



# Green Infrastructure for Growth 2 Summative Assessment Report

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## List of abbreviations

GI4G1	Green Infrastructure for Growth (1)
GI4G2	Green Infrastructure for Growth 2
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
PCR	Project Change Request
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
VfM	Value for Money
CC	Cornwall Council
UoE	University of Exeter
CSL	Cormac Solutions Limited

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# Executive summary

This report provides a Summative Assessment of the Green Infrastructure for Growth 2 project led by Cornwall Council in partnership with the University of Exeter, and with Cormac Solutions Limited as their main contractor. Cornwall Council has commissioned Wavehill to complete an evaluation of the ERDF-funded project and the findings set out below outline the extent to which the project has met its objectives, been delivered successfully, and will identify any learning to improve future practice.

## The Programme

The Green Infrastructure for Growth 2 programme's central aim is to 'increase the ecological and social value of Cornwall's urban green space.' It has aimed to do this by developing a target of 28ha of council-owned green space throughout Cornwall in the towns of Bodmin, Falmouth, Launceston, Liskeard, Newquay, Penryn and St Austell. The developed sites within each of these towns were selected based on a process that emphasised benefitting deprived communities in areas with low levels of green space per person. The vision for which is that long term site management on some sites will involve input from volunteers who will also be supported through the programme.

## The Evaluation

An evaluation framework was designed to lead the assessment of the Green Infrastructure for Growth 2 programme and identify the different elements that need to be tested and how to ensure a robust assessment was completed. As well as reviewing the collected monitoring data for the project, the evaluation team gathered primary data through interviews with the internal delivery team, external stakeholders, and interviews with some of the project's volunteers. This information was analysed and reviewed to provide the evidence needed to inform this summative assessment report.

## Key Findings

The findings from the data analysed for the evaluation showed that despite significant disruption from the Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent social distancing measures, the project has been both successfully designed and delivered to support the targeted ecological and social needs of these sites and their surrounding communities.

The project delivery team in place were regarded as efficient, informed, and flexible by individuals constituting both internal and external stakeholders and also some of the volunteers. The management structure of the project was well understood and considered to be very effective in overseeing the operation, with the partner approach utilised providing a range of experience and expertise for the project to draw from.

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From a development perspective, the project has exceeded its target of 28ha and has recently had a project change request approved to allow them to develop up to 34 ha, with 30.3ha currently delivered so far. Following a post-development site survey, 77% of the residents who responded to the survey indicated that they felt positive about the development. In addition to this, the majority of external stakeholder interviews responded that they felt the sites had improved and were not generating more use by their communities.

As mentioned earlier another key part of this delivery of the project has involved the recruitment and informal training of volunteers to help maintain these sites post the completion of the project. This was facilitated by an Urban Ranger whose role focused on the recruitment and support of these members of the public. Feedback from both staff, and volunteers regarding the impact of the ranger has been positive with it being felt they were able to effectively achieve their role.

The volunteers involved in the programme were largely happy with their experience, with almost all reporting that the training they received enabled them to take on their roles. The majority reported that they would be interested in continuing to maintain public green spaces in the future (90.5%), and also indicating that they would recommend volunteering to maintain sites to someone they know.

As previously mentioned, the Green Infrastructure for Growth 2 project's key target of developing council-owned space has been exceeded. In addition to this there have been several environmental and social aims that the project has also sought to address.

In terms of the environmental aims of facilitating habitat restorations and creation, improving the management of biodiversity and the ecosystem services offered by sites. Both the qualitative feedback provided by interviews with survey respondents, as well as the projects monitoring information suggest that this has been achieved.

The same is true with the social impacts the projects have sought to achieve including increasing access to community green spaces, increasing access for people with mobility issues, and facilitating community engagement with urban green spaces. It is clear once again from the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data provided that this has been achieved.

Another key focus of the project is to provide an exemplar project from which the learning can be disseminated and adopted by future similar projects to ensure they can build on the foundations established during Green Infrastructure for Growth 2 and its predecessor project.

Examples of the types of information disseminated included the emphasis on community engagement, most staff felt that their engagement with the community made the project strong in terms of having more voices inputting to the vision as well as helping make the developed site more attractive to the residents who not only use these spaces but would be encouraged to help manage the space post-project completion. The other main consideration put forward as an example of best practice was the development of a delivery team with a range of skills and experience.

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At the time of writing, the project has been able to exceed its target by 2.3ha while using 99% of its original capital expenditure agreement (£2,149,842.73 of £2,170,372.00). This means that the cost per hectare of the project has been £70,521.14 as opposed to the £77,513.28 that was originally expected in the funding agreement. This equates to a saving of £6,992.14 compared to the original expenditure forecast. It is also worth noting that this is lower than the average for GI4G1 which was £79,605 per hectare.

## Learning

Where there were suggested project improvements, these often related to changes to what the project was already offering as opposed to calls for changes in direction and focus. The most widely suggested of these is that there is a need for future support similar to what has been offered through this project. Some stakeholders suggested that this could come in the form of a successor project whereas others were interested to see this done in a hands-off advisory capacity to help facilitate community groups and other organisations to undertake green infrastructure projects like the site developments undertaken as part of this or to support the running of volunteer campaigns.

Another point of learning reported by both staff and stakeholders was to have more lead-in time for the project before the money had to be used. There was a belief that more lead-in time for the project could have allowed for more consultation with both the public and the town and community councils in which sites were to be based. Another suggested benefit of this was that it allows for time to plan and accurately budget for all the costs involved in delivering the project.

The lack of social media presence, due to the restrictions imposed by Cornwall Councils' social media policy, was an issue noted across all three groups of individuals engaged in this evaluation. It was felt that having a greater presence could have allowed the project to better explain to the public as to the rationale behind these developments and to showcase that they were designed to enhance biodiversity not just simply improve these sites from an aesthetic point of view.

Another consideration put forward to inform the development of future projects relating to the scope of GI4G2 was the need to consider and budget for exit strategies for projects. As has been mentioned throughout the findings of this report concerns have been voiced regarding the long-term sustainability of the impacts that the project has had. As a result, these respondents have indicated that they would want future provisions to have consideration for long-term support built-in, for example, there being the capacity for a role such as the Urban Ranger to be costed beyond the lifespan of the project itself to oversee the transition from being project-driven to being public driven.

# 1 Introduction

The Green Infrastructure for Growth 2 project (also known as Making Space for Nature and hereon in referred to as GI4G2) is a three-year project established in August 2019 and set to run until December 2022. It follows a previous phase Green Infrastructure for Growth (GI4G1) and has strived to increase the ecological and social value of Cornwall's urban green space. Cornwall Council (CC) is the grant recipient and lead on the project and has worked with Delivery Partner, University of Exeter (UoE) and Main Contractor Cormac Solutions Limited (CSL), to deliver the project. The GI4G2 project originally received £2,339,624 from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), in addition to £551,591 match funding from Cornwall Council, and £33,315 from the University of Exeter. However, due to subsequent Project Change Requests (PCRs) the capital funding element of ERDF has increased to £2,682,186.81 with £637,231.61 from Cornwall Council and £33,315 from University of Exeter (£2,682,186.46 Capital and £1,007,986.35 Revenue).

The overall project aim for GI4G2 is 'to increase the ecological and social value of Cornish Urban green space, to improve the quality of the green infrastructure network.'<sup>1</sup> GI4G2 originally aimed to achieve this by providing capital investment for the development of 28ha of Cornwall Council-owned and managed green space in seven towns throughout Cornwall: Bodmin, Falmouth, Launceston, Liskeard, Newquay, Penryn and St Austell. The sites within each of these towns were selected based on a process that emphasised benefitting deprived communities in areas with low levels of green space per person. However, through a project change request, this is now expected to reach 34ha, and include the towns of Camborne and Helston.

There is a strong emphasis within the project strategy that the green spaces developed during the project provide benefits for both communities and wildlife. It also looks to continue the shift in management strategies of green spaces from protecting what is already there to creating more abundant, productive and healthier habitats.

To improve the biodiversity at the selected sites across Cornwall, the project has looked to introduce the following to create havens for wildlife such as bees, butterflies, birds and hedgehogs:

- Wildflower meadow patches
- Ponds and wetlands
- Hedges and Cornish hedges
- Trees
- Woodland
- Pollinator shrubs and perennials
- Bulbs
- Orchards.

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<sup>1</sup> Making Space for Nature Project Strategy

Cornwall Council has commissioned Wavehill to deliver a summative assessment evaluation of the GI4G2 project in line with the funder's evaluation requirements, and also to provide an opportunity for observation, learning and development of the project. The evaluation is spread over three phases:

1. An inception to establish the processes and tools for the evaluation and review the implementation of the project.
2. A fieldwork phase which has reviewed processes, captured feedback on delivery, and estimated the impacts and legacy of the project.
3. A final analysis and reporting phase which has drawn together the findings of the fieldwork and through this report will outline the learning and recommendations that will support the partners to improve their delivery.

## 1.1 Intervention background

It was acknowledged in the policy strategy<sup>2</sup> that Cornwall is in a climate and ecological emergency and there is a need to create green infrastructure constituted of multi-functional, bigger, better and more joined-up habitats. It is suggested in the strategy that by improving the biodiversity value of urban sites, Cornwall can also improve its overall 'natural capital', meaning the stock of nature from which many benefits (ecosystem services) flow. This is seen as being both positive for wildlife and bringing nature to the doorstep of many Cornish residents, therefore providing additional social benefits.

The approach used by the project has been informed by widespread research conducted within the UK and further afield demonstrating that urban green space has an integral role as an affordable resource for public recreation, social interaction, health and well-being and other ecosystem services. However, it is noted that urban green space development has been limited by reduced local authority funds which have resulted in a lack of investment and reduced funding for their management. This has meant that many green spaces are now managed based on their economic value as opposed to their ecological and social value.

Factors such as reduced funding and larger-scale changes such as the loss and fragmentation of the UK's natural landscapes have led to declines in key plants and wildlife, in addition to social impacts such as risks to health and wellbeing, and limits on access to green spaces especially in deprived communities.

As a result, across the UK, efforts have been made to respond to this biodiversity crisis and to foster more ecological consideration in urban areas. This has included a shift from an emphasis on preserving what is left of these ecological corridors, to one concerned with expanding and developing green spaces to better support biodiversity.

The development of greater green infrastructure is seen as the development of more multi-functional spaces that in addition to providing space for wildlife and biodiversity, can also provide a social space for recreation and active travel.

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<sup>2</sup> Making Space for Nature Team (2021) Making Space for Nature in Cornish Towns: Project Strategy. Cornwall Council, Truro, UK. Available online at [www.cornwall.gov.uk/spacefornature](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/spacefornature)

## 1.2 Addressing challenges facing Cornwall

This green infrastructure development strategy was deemed an appropriate way to address some of the biodiversity issues facing Cornwall whilst also achieving great benefits for the local population. It was also deemed as a more effective way of mitigating the threats of climate change and biodiversity loss than other less natural and more manufactured grey infrastructures which were seen as potentially threatening the character and identity of local towns.

