse.</p>
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<p>Primary data collection (process)</p>	<p>We will conduct a qualitative process evaluation involving individual interviews with key stakeholders (N=20) to understand the processes for community/civic engagement in the Dock Branch Park regeneration, including engagement with 'seldom heard' groups.</p> <p>An estimated 3-6 months will be needed to co-design the interview documents (inclusive of ethical approval), 4 months to administer, and 5 months to analyse.</p>
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Outcomes (what we can we measure/evaluate/establish a baseline for?)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <p>Intermediate
Outcomes</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for skills development and civic engagement for local residents by contributing to the regeneration • Displacement of current park inhabitants • People feel more connected to nature • Bridging communities, improving social connection • More journeys made on foot / bicycle • Increased physical activity among local residents |
|----------------------------------|---|

Long Term

Outcome 1: People in places affected by other masterplans and regeneration frameworks in Wirral and beyond may see benefits and consider matching cultural stewardship frameworks to their own masterplans.

Outcomes

Outcome 4: Improved health and wellbeing of Birkenhead's residents.

Outcome 5: Reduction in health inequalities in Wirral and reduction in non-communicable diseases in Dock Branch Neighbourhood.

Resources and time required (what do we need?)

GroundsWell researchers time:

- Data Manager: 1 day/s per week (for 1 year)
- Research Fellow (qualitative): 1 day/s per week (for 1 year)
- Post-Doctoral Research Assistants/s: 1 day/s per week (for 1 year)

Resources/
Staff Time

Material cost considerations include printing, mailing, and potential follow ups (e.g., if door-to-door visits are deemed necessary to increase response rate). Interview participants will be reimbursed for their time with shopping vouchers in line with the NIHR guidance for public involvement (e.g., £25 for involvement in a task or activity requiring little or no preparation and which equates to approximately one hour of activity or less).

We would aim to get all necessary approvals and protocols in place so that data collection could commence in 2025, and data collection and analyses would be completed by August 2026.

Funding

Funding available through the UKPRP GroundsWell consortium to cover staff time, and costs for data administration and collection.

Option 2 This is what can be achieved with existing resources available from the GroundsWell consortium, with additional training available to Wirral Borough Council researchers and community stakeholders to collect additional primary data.

Methods (what will we do?)

Whole Population Routine Data	Option 1 + we will lay the foundation for future cross-sectional studies for the evaluation of the Dock Branch Park, beyond the GroundsWell Consortium’s timeline (September 2026). This means that the team responsible for this work will have to apply for access to the North West Secure Data Environment (CIPHA databanks’ successor) and establish partnerships with researchers at the University of Liverpool or other institutions, for academic support.
Primary data collection (outcomes)	Option 1 + we will collaborate with community stakeholders and train them as ‘citizen scientists’ to collect and/or analyse additional data on biodiversity indicators.
Primary data collection (process)	Rather than standalone interviews, we will conduct a mixed methods Stakeholder Network Analysis - we will use a survey tool to understand different stakeholders’ relationships to the Dock Branch Park regeneration programme (N=~30). Then we will conduct individual interviews with stakeholders to explore processes of civic engagement in the regeneration programme, relationships between different stakeholders, and plans for ongoing stewardship of the park.

Outcomes (what we can we measure/evaluate/establish a baseline for?)

Intermediate Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community wealth building through public stewardship / ownership of public spaces • Opportunities for skills development and civic engagement for local residents by contributing to the regeneration • Displacement of current park inhabitants • People feel more connected to nature • Bridging communities, improving social connection • Existing natural habitats and biodiversity will be encouraged to flourish and prosper alongside Birkenhead’s rich industrial heritage • More journeys made on foot / bicycle • Increased physical activity among local residents
Long Term Outcomes	<p><u>Outcome 1:</u> People in places affected by other masterplans and regeneration frameworks in Wirral and beyond may see benefits and consider matching cultural stewardship frameworks to their own masterplans.</p> <p><u>Outcome 2:</u> Improved perceptions of Birkenhead for residents and potential inward investment.</p> <p><u>Outcome 4:</u> Improved health and wellbeing of Birkenhead’s residents.</p> <p><u>Outcome 5:</u> Reduction in health inequalities in Wirral and reduction in non-communicable diseases in Dock Branch Neighbourhood.</p>

Resources and time required (what do we need?)

