

COMMISSIONING BRIEF:

Ecological Survey and Biodiversity Plan for Port Sunlight



1. Introduction

Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT) is looking for an experienced consultant to undertake an ecological survey of Port Sunlight village and to use the findings to produce a biodiversity plan identifying priority interventions.

Simply put, we want to understand the current contribution Port Sunlight's architecture, parks, gardens, and treescape make to biodiversity so that we can improve it, and to explore how we might create new opportunities for biodiversity within the village.

This work is important to us. It speaks to our commitment to arresting climate change and our recognition of the value of Port Sunlight's green spaces for all living things. It will support and inform our policies and procedures and guide our decision-making and investment in the village. It will also enhance our public programming and education provision.

We are eager to look beyond the boundaries of Port Sunlight and to foster a joined-up approach with neighbouring wildlife sites, other local organisations with similar responsibilities and values, and the Local Planning Authority, Wirral Council.

Engaging our key stakeholders, internal and external, will be an important part of the brief, both in terms of sharing the survey findings, but also shaping the approach to the biodiversity plan.

We think this brief requires a specialist consultant with experience in undertaking ecological surveys and developing biodiversity plans in mixed use areas with residential, commercial, and tourism activity, along with manufacturing close by. Experience of working in an historic environment would be advantageous along with effective communication and stakeholder engagement skills.

We have been advised that this type of survey work ideally needs to take place in spring and summer so we are looking for a consultant who can start as soon as possible.

2. About Port Sunlight

Port Sunlight was founded in 1888 by the industrialist William Lever. He wanted to provide the employees of his new Lever Brothers soap works and their families with decent and affordable housing and a wide range of facilities, services, policies, and incentives to ensure their well-being and 'betterment'.

Port Sunlight is not the first example of an industrial worker village, but it is one of the finest surviving examples in the world. It was an immediate precursor to and a model for the Garden City movement and influenced the design of planned worker settlements, garden villages and garden suburbs around the world from the turn of the twentieth century to the present day.

Today Port Sunlight is a Conservation Area and most residential properties, public buildings and monuments are Grade II listed. The war memorial is Grade I listed. These provisions provide statutory protection to the village enforced by the local planning authority (LPA) Wirral Council. Furthermore, there are restrictive covenants in the title deeds of all residential

property. Two sections of the landscape – The Dell, and The Diamond and The Causeway - are included in Historic England's register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Ten of Port Sunlight's green spaces are also designated for protection as Urban Greenspace by Wirral Council.



The village is home to approximately 2,000 residents, a mixture of owner-occupiers and private tenants, living in 1,059 residential properties. Prior to the Covid-19 global pandemic, Port Sunlight attracted in the region of 300,000 domestic and international visitors each year. There are a variety of community organisations and businesses operating in Port Sunlight today, from the village school and Grade II* listed church to two pubs, a hotel, conference and events space, a garden centre, and a theatre.

There are other important stakeholders in the village too, namely:

- Wirral Council (the LPA) who as well as planning and enforcement provide statutory services for highways, waste management and transport. Their emerging local plan will be of interest to this commission, along with the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan and Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy.
- National Museums Liverpool is responsible for the Lady Lever Art Gallery. Founded by William Lever, the gallery has one of the UK's finest collections of fine and decorative art.
- Unilever whose historic home in the UK is Port Sunlight; Lever Brothers became Unilever in 1929 following a merger with the Margarine Union. Today, Port Sunlight is an advanced manufacturing hub for Unilever and a centre for the company's Home Care and Beauty & Personal Care Research & Development.

3. About Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT)

PSVT is an independent charity founded in 1999 by Unilever Plc. Our vision is to make "Port Sunlight, an inspiring place to live, work and visit." Our mission "We are guardians of a unique and beautiful village, working with its community to ensure a great quality of life for residents and to celebrate William Lever's amazing legacy through cultural and learning experiences for all."

PSVT is directly responsible for:

- A diverse group of monuments (listed and unlisted).
- A permanent museum collection and village archive.
- All landscapes within the Conservation Area (except the back gardens of houses).
- 292 Grade II-listed houses, 323 garages and 22 non-residential/community buildings.
- Port Sunlight Museum & Gift Shop, including the Edwardian Worker's Cottage and learning experience SoapWorks.

It also works with partners and stakeholders to:

- Tackle social issues and promote community cohesion.
- Manage the visitor destination and raise its profile.
- Provide conservation advice to homeowners.

PSVT employs approximately 50 members of staff and works with organisational and community volunteers to discharge its charitable objectives. We are governed by a voluntary Board of Trustees with expertise in housing, surveying, finance, conservation, landscape, planning, museums, and heritage.