This character and identity have been shaped by historic land use driven by industries such as farming, mining and fishing. This in turn has led to each town having its unique heritage and identity, which requires preservation. Outside of towns, it is estimated that 75% of Cornwall is agricultural land with many of the field systems employed dating back to medieval times.<sup>3</sup>

It is noted in the strategy<sup>4</sup> that despite the wealth of cultural and environmental assets that the county possesses, in urban areas there are significant pockets of urban deprivation. As previously highlighted these areas are often especially limited in their access to green space, and of those, very little is designed with biodiversity and wildlife in mind. This, combined with low car ownership and limited public transport links, severely limits the access of some communities to high-quality green spaces that can improve well-being, recreation and a healthy lifestyle; an issue that was exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic through the subsequent lockdowns and social distancing measures.

During the project's site selection process for the following statistics, feedback from residents, and the understanding of the project team were used to evidence the need for the developments and their associated benefits in the selected towns:

- Urban wildlife is under pressure: e.g. UK hedgehog numbers have fallen from a 36 million in the 1950s to 1 million today. Butterflies have declined by 72% between 2001-2011.
- Green infrastructure assets are currently dominated by heavily mown grass with low biodiversity and low public interest.
- Cornwall has an ageing population with issues of social isolation, dementia, cardiovascular disease, depression, obesity and type 2 diabetes.
- 69.8% of adults in Cornwall are overweight. There is a strong link between obesity and physical activity.
- 30.2% of children leaving primary school in the towns are overweight or obese. Children's roaming range in 1915 was six miles by 2015 it had reduced to 300 yards.
- Increasing pressure on existing green space: current population of GI4G2 towns is approximately 82,000.
- 20,464 or 25% of the people in the towns of Newquay, St Austell, Launceston, Liskeard and Bodmin live in highly deprived wards.
- 24% of residents are not satisfied with their local green space.

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<sup>3</sup> Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Environmental Growth Strategy

<sup>4</sup> Making Space for Nature Team (2021) Making Space for Nature in Cornish Towns: Project Strategy. Cornwall Council, Truro, UK. Available online at [www.cornwall.gov.uk/spacefornature](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/spacefornature)

- There are at least 130 public green spaces in the Project Area, including roadside verges, churchyards and recreational areas.
- Having good quality public open spaces is rated very importantly by 95% of Cornish residents.
- 66% of Cornish residents visit parks or open spaces at least once per week.
- 75% of residents walk to a park or open space from their homes.

Both social and ecological factors were therefore considered during this decision-making process for which towns would receive support through this iteration of the programme. Therefore, ensuring that those areas targeted by the support stood to gain the most in terms of benefits to the environment and to the communities in which sites were installed.

Specifically, the perceived benefits for the identified sites included:

- A reduction in greenhouse gas emissions
- Climate change mitigation
- Reducing urban heat island effects
- Reducing air pollution
- Reducing the increased risk of flooding facilitated by climate change.

Whilst from a social perspective the project has sought to promote access, fitness and contact with nature. Establishing links to green spaces and nature potentially leads to less need for medical intervention and a reduction of strain on the NHS in selected towns and neighbourhoods.

### 1.3 Covid-19

The delivery of GI4G2 coincided with the Coronavirus pandemic and the associated lockdown, social distancing, and wider public health measures imposed by the UK Government. As a result, timescales, and other elements of project delivery were significantly impacted. Most pertinently the pandemic, and in particular the lockdown measures, have limited the extent to which the GI4G2 project team have been able to meet and engage with the spaces. The GI4G2 project team had to remain at home during the lockdowns and once site development was allowed this was impacted by further restrictions on who and how many local people the project team could engage. Furthermore, project delivery was impacted as staff at Cornwall Council had to adapt to home working to mitigate the disruption caused by the pandemic.

As a project which is designed in part to engage communities and potential volunteers, activities during the months coinciding with social distancing measures cannot be understood to be typical of the impact that the project may otherwise have had. This evaluation will seek to account for this disruption in its exploration of the project's success through targeted research questions.

## 2 Methodology

The evaluation has involved a mixed-methods approach to assessing the impact of GI4G2 and has considered the reasons behind the impact, helping to understand which parts of the project have worked well and where learning can be drawn.

### 2.1 Evaluation aims

The evaluation has sought to determine the extent to which the overall objectives and targets of GI4G2 have been achieved, the impact that the operation has had, both for stakeholders and more widely in the local communities, and an assessment of whether the operation has provided value for money.

As well as impact-oriented aims, the evaluation has also reviewed the management, implementation and delivery of the project. Through a review of the processes developed and the approach of the delivery, the evaluation has sought to understand what has worked effectively and what could be improved, as well as, importantly, what aspects of delivery have had the most impact. By exploring the effectiveness and consistency of the approach, the evaluation aims to support the project to refine its processes during its remaining delivery and inform the legacy of GI4G2 when the funding period has been completed. It is also important if any objectives have not been met, to understand why.

#### 2.1.1 Inception Phase

The inception phase utilised scoping interviews, project progress reports, and a steering group workshop to develop the evaluation framework which has shaped the rest of the evaluation. From this, tools were developed, and approaches decided that have been utilised in the fieldwork phase. This ensured that all the information necessary to conduct the evaluation has been captured during the project's monitoring processes.

#### 2.1.2 Fieldwork Phase

This phase sought to capture the relevant information necessary to capture the feedback and data relating to both the processes and impacts of the GI4G2 project. With a focus on the extensive list of questions included in the evaluation framework feeding into the overarching aim of the project: 'to increase the ecological and social value of Cornish urban green space, to improve the quality of the green infrastructure network.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Making Space for Nature Project Strategy

### 2.1.3 Final Phase

The final phase of the evaluation has been the synthesis and reporting phase bringing together the findings of the previous two phases to produce this report concluding with the successes and shortcomings of the project, what learning can be taken to help improve future projects and establish whether the project has met its objectives, providing an assessment of value for money.

## 2.2 Evaluation approach

In conducting the Summative Assessment, the evaluation has sought to provide insight into both the design and processes of the project as well as reporting on the impacts and outcomes. To achieve this, the evaluation team gathered data on the participant communities to support the monitoring data from the project, reviewed the project literature and interviewed delivery staff and partners to provide a comprehensive understanding of GI4G2 at all evaluation phases.

### 2.2.1 Inception Phase

During the inception phase, a desk review was undertaken by the evaluation team to review the project documentation, including the strategy documents, and data that is currently available. In addition to exploring the rationale for delivery, the desk research reviewed the logic model for the project and created a theory of change.

Alongside desk research, the evaluation carried out semi-structured scoping and staff interviews to gain a wider appreciation of the project, the management and governance structures and the delivery. These interviews helped the evaluation to determine the process and provided valuable feedback to inform this report and the shaping of the evaluation tools.

The theory of change helped to inform an evaluation framework which identified the various indicators that could be tested. These question areas and metrics, as well as how they were going to be gathered were used to guide the development of tools for the fieldwork phase of the evaluation.

### 2.2.2 Fieldwork Phase

The fieldwork phase of the evaluation commenced with a review of the monitoring information captured by the project and discussions with the project team regarding delivery progress. Partner interviews were conducted with 10 participants using the evaluation framework to guide the development of the data-gathering tools. These interviews provided wider insight into the perceptions and feedback on project management and delivery.

Interviews have been held with 10 stakeholders identified by the project team such as Cormac staff (Main Contractor), CC members and town councillors, sub-contractors and specialist suppliers, and members of groups with an interest in the developments. These have been used to help determine the extent to which the goals of the project and the progress made have aligned with their visions.

As at the time of the fieldwork phase the project was coming to an end and therefore some members of the original project team were no longer available to interview. In addition to this a council election meant that some of the individuals who were representing towns during the lifetime of the project had left office and were no longer able to be consulted, consequently some of the newer councillors felt that they could not contribute only being in office for a limited amount of time and having little involvement with and awareness of the project.

### 2.2.3 Final Phase

The final evaluation phase included an analysis of all the information gathered during the first two phases of the evaluation. This involved compiling reports to determine progress towards the KPIs over time in addition to expenditure reports, and the information included in the project change requests submitted.

Following this, thematic coding of both the delivery team and stakeholder interviews was undertaken to pull out key themes that feed into the findings of the report. This involved looking for consensus with regard to the opinions voiced regarding such topics as engagement, delivery, project management and impact. These findings against each of the themes and more can be seen in the later chapters of this report.

Finally, a mixed-methods approach to the analysis of survey responses from 18 community volunteers was utilised. This looked to determine the consensus and discourse surrounding; the impact of the project on them, the impact of the project on the communities in which they have been volunteers, as well as their views of the project more generally.

This analysis also included an assessment of whether the project has met its targets, the value for money achieved by the project and where lessons learned should be adopted in the future. This final report presents these findings and recommendations and contributes to the Summative Assessment summary report for Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

## 3 Context

This chapter considers the rationale and policy context that has led to the development of the GI4G2 project, including an overview of the previous iteration of the project, and also the international, national, and local policy environment that surrounds the project.

### 3.1 Green Infrastructure for Growth 1

GI4G2 built on the work already accomplished through Green Infrastructure for Growth 1. This involved the transformation of 44ha of urban open space across seven Cornish towns: Bude, Camborne, Hayle, Penzance, Pool, Redruth and Saltash. The project emerged following Cornwall Council's 2015 Environmental Growth Strategy which put forward that the protection of green spaces was no longer enough, and that there was a need to invest in and grow the environment.

Much like Phase 2, there was an emphasis put on ensuring that the urban green spaces that were being invested in were, and will continue to be, of great benefit to both communities and their wildlife. Through this work, Cornwall Council were able to refine its strategy and management techniques to improve its approach in GI4G2.

The evaluation of GI4G1 found the project to have been a success with regards to improving the wildlife value, accessibility and community enjoyment across all 33 sites within the seven towns. Therefore providing a blueprint that was seen as being transferable and replicable for future projects including this second phase and beyond.

### 3.2 Policy context

The provision of good green infrastructure in Cornish towns helps create places where people want to live and work. It is an essential part of good planning, particularly in the face of Cornwall's climate and ecological emergency. The GI4G2 project straddles policy from the realms of planning (the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>6</sup>), the environment (the Defra 25-Year Plan for the Environment<sup>7</sup>) and sustainable development (UN Sustainable Development Goals<sup>8</sup>).

#### 3.2.1 International

On an international level for governments and international organisations, climate and biodiversity emergencies have grown in prominence over recent years. Many countries declared climate emergencies, including the UK in May of 2019, and some are now moving toward national declarations for biodiversity emergencies. This was debated in UK parliament in April 2021.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2021-04-22/debates/96FFCDF9-3044-4D7C-8399-B306FCA8A4D1/BiodiversityEmergency>

Due to this slower movement of some countries to address biodiversity loss in comparison to climate change, several international organisations have taken it upon themselves to advocate for action to address the crisis. These include the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) which looks to bring together experts and international organisations to conserve nature and accelerate the transition to sustainable development.

The Convention of Biological Diversity is the international mechanism for protecting biodiversity and promoting sustainable development. This plan includes the Aichi Biodiversity targets that relate to issues such as raising awareness of biodiversity loss, reducing the pressures of biodiversity loss, and enhancing the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services.<sup>10</sup>

These targets and the progress towards them have been tracked by Cornwall Council and GI4G1 and GI4G2 have both been identified as ways in which Cornwall can contribute towards the international movement to meet these targets, many of which were underperformed against during their initial 2011 to 2020 timeframe.

