

## **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

### **BIRKENHEAD PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2007**

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## **BIRKENHEAD PARK RESTORATION PLAN AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

This report outlines the progress of the Birkenhead Park Restoration Plan and informs members of the events, activities and issues since the last meeting of the Birkenhead Park Advisory Committee on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2007. Details of progress are taken from Clerk of Works progress report and the Volunteer Co-ordinator's report, September 2007.

The report also updates the members on the operational management of Birkenhead Park through the work of Park Manager, Gardener, Security and Ranger Teams.

### **2.0 THE RESTORATION PLAN**

#### **2.1 Summary of Progress**

The Restoration Project is moving into its final stages with the completion of outstanding work and the formal handover of each element.

The Park Pavilion is now fully operational and serving as the centre for education and interpretation as well as providing public conveniences and cafeteria and the operational base for the park's management team.

Refurbishment and replacement of gates and railings is substantially complete with defects currently being addressed by the contractor, overseen by the Clerk of Works, Hilary Taylor Landscape Associates.

Conservation of the Grand Entrance, Swiss Bridge and Boathouse are complete and final inspections have been carried out by the Contract Administrator, Lloyd Evans Pritchard Ltd.

The main landscaping works, furniture and signage are now also substantially complete and are currently being maintained for a twelve month period by the landscape sub-contractor, Landscape Contract Services Ltd. These works are overseen by the principle contractor Balfour Beatty and the Clerk of Works.

Defects and snagging works are being completed across the site as weather and circumstances allow and additional refurbishment of sports facilities, ineligible for HLF grant, are ongoing.

Progress on the final stages of the various elements of the restoration is summarised below:

## **2.2 Package 1 – Pavilion and Plot 6 Landscaping (Lockwoods Construction)**

Birkenhead Park Pavilion is fully operational and provides the base for the park management team including Park Manager, Senior Ranger, Visitor Services Team and Senior Security Officer.

Bookings for both the multifunction room and gallery have been very encouraging in the past period with a good deal of return business from groups and organisations. Use of the multifunction room has included training sessions, meetings and presentations from a variety of different users and the gallery has also attracted a great deal of interest from individuals, schools and community based bodies.

The cafeteria, 'Cappuccinos in the Park', has benefited from increasing numbers of visitors to the pavilion over the summer months and in particular from the visitors attracted by public events and activities. In addition, the cafeteria has provided catering and refreshments to organisations using the multifunction room and at park events.

The maintenance of the pavilion garden, Plot 6, is now the responsibility of the park gardens team and, despite very poor weather conditions, the floral bedding displays have looked very well throughout the summer season.

A list of events and activities for the period July - September has been appended to this report.

## **2.3 Package 2 and 2b – External railings and gates (Casey Ltd)**

Refurbishment and replacements of gates and railings across the park has been completed with the exception of minor snagging works and some outstanding decoration. A list of the works that remain to be completed is being compiled by the Clerk of Works and carried out by the railings contractor, Casey Ltd, under his supervision.

## **2.4 Package 3 – Grand Entrance Lodge, Swiss Bridge and Roman Boathouse (William Aneley Ltd)**

The restoration of the Grand Entrance (external), Swiss Bridge and Roman Boathouse is now complete with final inspections and remedial works being completed in August 2007.

Internal fit out of the Grand Entrance North Lodge is also complete and new tenants, Active Drama, have taken up residency. Works to the South Lodge are now also complete and it is envisaged that this too will be leased to Active Drama as an administrative base for the arts.

## **2.5 Package 4 – Depot and associated minor buildings (Totty Building Services)**

The park depot, Ashville Road, is now complete and the Gardens Team are currently working out of the area which includes the following facilities:

- Depot building, including mess facility, toilets, shower room, Assistant Manager's office.
- Garage for plant and machinery storage and toolstore.
- Waste centre for compactable waste.
- Storage and re-cycle bays for materials and arisings.
- Vehicle wash area
- Bore Hole and Aeration System control points
- Staff parking

There are minor snagging items still to be completed by the contractor, however the depot is now fully operational, which will greatly facilitate maintenance operations in the coming months.