4. About Port Sunlight's Parks & Gardens



Place Port Sunlight lies 1 kilometre from the River Mersey • Its landscape has been formed from the marshy banks of the Mersey estuary • From 1888 major civil engineering projects transformed the natural landscape for industrial and residential development • Mayer Park, New Ferry Butterfly Park and Port Sunlight River Park tie the village into a network of green spaces.

A snapshot The front gardens are closely mown • The Diamond area is a colourful manicured landscape • The Dell is a sunken space that is the only physical remnant of the three tidal inlets that once cut across the site • There's a substantial number of trees providing a high percentage of canopy cover • The communal green spaces at the back of the superblocks are under-used • Drainage and surface water are big issues in key areas of the village.

Ownership The public open spaces, majority of front gardens, and majority of spaces at the back of the superblocks are owned and managed by PSVT • Rear yards and gardens are maintained by tenants and owner-occupiers and have mixed ownership • The majority of trees are in PSVT's ownership, except for 250 trees which are the responsibility of Wirral Council.

Landscape setting analysis The verdant nature of the site means that there are areas with a high and moderate potential for biodiversity.

Ecological setting analysis Wildlife corridors exist formed by the railway line, River Mersey shoreline and the Dibbinsdale Brook • New Ferry Butterfly Park has created a diversity of habitats, some of the species have started to travel along the railway wildlife corridor • The boggy woodland area on Corniche Road is suitable for bats • Formal planting, especially in The Diamond, is beneficial for pollinators • Green verges throughout the site provide a good habitat for smaller wildlife • Port Sunlight's allotment site provides habitat for a wide range of wildlife.

5. The need for the commission

Undertaking this piece of work has been in the pipeline for some time.

Commissioning an ecological survey and biodiversity plan is a key action in **PSVT's 10-year Conservation Management Plan 2018-2028**. As part of the development of the plan, Ryder Landscape Consultants were commissioned in 2017 to undertake a landscape condition survey. They identified the opportunity to increase biodiversity within the village. They proposed using some of the green spaces, particularly those away from public frontages, that are in a poorer condition, and of limited recreational value, without negatively impacting on the heritage or recreational value of the site.

PSVT's Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2020 – 2030, developed by The Environment Partnership and Element Sustainability highlights the importance of biodiversity for human survival. Biodiversity and ecosystems provide us with a range of goods and services that support economic and social wellbeing such as food, clean air, and regulation of the climate. Biodiversity also provides education opportunities and economic benefits to investors and visitors. AIM 5 of the strategy is 'To reduce the impact of PSVT landscape maintenance on the environment, diversify the type of open space and planting to improve biodiversity and enhance the sense of community spirit'.

PSVT's Public Realm Strategy 2022 developed by Planit argues that considering most of the green spaces are within PSVT's ownership, there is great scope to consider their ecological value. However, first a baseline is required from which to explore and measure improvements. Stakeholder consultation highlighted support for experimentation and testing approaches and the significant opportunity for local community involvement. The strategy also offers a whole range of suggested approaches to increasing biodiversity from new partnerships and connecting with neighbouring wildlife sites to sustainable drainage, colorful planting, and productive landscapes.



In 2023 architectural practice Paddock Johnson Partnership was asked to consider the **future use of the garage sites in Port Sunlight along with the communal green spaces at the back of the superblocs**. One of the recommendations from the resulting strategy was an ecological survey and biodiversity plan.

PSVT's **Environmental Policy** and **Landscape Policy** highlight our commitment to championing biodiversity and sustainability as part of our management of the natural and designed landscape in our care and our public programming. However, these policies along with others will be subject to review once this commission has concluded.

Why now?

PSVT is currently developing an over-arching vision and masterplan for the site which will clearly set out how the buildings and green spaces in our ownership will be used to transform the village into a world-class visitor destination whilst also improving the quality of life for its residents and the local community. With many competing priorities, we want to take the time to consider the best use of all our assets before finalising the plan. Potential funders will want to see how these projects are contributing towards arresting climate change.

The Lyceum Visitor Hub project is the linchpin of the masterplan and work has already begun to develop the concept. Set within the only remnant of the original tidal inlets that once cut across this site prior to the development of the village and factory, there is great potential for increasing biodiversity within The Dell and for engaging visitors through new displays in The Lyceum Building and public programming. The Lyceum Visitor Hub Project will be one area of focus for this commission.

The initial phases of our environmental sustainability strategy implementation plan have been very internally focused and rightly so. However, we recognise the need and demand for us to work with the community more to champion biodiversity and sustainability. This has been highlighted by a recent and ongoing project to improve the energy efficiency of PSVT's tenanted properties. And the timing has never been better as the organisation is about to embark on a whole new way of working with Port Sunlight's residents, which is addressed in section 11 of this brief.