### 3.2.2 National

As mentioned previously, on a national level, the UK government is aware of the biodiversity emergency that the nation and the wider world are experiencing and has subsequently added considerations surrounding the emergency into planning policy. National planning policy and guidance relevant to the project include the following:

The UK Biodiversity Strategy 2020<sup>11</sup> sets out goals for 2020 and 2050, which are intended to provide better, more, bigger and joined sites for nature to facilitate the halt and reversal of overall biodiversity loss. The mission for 2020 is *to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people*. The outcomes draw on the suite of international targets agreed upon in Nagoya as part of the Convention on Biological Diversity strategic plan for 2011-2020.

The Environment Act 2021<sup>12</sup> is a bill to make provisions about targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment. Its priority areas are (a) air quality; (b) water; (c) biodiversity; (d) resource efficiency and waste reduction. Which therefore seeks to cover not only biodiversity itself but also a range of the factors that have knock-on impacts on biodiversity.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services>

<sup>12</sup> <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2593>

As a regulator of professional competence, The Landscape Institute sets out how it will monitor and encourage best practices in its Climate Biodiversity Action Plan.<sup>13</sup> The Institute will be viewed as a key resource for guidance and best practice, its policy paper 'Greener Recovery Report' (2020) setting out its approach to green infrastructure.

In addition to the national biodiversity policy however, there is also a national planning policy that the project has to abide by. It is understood that national planning guidance has been referred to throughout both phases of GI4G1. The National Planning Framework must be taken into account in the preparation and development of local and neighbourhood plans and therefore is a key consideration in planning decisions. The guidance explains the processes and tools that can be used through the planning system and how to engage local communities effectively. It is intended to be read alongside the National Design Guide<sup>14</sup>, which sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice.

Both national planning and biodiversity policy have been considered during the development of the project, and in particular, the engagement of local communities has been considered from both a biodiversity development and policy perspective.

### 3.2.3 Local

Cornwall Council has a series of local policies and guidance documents relevant to the project, including its Cornwall Plan, Climate Emergency Development Plan Document, Environmental Growth Strategy, Pollinator Action Plan, Local Plan and, for some town councils, Local Neighbourhood Plans.

Cornwall's Local Plan<sup>15</sup> lays out the council's strategic policies for 2010-2030. It prioritises the need for environmental, social and financial sustainability in all the council's activities. The approach taken by GI4G1 is informed by Policy 12 (Design) and Policy 16 (Health and wellbeing) both of which highlight the need for multifunctional green spaces which are resilient to climate change. Policy 23 (Natural Environment) requires any developments to retain local character and distinctiveness, as well as protect and enhance biodiversity. Policy 25 is explicitly about green infrastructure in its widest sense (including all-natural and semi-natural environments in Cornwall), requiring developments to contribute to an enhanced network of interconnected open spaces, habitats and waterscapes, and to create accessible and attractive places for communities to make regular contact with nature. Policy 26 (Flood risk management and coastal change) requires that developers minimise flood risk and reduce surface water flows using SuDs and green infrastructure where possible. While GI4G1 falls under permitted development, these guidelines are still adhered to.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2020/05/12284-climate-biodiversity-action-plan.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [National design guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422222/national-design-guide-2015.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/ozhj5k0z/adopted-local-plan-strategic-policies-2016.pdf>

GI4G1 follows the principles set out in the council's Draft Design Guide,<sup>16</sup> which demonstrates how to achieve quality development for people, wildlife and the environment. The project is to be used as an exemplar of best practice which will facilitate shared learning beyond the project itself. GI4G1 is to act as a learning resource for other towns and stakeholders, delivering site design, construction and site management by relevant Local Plan policies:

- **Policy 1** (Presumption in favour of sustainable development) puts the three pillars of sustainability (environment, social, economy) at the heart of the local plan.
- **Policy 2** (Spatial Strategy) sets the overall strategy focusing on development in and around the existing main settlements across Cornwall, to promote sustainable, well-connected places. It also sets out the importance of the protection and enhancement of environmental assets.
- **Policy 12** (Design) requires adaptability to climate change and the provision of multi-functional and natural green spaces.
- **Policy 16** (Health and Wellbeing) requires development to protect and alleviate risk to people and the environment from unsafe development by avoiding or mitigating potential hazards from future climate change impacts and providing flexible community spaces that promote health needs and social interaction.
- **Policy 23** (Natural Environment) (1) and (3) requires development to 'sustain local distinctiveness and character and protect and where possible enhance Cornwall's natural environment and assets...' 'conserve, protect and where possible enhance biodiversity...' It is worth noting that the updating of the NPPF has removed the words 'where possible' from national policy, thereby changing the interpretation of Policy 23 as the NPPF has primacy.
- **Policy 25** (Green Infrastructure) has cross-cutting provisions relating to development demonstrating the creation and enhancement of functional environmental infrastructure, ecosystem services and biodiversity, providing appropriate buffers to natural spaces and creating connections, including eco-system services and restoring and enhancing connectivity.
- **Policy 26** (flood risk management and coastal change) states that development should take account of, and be consistent with, any adopted strategic and local flood and coastal management strategies including the Shoreline Management Plan and Catchment Flood Management Plans for Cornwall and the South West River Basin Plan.
- **Policy 28** (Infrastructure) states that developer contributions will be sought to ensure that the necessary physical, social, economic and green infrastructure is in place to deliver development.

The Cornwall Plan<sup>17</sup> 2020-2050 emphasises the importance of increasing the speed at which nature is brought back to land and seas to prevent ecological breakdown, and that the ability to connect with nature through access to outdoor space is a significant factor in improving health and well-being. Lockdown is noted to have had a significant impact on people's appreciation of local nature and the plan states that the environment 'appears to now be more of a constant in people's thinking about everyday matters.'<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> <https://indd.adobe.com/view/0369a2c8-eeb7-42eb-b9dc-15c85a8fd066>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/xcdhwsmu/the-cornwall-plan-2020-2050.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/xcdhwsmu/the-cornwall-plan-2020-2050.pdf>, Page 20

Cornwall Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, and six months later launched its Climate Change Action Plan.<sup>19</sup> It is envisioned that GI4G2 will directly contribute to this by providing a template for best practices concerning transforming amenity spaces to help capture carbon, help reduce carbon footprints and alleviate species decline. Cornwall's Climate Emergency Development Plan Document (DPD)<sup>20</sup> (submitted for independent examination in November 2021) sets out the spatial strategy for the Climate Emergency DPD and the council's expectations for new development in Cornwall. This is something to which learning from both GI4G1 and GI4G2 can contribute.

The policies under *Natural Climate Solutions* have been developed to protect and enhance Natural Capital (i.e. Cornwall's stock of natural resources, which includes biodiversity, vegetation, soils, air, water, habitats and geology) to provide long-term adaptability and resilience to anticipated extremes of weather and to provide long term carbon sinks. The new policy approach of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a process whereby existing biodiversity is protected and enhanced as part of the development process. This need to do more than merely protect the current biodiversity landscape is something that is a critical part of the rationale for both phases of GI4G1.

This will facilitate increased tree cover and green infrastructure and will help fund opportunities to work towards addressing nature decline by creating Local Nature Recovery Networks, to help improve and connect habitats at a local and regional level. GI4G1 contributes directly to Natural Climate Solutions in selected towns and sites, with the vision that this project could go on to provide best practices for other towns to consider.

The policies under *Sustainable Energy and Construction* are also of particular relevance. Sustainable Construction means taking a life cycle approach to development, which encompasses location, design, materials, construction management, and the life and long-term stewardship of developments. In achieving the highest standards of sustainable design and construction, the environmental performance of new developments will be improved, minimising contribution, and adapting to the effects of climate change over their lifetime. Sustainable construction is important to the GI4G1 approach to climate change, as well as having many other environmental, social and economic benefits. Although much of the learning regarding GI4G1 involved retrofitting improved green infrastructure within existing town infrastructure the project also has value for completely new developments.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/y5mctbyu/climate-change-action-plan.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/adopted-plans/climate-emergency-development-plan-document/>

Cornwall's Environmental Growth Strategy<sup>21</sup> aims to achieve gain for natural systems rather than just protection. This will be achieved by better management of the environment, creating more larger and more connected areas where nature thrives and designing existing activities and developments to support nature. Under the umbrella of the Environmental Growth Strategy is Cornwall Council's Pollinator Action Plan,<sup>22</sup> which aims to help reverse the decline in bees, butterflies and other insects by providing food and places of refuge for pollinators. GI4G1 and GI4G2 contribute to the Environmental Growth Strategy by improving the design and management of urban public open spaces for wildlife and creating more wildlife-friendly open spaces that are better connected. It will also add environmental gains to existing public green spaces. Cornwall's Pollinator Action Plan 2019-2023<sup>23</sup> is a key document in helping deliver Cornwall's Environmental Growth strategy. It focuses on actions that can be taken across the council's functions and services, including managing assets to be more pollinator friendly. Phase 1 of the GI4G1 project is listed as a key mechanism for this, through using pollinator-friendly planting to create a resource for urban-dwelling insects. GI4G2 expands on this and is set to continue delivering results.

GI4G1 follows all relevant advice and guidance laid out by Cornwall Council. The council's Terrestrial Invasive Non-Native Plants Policy and Statements lays out the approach to dealing with non-native plant species. The local authority's Biodiversity Guide (adopted 16th October 2018)<sup>24</sup> and Trees in the Cornish Landscape<sup>25</sup> intends to follow, and the project has reported that it will adhere to the advice in the Flood Catchment Management Plans for West and East Cornwall.<sup>26</sup> For each town, the project has checked whether there is a Neighbourhood Plan and Place-shaping Group and will be clear on how to contribute to the relevant goals.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to contributing to planning and environmental policy both phases of GI4G1 have sought to contribute to the health and well-being of Cornwall's residents and visitors. Cornwall's Health and Wellbeing Strategy<sup>28</sup> highlights the need to address the wider determinants of health and wellbeing and expand health-promoting opportunities. It recognises that the physical environment is a significant determinant of health and well-being and promotes the use of green outdoor space. The Covid-19 pandemic has amplified health and social inequalities in society, with good physical and mental health and well-being now considered more important than ever. Therefore, as the world begins to recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is clear that for residents of the towns involved in the project, GI4G2 could potentially play an important role.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environmentalgrowth>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment/grow-nature/pollinator-action-plan/#:~:text=Cornwall's%20Pollinator%20Action%20Plan%202019,Human%20Health'%20motion%20in%202016.>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/wszb3ahl/cornwalls\\_pollinator\\_action\\_plan\\_web.pdf](https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/wszb3ahl/cornwalls_pollinator_action_plan_web.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/adopted-plans/planning-policy-guidance/cornwall-planning-for-biodiversity-guide/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/41808846/treesinthecornishlandscape>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/west-cornwall-catchment-flood-management-plan> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/east-cornwall-catchment-flood-management-plan>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/neighbourhood-planning/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/1buptdxl/hwb-strategy-50648-a4-proof5.pdf>

## 4 Delivery Model

This chapter describes the project delivery approach, including the site selection, as well as setting out the targets, KPIs and cross-cutting themes which the project is expected to contribute towards.