GroundsWell researchers' time:

- Data Manager: 1.5 day/s per week (for 1 year)
- Research Fellow (qualitative): 1.5 day/s per week (for 1 year)
- Post-Doctoral Research Assistants/s: 1.5 day/s per week (for 1 year)

Resources/ Staff Time

WBC researchers' time:

- Public Health Intelligence, Wirral Intelligence Service: X day/s per week [TBD with WBC depending on capacity].

Citizen scientists:

- We would aim to recruit approximately (N=8) members of the public to train as 'citizen scientists' and support them in collecting additional data and advocating to additional people the benefits of collecting these data.

Material cost considerations as in option 1 + payment for citizen scientists' time + funding to reimburse participants in the Stakeholder Network Analysis.

Funding

Funding available through the UKPRP GroundsWell consortium to cover staff time and practical costs for data collection. Funding also available within the Dock Branch Community Panel Innovation Fund grant to cover participation in some evaluation research (Stakeholder Network Analysis).

Additional funding/resource required to cover Wirral Borough Council researchers' time and community members' time to collect additional data.

Option 3 This is what can be achieved with existing resources available from the GroundsWell consortium, with additional training available to Wirral Borough Council researchers and community stakeholders to collect additional routine and primary data, and further funding for longitudinal follow-up.

Methods (what will we do?)

Whole Population Routine Data Option 1 + a longitudinal study using periodical snapshots of the individual level health records and the household level environmental metrics. This will allow us to more precisely quantify the impact of the Dock Branch Park and identify changes in people, hospital attendances (e.g., emergency and routine/planned) and more importantly, we will be able to measure long term changes on health (e.g., reduction of non-communicable diseases) understanding if people have been displaced and replaced.

Primary data collection (outcomes) This option would follow the same methodological process as option 1, with the household survey of residents living within 1 mile of Dock Branch Park as well as a control groups, collecting data on mental health and wellbeing, connection to nature, physical activity, use of green space and more (e.g., crime and anti-social behaviour). However, these data would be collected longitudinally with the same population (i.e., once every year) to enable changes in these outcomes to be explored over time. It is likely that the sample size would need to exceed N=2000 to allow for longitudinal follow-up.
This option would include measures of long-term outcomes (e.g., health conditions with a focus on non-communicable diseases).

Primary data collection (process) With additional funding we would continue Stakeholder Network Analysis beyond the current funding restraints for GroundsWell (i.e., beyond August 2026). This would allow us to further develop our understanding of civic engagement and stakeholder networks in the Dock Branch Park regeneration programme as it progresses in build phases, and ongoing civic engagement as regeneration into the Dock Branch Neighbourhood continues in line with the Birkenhead 2040 framework.

Outcomes (what we can we measure/evaluate/establish a baseline for?)

- Community wealth building through public stewardship / ownership of public spaces
- Opportunities for skills development and civic engagement for local residents by contributing to the regeneration
- Displacement of current park inhabitants
- Improved sense of place, belongingness, pride in the area
- Intermediate Outcomes
- People feel more connected to nature
- Bridging communities, improving social connection
- Birkenhead becomes a destination ‘arrived at and enjoyed’ rather than a place that is ‘passed through and ignored’
- Existing natural habitats and biodiversity will be encouraged to flourish and prosper alongside Birkenhead’s rich industrial heritage
- More journeys made on foot / bicycle
- Increased physical activity among local residents
- Reduce social isolation
- Reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour

Long Term Outcomes

Outcome 1: People in places affected by other masterplans and regeneration frameworks in Wirral and beyond may see benefits and consider matching cultural stewardship frameworks to their own masterplans.

Outcome 2: Improved perceptions of Birkenhead for residents and potential inward investment.

Outcome 3: Facilitate placemaking and 'place keeping' to deliver new homes of benchmark quality to support the viability of the wider Birkenhead area.

Outcome 4: Improved health and wellbeing of Birkenhead's residents.

Outcome 5: Reduction in health inequalities in Wirral and reduction in non-communicable diseases in Dock Branch Neighbourhood.