## **2.6 Packages 5 / 6 – Main landscaping works / Park furniture and signage (Balfour Beatty Civil Engineering Ltd.)**

The main landscaping works have been completed across the park although there are areas where reinstatement is ongoing, in particular the silt storage areas in the upper and lower parks and a number of smaller areas that have suffered disturbance during the works. These works and other defects have been identified by the Clerk of Works who is supervising their completion within the defects period.

Planting across the park is subject to a twelve month maintenance period prior to handover and this maintenance is being carried out by Landscape Contract Services. Maintenance of newly planted areas is being monitored by the Clerk of Works and the Park Manager. In areas where there has been a loss of plant stock, these will be replaced at the appropriate planting season to ensure that the park is finally handed over fully stocked at the end of the maintenance period.

Drainage continues to be a problem in a small number of areas in the park, this is due in the main to blocked drainage gullies and pots from debris. WMBC has undertaken to clear blockages as part of the ongoing maintenance of the drainage system.

Remedial works to some areas of the pedestrian paths have been carried out since the last meeting of the Committee, however, there are still concerns about the quality of the finish, the amount of loose material left on the surface, and 'joint-marks' which create unsightly dark lines along the length of certain pathways. The contractor has been made aware of this issue and is therefore programming further remedial works.

Signage across the park has been installed and includes three distinct elements:

- Entrance signage and notice boards
- Internal orientation boards
- Park information cabinets

The refurbishment of the Lower Park children's play area was completed in February and specifications for the refurbishment works to the tennis courts in Boothby Ground and the football changing rooms in the lower park are currently in preparation.

Improvements have also been carried out at the bowling greens on Park Road North including re-turfing and an enhanced maintenance programme throughout the summer season.

### **3.0 PARK MANAGEMENT**

#### **3.1 Green Flag and Heritage Flag Awards**

In July, Birkenhead Park was awarded both the Green Flag Award and the Green Heritage Site Award by the Civic Trust. These national awards recognise excellence against a set of key criteria which cover all elements of parks management, specifically:

- High standards of Management and Maintenance
- Sustainability
- Conservation and Heritage
- Community Involvement
- Marketing

The park is the first and only public park in Merseyside to gain the Heritage Flag Award.

#### **3.2 Staffing and Volunteers**

In addition to the site based teams of Gardeners, Rangers and Security staff the two newly appointed outreach workers, funded through the Friends of Birkenhead Park's Birkenhead Park Heritage Education and Community Involvement Project, have been working closely with the Senior Ranger and his team to develop a range of events and activities for local schools and groups.

This additional resource has allowed a wider range of public events and activities to be delivered during the summer months as well as the targeting of specific groups in the local area such as youth clubs and children's centres.

A programme of volunteer activity days has also been developed with volunteers undertaking a variety of practical tasks in the park on a monthly

basis and a specialised Lakes Volunteer Group is now also active on a monthly basis.

Volunteer bailiffs have assisted the Ranger and Security Teams throughout the summer in lakeside patrolling and permit checks.

A designated Volunteer Co-ordinator from the Friends of Birkenhead Park is working closely with the Senior Ranger and his team to organise the practical tasks which include:

- Litter picking and rubbish removal
- Weed and bramble clearance
- Bagging wild bird food for sale at the Pavilion
- Removal of aquatic weed and algae from lakes
- Providing commentary for vintage bus site tours

### **3.2 Grounds Maintenance**

Commissioning of the park depot at Ashville Road has greatly improved facilities for operational staff allowing as it does adequate storage facilities for plant and equipment, mess facilities and waste management. The depot is now fully operational with the Assistant Manager and Gardens Team based in this location.