### 4.1 Delivery approach

GI4G2 has aimed to provide capital investment on 28ha of Cornwall Council-owned and managed green space in seven towns throughout Cornwall: Bodmin, Falmouth, Launceston, Liskeard, Newquay, Penryn and St Austell. The developed sites within each of these towns were selected based on a process that emphasised the potential for biodiversity and access improvements, plus existing local interest. As previously stated, this has now increased to 34ha with the towns of Camborne and Helston now also included.

The urban spaces that the project has sought to enhance include:

- Recreation grounds
- Parks
- Woodlands
- Verges
- Cemeteries and closed churchyards.

This site selection process started with all urban spaces owned and managed by the council. Another consideration was the size of the site to provide better biodiversity value and value for money, it was seen by the delivery team as being preferable to develop bigger sites to reach the hectare target. The next step involved considering the current biodiversity level at the sites with those most in need of action being prioritised. Finally, potential community involvement was considered by looking at things in proximity to housing and schools. Once these factors had been assessed, sites were scored, and professional judgment was used to determine which sites were selected according to these criteria.

These sites are designed to be multifunctional green spaces that not only harbour biodiversity but also foster more connected communities and help provide resilience to the impacts of climate change such as flooding. Therefore, when considering the approach to delivering these green spaces it is important to consider both the natural and community impacts that these improvements have had.

The communities and local councils in which these sites are situated have been consulted and engaged throughout the lifespan of the project so far, from the initial selection stages to more recent activities that have looked to foster environmental stewardship amongst residents and green space users.

## 4.2 Targets

The overall project aim for GI4G2 is ‘to increase the ecological and social value of Cornish Urban green space, to improve the quality of the green infrastructure network’.<sup>29</sup>

The more specific goals of the project are to:

- Increase biodiversity and wildlife value
- Enhance water quality and a more flood-resilient landscape
- Enhance ecosystem services provided by sites including climate mitigation such as carbon storage and air pollution mitigation
- Improve public access and promote increased community enjoyment of nature
- Deliver community engagement with health and well-being benefits
- Embed environmental sustainability and equality and diversity principles into all project processes
- Provide value for money during project delivery and long-term site aftercare.

As well as the overall objectives of the project, there are specific targets associated with the ERDF funding agreement. These have been split into three different categories: environmental, social and economic.

Table 4.1: Project KPIs

Category	Key Performance Indicator
<b>Environmental</b>	1. Improvement in biodiversity of 28 <sup>30</sup> ha of urban green space
<b>Environmental</b>	2. Habitat restoration and creation
<b>Environmental</b>	3. Improved management of biodiversity
<b>Environmental and social</b>	4. Improvement in ecosystem services provided by sites
<b>Environmental and social</b>	5. Increased carbon storage and sequestration at sites
<b>Social</b>	6. Increased access for people
<b>Social</b>	7. Increased access for people with mobility issues
<b>Social</b>	8. Positive perception of works completed in open spaces
<b>Social</b>	9. Community engagement with urban green spaces
<b>Social</b>	10. Dissemination of good practice in creating good green infrastructure
<b>Economic</b>	11. Long-term management costs to be similar or within 10% of existing long-term management costs

Since the initial funding agreement, the project has undergone several PCRs which have revised the date by which these targets are likely to be achieved pushing the end of the project back from July 2022 to December 2022. This PCR was submitted due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. As well as increasing the budget and scope of its key development goal.

<sup>29</sup> Making Space for Nature Project Strategy

<sup>30</sup> Now 34ha

### 4.2.1 Cross-Cutting Themes

The cross-cutting themes of ‘sustainable development’ and ‘equality and diversity’ feature as a part of the core delivery of the GI4G2 project, with delivery staff looking to ensure consideration of these issues.

## 4.3 Funding

The original budget for the GI4G2 project was £2,924,530 with funding coming from the European Regional Development fund (£2,229,624), with match funding from Cornwall Council (£551,591) and the University of Exeter (£33,315). A breakdown of the estimated capital costs associated with GI4G2 can be seen in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Original Projected Project Expenditure

Delivery Item	Budget
Costed design of 30 sites <sup>31</sup>	£94,602
Project management	£255,714
Construction <sup>32</sup>	£1,581,436
Establishment <sup>33</sup>	£280,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,211,752</b>

This overall budget through the subsequent PCRs has risen to £3,352,733.07 with funding coming from the ERDF now at £2,682,186.46 with match funding from Cornwall Council (£637,231.61) and the University of Exeter (£33,315). A breakdown of the estimated capital costs associated with GI4G2 can be seen in table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Current Projected Project Expenditure

<b>Capital</b>	
ERDF (Capital)	£1,875,797.38
Public Match (Capital)	£468,949.34
Private Match (Capital)	-
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>£2,344,746.72</b>
<b>Revenue</b>	
ERDF (Revenue)	£806,389.08
Public Match (Revenue)	£201,597.27
Private Match (Revenue)	-
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>£1,007,986.35</b>
<b>Total</b>	
Total ERDF	£2,682,186.46
Total Match	£670,546.61
<b>Total Project Value</b>	<b>£3,352,733.07</b>

<sup>31</sup> At £3,000 per site

<sup>32</sup> £54,457.73 per hectare

<sup>33</sup> £10,000 per hectare

## 4.4 Management and governance

GI4G2 is governed by a steering group made up of representatives from Cornwall Council including the asset manager, project lead, contract manager, two project advisors, a service accountant, a University of Exeter Impact Fellow as well as a representative from their finance team. This group recommends the sites for investment, as well as the strategic decision that determines the direction of delivery for the project. The day-to-day operation and management of the project are led by the project lead who is supported by other members of the project team. The project lead as well as the project advisors have taken responsibility for a proportion of the sites and oversee the developments in each area.

Decision-making is undertaken by the Environment Project Board which the team reports to monthly and presents to on a bi-monthly basis. This is where the project reports on progress against targets and budgets (output and expenditure profiles).

The Environment Project Board reviews monthly update reports which evidence the progress that has been made in each area, and with regards to the progress that has been made towards the KPI targets, in particular cumulative output and expenditure.

## 5 Evaluation Findings

This section sets out the assessment of the Green Infrastructure for Growth programme based on the findings from the delivery team interviews, stakeholder interviews, a survey of volunteers, as well as monitoring information.

### 5.1 Progress

To date, the programme has exceeded its target of providing capital investment for 28ha of Cornwall Council-owned and managed green space in seven towns throughout Cornwall: Bodmin, Falmouth, Launceston, Liskeard, Newquay, Penryn and St Austell.

GI4G2 is now taking place in nine towns: Bodmin, Camborne, Falmouth, Helston, Launceston, Liskeard, Newquay, Penryn and St Austell. In addition to this, the 27 sites now total 34ha of space. As of the time of writing, 30.3ha of development across 24 sites have been completed, equating to 108% of the original target area. The remaining 3.7ha (to be split amongst three extra sites) are currently at the Concept Design Stage and are expected to be completed before the project concludes.

Feedback from the delivery team suggests that they are very pleased with the performance of the programme, especially about its ability to exceed expectations. It was noted that initially, the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the ability of the delivery team to meet its targets, for example, site development was heavily restricted with social distancing measures put in place. But overall it was felt that the team's ability to adapt its delivery to meet social distancing measures, in conjunction with its ability to secure a funding extension, ensured that the targets were not only met on time but surpassed.

External stakeholders also unanimously suggested that the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted the project with those areas they saw as being most disrupted being the meetings and engagement with the wider community, as well as the deadlines to which the development of sites was supposed to adhere to.

#### 5.1.1 Cross-Cutting Themes

The project has committed as part of their funding agreement to contribute towards the cross-cutting themes of sustainable development and equality and diversity. Delivery staff report that these have been incorporated into the delivery of the programme, and that they are actively encouraging both partner organisations including Cormac, as well as their volunteers to abide by the principles behind these themes.

The theme of sustainable development is one that most staff feel is close to the core rationale of the programme. Some of the measures taken to ensure that the programme contributes to this theme include: positive environmental impacts and sustainable decisions being key considerations of programme design and ensuring that delivery team members and contractors received appropriate environmental training.

With regards to the cross-cutting theme of equality and diversity, measures have been taken including ensuring consultants and contractors have or have developed equality and diversity policies, ensuring that employees undergo appropriate equality and diversity training, as well as adopting Cornwall Councils' policy on equal pay for all.

## 5.2 Management and governance

The management and governance structure is outlined in detail in Chapter 4 of this report. The structure was well regarded by the delivery team members engaged in the evaluation who felt that they were able to communicate easily, ensuring that tasks were understood and completed. Most delivery staff also commented that this communication was especially strong during Covid-19 when the team needed to adapt their delivery once social distancing and lockdown restrictions were introduced. All delivery staff felt that they knew their roles and responsibilities and were able to continue to operate regardless of other changes brought about due to Covid-19.

The expertise and experience of the team and delivery partners were also frequently referred to by those delivery team members interviewed as well as some of the stakeholders. This experience and expertise were a commonly cited factor for why in their opinion the programme has been delivered effectively.

Regarding the management of the relationship between the project partners, all of those delivery team members interviewed felt that these partnerships had been positive with each partner bringing something to the programme to set it apart from others. For example, some team members felt that the academic aspect brought about through the partnership with the University of Exeter made the project unique from other green infrastructure projects. Also, the relationship with Cormac was said to have been mutually beneficial with Cormac benefitting from learning more about sustainable practices and development, and the wider programme benefitting from their expertise in site development and management.

## 5.3 Design and implementation

As mentioned previously, GI4G2 has been a direct successor to the previous GI4G1 project with much of the team, structures and designs remaining in place from this previous iteration. According to some members of the delivery team, this successor programme has been very similar to the previous iteration with the main points of development being, the selection of new sites, an increased public engagement focus, and embedding the learning from Phase 1.

All delivery staff felt that the design of the project was appropriate to meet its objective of improving existing green spaces for biodiversity and people. In addition to agreeing that the rationale had grown in importance and relevancy following a greater policy focus on biodiversity both on a local level, as well on a national scale.

All external stakeholders reported that they believed the project's design was well designed and aligned with the needs of the towns and were contributing to developing green spaces in Cornwall, the most commonly cited reasons for this perceived impact on green spaces were that they were being used by more people now and that the areas developed were empty fields before and now are somewhere people can visit.

The transition from the design to the implementation was said by the delivery team to have been greatly aided by their experience in delivering the precursor project as well as the expertise brought by Cormac, which the delivery team further refined through training surrounding the sustainable practice.

## 5.4 Engagement

From the volunteer survey, respondents indicated that they had heard about the GI4G2 project through a range of means. A printed advertisement was the most common way volunteers came across the opportunity; however, the Urban Ranger was also put forwards as one of the key ways volunteers became aware of the project.

It was made clear in both delivery team and external stakeholder interviews that there had been variation in the effectiveness of engagement with volunteers and the public more generally in consultation between the towns selected. It was also noted by both stakeholders and delivery staff that Covid-19 and the subsequent social distancing measures that limited more traditional face-to-face volunteer recruitment methods had an impact on the number of volunteers recruited as well as limiting face-to-face dissemination opportunities to inform the public of what was being done and why.