Outcome 6: Improved accessibility across the heart of Birkenhead.

Resources and time required (what do we need?)

Resources/
Staff Time

GroundsWell researchers' time:

- Data Manager: 1.5 day/s per week
- Research Fellow (qualitative): 1.5 day/s per week
- Post-Doctoral Research Assistants/s: 10 day/s per week
- Senior statistician to oversee the longitudinal analysis (0.1 days/week)
- Time for a programme manager

WBC researchers' time:

- Public Health Intelligence, Wirral Intelligence Service: 3 day/s per week. Dedicated time for this project to ensure the results are translated locally in the most effective formats to inform ongoing initiatives.
- Time from Wirral Borough Council team members to work with GroundsWell team to intensively canvas areas to achieve a representative population. Or hire of service.
- Time to train service/staff in approaches to obtaining data linkage consent.

Data:

This would require household linkage data from NHS England and associated systems working effectively within the Integrated Care Board Cheshire and Merseyside.

This would likely require costs to complete the data linkages of the intervention households versus other homes close to other parks in similar areas. The provision of these data would be counted as 'bringing our own data' to the NHS England and would require additional time and costs.

Citizen scientists:

We would aim to recruit approximately (N=8) members of the public to train as 'citizen scientists' and support them in collecting additional data and advocating to further people the benefits of collecting these data.

Material cost considerations include:

- Survey questionnaire and postage
- Field kit
- Data collection platform

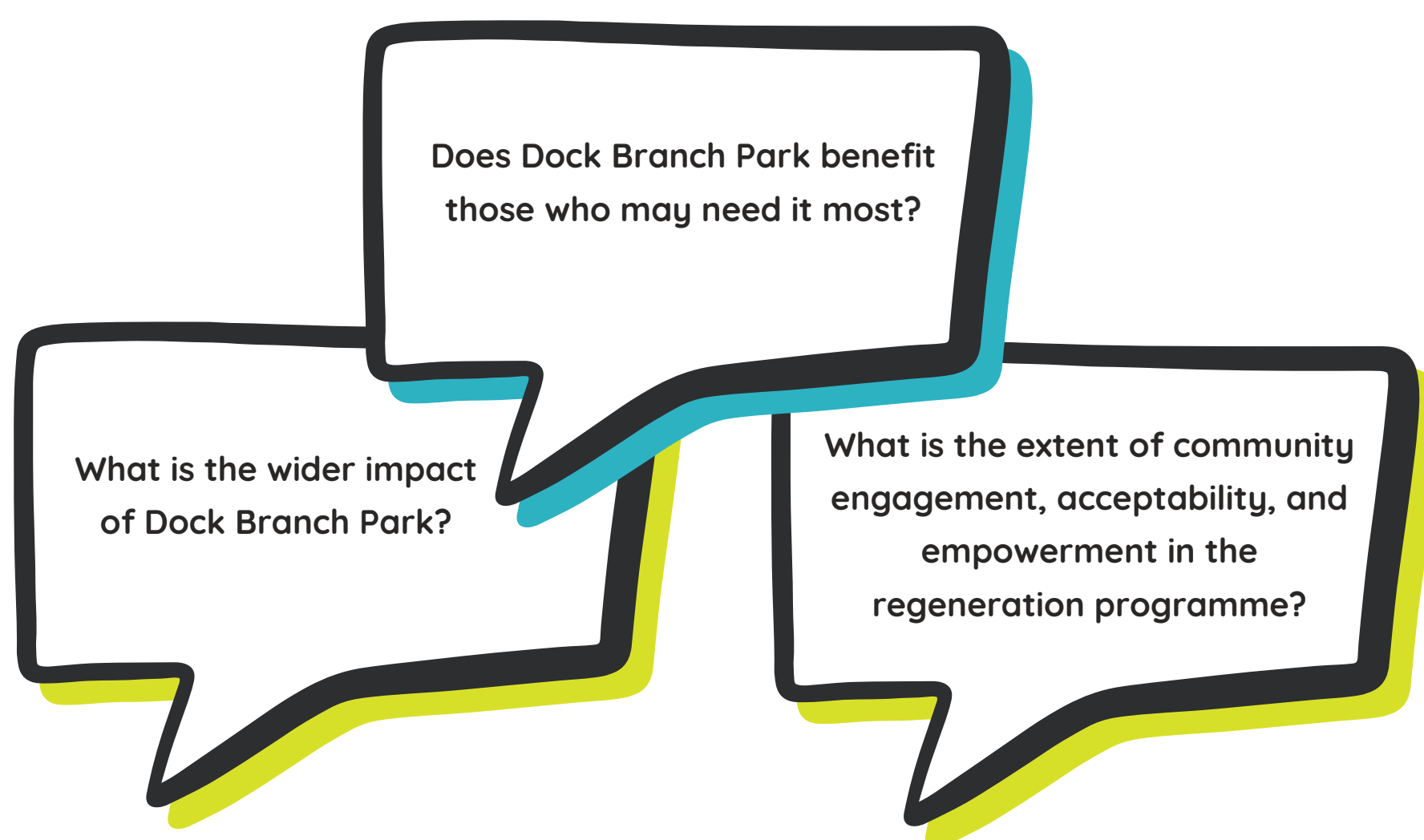
Funding

Funding available through the UKPRP GroundsWell consortium to cover staff time and practical costs for data collection until August 2026.

Further funding required for ongoing evaluation work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend **Option 3** in terms of the ideal evaluation. This would set up a regional capability of analysing changes through time and ensuring that current residents are not simply displaced with healthier more affluent people as the regeneration efforts progress. It would also show how to network of stakeholders might change over time; as the regeneration progresses through build phases until completion, and ongoing models of stewardship once the park is established. This option should address all the agreed evaluation outcomes, both intermediate and long-term, and respond to the key evaluation questions:



We hope by setting out the incrementally more complex evaluations in Options 2 and 3, that it is clear what can be evaluated now with current funding from GroundsWell, and what can be achieved with some additional funding and effort.

Option 1 would provide some important baseline data. Both to guide further evaluations, and to provide some evidence on the processes undertaken to involve the community in the regeneration of Dock Branch Park, as well as recording the starting point for health of the residents in this locale.

Option 3 does require additional resources (both time and funding) that go beyond what GroundsWell can currently offer. This would require buy-in from the Council and the community to work collaboratively over the next two years on data collection, monitoring, and analyses, and on applications to secure additional funding for the longitudinal evaluation. The GroundsWell team are experienced in applying for funding, but it is competitive, therefore there is no assurance of funding being received at the correct time to allow a full evaluation of all outcomes, as set out in Option 3. If we agree to proceed with Option 3, but we are unsuccessful in securing additional funding, then we will still have achieved the baseline as set-out in Option 2. With Option 3 there is the potential to **embed researchers** into the Council and vice versa, **building capacity and team working** across local government and academia. Working in partnership will allow us to **work collaboratively** on the proposal, making it stronger and more likely to succeed.

