

Draft

Coronation Gardens

Management Plan and Security Audit

2005-2009



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1 Introduction and Vision

Wirral Council has produced this document in conjunction with the Friends of Coronation Gardens to provide a comprehensive framework for the future development of the site.

We encourage suggestions from park users and the wider community to this plan.

If you would like to help in any way please contact Neil Irons (Senior Parks Development Officer) on 0151 666 4712.

Vision *To be agreed with the park's stakeholders.*

Parks & Countryside Service, Wirral Council, Westminster House, Hamilton Street, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH41 5FN.

Departmental Mission Statement;

'Promoting a healthy, safer lifestyle and improving the quality of life for all.'

Aims:

- *To enable sustainable, economic, social, neighbourhood and environmental regeneration.*
- *To improve the health and well being of Wirral residents.*
- *To promote opportunities for personal, community and business development.*

2 The wider policy context

Wirral Council has produced 9 corporate objectives:

- PROTECTING AND IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENT
- PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION OF WIRRAL
- PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL
- IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF WIRRAL PEOPLE
- MAKING WIRRAL SAFER
- MEETING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF WIRRAL
- SUPPORTING AND PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE
- IMPROVING TRANSPORT
- CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING SERVICES

The **Parks and Countryside Service Plan** for 2007/08 sets the targets for the service within the context of the above corporate objectives and the Regeneration Departmental Service Plan.

Wirral Council recently commissioned a Master plan for the regeneration of Hoylake and West Kirby to capitalise on the raised profile of the area arising out of the 2006 Open Golf Championship coming to the Royal Liverpool Golf Club in Hoylake.

The plan is supported for funding by the North West Development Agency and the Objective 1 programme.

The significant improvement of Coronation Gardens is included in the plan as a medium term project.

3 Site Information

Name: Coronation Gardens

Address: Banks Road, West Kirby, Wirral, CH48 3HU

Size: 0.84 Hectares

Primary classification: Local Park

Ward: West Kirby & Thurstaston

Tenure:

The site is owned and managed by Wirral Council, Department of Regeneration, Parks and Countryside section.

Stakeholders:

- Friends of Coronation Gardens.
- Roger Jones – Café proprietor.
- Grounds maintenance staff.

Summary of Features:

- Licensed Café
- Flagged footpaths with seating
- Established ornamental shrub planting
- New central feature of seating, plating and sculpture sponsored by the Friends of Coronation Gardens

Access:

The gardens are situated in West Kirby and lie between the promenade (South Parade) and Banks Road. The main entrance is located on Banks Road but there are two access points each side of the café on the promenade.

History:

The gardens were constructed on sand dunes that were accessed via a gate from the prestigious Hydro Hotel (apartments now occupy this site). They became a formal public space in the late 1930's with associated tea - rooms (now the Sunset Lounge café). Opened in 1936 they were named to mark the coronation of George VI. Although the Hydro Hotel was demolished in the 1960's the gardens continued to be well maintained by the Local Authority. However during the 70's and 80's the annual bedding feature, glass block walling and circular footpaths were removed and the site allowed to generally decline. More recently the public toilets have been closed on the site as part of that Departments savings. Coronation Gardens is now a rather bleak and featureless open area of grass with litter and dog fouling a constant problem. The Friends have sourced funding to reverse this trend and have funded two schemes to improve the entrance and provide a central feature.



Resources:

There is currently no dedicated capital budget for improvements to the gardens.

Grounds maintenance is funded from the annual maintenance revenue budget. The Area Parks Manager has overall responsibility for grounds management.

Maintenance is carried out by staff based at a neighbouring park supported by a gardener carrying out mowing of the park's larger grass areas with a mini tractor.

4 Analysis and Assessment

The decline in the quality of grounds maintenance and lack of investment over previous decades has resulted in the deterioration of Coronation Gardens.

The current condition of the built environment and hard landscape is variable and requires investment, particularly the boundary wall along its entire length to the seaward side (which houses the decommissioned public toilets) and the footpaths throughout the site.

The café building also requires a face-lift as the proprietor has poorly painted the exterior brickwork with magnolia masonry paint but not maintained the window grills which have rusted and stained large areas of the painted brickwork.

Horticultural maintenance is variable with the volume mowing being of an acceptable standard but the planted areas and footpath weed spraying being poor.