Another limitation regarding engagement cited by delivery staff and stakeholders was a lack of social media presence for the project. It is understood that this lack of social media was due to restrictions put in place by Cornwall Council's policy surrounding social media ensuring that communications need to come through them. However, this may be something that Cornwall Council may want to consider as the majority of delivery staff as well as several stakeholders reported that engagement with both volunteers and the public in general could be improved by providing frequent updates on the project.

### 5.4.1 Volunteer Motivations

For the majority of the volunteers surveyed, their motivations to engage with the project included wanting to help improve their local environment or wanting to help improve biodiversity in Cornwall. Half of the survey's respondents indicated that they wanted to volunteer to improve their health and well-being.

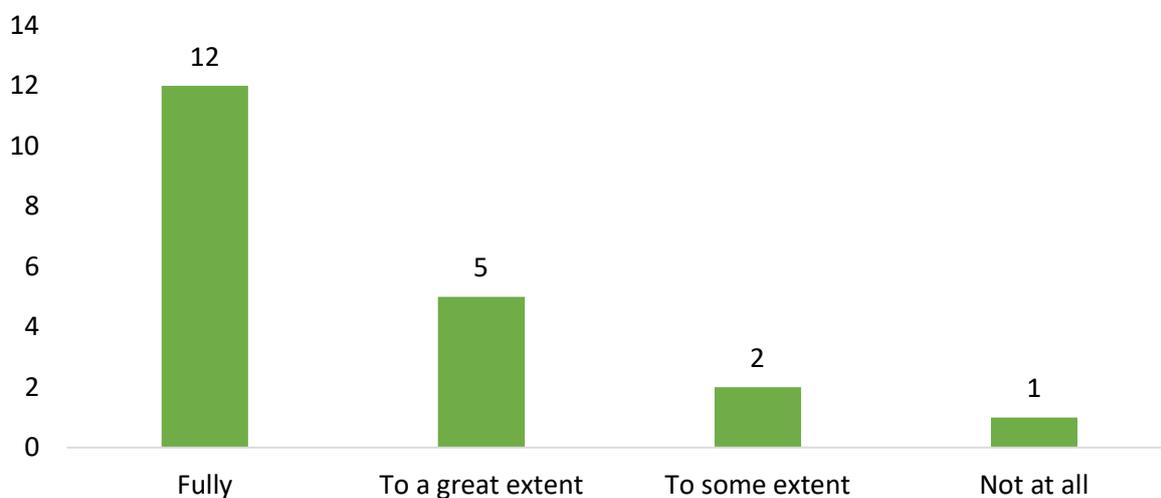
With regards to whether these motivations were met through volunteering, all three of these themes were also among those reported as differences respondents felt after engaging with volunteering. What this suggests is that the opportunities available for volunteers through the project have aligned with what they wanted to get out of their experience.

### 5.4.2 Support for Engaged Volunteers

Most volunteers reported that they received training to prepare them for their role, with those who didn't largely suggest that they themselves were experienced volunteers or gardeners and therefore wouldn't have benefitted from the training available.

The majority of participants reported receiving tool training, whereas many also reported having received training surrounding health and safety, and first aid. This training, as well as the existing experience of some volunteers, meant that the majority of those surveyed felt prepared to undertake their role on the project with only one response reporting that they felt unprepared.

Figure 5.1: Preparedness of Volunteers



## 5.5 Infrastructure delivery

With regards to the delivery of the development of the sites, all delivery staff were positive about how this had been approached. With regards to the selection of sites in particular the majority felt that those identified were those with the most potential. Delivery staff were also positive about the cross-county spread of the towns identified, and the consultation process that was involved.

### 5.5.1 Community Consultation

As previously discussed, the project delivery team undertook extensive community consultation in those areas surrounding sites, as well as working with local councils to determine the best use for these sites. This is one way that delivery staff felt the project was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic as, due to social distancing measures, staff had to engage in remote consultations (e.g. surveys, postal campaigns) with these stakeholders to ensure that they were still as engaged in the process if they could be consulted in person.

It is worth noting that some external stakeholders felt that this consultation wasn't as effective as more traditional methods and voiced concerns that the team were unable to accurately spread the message of the project to the public. It was felt that the public was aware that developments were taking place to improve the aesthetic of these spaces but not necessarily the biodiversity benefits these developments also provided. It was suggested however that with access to more traditional engagement methods, as well as a larger social media presence, this would not have been an issue.

### 5.5.2 Challenges Regarding Site Selection

The majority of delivery team members interviewed felt positive about the sites that had been identified during the design and implementation phases of the project, however, all those interviewed also voiced what they felt were limiting factors regarding what sites were deemed appropriate.

The largest limiting factor reported was that sites needed to be assets already controlled by the council, this however was something that was realised in the previous iteration of the project and was therefore something that the team were prepared for when undertaking the site selection process.

Another key challenge faced by the delivery team regarding site selection was ensuring that the sites delivered value for money in terms of cost per hectare. It was found that it was more expensive to undertake development on lots of small sites and therefore larger sites were prioritised.

## 6 Outcomes and Impact

The GI4G2 programme has generated both qualitative and quantitative impacts for the supported sites, communities, and volunteers. The results of the volunteer survey, monitoring information and discussions with external stakeholders have attested to these impacts. It is also important to consider that these impacts exist in both environmental and social capacities.

### 6.1 Site development

The first thing to consider about the impacts of the Green Infrastructure for Growth 2 project is the impact it has made on its primary focus of providing capital investment for 28ha of Cornwall Council-owned and managed green space.

As previously mentioned, not only is the project on track to exceed this target by 8% it has also done so by delivering in two extra towns Camborne and Helston and across three extra sites.

Upon completion of these sites, the community were surveyed to capture their perceptions of the work, of those who responded (351) 77% of those indicated that they perceived the works completed to have had a positive impact.

### 6.2 Environmental impacts

In addition to delivering environmental impacts through the development of sites, the project has also aimed to contribute towards its environmental impact by promoting the importance of spaces like these and training its volunteers to look after these spaces both during the lifespan of the project and after it has concluded.

#### 6.2.1 Habitat Restoration and Creation

Regarding habitat restoration and creation, all staff felt that this was something they had delivered through the project. The majority of staff felt that the project had exceeded its targets regarding this as habitat restoration and creation formed a key part of the considerations surrounding site development, and therefore by exceeding the targets for the areas of development achieved they had in turn exceeded their expectations surrounding habitat restoration and creation. At the time of writing 29,330m<sup>2</sup> of habitats have been either restored or created.

The only issue put forward by staff regarding the impact of the project on habitat restoration and creation was about ensuring this change lasts. Delivery staff were confident that, for the duration of the project and for as long as the Urban Ranger remains in place, the sites developed will have a lasting impact. However, concerns were voiced that if the duty of caring for these spaces is not taken on either by volunteers or by Cornwall Council these spaces risk being subject to deterioration, or returns to more cost-effective, less environmentally management strategies.

## 6.2.2 Improved Management For Biodiversity

All staff also reported that they believed the project had contributed to improved management of biodiversity. This was attributed to several actions taken by the project including, the training of Cormac in more ecologically friendly methods of conducting their work, the introduction of 17 environmental growth management plans for 24.9ha, and the improved knowledgebase of communities regarding biodiversity and conservation.

In particular, the continued support for these sites from Cormac was seen as crucial to the continuation of this impact long term, with several staff indicating that the improved management of these sites would be determined by Cormac continuing to use their newer improved practices, as well as them having the financial support from Cornwall Council to do so.

## 6.2.3 Improvement in Ecosystem Services provided by Sites

The final overarching environmental aim that the project looked to address was improving ecosystem services offered by sites, this refers to the direct and indirect contributions ecosystems provide for human well-being and quality of life. Once again, all staff felt that the project has had an impact on this particular aim.

Some of the specific impacts are; increased community flood resistance caused by the introduction of spongy healthier soils, increased air quality due to planting of taller vegetation such as wildflower meadows, shrubs and trees, where possible between pollution sources and recreation areas; increased carbon storage and sequestration at sites by planting carbon-absorbing vegetation such as trees; increased wildlife populations such as pollinators by planting with habitats that provide nectar and pollen.

The majority of external stakeholders reported that these developments had led to an increased usage of sites and that sites were now more attractive, especially in those that were previously just fields with no infrastructure to support people using them.

Four qualitative assessments have been undertaken so far to understand the change in ecosystem services provided by sites, following the framework of the Environmental Benefits from Nature tool developed by Natural England.<sup>34</sup> Each site demonstrates gains in different ecosystem services depending on their context and site design. The amount of carbon stored in ground vegetation was calculated for 18 sites and indicated an additional 19 tonnes of carbon stored.<sup>35</sup> The Woodland Carbon Code calculator was used to calculate carbon sequestration of the newly installed woodland edge species only, and after 20 years, the sites are estimated to have sequestered an additional 13 tonnes of carbon, and 74 tonnes after 50 years.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6414097026646016>

<sup>35</sup> For further information on calculations contact University of Exeter.

<sup>36</sup> <https://woodlandcarboncode.org.uk/standard-and-guidance/3-carbon-sequestration/3-3-project-carbon-sequestration>

## 6.3 Social impacts

In addition to the environmental targets and focus of these site developments, the provision of impacts to volunteers, local communities, and visitors has been another aim of the project. These are seen to have been contributed to not only through the development of sites but also through the experience of volunteers.

### 6.3.1 Increase in Access for People

The project has looked to develop better access to green spaces for people, this is two-fold, it has been about increasing the proximity of communities to green space as well as making these spaces more accessible. Once again, staff unanimously felt that they had achieved this.

To do this and also to encourage people to spend longer in these spaces, there has been the provision of amenities such as benches (35), paths (2194m<sup>2</sup>) and gates. All of these are introduced to ensure that people find travelling through these spaces straightforward and that there are spaces in which people can relax and spend time.

#### Increase in access for people with mobility issues

Staff reported that in addition to improving accessibility for the general public, there was also a particular focus on ensuring that accessibility was achieved for people with mobility issues. To help ensure this part of the design process for sites involved consultation with Disability Cornwall regarding what could be done and what was available to ensure as many people as possible could access these sites.

These adaptations have come in the form of 17 accessible picnic tables, the introduction of paths (1770m<sup>2</sup>) and gradual inclines to limit the necessity for steps. It is worth noting however that, as the majority of delivery staff suggested, in a number of cases some sites were impossible to fully adapt to be accessible due to issues largely relating to the topography.

### 6.3.2 Facilitating Community Engagement with Urban Green Spaces

The final social benefit the project has specifically looked to contribute to is facilitating community engagement with urban green spaces. This was seen as linking to the previous objective as increasing accessibility was seen as facilitating passive engagement with these spaces.

In total 235 events were held, engaging with 8,895 people through events held with schools and residents as well as through presentations and updates to town councils.

With regards to active engagement, this was largely facilitated by the introduction of the Urban Ranger whose role was to engage with members of the public and to provide training regarding the management of the site, with the long-term vision of them later taking on responsibility for helping to manage the site once the project comes to an end.

