

The background of the slide features the Falkirk Council Coat of Arms. It is a shield divided into four quarters. The top-left quarter shows a castle tower. The top-right quarter shows a stag's head with antlers. The bottom-left quarter shows a sailing ship on water. The bottom-right quarter shows a lion rampant. Above the shield is a crown with four fleurs-de-lis. Below the shield is a ribbon with the motto 'A'NE FOR A'.

# **Agenda Item 10**

## **Falkirk Council – Helix Business Strategy 2023 - 2028**

**Falkirk Council**

**Title:** Falkirk Council – Helix Business Strategy 2023 - 2028  
**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 17 October 2023  
**Submitted by:** Director of Place Services

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present and seek approval for the Helix Business Strategy (2023-2028).
- 1.2 This strategy will contribute to the strategic priorities set out in the Council Plan (2022-27) by supporting a thriving economy. It will do this by assisting economic development, increasing visitor numbers and encouraging visitors to stay for longer and spend more money in the Falkirk Council area.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Executive approves the Helix Business Strategy (2023-2028) which is attached as Appendix 1.

**3. Impact on Climate Change Targets**

- 3.1 The Helix Business Strategy will directly benefit the Council's Climate Emergency Targets. While increasing visitor numbers has the potential to drive up emissions as well as putting pressure on the site's infrastructure, the Strategy focusses on mitigating measures by promoting sustainability, community engagement and responsible tourism. These will help drive sustainable growth, positive socio-economic change and will help support green transition through responsible and sustainable tourism.
- 3.2 Sustainability is at the heart of the Business Strategy. Opportunities identified in the Strategy include:
  - 1. Putting sustainability at the forefront of all site management decisions at The Helix, from site maintenance and habitat management to waste reduction and choice of suppliers.
  - 2. Promoting active travel by reimagining the Helix Around Town Trail and promoting a revised family-friendly 'Heart of Falkirk' Trail.
  - 3. Investigating the potential for EV charging points.
- 3.3 Active promotion of the Heart of Falkirk Trail will be a key part of our aspiration to increase active travel between The Helix, Rosebank Distillery, Falkirk Distillery, The Falkirk Wheel, Falkirk Town Centre and Callendar Park. There are also opportunities for third party operators to run bike and e-bike hire schemes and walking and cycling tours from The Helix.

## **4. Background**

- 4.1 As part of a suite of local attractions, the original £43m invested to create Helix Park and the Kelpies has contributed to growing tourism spend in the Council area. In 2021 almost 600,000 visitors spent £85m which has created and supported a wide range of jobs and businesses. An increasing number of visitors helps support local shops, restaurants, cafes and pubs, events and other facilities. This instils a sense of pride amongst our local communities for a place that attracts visitors and offers everyone a memorable experience.
- 4.2 The Strategy complements the recently approved Falkirk Area Tourism Strategy 2023-28 with its focus on targeted growth and, in particular, aligns with two of the four priority action areas: building up the attractions and developing through partnership. Underpinning this is the Strategy's focus on the Council's leadership role encouraging the sector to adopt and promote sustainable practices.
- 4.3 The Business Strategy focuses on driving the business forward over the next five years. In recognition of the current economic challenges facing Falkirk Council, we are also seeking opportunities to further close the gap between income and expenditure.
- 4.4 During 2022/23 864,506 people visited the park and 436,912 people came into the Visitor Centre. We continue to see an increasing proportion of overall visitors coming into the Visitor Centre which is helping us achieve our income targets. In 2022/23 total income for The Helix was £1,539,845.
- 4.5 The Strategy draws on views from staff from the Helix, Business Development and Marketing teams. In preparing the Helix Business Strategy we also sought the views of key external partners at Scottish Canals, National Lottery Community Fund, VisitScotland and VisitFalkirk and elected members through a workshop held on 5 September 2023.
- 4.6 Over the next five years, the Helix team will work closely with our Marketing colleagues to target key market segments. We have created segments by utilising VisitScotland's segmentation guide alongside our social media and Google Analytics data. This provides a targeted approach to reaching current and prospective customers.

## **5. Helix Business Strategy (2023-2028)**

- 5.1 The Helix is an integral component of the Council's placemaking agenda providing a high-quality open space for our local communities and for visitors. The vision for the Helix Business Strategy is: *that Helix Park is a sustainably managed 5-star visitor attraction offering opportunities for people to engage with the landscape, interact with nature and enjoy an inspirational visitor experience.*

The Strategy summarises our achievements to date since the Park opened in September 2013 and the international launch of the Kelpies in April 2014:

- Award-winning:
  - Winner of Great Day Out in VisitScotland's National Thistle Awards 2023 as voted by readers of the Scottish Sun
  - VisitScotland Thistle Awards Regional Winner 2022 – Best Visitor Attraction Experience
- Known for its excellence in Customer Service:
  - 5\* visitor attraction
  - We have welcomed an average of 743,000 visitors per year over the last five years (excluding 2020/21) with approximately 865,000 visitors to Helix Park during 22/23
  - During 2022/23 we welcomed 436,912 people into our Visitor Centre exceeding our annual target of 375,000
- Financially stable:
  - We met all our income targets for 2022/23 for catering, retail, car Parking and Kelpie Tours
  - Our aim is to increase income from £1.5M to £1.75M by 2028
- Sustainable:
  - We have been awarded the Green Tourism Business Gold Award
  - The Helix is a Green Flag Park

Maintaining this quality and, where possible, stretching targets, sits at the heart of the Strategy which identifies four priority themes to help us achieve our vision:

- A green place by managing Helix Park with sustainability at the heart of all we do.
- An active place by encouraging more activity throughout the park, continuing to provide a 5\* experience for every visitor and by encouraging more people to arrive at Helix Park by sustainable and active travel modes.
- A place to feel good by creating and promoting quiet spaces within Helix Park where visitors can sit, relax and enjoy the park's landscape and wildlife.
- An inspiring place by enhancing the quality of the park's landscape with sculptures and artwork and through delivering a creative events programme.

The overall purpose of the strategy is to set out how we will the vision as well as acknowledging the challenges we face to build on what we have achieved at Helix Park over the last 10 years. By 2028, Helix Park will be:

- Recognised locally, nationally and internationally for its excellence in customer service by:
  - Remaining a 5\* visitor attraction;
  - Attracting 1 million visitors a year;
  - Providing a quality experience for every visitor.
- Recognised for excellence in delivering its sustainability values by:
  - Continuing to monitor our sustainability goals and adapting our practices to drive the highest standards within the visitor attraction and tourism sector;
  - Retaining our Green Flag and Green Tourism Business Gold Award.
- A successful, dynamic and inspirational place to visit:
  - Achieving £1.75M income from across Helix trading opportunities (catering, tours, car parking, retail, on-site business operations);

Delivering one key event per season at the Helix as part of a vibrant, inspirational, and nationally important outdoor events programme which is more financially sustainable with less reliance on public sector financial support.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 The strategy has been created following consultation and engagement with members of staff from The Helix, Economic Development and Marketing teams. Stakeholder engagement was also undertaken with an information session with elected members and through individual consultations with the Helix Project Executive and key partners Scottish Canals, National Lottery Community Fund, VisitScotland and Visit Falkirk.
- 6.2 The Strategy is also informed by findings from a customer satisfaction survey undertaken in April-May 2023. Overall, the Helix scored very well for accessibility, the range and quality of the offer in both the shop and café and staff friendliness which validates our focus on continual improvement in both our trading offer and customer service. More than half of respondents visited at least every three months, and over 40% had visited once every two months over the previous year. Over 97% of respondents stated that the site met or exceeded expectations. When asked to score value for money, enjoyment and service out of 5, each area scored at least 4.3. Areas we need to focus on improvement include pre-visit information for first time visitors.
- 6.3 Regular research will continue over the five years of the Strategy using customer data, digital insights, and competitor information, which will help us identify customer and industry trends, opportunities, and threats. All this information will be used to help continue inform and refine our business decisions.