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APPENDICES

Proposed Dock Branch Park evaluation/study area

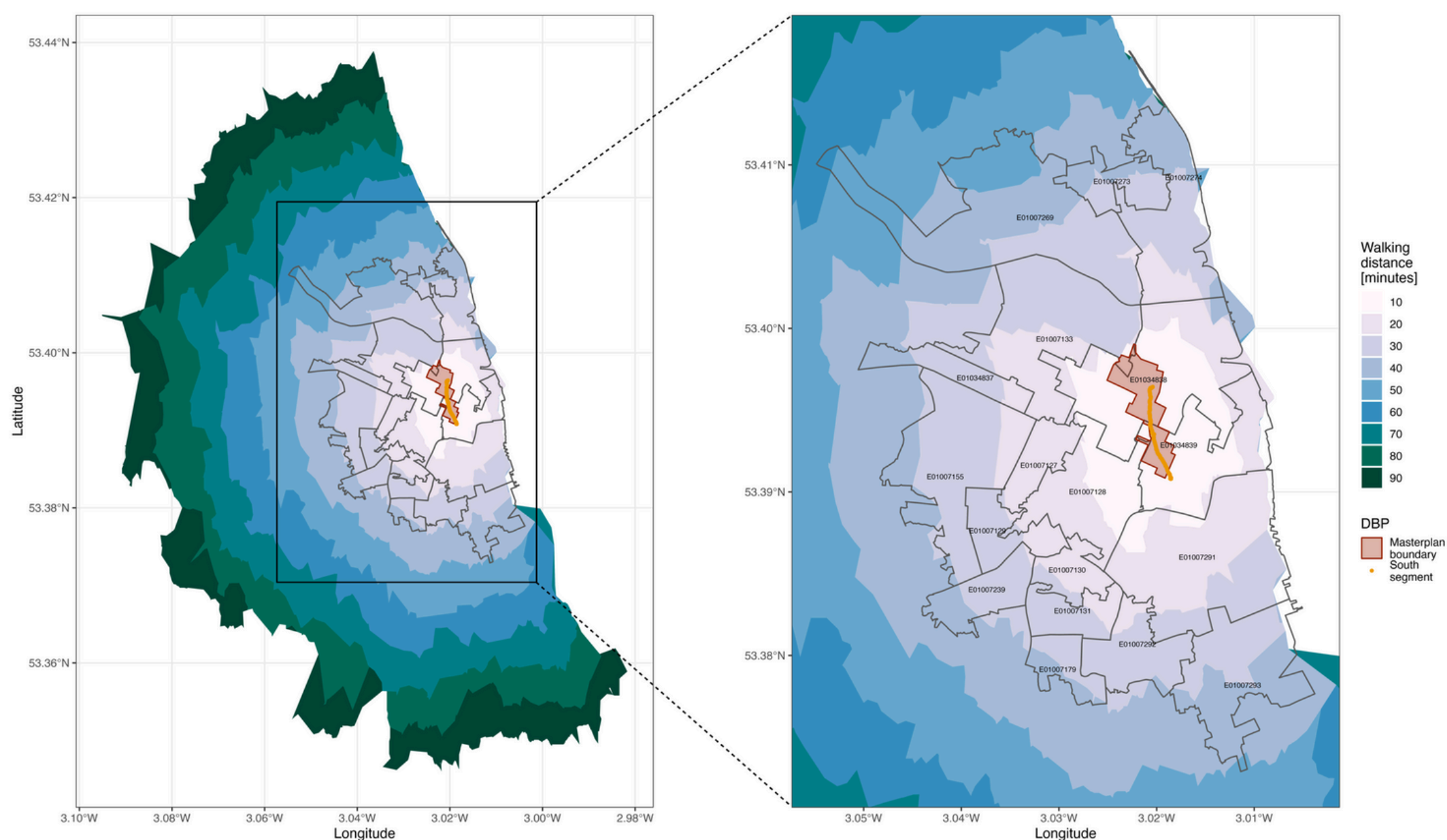
On the evaluability assessment #2, the attendees made the following suggestions in response to the prompt: “how do we want to define the Dock Branch area for the purposes of this evaluation?”:

- Use an accepted standard such as the *20-minute neighbourhoods*:
<https://www.ourplace.scot/about-place/themes/20-minute-neighbourhoods-home/20-minute-neighbourhoods>.
 - This will allow for comparisons with other regions/nations
- Bigger than masterplan area, but not so wide that it becomes borough wide.
- Use well defined geographical divisions, like Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs).
 - This will allow the usage of existing data assets at this geographical level
- *Use a flexible/fuzzy* boundary to account for changes on the neighbourhood in the future.
 - Allow to capture new builds planned as part of the wider regeneration

In response to these observations, the GroundsWell team is proposing the area of study to be defined as the combination of LSOAs for which their centroid is approximately within 1 mi of the DBP south segment, see Figure X. The area is defined by the following LSOAs for the 2021 census:

E01007127, E01007128, E01007129, E01007130, E01007131, E01007133,
E01007155, E01007179, E01007239, E01007269, E01007273, E01007274,
E01007291, E01007292, E01007293, E01034837, E01034838, E01034839

With an approximate area of 8 km² and an estimate 16,000 residential properties (as per the classification on the Ordnance Survey’s AddressBase Premium product v2023).



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Wirral Borough Council - Regeneration and Place team

Wirral Borough Council - Public Health team

Dock Branch Community Panel

All those who participated in online workshops and provided information to help us develop this report.

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to reduce non-communicable diseases.

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