Staff were unanimously positive about the project's ability to facilitate this engagement and were positive about the role that the Urban Ranger had played. Some staff also spoke positively about the project's ability to engage with younger volunteers.

## 6.4 Dissemination of good practice

Outside of the social and environmental impacts the project has sought to achieve, it has also sought to provide examples of best practices for another green infrastructure projects, and to engage with other bodies to help them effectively engage with green infrastructure developments.

The team found that there were several ways in which the project could contribute to creating a best-practice approach for green infrastructure projects. The first of these related to community engagement, most staff felt that their involvement with the community made the project strong in terms of having more voices inputting to the vision as well as helping make the developed site more attractive to the residents who, not only use the park, but would be encouraged to help manage the space post-project completion.

The other main consideration put forward as an example of best practice was the development of a delivery team with a range of skills and experience. For example delivery staff referenced how working with the University of Exeter has allowed for a more academic understanding of the project to be considered which has led to the project being involved in further academic work. It was also noted that working with Cormac was mutually beneficial as the project benefitted from their expertise surrounding what was feasible in the development and in turn the project has been able to help shape how they work to be more conscious of biodiversity.

In order to disseminate the best practice developed during the delivery of the project, the team provided case studies, developed video packages, as well as presenting the project to a wide range of audiences including both national and international stakeholders.

It is also worth noting that the project has received UK and international exposure through multiple awards this year. In June 2022 GI4G2 was awarded highly commended 'Best Practice Large-scale Nature Conservation Award' by CIEEM Awards 2022 (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management). In September 2022 the team attended the BIG Biodiversity Challenge awards 2022, hosted by CIRIA, the Construction Industry Research and Information Association. These awards are designed to help raise awareness of ways to improve practices that benefit biodiversity within the construction industry and to encourage the industry to be proactive in pursuing a path of long-term awareness and protection of local biodiversity. GI4G2 received two highly commended awards as 'Habitat Creation Project of the Year' Award, and the 'Biodiversity Legacy Award' for its work in Ridgeway Park, Launceston. In October GI4G2 was selected as a Finalist in the University of Exeter's Knowledge Exchange Awards 2022. In November 2022 GI4G2 was selected as winner in Landscape Institute Awards 2022 'Excellence in Biodiversity, Conservation and Enhancement'.

## 6.5 Value for money

Value for Money (VfM) in ERDF-funded projects is normally assessed by reference to impacts, benchmarked against other similar projects. However, as has been noted in the previous summative assessment for GI4G1, the project has not sought to deliver against standard impact indicators which provide suitable comparators across projects. Further, the nature of the intervention is not one that is readily benchmarkable to other projects and the value created itself is beyond quantification against indicator metrics.

While not comparable, the GI4G2 project has been offering good value for money throughout its operation. The site selection process of prioritising larger sites which offer more hectareage for less cost is a good demonstration of this, rather than having to adopt a greater number of smaller sites. In instances when smaller spaces were utilised this was done to ensure equitable distribution of resources across communities. The project has increased biodiversity by an average of 9.7% across 30.3ha of land bringing important natural capital and inherent value. From the qualitative data gathered during fieldwork, it is also evident that stakeholders and volunteers both consider this to be of great social value also, making sites nicer places to visit.

Though it is not possible to compare the value created by the project itself in quantifying and monetising some of the impacts, there have been other benefits from the investment that can be quantified. The development work undertaken by contractor Cormac will generate Gross Value Added (GVA) and safeguard or create direct and indirect jobs. Capital expenditure on the project has been modelled here to show the GVA and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs impact for the contractor and supply chain. Given Cormac are based in Cornwall and drew on local suppliers, there has been little direct leakage of resources outside the county. Spending that did take place therefore circulated in the Cornish economy, creating local multiplier effects.

Overall capital expenditure of £2.34m has been spent on land development activities which are aligned to construction and agriculture/forestry Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes used by ONS. From the Annual Business Survey an estimate GVA to turnover ratio can be computed. This suggests that for every £1 spent on the project £0.72 in GVA has been created. Similarly, for every £114,000 in turnover a job is expected to be created or safeguarded. The direct benefits of the capital expenditure on GI4G1 are therefore expected to be approximately £515,000 in GVA and 6.2 FTE jobs created or safeguarded for each year of the project period.

Indirect benefits can be assumed as the expenditure is spent in the supply chain and as income from those who are employed. Indirect benefits in a local economy such as Cornwall are smaller as some of the impacts will leak into other parts of the South West region and wider UK. A smaller local multiplier effect of 1.2 is used to account for this indirect leakage which suggests that there will be an additional £103,000 in GVA created in Cornwall for each year of the project and a further 1.2 FTE jobs either created or safeguarded.

Total GVA benefits of the capital element is therefore estimated to be £1.8m over the three years of the project with 7.5 FTE jobs created or safeguarded each year. This does not include other jobs for the project team from the revenue budget and the wider benefits that may be accrued from the project. Against this crude and underestimated GVA benefits the project has created suggests a return on investment of £0.64 for every £1 spent on capital initiatives. Given other non-monetised benefits, and further considerations outlined below, the impact of the scheme is therefore likely to have generated acceptable value for money.

However, given our current knowledge and limited ability to compare, there is insufficient data and comparatives to determine the full extent to which value for money has been achieved. Therefore it is impossible to draw conclusions regarding how the GI4G2 project has compared to comparative projects with regard to value for money.

### 6.5.1 Targets and Budget

At the time of writing the project has been able to exceed its target by 2.4ha while using 97% of its original capital expenditure agreement (£2,149,842 of £2,211,752). This means that the cost per hectare of the project has been £70,718 as opposed to the £72,755 that was originally expected in the funding agreement. This equates to a saving of £2,037 compared to the original expenditure forecast. It is also worth noting that this is lower than the £79,605 per hectare average for GI4G1.

**Table 6.1: Total Capital and Revenue Expenditure**

Expenditure (£m)	Original Funding Agreement	Amount in most recent Funding Agreement Variation	Total achieved at the time of evaluation	% of target	Projected to be achieved at Project Closure	% of target
<b>Total Capital</b>	£2,211,752	£2,344,746.72	£2,149,842	<b>92%</b>	£2,344,746.72	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	£712,778	£1,007,986.35	£734,339	<b>73%</b>	£1,007,986.35	<b>100%</b>

### 6.5.2 Wider value of the project

In addition to the savings outlined in the above section of this chapter, there are several impacts of the project that could lead to further savings for maintenance in the future. For example, for the sites to benefit biodiversity they should receive a reduced frequency of mowing, As well as this if volunteer engagement is sustained post-project maintenance may be provided by communities in addition to the standard maintenance provided by Cormac. These sites also have the potential to continually contribute toward the wider environmental and climatic targets for Cornwall if they are maintained, reducing the need for future interventions in these areas.

It is worth noting that as providing a financial return on investment is not a focus of this project and many of the outcomes produced through the project do not have monetary values assigned to them it is difficult to fully appreciate the full economic impact the project has had.

## 6.6 Remaining challenges

As part of this evaluation delivery staff, external stakeholders, and volunteers have all been consulted regarding what they see as the remaining challenges facing Cornwall regarding biodiversity and the natural environment. This has been done to help present potential future issues that projects like Green Infrastructure for Growth 2 can contribute towards addressing.

The largest challenge referenced across all the respondents has been the long-term management of these sites and the future development of new suitable spaces. It was reported across all three groups that this is going to require resources in terms of both finance and time, and there were concerns that with growing financial pressures, Cornwall Council could decide to opt for cheaper less-sustainable management regimes that risk the progress made towards conserving biodiversity.

Similarly, another challenge put forward by all three groups concerned the long-term engagement of volunteers across these sites. Concerns were voiced regarding how long volunteering could be sustained in the areas without the Urban Ranger and the financial support provided by the project. Similarly to the previous point raised regarding the long-term management of sites, it was reported that without establishing new and maintaining the existing volunteer groups, sites are likely to go unmanaged or potentially mismanaged from a biodiversity perspective to save costs.

Engaging further with the public was another potential challenge raised, staff and stakeholders wanted to see more done, especially now face-to-face events have returned post-Covid, to engage with the public and educate them on the importance of biodiversity and how they can support this. Not only was it felt that this would encourage further volunteers to address the previous challenge, but it would also help to change the conversation surrounding biodiversity-friendly spaces that can often appear untidy compared to more strict grass-cutting regimes for example.

The final challenge put forward for consideration by multiple respondents was the need for there to be an ongoing support mechanism in place to advise and encourage the consideration of biodiversity and green infrastructure in developments going forward. For some respondents, this suggested the need for some kind of successor project, whereas for others this would be in the form of a permanent resource to advise groups and organisations wanting to engage in the development of biodiversity.

## 6.7 Programme improvements

Though very pleased with the outcomes of the project as well as how the project had been delivered in general, delivery staff, external stakeholders, and volunteers provided a variety of suggestions on how future projects could improve on the delivery model for GI4G2.

The first of these suggested improvements related to the final point made in Section 6.6 regarding the need for future support. It was reported across all three groups that there was a need for on-going support similar to that offered through GI4G2, even if this is to be done in more of a hands-off advisory capacity, to help facilitate community groups and other organisations to undertake green infrastructure projects through their knowledge and experience.

Having more time to plan for the project before the money had to be used was also suggested as being beneficial by both staff and stakeholders. There was a belief that more lead-in time for the project could have allowed for more consultation with both the public and the town and community councils in which sites are to be based. Another suggested benefit of this was that it allows for time to plan and accurately budget for all the costs involved in delivering the project.

The lack of social media presence due to the restrictions imposed by Cornwall Councils' social media policy was an issue noted across all three groups of individuals engaged in this evaluation. It was felt that having a greater presence could have allowed the project to better explain to the public as to the rationale behind these developments and to showcase that they are designed to enhance biodiversity not just simply improve these sites from an aesthetic point of view.

Another consideration put forward to inform the development of future projects relating to the scope of GI4G2 was the need to consider and budget for exit strategies for projects. As has been mentioned throughout the findings of this report concerns, have been voiced regarding the long-term sustainability of the impacts that the project has had. As a result, these respondents have indicated that they would want future provisions to have consideration for long-term support built-in, for example, there being the capacity for a role such as the Urban Ranger to be costed beyond the lifespan of the project itself to oversee the transition from being project-driven to being public driven.

## 7 Conclusions

The feedback from delivery staff, external stakeholders, and volunteers suggests that the Green Infrastructure for Growth 2 project has been successful, in addition to it exceeding its target regarding the hectareage of land it has developed to introduce green infrastructure and improve biodiversity.

By drawing on its learning from the precursor project as well as collaborating with the public and local groups, the design of the project was considered very appropriate for its central task and rationale. The experience of the team and the project partners also ensured that the management and governance structures were effectively able to support the operation of the project and maximise the efficiency of its delivery.

This collaboration between partner organisations, bringing together a range of experiences and expertise is a key strength of the programme, ensuring that the steps taken were considered through a range of lenses. A knock-on impact of this also is that partners have in turn benefitted from learning from one another and being able to adapt their operations accordingly, the most prevalent example of this was Cormac being trained in more sustainable and biodiversity-positive ways of working. It was widely remarked that this should be something that Cornwall Council consider when approaching further environmental projects.