Port Sunlight has always been celebrated for the appearance and management of its landscape. We are very proud of our talented and committed landscape team who work hard year-round to meet their own exacting standards. However, we are keen to explore new ways of working. For example, more traditional management techniques, solutions to ease flooding and benefit biodiversity, and the implementation of natural landscapes, which better align with our heritage values and the appearance of the village in the early days of its development.

6. Scope of Works

Below is a summary of the scope of works for the commission.

- A. Review and agree the scope of the brief with members of the Project Team.
- B. Complete a desktop review of relevant PSVT policies, plans, surveys, and strategies, along with the plans and policies of other key stakeholders which are relevant to this commission, e.g. Wirral Council, Unilever, and Network Rail.
- C. Spend time with the PSVT Landscape Team to develop an understanding of their approach to landscape management and maintenance and areas of expertise.
- D. Undertake an ecological survey of Port Sunlight village to establish a baseline, focussing on trees, public green spaces, listed landscapes, front gardens, green spaces at the back of the superblocs, and architecture. This might include some nighttime survey work.
- E. Engage with neighbouring wildlife sites to understand the ecological value of the sites and current work and plans to improve biodiversity with a view to identifying opportunities for joined-up working.
- F. Present the findings to key internal and external stakeholders and workshop your initial thoughts on how biodiversity could be improved in Port Sunlight to gauge stakeholder appetite and inform priority interventions in the biodiversity plan.
- G. Draft a Biodiversity Plan. This should include areas of focus, timescales, costs, ongoing maintenance requirements if applicable, measures of success, training needs, potential partners, volunteering opportunities, and any funding available to support implementation. We would love to get your views on how we might incorporate biodiversity in our public programmes and education provision. We are also keen to be put in contact with other sites who are already doing great work in this area.
- H. Support the PSVT workforce to present the final Biodiversity Plan to key internal and external stakeholders.
- I. Ensure the project always complies with the Data Protection Act 2018 and adheres to PSVT policies and procedures in this regard.



7. Skills and Experience

We believe that to deliver this piece of work successfully you will require:

- Considerable experience in undertaking ecological surveys and developing biodiversity plans in mixed use areas with residential, commercial and tourism activity, along with manufacturing close by.
- Experience of working in an historic environment would be advantageous.
- Effective communication and stakeholder engagement skills are essential.
- Evidence of appropriate insurance, including Public Liability Insurance

8. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

PSVT is actively working to be a diverse and inclusive organisation. As part of PSVT's commissioning practice, we welcome submissions from people who are from the Global Ethnic Majority, Disabled, Neurodiverse, D/deaf, LGBTQ+, and/or from working-class backgrounds.

9. Budget

A budget of £10,000 + VAT has been assigned to this commission.

The total cost of the works presented to PSVT as part of the response to the brief should include all costs of delivery. PSVT can support some costs, e.g. venues to host meetings and community engagement activity, and marketing via PSVT social media channels, quarterly village newsletter, and stakeholder e-blasts.



10. Reporting relationships

You will report to Katherine Lynch, Director of Projects at Port Sunlight Village Trust. The Project Team is also likely to include:

- Paul Harris, CEO
- Lin Whalley, Director of Operations, and organisational lead for PSVT's Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- Jean Milton, Director of Heritage, and project lead for PSVT's New Visitor Hub
- Liam English, Landscape Manager
- Nicky Evans, Assistant Landscape Manager

11. Port Sunlight Resident Engagement Strategy

In March 2024 PSVT adopted a resident engagement strategy to ensure the experiences, skills and views of Port Sunlight Village residents can influence how PSVT delivers its work. Consultants Catherine Simmons and Paul Kelly and are now working with PSVT to implement the strategy over 2024/25. A series of advisory groups are central to this. They will be established in the first quarter of 2024/25 and will involve skilled and experienced residents who want to be more involved in specific areas of PSVT's work. This commission will be of interest to the environmental advisory group and Catherine and Paul will advise and assist on any engagement with this group.

12. Application method

You are invited to submit a proposal that must demonstrate the following:

- Your proposed approach and schedule to deliver the scope of work described above.
- Examples of previous relevant projects, the names of two referees who have experience of working with you on similar projects and CVs for you (and your team, if applicable).
- Breakdown of costs by scope of work.

Your proposal should be emailed to Katherine Lynch, Director of Projects
k.lynch@portsunlightvillage.com

13. Timescales

The **deadline for proposals is 5pm on Tuesday 30th April 2024**. Ideally an appointment will be made during w/c 29th April. Interviews may be required depending on the response.

14. Further Information

For an informal conversation please contact Katherine Lynch,
Director of Projects k.lynch@portsunlightvillage.com

PSVT's 5-year strategic plan and 10-year Conservation Management
Plan (CMP) are available to download from PSVT's website
www.portsunlightvillage.com

All other relevant PSVT policies, plans, surveys, and strategies,
including a recent Tree Survey, will be made available upon appointment.