## **7. Implications**

### **Financial**

- 7.1 In line with savings targets set across Falkirk Council, it will be necessary to reduce the subsidy required to manage the site over the next five years. The Helix will make at least £180,000 of savings over the next four years which be driven largely through income generation from our in-house catering and retail offer and through encouraging third parties to run activities and events in the park. An investment programme will focus on site improvements that allow us to grow that income.

Continued efforts will be made to secure external funding and we will collaborate with partner organisations such as Visitscotland, Visit Falkirk and Scottish Canals to secure investment. Where appropriate, we will continue to explore options for the more efficient management of the site while being conscious of not reducing the quality of the visitor experience.

### **Resources**

- 7.2 Staff resources will be required to deliver the ambitions set out in the Strategy. These will come from within existing staffing resources.

### **Legal**

- 7.3 There are no legal implications or obligations arising from the Helix Business Strategy.

### **Risk**

- 7.4 There is a risk that actions identified across the priority themes cannot be delivered or are too ambitious if market conditions suddenly change. This will be mitigated by closely monitoring progress, and implementing revised actions in response to opportunities and constraints which emerge over the coming years.
- 7.5 There is a risk that budget savings will impact our ability to achieve the ambitions set out in the Strategy. This will be mitigated by looking for alternative sources of finance and by building strong partnerships across Council teams and with external organisations.

### **Equalities**

- 7.6 An Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment has been undertaken to ensure the strategy is robust, and that there is no potential for discrimination for groups protected by the Equalities Act 2010. This is attached as Appendix 2. The EPIA did not identify any negative impact on protected groups. Some of the priority actions within the Strategy will positively impact people with protected characteristics. We will continue to monitor our impact and seek to further improve the experience for all potential customers visiting The Helix.

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 It is recommended that The Council approves the Helix Business Strategy (2023- 2028) and asks officers to take forward the actions required to deliver our aspirations for sustainability, wellbeing and excellence in customer experience.

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**Director of Place Services**

**Date:** 04 October 2023

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### **Appendices:**

**Appendix 1** – Helix Business Strategy (2023-2028)

**Appendix 2** – Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment

List of Background Papers: None



# The Helix

## **Business Strategy 2023 - 2028**

**(Draft)**







# 1. Introduction

The Helix is the result of the transformation of over 300 hectares of land, with some 27km of new and improved paths and cycle networks (linking 17 communities to The Helix) as well as the new 1.8km Queen Elizabeth II canal re-establishing the Forth and Clyde canal link.

Between September 2013 and 31 March 2022 Falkirk Community Trust operated the Helix, Home of the Kelpies on behalf of Falkirk Council and Scottish Canals. This included managing the Kelpies public realm and central park areas of the initial Helix Project. Falkirk Council took responsibility for maintaining the Helix North and Helix South areas of the project from 2017. When Falkirk Community Trust ceased operation on 31 March 2022, all its functions, including the operation and management of Helix Park were transferred back into Falkirk Council.

A Project Executive comprising Falkirk Council and Scottish Canals provides oversight to drive operational opportunities and priorities for Helix Park and the Kelpies.

As well as being taken to the hearts of our local communities, The Helix and The Kelpies have now become a national and international tourist attraction. After five years of continual improvements within the park and its business operation, we were beginning to reach a

relatively steady state and stable staffing structure. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated lockdowns and restrictions between March 2020 and April 2022 significantly impacted the business's ability to generate income.

Since most restrictions were eased after Easter 2022, we have begun to recover from the negative effects of the pandemic. Visitor numbers across the site have been lower than predicted, but the number of visitors coming into the Visitor Centre has exceeded our expectations. This is likely to be driving our recovery with income from car parking, tours, catering and retail all meeting or exceeding targets for 2022/23.

We are now keen to focus on driving the business forward and seeking opportunities to further close the gap between income and expenditure. This Strategy explains how we intend to do this over the next five years.

The Helix Business Strategy will run concurrently with Scottish Canals Corporate Plan (2023-2028), with both plans focusing on creating vibrant places

and business development opportunities that:

- Contribute to health, wellbeing and quality of life
- Provide opportunities for community engagement and volunteering
- Promote sustainable tourism and active travel
- Deliver high quality services and customer experiences.

## 2. Vision

Our **vision** is that Helix Park is a sustainably managed 5-star Visitor Attraction offering opportunities for people to engage with the landscape, interact with nature and enjoy an inspirational visitor experience.

As stewards of a living landscape, we need to allow Helix Park time to develop, grow and mature. By nurturing the site and placing sustainability at the heart of our land management decisions, communities from across the Council area and beyond will continue to benefit from the park's social, environmental and economic achievements for generations:

**By 2029,** The Helix will continue to be a well-loved 5-star visitor attraction providing excellence in customer service and sustainability. We will be renowned for providing our visitors with a personal and friendly welcome. We will deliver a high-quality coffee shop experience within the visitor centre and our Gift Shop will offer a range of locally and responsibly sourced products. We will have small businesses and social enterprises around the park offering our visitors a selection of street food, outdoor activities, and fun, memorable experiences. There will be newly planted native trees which will grow into the woodland of tomorrow, along with space for community growing, wildflower meadows and wetlands offering opportunities for wildlife and space for quiet reflection. Our expanded outdoor events and tour offer will encourage more people to explore beyond the Kelpies, enjoying walks or cycle tours around Helix Park and beyond.

**By 2034,** Helix Park's landscape will attract and support national and international cultural, arts and active outdoor events suitable for all ages and abilities. It will be easy to arrive at the park on foot, by bike or by public or shared transport. Visitors will be able to charge their vehicles while they enjoy all that the park and its facilities have to offer. Habitats will support a range of wildlife and plant life. There will be a thriving community of businesses and social enterprises across the Helix Park offering visitors and members of the local community a wide selection of activities and experiences. The site will be a valued outdoor learning space and a hub for volunteering in the outdoors.

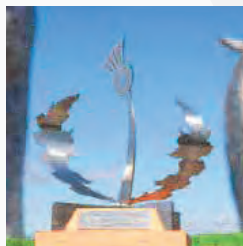
**By 2074,** Helix Park will be a flourishing, inspirational and vibrant place with maturing woodland and landscape features. A first-class programme of events and a range of on-site activities will complement the internationally renowned Kelpies experience and draw people from across the world into the park where they can meet friends and family, engage in physical, cultural and artistic activity, and reap the many benefits of being outdoors. There will be hidden pockets throughout the park featuring artworks and opportunities for people to interact with their surroundings. The landscape will allow space for activity, space for quiet reflection and space for nature.





### 3. Where are we now ?

We are proud of what we have achieved at Helix Park over the past 10 years.



#### Award-winning

Winner of Great Day Out in VisitScotland's National Thistle Awards 2023 as voted by readers of the Scottish Sun

VisitScotland Thistle Awards Regional Winner 2022 – Best Visitor Attraction Experience



#### Known for its excellence in Customer Service

5\* visitor attraction

We have welcomed an average of 743,000 visitors per year over the last 5 years (excluding 2020/21) with approximately 860,000 visitors to Helix Park during 22/23

During 2022/23 we welcomed 436,912 people into our Visitor Centre exceeding our annual target of 375,000



#### Sustainable

We have been awarded the Green Tourism Business Gold Award

The Helix is a Green Flag Park

#### Financially stable

We met all our income targets for 2022/23 for Catering, Retail, Car Parking and Kelpie Tours

Our aim is to increase income from £1.5M to £1.75M by 2028

### 4. Financial Overview

As part of Falkirk Council's commitment to save £69M by 2027, Helix Park will make at least £180,000 of savings over the next 4 years. Our aim is that this be driven largely through income generation across the Helix teams.