**Recommendation:** If possible, future programmes could consider similar partnerships to better inform their approaches to projects as well as provide mutually beneficial learning experiences to partner organisations.

Regarding engagement, feedback was also very positive, it is clear that the project has looked to actively collaborate with the community and local councils, as well as engage with volunteers to contribute towards future maintenance of the sites post-project. One of the clear strengths of this approach has been the introduction of the Urban Ranger role, both in terms of advertising the opportunities available to the public, and also being a face in the community to support volunteers and engage with residents and visitors. The main point to be considered regarding engagement is how to ensure that those actively engaging with the maintenance of the sites continue once the project comes to an end.

**Recommendation:** Future projects would benefit from having a specific budget in place to fund a role similar to the Urban Ranger that is in place once the project comes to a close to facilitating the handover to volunteers.

In the delivery of the project, the core success for delivery staff has been the overachievement of the expected area of development. In addition to this, positive feedback was received from all parties involved regarding the project's other more qualitative targets i.e. increasing access to green space for people and improving ecosystem services. While it is challenging to attribute quantitative impacts to the interventions given the fact that many of the potential impacts of the project exist in the wider community who were unable to be engaged in this research, the evaluation has found that the project has had an impact on the majority of those who have been engaged.

One of the key points of improvement requested by external stakeholders was for future projects to engage further with local councils and groups. This was primarily so that the project, or any future project, could better align its interests with those groups with local interests, whether that be in the form of redeveloping a site that they see as a priority to them, or providing a site in a community that they feel would benefit it most. It is clear from the data collected from delivery staff and other stakeholders that this is already something that was considered and therefore this is a matter of scaling-up existing capacity to do this as opposed to introducing a completely new aspect to the delivery of the project.

**Recommendation:** In future projects to continue to engage extensively with local councils and community groups to improve the alignment of projects and interventions with their local objectives where funding restrictions and team capacity allows.

The limited exposure of the project to the general public is another key consideration that Cornwall Council must take on going forward. As stated throughout it was understood that the limited social media presence of the project has been due to Cornwall Councils' regulations on the use of social media by projects. However, from the feedback received across all groups involved in this evaluation, incorporating an active and engaging social media presence could not only raise the visibility of the projects themselves but also the rationale behind them.

**Recommendation:** For Cornwall Council to review its policy surrounding the use of project-specific social media accounts. Encouraging an active presence to raise attention and engagement in the project with the public.

As a consequence of the clear strengths of the GI4G2's delivery, its value for money, and its ability to meet its quantitative core target as well as its more qualitative objectives, it is clear that the project represented high social and environmental value as well as a return on investment of £0.64 for every £1 spent on capital initiatives. The recommendations for the project relate largely to improving on the existing strengths of the project as opposed to needing to change focus or how the project and future projects should approach improving green infrastructure.

Future projects should look at the process, management style and delivery approach of the GI4G2 project as an exemplar of effectively providing good green infrastructure with a biodiversity and community focus. Its alignment with both UK-wide and more local policies regarding biodiversity loss and climate change provides a strong rationale to ensure that a similar project is available in the future.

# Appendix 1- Theory of Change

A theory of change is best described as a roadmap that sets out the things that need to happen to achieve the intended outcomes and address the need (and rationale) for an intervention. It is also a method of identifying the assumptions that are being made within the identified 'causal chain', the barriers and risks that need to be overcome, and the enablers.

The theory of change is presented diagrammatically as an illustration of the logical relationships between the resources being used (inputs), activities, outputs, outcomes and the impact of a policy or intervention.

- **Inputs:** the resources that go into the project that a team or organisation needs to be able to carry out its activities.
- **Activities:** the things that are done to deliver the scheme day-to-day. Activities are under the control of an organisation or project.
- **Outputs:** the products, services or facilities that result from an organisation or project's activities – these are often expressed quantitatively, e.g. the number of individuals engaged.
- **Outcomes:** the benefits, learning or other effects that result from the activities undertaken.
- **Impacts:** the broader socioeconomic change and final goal that a scheme achieves as a result of the outcomes achieved.

The theory of change is based on desk research, interviews with the delivery team, and a theory of change workshop.

Table A1: Theory of Change Model

Objectives →	Inputs →	Activities →	Outputs →	Outcomes →	Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Align operational processes with the strategic direction of CC's environmental policies</li> <li>To preserve and increase Cornwall's existing biodiversity</li> <li>To improve the biodiversity contributions of urban green spaces and council-owned assets</li> <li>Develop best-practice relationships with local stakeholders and contractors to deliver a place-based approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ERDF Funding £2.84 million</li> <li>Cornwall Council (£567,713)</li> <li>University of Exeter (£37, 193)</li> <li>Capital funding of £2.1 million</li> <li>Time and expertise of delivery staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wildlife and access capital investments in urban public open green space</li> <li>Project management, community engagement and marketing carried out by Project Staff</li> <li>Production of Environmental Growth Management Plans and complementary research by part-time University Impact Fellow</li> <li>Monitoring and evaluation of outputs, outcomes and impacts and sharing of best practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surface area of land with improved conservation status (28 ha)</li> <li>Environmental Growth Management Plans for each site</li> <li>Number of seats and area of pathway increased</li> <li>Number of accessible benches and area of hard-surfaced pathway</li> <li>Research outputs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multifunctional habitat creation and restoration</li> <li>Improved biodiversity in urban green areas</li> <li>Improved carbon sequestration and lower flood risk at sites</li> <li>Develop wildlife network, supporting wider ecosystem and corridors for wildlife</li> <li>Changes to management practices of biodiverse sites</li> <li>Increased public engagement with sites</li> <li>Increased access for people with mobility issues</li> <li>Positive perception of site management works delivered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigation of climate and biodiversity emergency</li> <li>Improved health and well-being through enhanced engagement with nature and natural surroundings in an urban area</li> <li>Greater sense of pride in the local community and urban green spaces through volunteer engagement</li> <li>Improved natural capital and ecosystem in urban areas</li> <li>Other towns in Cornwall inspired and enabled to deliver of green infrastructure projects through best practice developed</li> </ul>

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Objectives →	Inputs →	Activities →	Outputs →	Outcomes →	Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a foundation for sustainable delivery of site management through local 'ownership' and self-sustaining volunteer groups</li> <li>• Deliver projects in areas with the greatest benefits for people and biodiversity can be achieved</li> <li>• Develop evidence base for the opportunities for improvements and benefits of high-quality green space</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collection and local use of Cornish provenance wild seed</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissemination of good practice in creating good green infrastructure at the County Council and Town and Parish level</li> <li>• Long-term management costs to be similar, or within 10% of existing long-term management costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colleagues across Cornwall Council are better able to embed environmental sustainability into all council work through the use of project data</li> </ul>

Assumptions	Barriers	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CC Members, Town Councils and residents recognise the need for and importance of improvement in sites</li> <li>• The sites are appropriate for improvements in biodiversity and ecosystem network development</li> <li>• The project timeline is suitable for the development of appropriate and seasonally dependent environmental interventions</li> <li>• Learning from the project is useful and can be applied in other areas at a devolved level</li> <li>• Developed Environmental Management Plans are fit for the purpose</li> <li>• Town and Parish Council's strategy aligns with CC in addressing the climate crisis and biodiversity</li> <li>• Residents are willing and able to engage in volunteering to help ensure sustainability</li> <li>• Use of green space improves mental health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Council is committed to the wider environmental and social value of the project rather than direct project costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient time/ability (due to Covid) to fully embed projects in communities and consult with residents</li> <li>• A lack of recognition of the need for environmental interventions</li> <li>• The administrative burden of processing EU funding</li> <li>• Bureaucracy limiting ability for timely action and meaningful impact responding to the climate emergency</li> <li>• Procurement criteria limiting the use of local suppliers</li> <li>• Project-based funding leading to risks over staff retention towards the end of the project</li> <li>• Difficulty evidencing impact and sharing project data in a digestible way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The potential of funding clawback of EU funding – if funder rules are not fully met</li> <li>• Public opinion and perception can be changeable and may be negative towards Cornwall Council</li> <li>• Team members leave midway through the project due to project-based funding and fixed-term contracts</li> <li>• Green infrastructure investments do not lead to increased biodiversity risk of habitat failure</li> <li>• Developments are not adequately managed following the end of the project funding, for the required minimum 15-year period</li> <li>• The strategy used in the project is not transferable to other areas</li> <li>• Disruptions to delivery caused by further Covid-19 restrictions</li> <li>• Contractors not aligned with CC strategy</li> <li>• Contractors do not have the skills or capacity to develop relationships or change site management practices</li> <li>• The council do not recognise the environmental and social value of the project is appropriate for the financial input</li> </ul>

**Enablers**

- Dynamic team and professional project lead and contract manager to deliver the project
- Success of Phase 1 of GI4G1 contributing to senior manager buy-in and public perception (including national awards)
- Partnership with the University of Exeter increasing the reach and standing of the project due to their status as a globally recognised HEI
- Good existing relationship between the contractor and the council, including project management
- Growing recognition and awareness of the climate and biodiversity emergency and the need to accelerate the response
- Programme structure delivering 24 projects enables the successful transfer of processes and learning. Ongoing review and improvement
- Strategic thinking by the project team – to help embed changed thinking in other teams
- Committed budget and clear funding guidance for a second project, based on DLUHC's positive response to GI4G1

## Appendix 2 – Evaluation Framework

This evaluation framework identifies the topic areas and methodological approaches to explore the various elements identified in the theory of change above. The evaluation framework is divided into two parts; process-based elements (looking at how the project was delivered) and impact-based elements (what difference did the intervention make).