The formation of the Friends of Coronation Gardens has resulted in some maintenance improvements to the site particularly with regard to litter collection and footpath edging, which is carried out by the group on numerous weekends throughout the year. They have also provided a new notice board at the main entrance indicating forthcoming events and the vision for the gardens.

The use of the Green Flag Award criteria can provide an excellent framework for a site assessment as it focuses on 8 key management themes as follows:

i) A welcoming place

There are 3 access points into the gardens with one being on the roadside and 2 on the seaward side. The main entrance is on Banks Road near to the junction with Mostyn Avenue with the two others being each side of the café on the promenade. All three have good disabled access. The main entrance has an information board and an attractive entrance sign in the form of a wrought iron arch funded by the Friends. There is vehicular access at this entrance point controlled by the erection of a drop bollard to prevent unauthorised access. There is no direction signage to the gardens from the main road or along the promenade. At present the two entrances to the site from the promenade are uninspiring and oppressive. There is no information indicating the managing agent or contact numbers.



ii) Healthy, safe and secure

Wirral Council operates a 24hr Community Patrol force providing a measured response to any act of vandalism or anti-social behaviour.

Wirral Council has a written an up to date Health and Safety Policy.

Signage requesting dog owners to clean up after their pets is marked at all entrances to the site, but a littering of dog faeces is still evident throughout. The siting and type of waste bins requires improving as these are also used for dog waste.

The public convenience building at the site was closed approx. 2 years ago and is managed by the Dept. Housing and Environmental Health. Following a recent site meeting with an officer from that Dept. and representatives of the Friends, it was agreed that the locked grills would be further sealed to prevent littering and urinating. The timber privacy screens are no longer necessary and narrow the entrance creating a hidden area where anti social behaviour is taking place.

It is proposed to introduce an Annual Site Safety Inspection Checklist. The inspection will identify defects within the park that present a risk to staff and/or users and includes footpaths, walls, fences, buildings, furniture and planted areas.



A Security Audit was carried out at the site that assessed the gardens under the following 12 criteria:

Entrances – Renovation work to the main entrance from Banks Road has now been completed with new signage a drop bollard and resurfacing to the footpath. Some pruning of over mature shrubs at this point would create a more open and inviting feel. Dog ‘clean it up’ signage is clearly marked at all entrances. Standardisation of bin type and re-siting to the 3 access / egress points would be beneficial. The timber privacy screens around the disused toilets are unnecessary and threatening particularly when entering the site from the promenade. There is no signage advertising the gardens from the promenade.

Sight lines – The gardens are an open square site and pose no real visibility problems, however, the tree area to the northern boundary and the timber privacy screens to the toilets do offer some protection for anti-social behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour – The toilet area is heavily littered and smells strongly of urine. The tree area to the northern boundary appears to be used for dens and for sliding down the grassed bank onto the flagged footpath.

Vandalism – Render to the bays of the perimeter walling is being damaged by youths kicking footballs. The tiled roofing to this structure is similarly damaged and has had numerous repairs. Anti vandal paint has not been applied to the roof- line. One of the slatted park benches has been vandalised.

Motor vehicles – Grounds maintenance vehicles and visitors to the café have caused damage to flagged footways across the site via the Banks Road entrance.

The Gardens at night – The flagged footpath that bisects the site is used as a cut through to and from the promenade and to / from the café. The café is licensed and open in accordance with Public house licensing laws.

Footpaths - No security problems are evident but surfacing is cracked and uneven.

Boundaries – The gardens are not gated. As previously mentioned the promenade walling is in need of some structural attention. The site is well overlooked by private properties on Banks Road.

Buildings – Anti vandal paint needs to be applied to the promenade wall roofline.

Play areas – *Not applicable*

Who was on site – Workmen, dog walkers, pedestrians en-route and patrons of the café.

Maintenance – The timber privacy screening contributes negatively to the feeling of safety in the gardens. Grounds maintenance of the gardens could be improved as the footpaths and shrub beds are contaminated with weed. In addition the large open areas of grass are fouled by dog faeces.



iii) Clean and well maintained

Staff based at Ashton Park carry out grounds maintenance in the gardens, supported by a gardener using a mini tractor for the grass mowing.

Horticultural maintenance is carried out in accordance with a frequency based work programme allied to a specification. The work programme is issued to staff on a quarterly basis this is used for identifying all maintenance operations on the site and the required standards. It is understood that currently these documents are not being fully utilised and are under review.