## 5. Key Resources and Assets

Helix Park is maintained to a high standard with features that attract people of all ages, interests, and abilities. Our key assets offer challenges and opportunities which influence our site management decisions, and the options available to us for enhancing visitor enjoyment of the park and its facilities.

**Sustainability** is at the heart of all we do and will become increasingly important as we continually strive to exceed visitor expectations. We are a Green Flag Park and have our Green Tourism Business Gold Award.

**Challenges:** The Forth Bike e-bike hire scheme ceased operation in 2023. This will reduce sustainable and active travel options available for some of our visitors travelling between the Helix and Kelpies and other local attractions. Similarly, travel to the Helix by public transport is limited.

During 2022/23 we experienced issues with the Visitor Centre's Air Source Heat Pump. As this system ages, we will need to consider our options for a replacement heating system.

An awareness, appreciation and understanding of sustainability is crucial for us to meet our ongoing income and savings targets. Key **opportunities** for future site development include

investigating the potential for EV charging points, reimagining the Helix Around Town Trail, the development of Scotland's National Art Park, exploring opportunities for linking with Greener Grangemouth and putting sustainability at the forefront of management decisions across Helix operations.





## 5. Key Resources and Assets



We pride ourselves in providing a **vibrant and engaging events programme** with a mix of activities to appeal to local, regional, national and international audiences.

**Challenges:** There is significant pressure on our very small events team to deliver an events programme for our communities whilst also providing support to professional event organisers and community groups wishing to run events across The Helix, Callendar Park and Kinneil Estate.

We have an **opportunity** to grow the capacity of our small professional events team by developing closer links across the Culture and Helix teams. There is also an opportunity to re-engage our volunteers and communities in delivering a fun, creative and engaging events programme across our indoor and outdoor venues.



As part of our 5\* service, every visitor should expect a friendly **personal welcome** to Helix Park. Our Car Park Attendants, Tour Guides and Customer Service Assistants are integral to delivering this and making sure all our visitors experience exceptional customer service.

The key **challenge** we have is around consistency of customer service across the park, and across the year with staffing numbers fluctuating with the seasons. Staffing and recruitment have been a challenge for the past few years, and this is expected to continue for the next year or two.

**Opportunities:** The 2022 Tourism Conference highlighted the increasing demand for personal, authentic experiences as a key driver in visitors' decisions about the places they wish to spend their time and money. Excellent customer service is one of our strengths at The Helix. We now need to seize the opportunities that this offers in terms of attracting new and repeat visitors.



The **Splash Play and Adventure Zone** is one of the most popular offers for families visiting Helix Park. The Splash Play runs daily throughout the peak season and the Adventure Zone is available at all times.

**Challenges:** As the facility ages, we are facing ongoing challenges around maintenance and replacement of key features at the play area and the Splash Play. Visitors have also highlighted a lack of play facilities at The Helix for pre-school children.

**Opportunities:** The Splash Play is a unique selling point for the site and there is potential to add to the play features to further improve our Adventure Zone. A key opportunity would be to develop the play offer to include features for pre-school children. As the landscape and woodlands across the park develop and mature there is also enormous potential for developing opportunities for informal outdoor learning and play.



**C**atering at the Helix is showing an improving picture. We successfully met our income target across the catering operation during 2022/23.

Staffing and recruitment remain a key **challenge** in the catering team with rises in costs of produce, ingredients and staffing putting further strain on our budgets. The location of the Plaza Café means it is remote from other Helix operations in the Visitor Centre. This makes it a more challenging venue to manage.

We have implemented changes to the Visitor Centre catering service and have an **opportunity** to focus on delivering a quality coffee shop experience for our customers with a range of home-baking and locally sourced produce. We are also exploring opportunities for the Plaza Café and for maintaining income from external catering over the next 5 years. Further site developments will provide additional opportunities for driving income through external catering operators offering a wider range of street food.

**T**he **gift shop** within the Helix Visitor Centre has gone from strength to strength over the last 10 years. Our retail offer is one of the most successful aspects of the business. During 2022/23 the net profit from our retail operation was over £200,000.

Many of the **challenges** associated with maintaining and further improving the success of our retail operation are associated with macroeconomic factors out with our control. In the last few years, we have coped with Covid recovery, supply issues and increasing costs of energy, staffing and products. It is likely that we will continue to see an impact of some of these factors over the next few years which will continue to affect visitor spending habits.

**Opportunities:** We are working with our partners in Scottish Canals to develop a new Kelpies Merchandising Agreement to increase our flexibility around products that we can sell from our gift shop. This will bring opportunities for developing new products, working with local art and crafts people, and encouraging young entrepreneurs to develop

products with us. There are also extensive opportunities associated with developing and expanding our e-commerce operations, and further improving our range of products from local producers, suppliers, and artists.

After several years of weakening sales, our **Kelpie Tours** performed exceptionally well during 2022/23. We are working with the Council's marketing team to try and understand why this is the case, and to enable us to build on this success.

**Challenges:** We need to keep the tour fresh and enjoyable for every visitor, so they continue to appreciate and value the experience.

**Opportunities:** Customer surveys and market research by VisitScotland and Falkirk Council will be completed in June 2023; analysis of these will be completed by autumn 2023 and will allow us to better understand visitor trends, aspirations, and issues that we need to address. This will shape any future tour development and highlight opportunities for different types of tours we might consider offering our visitors.



**O**ur **freshwater lagoon** is home to a variety of aquatic plant and animal life, as well as supporting our resident swans and other waterfowl. Our visitors enjoy watching the birdlife, and the lagoon is used for water safety demonstrations as part of the National Water Safety Day event.

**Challenges:** Regular water testing has highlighted poor water quality and the presence of blue-green algae. This may be costly to address, but there are options we can consider. In addition to water quality issues, any activity in or adjacent to the lagoon has the potential to cause disturbance to wildlife. Dogs off leads, noise and people entering the water will each have varying degrees of impact.

There are **opportunities** for income generation by working with the right social enterprise or business offering low-impact water-based activities for our visitors to enjoy. There are also opportunities to improve biodiversity through the way we manage the water body, and an opportunity to work in partnership with local organisations to trial environmentally sensitive methods for improving water quality.

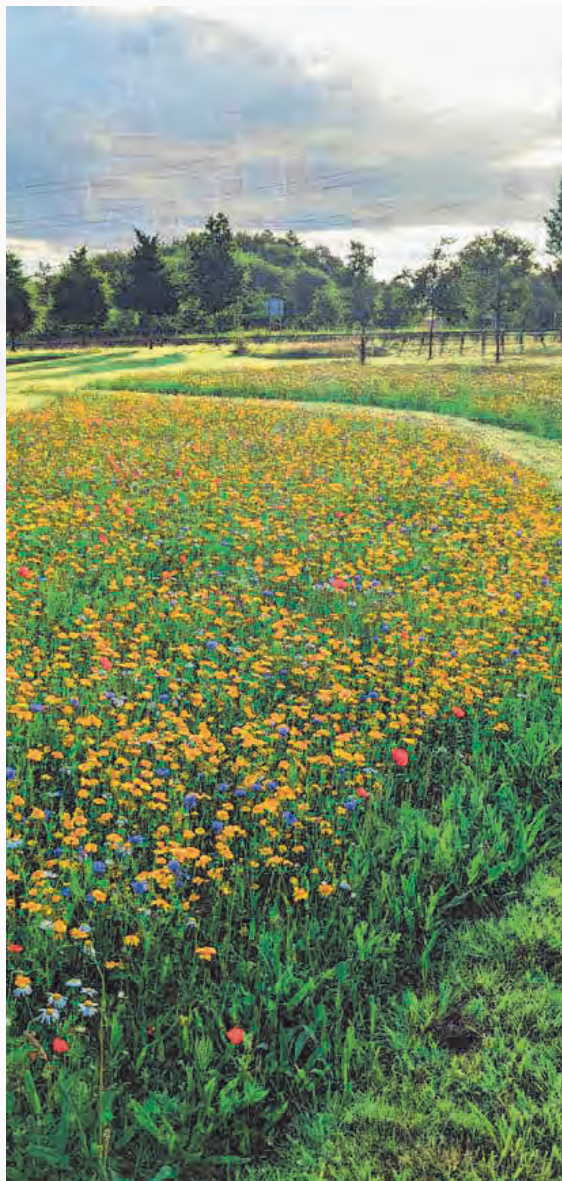




Helix Park supports a variety of **habitats** including wetland, woodland, wildflower meadow and grassland.

