

Townscape Improvement works at Bankhill

Background

1. The area between Bankhill Road and the New Road has been an area left unmanaged for many years. The results of this are an increasing air of neglect both in terms of maintenance of physical infrastructure and management of vegetation, especially the areas immediately adjacent to the New Road itself [Photos 1 & 2].



Photo 1 Weed growth by New Road

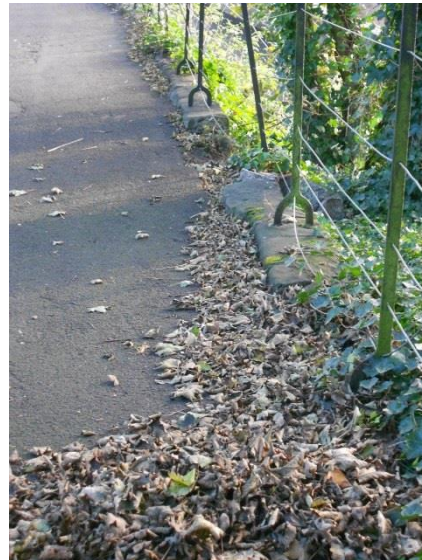


Photo 2 Fence condition, Bankhill

2. This deteriorating appearance is at odds with the physical improvements instigated under the Berwick Parks Project in the adjacent, upstream parts of the New Road.
3. In particular, the area is on the route of the Castle Parks Trail, as well as being part of the route of many if not most of Berwick's visitors as they 'walk round the walls'.
4. In 2014, Berwick Town Council identified this area as one needing attention and a scheme of work was developed, although other operational requirements meant this did not proceed.
5. Recently, time has been available to revive the original scheme and engage others, English Heritage and NCC, in developing a scheme to improve the appearance of the area. Recent cosmetic repairs to the Bankhill fence by English Heritage came about in part due to this work.

Proposed Scheme of Works

Phase 1

6. Work involved in Phase 1 focuses on Bankhill. In Phase 1, the post and wire fence will be repaired, along with the low stone wall at its base.
7. The work will involve replacement of damaged intermediate posts, installing new straining posts made to resemble the original, surviving cast iron ones and replacing and retensioning the fence wire.
8. The repairs to the stone wall will include replacing missing stonework and repointing the exposed wall below the fence.

9. Additionally, Phase 1 will include a new replacement handrail for the steps between Bankhill and the New Road [Photo 3]. The current handrail is fashioned from scaffolding poles and is falling over in places. The replacement handrail will be in the same style as the handrails used throughout Castle Vale and Coronation Parks and the nearby steps leading up to Gillie's



Braes [Photo 4].

Photo 3 Existing Handrail



Photo 4 Style of replacement handrail

10. Finally, Phase 1 will see the removal of a small number of trees that are causing problems by growing too close to the Royal Tweed Bridge or on top of a wall at the foot of the bank [Photos 4 & 6].



Photo 5 Tree too close to bridge



Photo 6 Tree growing on wall top

Phase 2

11. In Phase 2, the focus will be on improving the appearance of the area adjacent to the New Road. This will involve clearing weeds and ivy from in front of the wall, levelling the ground, repairing and repointing the wall and planting the area with shrubs and perennials to complement the natural appearance of the bank behind and provide wildlife habitat in keeping with the rest of the New Road.

Contractors and Costings

12. **Stonework** – given the location of the site within the area under English Heritage Guardianship, there is a requirement to use an approved contractor who can comply with requirements relating to use of traditional materials. A suitable local contractor has estimated the total cost of stone work repairs to be £11300. The repairs to the Bankhill fence, about 100m, would cost approximately £7000, while repairs to the low wall by the New Road, about 40m, would be approximately £4300.
13. **Fencing Repairs and handrail** – A local contractor has provide estimated costs for both repairing the fence and manufacturing and installing a new handrail. These costs are £6000 and £8000 respectively.
14. For comparison, an estimate for the cost of a new handrail was sought from the Hawick-based contractor who made and installed the handrails for the Berwick Parks project. Unfortunately, this contractor ceased trading shortly before they responded. So far no other contractors based between Newcastle and Edinburgh who might carry out such work have been identified.
15. **Tree Works** – NCC have agreed to undertake the tree works in Phase 1. In Phase 2 it may be necessary to remove one or two tree stumps by grinding. A contractor would be required for this work.
16. **Ground clearance and replanting** – Discussions on the precise details of the Phase 2 work are still on-going so costs and contractors have not yet been contacted for estimates of the cost of this work.

Budget

17. Berwick Town Council currently have a reserve of £25000 set aside for work at Bankhill

Recommendations

18. Committee if it wishes to recommend the implementation of Phase 1 works outlined above
19. If so, the Committee to consider recommending waiving Financial Regulations 7.6 and 7.7 relating to obtaining additional quotes for the work involved due to the requirements for the stonework contractor and the lack of regional contractors for the fencing work.
20. If so, the Committee recommend placing orders for the Phase 1 work outlined above.