The Senior Development Officer using the following 13 headings has carried out an assessment of the current maintenance condition of the site. The facilities and features are simply ticked as good, fair or poor and can only represent findings during the writing of this plan. The facilities and features without a rating are not available at the site.

Grounds maintenance site checklist

Grass	Good	Fair	Poor
Fine Sport	N/a	N/a	N/a
Playing Fields	N/a	N/a	N/a
Ornamental	N/a	N/a	N/a
General		√	
Rough	N/a	N/a	N/a
Wild Flower Area	N/a	N/a	N/a

Planting	Good	Fair	Poor
Annual	N/a	N/a	N/a
Herbaceous	N/a	N/a	N/a
Roses	N/a	N/a	N/a
Shrubs			√
Hedges	N/a	N/a	N/a
Young staked trees		√	
Mature Trees		√	
Woodland		√	

Hard Surfaces	Good	Fair	Poor
Tarmac Sport	N/a	N/a	N/a
Hard Porous	N/a	N/a	N/a
Footpaths			√
Drives	N/a	N/a	N/a
Car Parks	N/a	N/a	N/a
Steps	N/a	N/a	N/a
ACW / ATP	N/a	N/a	N/a

Play Areas	Good	Fair	Poor
Maintenance	N/a	N/a	N/a

Litter	Good	Fair	Poor
Collection		√	
Bins		√	

Buildings	Good	Fair	Poor
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Maintenance			√
Graffiti	N/a	N/a	N/a

Walling	Good	Fair	Poor
Maintenance		√	
Graffiti	N/a	N/a	N/a

Fencing	Good	Fair	Poor
Maintenance		√	

Drainage	Good	Fair	Poor
Ditches	N/a	N/a	N/a
Inspection Chambers / Covers	N/a	N/a	N/a
Gully pots	N/a	N/a	N/a

Furniture / Memorials	Good	Fair	Poor
Maintenance		√	
Graffiti		√	

Signage	Good	Fair	Poor
Maintenance		√	
Graffiti	?	?	?

Lighting	Good	Fair	Poor
Maintenance	N/a	N/a	N/a

Water	Good	Fair	Poor
Maintenance	N/a	N/a	N/a
Safety	N/a	N/a	N/a

Although by no means exhaustive, the following concerns were noted during the assessment:

Perimeter walling to the promenade has some signs of damage. There are sections of cracked and missing render with loose or missing roof tiles.

The footpaths that are predominantly flagged are contaminated with grass and weed with some units cracked or broken presenting slip and trip hazards.

The café exterior brickwork has been painted a magnolia colour by the lessee and is unattractive accentuating the rust staining from the poorly maintained window grills.

Grass cutting throughout the site is acceptable but needs associated planting to add interest.

Shrub beds have weeds and need remedial pruning of dead, diseased and crossing branches.

Planting to the café frontage has been carried out by the café lessee and includes a dinghy in Slate mulch but looks unkempt.

Maintenance of the buildings within the gardens is carried out via the Departments day to day repair system.

It is apparent that operational factors beyond the influence of this management plan require consideration in order to improve grounds maintenance. The main issues for consideration could include staff management (i.e. motivation, supervision, training) coupled with the issue of resourcing (i.e. revenue funding, machinery and materials).

Overall Coronation Gardens receives a 'fair' level of maintenance and it is hoped to bring the standard up to 'good' within the period of this plan.

iv) Sustainability

Wirral Council has an Environmental Policy that the Parks and Countryside section supports and works towards.

Recycling of waste produced from operations within the gardens is carried out at Ashton Park depot where recycling bays are situated.

The Gardens are well served by cycle routes along the promenade and public transport infrastructure.

v) Conservation and Heritage

Bio-diversity report to follow

Many of the original footpaths and ornamental planting beds within the gardens have now been removed.

One of the most attractive original features of the gardens was the glass walling blocks set into the promenade boundary wall and reinstatement of these in whole or part would be desirable.

The recently closed toilets present an unattractive sight of sealed doorways to visitors and consideration should be given to the improvement of this area.

The café exterior brickwork has been poorly painted and is not in keeping with the promenade walling.

vi) Community involvement.

Coronation Gardens has an active Friends group that has been successful in sourcing grant aid to fund improvements to the site.

The Friends organise regular weekend litter picking sessions throughout the year supported by the Parks section.