**Challenges:** Improvements to the A9 and A904, immediately adjacent to Helix Park, will last approximately 2½ years. Works include removal of a section of woodland along the boundary between Helix Park and the A904. This work began in March 2023 and will have a short-term impact on site biodiversity and significant visual impact for people visiting or passing the park. The disruption caused by the roadworks will adversely impact overall visitor experience over peak summer seasons between 2024 and 2026, and alterations to the road and underpass will impact accessibility of the park from Falkirk Stadium.

We continually explore **opportunities** for increasing biodiversity across the park and are mindful of the impacts of our decisions on site maintenance and habitat management. There will be biodiversity improvements within Helix Park as part of the A904 roadworks which will compensate for the loss of the woodland. We have also committed to minimising our use of chemical weedkillers and fertilisers and are actively managing our habitats for the benefit of biodiversity.



We are focussing on **volunteering and community engagement** with an aspiration to increase volunteer activity across the park. We are doing this through working with community, youth and school groups, local businesses, and social enterprises.

**Challenges:** Our volunteers currently work with the Parks Attendants, Gardeners and Events teams. Servicing this demand requires adequate time commitment, supervision and a varied programme of activities.

We have identified a range of **opportunities** for Social Enterprises and businesses

to provide a wider range of activities for visitors across the park during the peak season. Our teams are also identifying projects and events where volunteers have an opportunity to work with us to develop and improve the park and encourage our visitors to engage with our events programme.

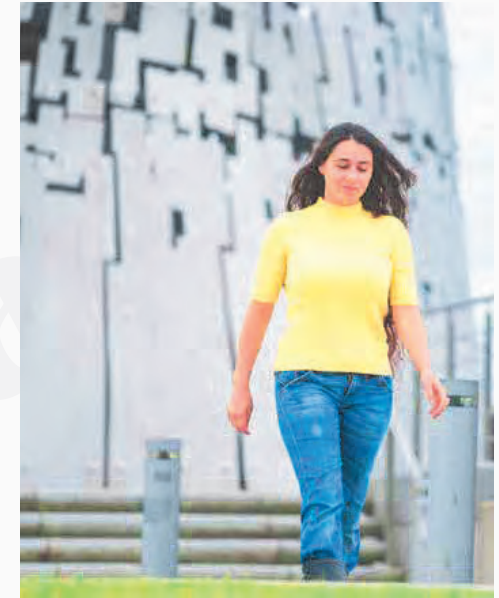




We have created a small **community growing** area next to the Visitor Centre as part of the team's Wellness Wednesday sessions. There is plenty of space to expand this, and volunteer groups have expressed interest in looking after their own community growing areas. We also have a nuttery within Helix Park.

The main **challenge** to providing community growing opportunities within Helix Park will be ensuring these spaces are cared for so that they continue to add to the character and quality of the park environment.

There is plenty of scope to expand the number of **opportunities** for growing fruit, vegetables and herbs on site. This can be done through creating more raised beds for volunteers and community groups to tend, identifying suitable locations for fruit bushes and trees and ongoing improvements to the nuttery. All these provide more opportunities for staff, volunteer and community engagement, and home-grown produce that can be used in the kitchen.



There is an extensive and accessible network of **good quality paths** throughout Helix Park which provide important links with the Kelpies and with the surrounding path network.

Because of our location, there are **challenges** in terms of encouraging families to access Helix Park on foot or by bike. Distance puts some people off, and the presence of busy roads around Helix Park may be deterring some families from cycling to the park. Poor and inconsistent signage, and issues with quality and maintenance of the route has meant we have never promoted the Helix Around Town Trail (HArTT) as well as we could.

Within the park the pedestrian connection between our main car park and the Visitor Centre and Kelpies Plaza is poor. Visitors either use the canal towpath or walk along a relatively narrow path which forms part of the Kelpies basin access and service road.

There are **opportunities** to work with partners to reimagine the HArTT route to create a "Heart of Falkirk" trail; we will also work with Scottish Canals to realise the vision for and delivery of Scotland's National Art Park. When the quality of these routes match our customers' expectations, we will market

them to our visitors and to the local population to encourage more people to travel between Helix Park, Falkirk Wheel, Falkirk Town Centre and Callendar Park by bike or on foot as well as looking to a new green corridor link down to Grangemouth

We have also identified opportunities for improving access within Helix Park, with a key priority being creating a better link between the car park and the Visitor Centre.



## 6. How will we achieve our vision ?

### We will build on what we have achieved at Helix Park over the last 10 years so that by 2028

- The Helix is recognised locally, nationally and internationally for its excellence in customer service
- We remain a 5\* visitor attraction
- We attract 1 million visitors a year
- We provide a quality experience for every visitor, with a range of bespoke, luxury experiences on offer

### The Helix is recognised for excellence in delivering its sustainability values

- We continue to monitor our sustainability goals and adapt our practices to drive the highest standards within the visitor attraction and tourism sector
- We have retained our Green Flag and Green Tourism Business Gold Award

### The Helix is a successful, dynamic and inspirational place to visit

- We will achieve £1.75M income from across Helix trading opportunities (catering, tours, car parking, retail, on-site business operations)
- We deliver one key event per season at The Helix as part of a vibrant, inspirational and nationally important outdoor events programme which is more financially sustainable with less reliance on public sector financial support.

## Key Activities

Helix Park is integral to Falkirk Council's placemaking agenda providing a quality space for our local communities and visitors. We have identified 4 themes for The Helix to help us achieve our vision of creating:

1. A green place
2. An active place
3. A place to feel good
4. An inspiring place





# Theme 1: A green place

We commit to managing Helix Park with sustainability at the heart of all we do:

Key actions and activities	Target audience(s)	Who can help
<p>We will work with the Green Tourism Award scheme to maintain our Gold standard and target areas for improvement</p> <p>Our sustainability goals will drive our site management decisions, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We no longer use chemical fertilisers or weed killers</li> <li>• Creating opportunities for increasing biodiversity</li> <li>• Maximising our use of local suppliers, produce and contractors</li> </ul> <p>Habitat creation and management across Helix Park will offer opportunities for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Biodiversity enhancements</li> <li>• Place-making</li> </ul>	<p>Suppliers and contractors will be aware of our commitments so they can help us achieve our sustainability goals</p> <p>Volunteering opportunities will be available to people of all ages from our local communities, including businesses, schools, youth groups and community groups</p> <p>We will raise awareness of our sustainability goals amongst our local, regional, national and international visitors so they understand the reasons behind key site management decisions and to allow them to buy into our ethos</p>	<p>FC Planning &amp; Greenspace</p> <p>FC Climate Change team</p> <p>FC Marketing team</p> <p>Scottish Canals</p> <p>VisitFalkirk</p> <p>VisitScotland</p> <p>Suppliers and contractors</p>