Table A2: Evaluation Framework

Indicators/Questions	Sources	Analysis and Function
<b>Process</b>		
What issues is the project seeking to address?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interview</li> <li>Stakeholder interview</li> </ul>	Understand the project context and rationale for intervention
How has the project been designed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> </ul>	Understand the project context and rationale for intervention
How responsive is the project to the rationale?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	Understand the project context and rationale for intervention
How does the project fit with existing green infrastructure development support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	Understand the project context and rationale for intervention
Were targets/objectives realistic and achievable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> <li>Monitoring data</li> </ul>	Understand the project context and rationale for intervention
How effective has the project been in continuing from the previous GI4G1 project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	Understand the project context and rationale for intervention. Additionally, this will also explore the extent to which best practice and learning are utilised
How effective has the relationship between partner organisations been?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> </ul>	Allows assessment of the project governance
How successful was the project implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> </ul>	Understand the project context and rationale for intervention
How has the project performed over its lifespan?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> <li>Monitoring data</li> </ul>	Allows exploration of the successes of the project and cost-benefit

Indicators/Questions	Sources	Analysis and Function
<b>Process</b>		
What are the strengths and weaknesses of delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	Allows assessment of the project delivery and identifies areas of learning
What are the strengths and weaknesses of the site selection process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	Allows assessment of the grant project and identifies areas of learning
How successfully was the project managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> </ul>	Allows assessment of the project management
Were resources sufficient to meet the targets/objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	Allows assessment of the project resourcing
Where did beneficiaries hear about the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Monitoring information</li> </ul>	Allows assessment of the project organisation and processes
How appropriate was the project delivery and content?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li></li> </ul>	Allows assessment of the project organisation and processes
How was the project organisation and communication?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> </ul>	Allows assessment of the project organisation and processes
Cost and financial performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring information</li> </ul>	Support VfM assessment
Has the project responded effectively to the Covid-19 pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scoping interviews</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> </ul>	To determine the extent to which project adaptations have been successful
<b>Impact</b>		
What challenges does Cornwall face with biodiversity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	Understand the project context and rationale for the delivery approach
Reasons for individuals participating in the sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary Survey (specifically event attendees)</li> </ul>	Understand the appropriateness of project rationale and whether reasons are met
Increased hectares of biodiversity in urban green space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project monitoring data</li> </ul>	Demonstrates effectiveness of the project in developing sites
Habitat restoration and creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project monitoring data</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> </ul>	Demonstrates effectiveness of the project in developing sites
Improved management for biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> <li>Project monitoring data</li> </ul>	Demonstrates effectiveness of the project in responding to biodiversity needs

Indicators/Questions	Sources	Analysis and Function
<b>Impact</b>		
Improvement in ecosystem services provided by sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> <li>Project monitoring data</li> </ul>	An indicator of performance going forward to assess the further impact
Increased access for people with mobility issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> <li>Project monitoring data</li> </ul>	Demonstrates progress towards “equality and diversity” cross-cutting theme
Positive perception of works completed in open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> <li>Project monitoring data</li> </ul>	Demonstrates site satisfaction of users and stakeholders.
Community engagement with urban green spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> <li>Project monitoring data</li> </ul>	Demonstrates community engagement with the sites
Dissemination of good practice in creating good green infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> <li>Project monitoring data</li> </ul>	Demonstrates transferability of project framework to other schemes/areas
Long-term management costs to be similar or within 10% of existing long-term management costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> <li>Project monitoring data</li> <li>Financial data</li> </ul>	Support VfM assessment.
Leadership and management skill perceptions of the delivery team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	Shows learning from the project and assessment of potential impacts
Positive attitudinal change in public confidence to engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> </ul>	An indicator of the extent to which the project has led to attitudinal change for beneficiaries.
Changed practices surrounding biodiversity loss and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Delivery Staff</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	Shows learning from the project and assessment of potential impacts
What impact did the developments have on the communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	Demonstrate the effectiveness of the social aspects of the project
Has the project contributed to the biodiversity needs of the area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> <li>Delivery staff interviews</li> <li>Project monitoring data</li> </ul>	Demonstrates effectiveness of the project in responding to the biodiversity crisis

Indicators/Questions	Sources	Analysis and Function
<b>Impact</b>		
What support do communities still need to engage with sites?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> </ul>	Demonstrates effectiveness of the project and suggests future support provision
What challenges do sites still face?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> </ul>	Understand persistent issues for increasing biodiversity
The extent of impacts can be attributed to the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> </ul>	Allows assessment of the project and core objectives
Where has the project added value?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery team interviews</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> </ul>	Demonstrates effectiveness of the project in responding to challenges
How effective has the project been in increasing the ecological and social value of Cornish Urban green space, and improving the quality of the green infrastructure network?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beneficiary survey</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> <li>Delivery team interviews</li> <li>Project monitoring data</li> <li>Nominations &amp; Awards</li> </ul>	Demonstrates effectiveness of the project
How effective has the project been in encouraging the council to extend the reach of the project with other similar projects and new thinking?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project monitoring data</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> <li>Delivery team interviews</li> <li>Pipeline projects on a similar theme of Nature Recovery and Placemaking</li> </ul>	Demonstrates effectiveness of the project

# Appendix 3 - University of Exeter

## Summary of Activities

The University of Exeter project team formally included -

- Five academics (Juliet Osborne (UoE lead), Kevin Gaston, Ben Wheeler, Ilya Maclean, Jane Wills)
- One 0.5 FTE Impact Fellow (Rosalind Shaw)
- Three short term paid internships (Phoebe Webster, Helen Chadwick, Katherine Day)
- Support from staff in the Innovation Impact and Business Department (Alex Huke, Zita Morris, ESIF finance team).

Six monthly meetings with the UoE team and Cornwall Council team were run, and UoE representatives (Rosalind Shaw, Alex Huke and Zita Morris) attended the quarterly GI4G2 Steering group meetings.

Additional informal support has been provided in the form of student supervision and outreach assistance by other University of Exeter staff members (for further details see below).

## Summary of contributions to the project

### 1. Environmental Growth Management Plans

19 environmental growth management plans have been produced, with a further 8 in production, on track to be completed by the end of the project.

### 2. Ecological surveys

Pre- ecological surveys carried out at 25 sites and post ecological surveys have been carried out at 22 project sites (the last sites are still in construction). Feedback provided to project team and reports provided for Building with Nature sites.

### 3. Key performance Indicators

- Bespoke Key Performance Indicators developed for the project
- Data collected on technical KPIs (Biodiversity Net Gain, Carbon Storage)
- Provision of datasheets and templates for assisting with other KPI recording, particularly engagement activities.
- KPI tracker kept up to date and information extracted for Cornwall Council Environment Project board monthly reports.

## 4. Engagement activities

### 2021

Assistance from UoE College of Life and Environmental Sciences outreach team (particularly Rai Lewis) on engagement activities included -

- MS4N Photo competition – photo competition run between 14/5/2021 and 30/6/2021 weeks. The categories were ‘Urban Wildlife’ and ‘Parks and People,’ with categories for under 16’s and over 16’s. Prizes were kindly supplied by Eden Project and Green & Blue. Advertised to over 27,000 people via local Facebook groups and included a press release advertising it and picked up by local press. Organised judging panel, winners and prizes.
- Penryn Nature Trail production at Glasney College Field, assisted with trail production.
- Celebration of Nature Event, The Beacon, Falmouth – attended with an outreach activity featuring animal skulls.
- Devon and Cornwall Libraries Video ‘Wonderful Wildflowers,’ produced by Rai Lewis, CLES Engagement Team with content written and delivered by R. Shaw. 10-minute video filmed on GI4G1 site aiming to inform young people about wildflowers and featuring activities they could do to help them appreciate and monitor wildflowers. Shown at libraries throughout the south west summer 2021.

### 2022

- UoE team assisted at 8 public engagement events throughout the summer, either attendance or bespoke stand with outreach games.
- Created outreach posters explaining the benefits of urban parks for wildlife and for people and citizen science monitoring schemes.
- Created outreach activities including – spot the wildlife in your park and a free leaflet with information on citizen science monitoring schemes that could be completed throughout the year.

## 5. Presentations by UoE team

The University of Exeter team have given eight presentations featuring GI4G2 to scientific, business and general public audiences, reaching 740 people.

Some examples listed below:

- 14/12/21 - Presentation to British Ecological Society AGM on biodiversity net gain assessment method used as part of GI4G2. Rosalind Shaw.
- 11/3/22 On-line CPD Training seminar to 55 Capgemini management consultants on Nature and Business – using MS4N as a key case study. Juliet Osborne.
- 9/4/22 Lecture to BBKA Spring Convention 2022 (audience of 100) on Cornish green spaces, featuring GI4G2. Juliet Osborne.

## 6. Additional funding and projects

Additional funding acquired to run a parallel project looking at co-design of urban green spaces, working with two GI4G2 sites and a third additional site.

Wills, J., Osborne, J.L. and Shaw, R.F. (2019) Growing Communities through nature. £38,489.60 awarded by UKRI under the Enhancing place-based partnerships in public engagement award scheme.

## 7. Student and work placement projects

Seven student research projects linked to GI4G2 project –

- Kornblut, D. (2020) Multifunctional Nature: Reasons Behind Informal Green Space Use. MSc thesis, University of Exeter Penryn Campus. Supervised by Tomas Chaigneaux and Rosalind Shaw.
- Ferrier, M. (2020) Bee Friendly? The Impact of Habitat Variation on Pollinator Populations. MSc thesis, University of Exeter Penryn Campus. Supervised by Rosalind Shaw and Nicole Goodey.
- Lake, C. (2022) Biodiversity Interventions in Urban Green Spaces and Soil Health: Carbon Storage and Water Retention. MSc thesis, University of Exeter Penryn Campus. Supervised by Juliet Osborne and Rosalind Shaw.
- Holman, E. (2022) Does improving urban green spaces for biodiversity also boost carbon storage and reduce flood risk? MSc thesis, University of Exeter Penryn Campus. Supervised by Juliet Osborne and Rosalind Shaw.
- Kahane, F. (2022) Enabling effective urban greenspace stewardship: Qualitative Comparative Analysis of a Local Authority led project in Cornwall, UK. MbyRes thesis, University of Exeter, Penryn Campus. Supervised by Karen Scott and Rosalind Shaw.
- Poole, O. (2022) Improving urban greenspace for pollinators: a case study in Cornish towns. MSc thesis, University of Exeter Penryn Campus. Supervised by Chris Kaiser-Bunbury and Rosalind Shaw.
- Reijnen, V. (2022) Reduced mowing enhances flowering plant biodiversity and provision of floral resources in urban verges. BSc thesis, University of Exeter, Penryn Campus. Supervised by Juliet Osborne.

Nuffield Research Scholars (2021)

Nuffield Research Placements provide engaging, hands-on research projects, where Year 12 students have the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution towards the work of a host organisation through a well-supervised but independent research collaboration.

Students supported: Maisie Craddock and Lareesa Parrott, Truro and Penwith College.

## Work placement students

- Li, J. (2020) 4-week work placement as part of mathematics undergraduate degree. Carried out literature search and R code on the carbon storage of different habitats found in urban parks.
- Duley, E. (2021) 120-hour work placement completed as part of BSc degree provided by Eden Learning and University of Plymouth. Completed GIS mapping of GI4G2 sites for pre-ecological surveys and assisted with ecological survey work.
- Williams, C. (2022) 6-month full time work placement as part of 4-year undergraduate degree. 80% of time spent on GI4G2.

## 8. Peer reviewed publications

Collins, C., Shaw, R.F., Wills, J. (2022) Using place-based public engagement to improve social and environmental sustainability: Lessons from partnership working in Cornwall, UK. *Current Research in Environmental Sustainability*, 4, 100181.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crsust.2022.100181>.

Knapp, J.L., Phillips, B.B., Clements, J., Shaw, R.F., Osborne, J.L. (2021) Socio-psychological factors, beyond knowledge, predict people's engagement in pollinator conservation. *People Nat.*; 3: 204– 220. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10168>

## 9. Other activities

- Co-authored the Project Strategy, awarded 'Excellent' by Building with Nature
- Co-wrote the submission to CIEEM Awards, resulting in a 'Highly Commended' award under 'Best Large-Scale Nature Conservation Project' category. Nominated and shortlisted for a University of Exeter Knowledge Exchange Award under the 'Sustainable Futures' category.
- Gave presentation on 'Management for Biodiversity' and designed, developed materials for and ran workshop on 'Great grasslands – how to recognise them and what to do about them' for Cormac CPD Event, Managing land for biodiversity, 10/3/2022.
- Led on recording the cross-cutting themes recording and reporting.
- Provided access to research on questions Cornwall Council and CORMAC needed to respond to, for example FAQs on the health impacts of road verge management changes.

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