The Friends have funded many improvements to the gardens and have recently funded a hard and soft landscaping scheme as a central feature located on the main footpath that

bisects the site. The scheme will also include extending the resurfacing of this footpath from the Banks Road entrance.

vii) Marketing.

Wirral Council has a web site that has links to the Parks and Countryside information. This is at present hard to find and has no information on Coronation Gardens.

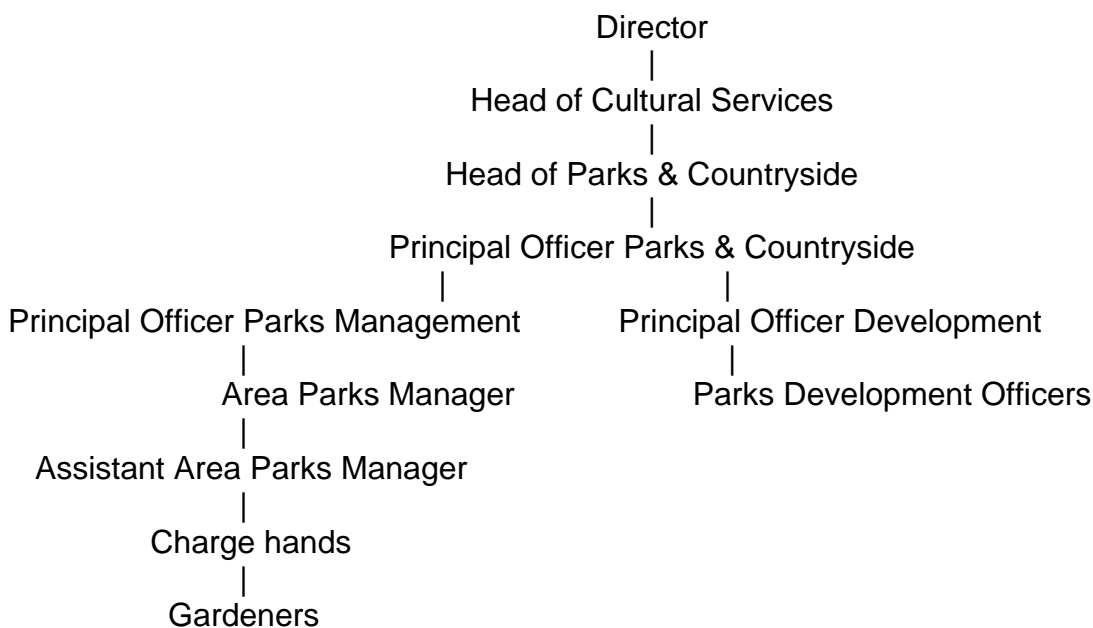
The information board at the main entrance to the gardens does have current information on local events.

The Friends produce a quarterly newsletter keeping the community abreast of their vision for the site and progress to date.

viii) Management.

The production of this management plan should provide staff and public with the expectations Wirral Council has for the future development and maintenance of the gardens.

Following re-organisation of The Parks & Countryside Service in 2004 the following management structure was put in place.



The production of this management plan should provide staff and public with the expectations Wirral Council has for the future development and maintenance of the park.

5 Aims and Objectives

Aim: To encourage people into the gardens and to make them more welcoming.

Objectives:

1. Provide direction signage from the centre of West Kirby.
2. Provide a good quality sign at the access point to the gardens along the promenade.
3. Improve the two entrances each side of the café.
4. Supply information regarding managing agent and contact numbers to the notice board at the main entrance.

Aim: To improve the health, safety and security of the public when visiting the gardens.

Objectives;

1. Re-position and standardise type of waste bins to entrances
2. Apply anti vandal paint to building roof- lines.
3. Remove dog faeces on site and regularly brush and litter pick pathways.
4. Remove defunct timber screening to toilet area.
5. Begin Annual Site Safety Inspection

Aim: To improve and develop the built environment with hard and soft landscaping, creating a feeling of quality throughout the gardens.

Objectives;

1. Improve the quality of grounds maintenance throughout the gardens.
2. Carry out selective thinning of tree area on northern boundary and open up under storey to prevent any anti social behaviour.
3. Produce winter work programmes to include annual tree/shrub planting and other works to reflect this document.
4. Repair damaged render and roofing tiles to promenade walling.

5. Improve condition and maintenance of footpaths.
6. Assist Friends group in creation of central landscape feature.
7. Improve maintenance and stocking of mature shrub planting.
8. Improve appearance of toilet block area.