## Theme 2: An active place

**We will encourage more activity throughout the park, continuing to provide a 5\* experience for every visitor**

Key actions and activities	Target audience(s)	Who can help
<p>We will provide an interesting and fun experience at Helix Park for every visitor. We will do this by exploring opportunities for delivering a wider range of activities within the park to encourage people to discover, explore and enjoy The Helix</p> <p>We will look at options for expanding our tour offer to include walking and cycling tours of the park</p> <p>We will explore opportunities for small businesses or social enterprises to provide activities that complement the existing customer offer at The Helix. Such activities might include cycle hire, skate/scooter hire, small walking or cycling tours within Helix Park, and between The Helix and other key local destinations and visitor attractions</p> <p>We will explore options, developing new partnerships and collaborating with existing partners to deliver bespoke and luxury tour experiences</p> <p>We will explore opportunities for increasing capacity of the Visitor Centre to improve the customer experience for all our visitors</p>	<p>We do not currently have information on key audience segments and their behaviours</p> <p>Our marketing team is helping us address this. This information will help inform the visitor offer(s) we pursue, and the types of site improvements we progress across Helix Park</p> <p>We will make use of Visit Scotland's Inclusive Tourism Toolkit to ensure all our visitors enjoy an excellent customer experience</p>	<p>Market research is being conducted between May and September 2023 on behalf of Falkirk Council and VisitScotland</p>

**We will encourage more people to arrive at Helix Park by using sustainable and active travel modes**

Key actions and activities	Target audience(s)	Who can help
<p>We will work in partnership with VisitFalkirk and the Council's Sustainable Transport team within the Transport Planning Unit to explore options for a successor to the Forth Bike e-bike hire scheme. We will work together to investigate if there is a cost-effective sustainable solution to encouraging people to arrive at Helix Park and other key local destinations through a bike hire scheme. We will also explore a potential connection between the Travel Hub at Grahamston Station and the Art Park route between Falkirk Wheel, Falkirk Town Centre and Helix Park</p>	<p>Visitors looking for a convenient and sustainable way of travelling between The Helix and other key destinations in the area</p> <p>Local people using active travel modes to get from their home to and from Helix Park</p>	<p>Visit Falkirk FC Transport Planning Unit FC Sustainable Transport team FC Marketing Scottish Canals</p>
<p>We will work in partnership with the council's Outdoor Access and Sustainable Transport teams to reimagine the Helix Around Town Trail to create a family-friendly "Heart of Falkirk" trail</p>	<p>The Heart of Falkirk Trail will be targeted at people living locally to encourage families to explore the area by bike</p>	<p>Visit Falkirk FC Sustainable Transport FC Planning &amp; Greenspace FC Marketing</p>
<p>We will investigate opportunities for developing partnerships with 3rd party operators who could provide walking and/or cycling tours around Helix Park and between Helix Park and other local tourist destinations</p>	<p>Guided cycle or walking tours would target regional, national and international visitors as well as locals keen to explore the area as part of an organised group tour experience</p>	<p>Visit Falkirk FC Marketing</p>

## Theme 3: Helix Park is a place to feel good

We will create and promote quiet spaces within Helix Park where visitors can sit, relax and enjoy the park's landscape and wildlife

Key actions and activities	Target audience(s)	Who can help
<p>We will enhance the park so there are quiet spaces to sit and relax as well as active natural spaces for families to explore</p> <p>We will identify areas where we can create new woodland and areas where we will focus on enhancing existing woodland, wetland and grassland habitat to provide interesting spaces for people to explore</p> <p>We will continue to enhance our community growing spaces, including the nuttery. These offer volunteering opportunities for staff, our Green Team volunteers and other organised volunteer groups for growing, caring for, harvesting, and using produce grown at The Helix. We will also scope out other locations around the park for growing fruit trees, fruit bushes, herbs, etc</p>	<p>Visitors from the local area will be encouraged to come and enjoy Helix Park</p> <p>Volunteering opportunities will be targeted at community volunteering groups of all ages and abilities as well as the Helix Green Team</p> <p>There are also opportunities for business, youth and school volunteer groups to assist with habitat creation and management tasks</p>	<p>Volunteer groups</p> <p>Businesses</p>

## Theme 4: Helix Park is an inspiring place

We will enhance the quality of the park's landscape with sculptures and artwork and a creative events programme

Key actions and activities	Target audience(s)	Who can help
<p>We will explore opportunities for siting sculpture and landscape art works across the park. We will create space for visitors to interact with poetry, storytelling and music as well as opportunities for them to get out and about for fresh air and exercise</p> <p>We will deliver an inspirational events programme with a mix of arts, music and cultural events as well as active and educational events</p>	<p>Our local communities and visitors from across the region will be encouraged to spend time at the Helix and make regular repeat trips so they can explore new features and take part in a range of events and activities</p> <p>National and international visitors will be encouraged to attend the major events and activities that form part of our Culture and Helix events programme</p>	<p>FC Events team</p> <p>FC Culture team</p>



# Marketing

## Segmentation Strategy

Utilising Visit Scotland's segmentation guide alongside our Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM), social media and Google Analytics data we have created segments, which provides a targeted approach to current and prospective consumers. During 2023 we are gathering more updated customer research via Visit Scotland, an internal research project and the integration of our systems.

This will provide refreshed segmentation for 2024 onwards.

Segment	Targeting	Product Mix
<b>Discovery Travellers</b>  Full-time workers. Affluent. Tend to be under 34 and over 50 years old. Enjoy scenery, discovering new things, green living, arts & entertainment. Likely to travel from around the UK	Young demographic is digitally focused. To attract this group, we need to ensure our online customer journey is optimised, online recommendations are high and that we utilise paid digital advertising  Older demographic relies on online recommendations as well as printed advertising and editorials in trusted publications	The Helix and The Kelpies offer a unique and award-winning experience whilst striving for sustainable and responsible tourism through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kelpie Tours</li><li>• Overnight Campervans</li><li>• Visitor Centre catering and retail</li><li>• Walking and cycling routes</li><li>• Events programme</li><li>• Social enterprise offering</li></ul>
<b>Adventurists</b>  Full-time workers. Affluent. Mostly under 40. Enjoy outdoor activities, sport & fitness and can be classed as 'outdoor enthusiasts'. Likely to be local but will travel further afield for the right activity.	Adventurists rely on word-of-mouth recommendations and social media for inspiration. We therefore need to utilise social media and digital marketing to attract this group	The Helix is a beautiful green park ideal for walking, running and sporting events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Walking and cycling routes</li><li>• Catering options in Visitor Centre and through external catering units</li><li>• Free car parking</li><li>• Pet friendly areas</li></ul>

## Segmentation Strategy cont

Segment	Targeting	Product Mix
<b>Family Day Trippers</b>  Very likely to have children or grandchildren and pets. Mid-affluency. Most likely aged 30-55. Enjoy the outdoors, family orientated and pet-friendly areas. Are local to the wider Forth Valley area.	Likely to use community websites such as netmums, online search and social media to discover 'things to do' near them. Need to ensure Search Engine Optimisation, social media and paid digital advertising are optimised.	The Helix is a free, family and pet-friendly space with lots to do to keep the family entertained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Events programme</li><li>• Visitor Centre catering and retail</li><li>• Plaza Café</li><li>• Adventure Zone and Splash Play</li><li>• Free entry and car parking</li><li>• Walking trails (Wee Woodland Walk etc)</li><li>• Social enterprise offering</li></ul>
<b>Local Walkers</b>  Mix of full-time workers and retirees. Mid-affluency. Enjoy scenery, health & wellbeing and pet-friendly areas. Likely to use the park regularly however may not engage in any secondary spend opportunities.	Rely on recommendations from friends and family, use 'trusted' or well-known websites to do their planning. Reliable weather isn't an issue so can target this segment during 'off-seasons'. Need to ensure brand authority and customer satisfaction remain high, online and offline.	The Helix is dog-friendly and a great space to enjoy fitness activities such as walks, runs and daily dog walks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plaza Café</li><li>• Visitor Centre and external catering offer</li><li>• Volunteering Opportunities</li><li>• Walking and cycling trails</li><li>• Pet-friendly areas</li></ul>



# Marketing Activity Plans

We will generate an annual Marketing Activity Plan using this segmentation. For 2023/24, the following marketing activities will be targeted and optimised to relevant segments:

## Print Advertising

- 2-year advert in Le Petit Futé ECOSSE guidebook
- Flyer rack distribution in key areas throughout Scotland
- Direct Distribution concierge maps racked in key locations throughout Scotland
- VisitScotland iCentre Map advert within the Stirling map

## Digital Marketing

- Paid Search
- Search Engine Optimisation
- Display
- Social media advertising
- Le Petit Futé ECOSSE travel website advertising
- Tourism For All website advertising

## Social Media

Facebook and Instagram continue to have excellent engagement and growth potential and as such a content plan is in place to ensure organic content is of high quality, relevant and targeted.