#### Routine maintenance programme

Routine maintenance for the period (period 02 of annual work programme 2007) has included grass mowing, fine turf operations, herbicide application (non-residual), litter picking, removal of waste, routine maintenance of sports facilities and minor repairs.

Maintenance for all newly planted areas across the park is the responsibility of the main contractor, Balfour Beatty and their subcontracted landscape staff.

### **3.3 Promotions and Public Relations**

The Park Manager and Senior Ranger and Assistant Manager continue to work closely with a number of key stakeholder groups in the delivery of visitor services in the park and discussions are being held with the Tourism Section to update the marketing strategy for the park. Delegates from Birkenhead Park will also attend the Cheshire Gardens Trust Conference in October which is focussing on gardens and tourism.

The Friends of Birkenhead Park's, 'Heritage Education and Community Involvement Project', is progressing well with the appointment of two staff members and the delivery of the first series of dramatic performances in the park by Active Drama.

This project has allowed further development of events and activities targeted at the local community including the Children and Young People's Summer

Programme held in August which offered a wide range of activities such as sports taster days and natural history activities attracting over 600 visits.

Close links are maintained with both the Association of Wirral Angling Clubs in the management of the park lakes and the Birkenhead Park Crown Green Bowls Forum in development of the bowling greens at Park Road North.

A number of exhibitions and activities have been held in the Pavilion gallery, these have included:

- Primary Schools Stained Glass
- Royal Institute of British Architects 'Gifted and Talented' Workshops
- Children's Art Attack
- Wirral Partnership Homes Gardens Competition
- Restoration Photographs by Ian Lea

In addition to this project based work and the annual programme of events, activities and exhibitions, further promotion of the park for the period is listed below:

- Weekly Restoration Update walks being run every Wednesday
- Restoration Information for Visitors notice boards installed throughout park
- Park Management Team facilitating a monthly workshop with the Association of Wirral Angling Clubs to formulate future management policy for the park lakes
- Park Manager regularly meeting Birkenhead Park Crown Green Bowls Forum to develop facilities in partnership with local clubs.
- Attendance at Friends of Birkenhead Park meetings
- 'A Visit to Birkenhead Park: Following in Frederick Law Olmstead's Footsteps' - Field Notes: National Association of Olmstead Parks Newsletter, Spring 2007 Vol.25 No.1
- Radio Merseyside Green Flag Award announced
- Green Flag / Heritage Flag Award 2007
- International Landscape Research Centre, Tokyo – site tour with Vice President, Shintaro Sakamoto
- Restoration Celebration Event, June 2007
- Installation of Birkenhead Park Station signage – Merseytravel
- Radio Merseyside 30<sup>th</sup> August – Interview with Chairman of the Friends of Birkenhead Park and Head of Parks and Countryside Service

*A summary of events and activities for July - September has been attached to this report as Appendix 1.*

#### **4.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

There are none arising from this report

## **5.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following background papers have been used in the preparation of this report; Clerk of Works (HTLA) report July 2007, Volunteer Co-ordinator's Report September (2007).

## **6.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS**

The park is in the Claughton Ward and adjacent to the Bidston and St James and Birkenhead and Tranmere Wards.

## **7.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

The park Pavilion has been designed to meet the requirements of all building regulations. Any timbers will be from sustainable sources. The Pavilion will provide a focal point for people using the park. It will enhance the sense of participation and social inclusion for people from the surrounding areas.

## **8.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

None arising from this report.

## **19.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

During the period of the restoration works all contractors are responsible for the health and safety arrangements in their areas of work. The Park Manager, with the support of the Departmental Health and Safety Officer, continues to liaise with the Clerk of Works and Planning Supervisor with regards to health and safety on site. Certain areas of the park will remain closed to the public for the duration of the project.

## **10.0 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

None arising from this report.

## **11.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

None arising from this report.

## **12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the report be noted

**ALAN STENNARD**  
**DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION**

This report was prepared by Martin McCoy (Birkenhead Park Manager) who can be contacted on 0151 652 5197