Aim: To improve sustainable work practices relevant to the gardens.

Objectives;

1. Implement improved waste management / recycling procedure for site.
2. Install cycle racks on site to assist secure parking of cycles.

Aim: To conserve and improve the best features of the site and retain those of historic importance.

Objectives;

1. Reinstate glass- walling blocks to promenade wall.
2. Improve café exterior brickwork / window grills etc.

Aim: To support and increase community involvement in the site.

Objectives;

1. Continue to capacity build with the Friends group.
2. To work in partnership with the Friends to apply for and achieve Green Flag status.
3. Assist the Friends with their regular weekend litter picks.

Aim: To raise the public profile of the gardens and promote the site as a community resource.

Objectives;

1. Improve the Wirral Council website.
2. Assist the Friends in the production of their newsletter.
3. Improve site interpretation and signage.

Aim: To manage the implementation and review of this plan.

Objectives;

1. To gain funding to make as many quality improvements to the gardens as possible.
2. To create mechanisms to actively review both maintenance and improvements.

6 Action Plan

Actions	Lead Officer	Target date	Funding source
Decide locations for and provide road signage	Area Parks Manager/Parks Development Officer (PDO)		Requires additional funding (RAF) £1K
Provide sign to Promenade entrance	Area Parks Manager		RAF £5K
Renovate promenade entrances	Area Parks Manager		RAF £10K
Supply contact information to main entrance	Area Parks Manager		RAF £2.5K
Standardise and re-position waste bins	Area Parks Manager		RAF £2.5K
Begin Annual Site Safety Inspection	Area Parks Manager	2007 Onwards	From existing resources
Apply anti vandal paint to building roof-lines and maintain	Area Parks Manager	2007 Onwards	From existing resources
Remove dog fouling and litter from pathways and brush more frequently	Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	From existing resources

Instigate repairs to damaged walling / roofing as it occurs	Area Parks Manager	2007	From existing resources
Remove defunct timber screening	Area Parks Manager	2007/8	From existing resources
Improve grounds maintenance standards throughout the gardens	Area Parks Manager	2007 Onwards	From existing resources
Produce annual winter work programmes in line with this document	Area Parks Manager	2007 and onwards	From existing resources
Selectively thin tree area	Area Parks Manager	2008	From existing resources
Improve aesthetics of toilet block area	Area Parks Manager/PDO	2006	RAF £7.5K
Create central landscape feature	PDO / Friends	2007	Funding to be sourced / Friends
Improve maintenance of mature shrub planting	Area Parks Manager	2007 Ongoing	From existing resources
Improve composting	Area Parks Manager	2007 Ongoing	From existing resources
Install bicycle racks	Area Parks Manager	2008	Funding to be sourced / Friends
Reinstate glass walling blocks	Development Officer / Friends	2010	Funding to be sourced
Improve café exterior inc. planting	Property Services/Tenant		From existing resources
Support and work in partnership with the Friends	Development Officer / Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	
Apply for Green Flag Award	Development Officer	2010	From existing resources
Assist Friends with regular work days	Area Parks Manager / Friends	Ongoing	From existing resources
Improve Parks website	Parks Officer	2007	From existing resources
Produce regular newsletter for gardens	Friends	Ongoing	Friends

Improve site interpretation and signage	Area Parks Manager/PDO	2007 Onwards	RAF £5K
To work with Friends to gain external funding	Development Officer / Friends	Ongoing	Funding to be sourced
Create system to monitor grounds maintenance quality	Area Parks Manager	2007 Onwards	From existing resources
Create system to review improvements	Area Parks Manager / Development Officer / Friends	2007 Onwards	From existing resources

7 Monitoring and Review

There needs to be a precise frequency and a clear process for monitoring both maintenance and development.

The Principal Officer for Parks Management will incorporate progress on management plan actions into monthly management team meetings.

Charge hands will report back on progress or shortfalls to the Area Parks Manager after each visit.

The Area Parks Manager will carry out random inspections of the site between programmed visits.

The Area Parks Manager should carry out a monthly inspection of the site with the relevant operatives to assess maintenance standards and check against the issued work programme and specification.

The Development Officer should carry out a bi-annual site visit with the Area Parks Manager and Friends to oversee the delivery of the development plan. The target date in the five- year action plan will enable people to see how the partnership is making progress and when that action has been achieved.

8 Appendices

1. Site Plan

CORONATION GARDENS