## PR & Comms

We will engage with industry relevant publications, journalists and influencers to ensure high-level coverage of events, awards and newsworthy activities through-out the year.

## Annual Marketing Plan Highlights

**Brand refresh:** We will develop and nurture a strong destination brand and identity as a top Scottish visitor attraction and will continue to strengthen our position with local audiences. The Helix has its 10th anniversary

in 2023 so this is an ideal time to refresh the current brand. This will allow us to reflect the park's many achievements, remain competitive and retain our current customers and attract new customers.

**Ambient Marketing:** The Helix lends itself well to ambient marketing opportunities. This will be explored and implemented where appropriate.

**Relationship Marketing:** Customer experience and mystery visit work will continue, along with further promotion of loyalty cards. Other opportunities will be explored, customer feedback will be gathered, and targeted advertising will all help drive relationship marketing.

**Website Development:** We will audit the main elements of the website alongside the customer journey to ensure the website (as the main

marketing tool) is optimised for all customer segments. This includes navigational changes, content creation, an e-commerce platform, system integration as well as regular analysis and optimisation as required.

**Research:** Visit Scotland is undertaking a large-scale research project which will help us identify customer groups, trends, and business opportunities. This is due to be released during 2023/2024. We are also undertaking our own customer satisfaction research which will help us identify potential opportunities and gaps. Regular research will also be undertaken using Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data, digital insights, and competitor information, which will help us identify customer and industry trends, opportunities, and threats. All this information will be used to help inform our business decisions.

# 7. Action Plan for smart investment – 5-year Finance Plan for The Helix

Falkirk Council needs to save at least £69m by 2027 at a time of significant external challenges. Global price increases, high inflation and energy costs, and recovery from the economic impact of Covid-19, Brexit and conflict in Ukraine are all adding to pressures on the Council's budget. It is in this context that Falkirk Council has asked the Helix Park team to make at least £180,000 of savings over the next 4 years.

To do this, we are planning to contain spend where possible, but we will need to employ a strategy of growth to allow Helix Park to mature and flourish. We will create a park that reaches its social, environmental and economic potential through careful management of resources, and an ambitious programme of targeted interventions that enable us to achieve the aspirations of the council and its partners, local communities and visitors.

The actions highlighted below have been chosen because they will either help us attract external funding or are investments required to attract third party businesses to the park, drive additional footfall, and provide more opportunities for generating income for the park.



## What Do We want to Achieve

A vision for Helix Park				
How will we achieve it	When	Who can help	Resources required	Opportunity for income generation
Site-wide Masterplan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vision and programme for delivery</li> <li>Work in partnership with Scottish Canals</li> </ul>	2024/25	Consultant  Scottish Canals	£50,000	Following delivery of Helix Park improvements as identified in this visioning exercise, there will be opportunities for rental income, increased parking income and increased retail/catering income
Detailed design for Kelpie Boulevard and Kelpie Selfie Hill and options for increasing car parking capacity	2023/24			
Options appraisal for development of Plaza Café and potential for Visitor Centre expansion	2024/25			

## What Do We want to Achieve

A welcoming visitor centre				
How will we achieve it	When	Who can help	Resources required	Opportunity for income generation
Minor upgrades/ refurbishment of Visitor Centre and Plaza Café: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace obsolete lighting in Visitor Centre</li> <li>Toilets refresh - Plaza and Visitor Centre</li> <li>Maintain and “wrap” Visitor Centre pillars</li> </ul>	2024/25	FC Facilities  FC Marketing	£45,000	Seek funding for pillar ‘wraps’  Impact on income generation through providing quality facilities
Provide supplementary/ back up heating source within Visitor Centre (woodburning stove)	2023/24	Local supplier	£10,000	Impact on income generation within cafe from providing quality facilities
Replace heating system in Visitor Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May require feasibility study</li> <li>Engage with Council's Facilities team to find a more efficient alternative system for heating the building</li> <li>Seek external funding</li> <li>Install</li> </ul>	2023/24	FC Facilities  Consultant	£100,000	Seek funding to recover costs of replacing the heating system  Potential Capital Bid to Falkirk Council
Increase capacity of Visitor Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with architects to explore options for extending Café area through creating an integrated sheltered dog-friendly seating area to the front of the Visitor Centre</li> </ul>	2024/25	Architects	£50,000	Secure funding to carry out required alterations

## What Do We want to Achieve

Provide opportunities for social enterprise and commercial operators				
How will we achieve it	When	Who can help	Resources required	Opportunity for income generation
Seek expressions of interest from small businesses or social enterprises to run activities within specified areas of the park, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cycling Without Age Scotland booking office and Trishaw store at main car park</li> <li>Lagoon activities (non-immersive, wind or self-propelled craft)</li> <li>Busking/street entertainment area</li> <li>Walking/Cycling tours/skate hire</li> <li>Remote-controlled car hire</li> <li>On-site photographer, caricature artist, etc</li> <li>Dog wash facility</li> <li>Street food stalls along Kelpie Boulevard</li> </ul>	2023 onwards	Social Enterprise  Community Interest Companies  Small Business or Sole traders	£5,000	Income from lessees – share of gross income or land rent agreement  Partnership opportunities to help secure external grant funding

## What Do We want to Achieve

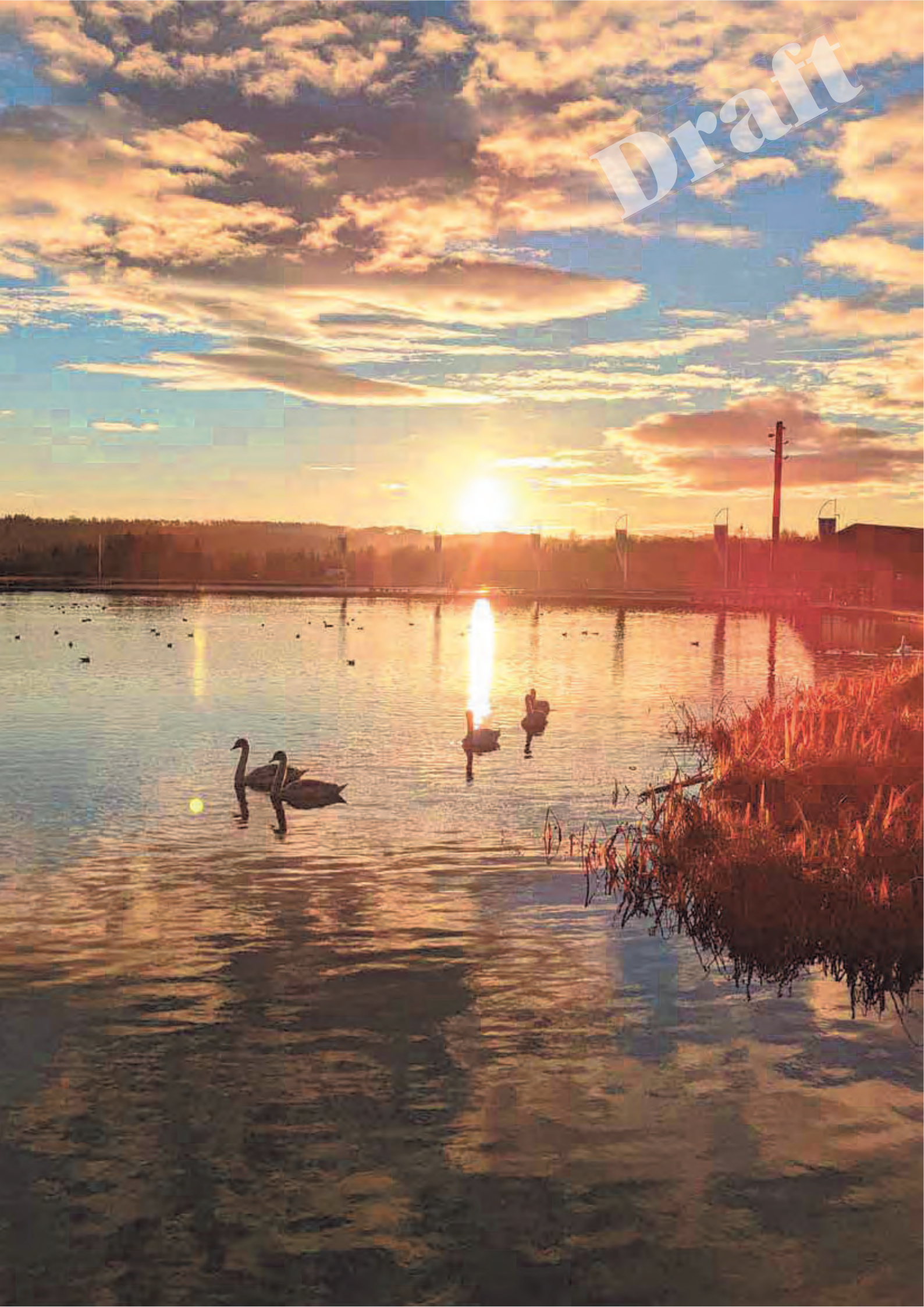
Excellence in customer service and visitor experience by providing a welcoming, accessible, and inspiring Park				
How will we achieve it	When	Who can help	Resources required	Opportunity for income generation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kelpie Boulevard implementation</li> <li>Minimum 5m wide at-grade bitmac path with lighting and power</li> <li>Gateway artwork at each end of path to prevent unauthorised vehicular access</li> <li>Provide power and spaces for street food stalls and seats</li> <li>Architectural landscaping opportunities alongside path</li> </ul>	2024/25	Cycling Without Age Scotland  EB Scotland  Sustrans / Paths for All Partnership  LEADER or its replacement (if eligibility criteria change)	£500,000	Income generation opportunities from lease of street food stall pitches  Partnership opportunities to help secure external grant funding  Seek funding from external sources
Play area improvements  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replacement of 'end of life' or obsolete equipment, e.g. trampolines</li> </ul>	2024/25	Play equipment suppliers and contractors	£50,000	Seek funding from external sources
Provide vehicle charging points	Timescale dependent on funding availability	FC Transport Planning Unit		Explore potential funding opportunities for providing EV Charging points
Kelpie Selfie Hill implementation  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscaping and path works</li> </ul>	2025/26	Contractor	£15,000	Seek funding from external sources

## What Do We want to Achieve

Excellence in customer service and visitor experience by providing a welcoming, accessible, and inspiring Park				
How will we achieve it	When	Who can help	Resources required	Opportunity for income generation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New electric barrier</li> </ul>	2023/24	Contractor	£15,000	Site management to facilitate increased income generation from parking, including campervan/overnight parking  Seek funding from external sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replace bird beak fencing with boulders or similar alongside access road</li> </ul>	2025/26	Helix Gardeners	£50,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Car park extension and/or reconfiguration</li> </ul>	2027/28	Consultant / Contractor	tbc	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate options for providing additional lighting along paths through the park</li> </ul>	2024/25	Consultant / Contractor	tbc	
Deliver an inclusive, fun, creative and inspiring events programme	2023 onwards	Events team  Partners and third-party events	£80,000	Site management to facilitate increased income generation from parking, including campervan/overnight parking  Seek funding from external sources
Create a new classroom / workshop cabin	2024/25		£15,000	Seek funding from external sources  Income generating opportunities from hire of cabin for workshops or events and from participants attending ticketed events



Draft





## Equality & Poverty Impact Assessment 00539 (Version 1)

### SECTION ONE: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

<b>Service &amp; Division:</b>	Place Services Growth, Planning & Climate	<b>Lead Officer Name:</b>	Mandy Brown
		<b>Team:</b>	Culture & Helix
		<b>Tel:</b>	01324 504716
		<b>Email:</b>	mandy.brown@falkirk.gov.uk
<b>Proposal:</b>	Helix Business Strategy 2023 - 2028: This sets out the vision and direction of travel for Helix Park. It focuses on driving the business forward and seeking opportunities to further close the gap between income and expenditure. The Strategy explains how we intend to do this over the next five years.	<b>Reference No:</b>	

What is the Proposal?	Budget & Other Financial Decision	Policy (New or Change)	HR Policy & Practice	Change to Service Delivery / Service Design
	No	Yes	No	No
Who does the Proposal affect?	Service Users	Members of the Public	Employees	Job Applicants
	No	Yes	No	No
<b>Other, please specify:</b>				

Identify the main aims and projected outcome of this proposal (please add date of each update):	
28/07/2023	We will manage The Helix with sustainability at the heart of all we do. This includes decisions regarding habitat creation and management, catering and retail.
28/07/2023	We will encourage more activity throughout the park, delivering a wider range of activities to appeal to different ages and abilities.
28/07/2023	We will encourage more people to arrive and travel round the Falkirk Council area by sustainable and active travel modes.
28/07/2023	We will create and promote quiet spaces in the park to expand the range of opportunities for visitors to engage with the site. This will include increasing opportunities for formal engagement through volunteering, and enabling informal engagement with spaces for relaxation and quiet reflection.
28/07/2023	We will enhance the quality of the landscape through artwork, sculptures and by delivering a creative events programme.

Identify the main aims and projected outcome of this proposal (please add date of each update):	
28/07/2023	We will deliver targeted interventions to allow the Helix to mature and flourish. This includes aims to attract external funding, attract 3rd party businesses, drive additional footfall and provide more opportunities for generating income for the Council.

**SECTION TWO: FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

For budget changes ONLY please include information below:			Benchmark, e.g. Scottish Average
Current spend on this service (£'0000s)	Total:		
Reduction to this service budget (£'0000s)	Per Annum:		
Increase to this service budget (£'000s)	Per Annum:		
If this is a change to a charge or concession please complete.	Current Annual Income Total:		
	Expected Annual Income Total:		
If this is a budget decision, when will the saving be achieved?	Start Date:		
	End Date (if any):		

<b>SECTION THREE: EVIDENCE</b>	Please include any evidence or relevant information that has influenced the decisions contained in this EPIA. (This could include demographic profiles; audits; research; health needs assessments; national guidance or legislative requirements and how this relates to the protected characteristic groups.)
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<b>A - Quantitative Evidence</b>	This is evidence which is numerical and should include the number people who use the service and the number of people from the protected characteristic groups who might be affected by changes to the service.
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We have used Visit Scotland’s segmentation guide alongside our social media and Google Analytics data to create market segments to provide a targeted approach to current and prospective consumers. Information from Visit Scotland via Visit Falkirk has been used to inform strategy development:

- Spending power of disabled people of £249bn across the economy
- 86% of senior travellers will make a return visit if their needs are met
- 72% of disabled customers are more likely to visit new places if they feel welcomed by staff

<b>B - Qualitative Evidence</b>	This is data which describes the effect or impact of a change on a group of people, e.g. some information provided as part of performance reporting.
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**Social - case studies; personal / group feedback / other**

Engagement with key partners, Councillors and experienced and knowledgeable staff from Falkirk Council's Helix team, Marketing team and Economic Development team (including Visit Falkirk) has informed development of the Helix Business Strategy. This is summarised in Section 4.

Best Judgement:	
Has best judgement been used in place of data/research/evidence?	Yes
Who provided the best judgement and what was this based on?	Experienced Officer in collaboration with relevant colleagues
What gaps in data / information were identified?	We do not have up-to-date customer research for The Helix. During 2023 we are gathering more updated customer research via Visit Scotland, an internal research project and the integration of our systems. This will provide refreshed segmentation for 2024 onwards and will help us identify customer groups, trends, and business opportunities. This is due to be released during 2023/2024. We are also undertaking our own customer satisfaction research which will help us identify potential opportunities and gaps. Regular research will also be undertaken using CRM data, digital insights, and competitor information, which will help us identify customer and industry trends, opportunities, and threats. All this information will be used to help inform our business decisions.

Is further research necessary?	Yes
If NO, please state why.	

**SECTION FOUR: ENGAGEMENT**

Engagement with individuals or organisations affected by the policy or proposal must take place

<b>Has the proposal / policy / project been subject to engagement or consultation with service users taking into account their protected characteristics and socio-economic status?</b>	Yes	
<b>If YES, please state who was engagement with.</b>	<p>All members of staff at The Helix have input ideas that feed into our Unit Action Plans, Site Management Plans and the Helix Business Strategy.</p> <p>Key partners at Scottish Canals, Visit Scotland and Visit Falkirk have fed into the development of the Helix Business Strategy.</p>	
<b>If NO engagement has been conducted, please state why.</b>		
<b>How was the engagement carried out?</b>	<b>What were the results from the engagement? Please list...</b>	
<b>Focus Group</b>	Yes	<p>Helix team workshop helped draw up the vision for the site, informed target setting and helped us identify key priorities. The team wanted us to include actions for sustainability, providing additional volunteering opportunities and for developing community growing opportunities on site.</p> <p>Helix Project Executive (partnership between Falkirk Council and Scottish Canals) identified additional partnership opportunities with Scottish Canals and asked us to make sure the Strategy and Scottish Canals Corporate Plan were better aligned. These changes were made.</p>
<b>Survey</b>	No	
<b>Display / Exhibitions</b>	No	
<b>User Panels</b>	No	
<b>Public Event</b>	No	
<b>Other: please specify</b>	Stakeholder engagement with Falkirk Council Marketing team, Visit Scotland and Visit Falkirk informed Market Segmentation information and helped us better align Helix Business Strategy with Falkirk Area Tourism Strategy 2023-2028.	
<b>Has the proposal / policy/ project been reviewed / changed as a result of the engagement?</b>	Yes	



Have the results of the engagement been fed back to the consultees?	Yes
Is further engagement recommended?	No

## SECTION FIVE: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

**Equality Protected Characteristics:** What will the impact of implementing this proposal be on people who share characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 or are likely to be affected by the proposal / policy / project? This section allows you to consider other impacts, e.g. poverty, health inequalities, community justice, carers etc.

Protected Characteristic	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Please provide evidence of the impact on this protected characteristic.
Age		✓		We are delivering more types of activities on site to appeal to a wider range of age groups. Play area improvements and additional family-friendly activities will add appeal for families, children and young people. A partnership with Cycling Without Age Scotland will provide a service to take older visitors around the Park. We are also seeking to provide more volunteering opportunities for all ages.
Disability		✓		Our partnership with Cycling Without Age Scotland will provide opportunities for people with mobility challenges to experience the full area of Helix Park and the Kelpies through bookable rides on Trishaws with experienced trishaw 'pilots'. We are also seeking to provide more volunteering opportunities for all ages and abilities, including a partnership with Carrongrange High School offering work experience in park management, catering and retail.
Sex		✓		We are aiming to provide better site security through improvements to our CCTV system, additional volunteering opportunities, more family-friendly activities and other interventions across the park to make it a safer and more accessible place to be, and to provide a better experience for all our visitors. This includes better accessibility for parents and carers and more attractions for all the family.
Ethnicity	✓			No adverse impact
Religion / Belief / non-Belief	✓			No adverse impact
Sexual Orientation	✓			No adverse impact
Transgender	✓			No adverse impact
Pregnancy / Maternity	✓			No adverse impact
Marriage / Civil Partnership	✓			No adverse impact
Poverty	✓			No adverse impact - we will continue to invest in the park to offer free and low cost activities, play space, picnic space and events for all the family.
Care Experienced	✓			No adverse impact

**Public Sector Equality Duty: Scottish Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance quality of opportunity and foster good relations. Scottish specific duties include:**

<b>Risk (Identify other risks associated with this change)</b>	
	<b>Evidence of Due Regard</b>
<b>Eliminate Unlawful Discrimination (harassment, victimisation and other prohibited conduct):</b>	We are aiming to provide better site security through improvements to our CCTV system, additional volunteering opportunities, more family-friendly activities and other interventions across the park to make it a safer and more accessible place to be.
<b>Advance Equality of Opportunity:</b>	We are delivering more types of activities on site to appeal to a wider range of groups than before.
<b>Foster Good Relations (promoting understanding and reducing prejudice):</b>	We are delivering more types of activities on site to appeal to a wider range of groups than before.

**SECTION SIX: PARTNERS / OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

Which sectors are likely to have an interest in or be affected by the proposal / policy / project?		Describe the interest / affect.
Business	No	
Councils	No	
Education Sector	No	
Fire	No	
NHS	No	
Integration Joint Board	No	
Police	No	
Third Sector	No	
Other(s): please list and describe the nature of the relationship / impact.	Scottish Canals - we share the site with Scottish Canals who own the Kelpies and Canal infrastructure	

## SECTION SEVEN: ACTION PLANNING

**Mitigating Actions:** If you have identified impacts on protected characteristic groups in Section 5 please summarise these in the table below detailing the actions you are taking to mitigate or support this impact. If you are not taking any action to support or mitigate the impact you should complete the No Mitigating Actions section below instead.

Identified Impact	To Who	Action(s)	Lead Officer	Evaluation and Review Date	Strategic Reference to Corporate Plan / Service Plan / Quality Outcomes

### No Mitigating Actions

Please explain why you do not need to take any action to mitigate or support the impact of your proposals.

No negative impacts identified, therefore no mitigation is required.

Are actions being reported to Members?

Yes

If yes when and how ?

October Executive

## SECTION EIGHT: ASSESSMENT OUTCOME

Only one of following statements best matches your assessment of this proposal / policy / project. Please select one and provide your reasons.

No major change required	Yes	There is no requirement to change the Helix Business Strategy
The proposal has to be adjusted to reduce impact on protected characteristic groups	No	
Continue with the proposal but it is not possible to remove all the risk to protected characteristic groups	No	
Stop the proposal as it is potentially in breach of equality legislation	No	

## SECTION NINE: LEAD OFFICER SIGN OFF

Lead Officer:

Signature:		Date:	28/07/2023
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**SECTION TEN: EPIA TASK GROUP ONLY**

<b>OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF EPIA:</b>	<b>Has the EPIA demonstrated the use of data, appropriate engagement, identified mitigating actions as well as ownership and appropriate review of actions to confidently demonstrate compliance with the general and public sector equality duties?</b>	Yes
<b>ASSESSMENT FINDINGS</b>  If YES, use this box to highlight evidence in support of the assessment of the EPIA  If NO, use this box to highlight actions needed to improve the EPIA	Information from Visit Scotland via Visit Falkirk has been used to inform strategy development. Engagement with key partners and Councillors.	
<b>Where adverse impact on diverse communities has been identified and it is intended to continue with the proposal / policy / project, has justification for continuing <u>without making changes been made</u>?</b>	Yes / No	If YES, please describe: N/A

LEVEL OF IMPACT: The EPIA Task Group has agreed the following level of impact on the protected characteristic groups highlighted within the EPIA		
LEVEL		COMMENTS
HIGH	Yes / No	
MEDIUM	Yes / No	
LOW	No	No negative impacts identified.

**SECTION ELEVEN: CHIEF OFFICER SIGN OFF**

<b>Director / Head of Service:</b>			
<b>Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	08/08/2023