



Wirral Council

Department of Regeneration

Parks and Countryside Service

Beechwood Park

**Management Plan
&
Security Audit**

2007 - 2012

DRAFT



Contents

1) Introduction and vision

2) The wider policy context

3) Site information

4) Analysis and assessment including Security Audit

5) Aims and objectives

6) Action plan

7) Monitoring and review

8) Appendix

1) Introduction and vision

Wirral Council produced this management plan. The plan is intended to provide a framework for the development and improvement of the park over the next five year period up to 2012. The plan is intended to be a working document, which is open to new ideas at any time. We welcome your suggestions and comments for incorporation into this plan, whether you are a local resident, user or organisation. Your input will help us to develop a park that meets everyone's needs and aspirations.

If you wish to find out further information about this document or submit any suggestions please contact **Peter Whittle** in the Parks and Countryside Service at Wirral Council on 0151 666 4713 or by email at peterwhittle@wirral.gov.uk alternatively, you can contact Peter Whittle by writing to:

Parks and Countryside, 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 and its relevance to the park

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

3) Site Description

Name: Beechwood Community Park

Grid Reference: 328201, 389799

Primary classification: Local Park

Address: Bidston Green Drive

Ward: Bidston & St James

Size: 1.906 Hectares

Existing facilities and features:

- Children's play area
- Mature shrub and semi mature tree stock
- Open grass areas
- Wheeled play area (BMX obstacles now removed)
- Adjacent kick-about court

Tenure: The site is owned and managed by the Parks and Countryside Service of Wirral Council's Department of Regeneration.

Summary of main uses:

- ❖ As an area for dog walking
- ❖ Children's play
- ❖ Wheeled play activity

Partner organisations:

The Beechwood Estate Management Board
Merseyside Police
Wirral Council's Community Safety Team
Wirral Council's Streetscene Service (adopted footpaths and lighting)

Access:

The park has three entrance points one on St Oswald's Avenue one on Greenacres Close and one on Hillfoot Close. The wheeled play area is accessed at either end from Hillfoot Close and Greenacres Close. All entrances and pathways in the park are suitable for wheelchair users.

The park is in close proximity to the bus route along Fender Way.

The two nearest rail stations are Bidston and Upton both situated approximately 1.5 Km from the park.

History:

The park was constructed during 1991/92 during a period of investment and redevelopment in the estate. The former Department of Leisure Services and Tourism's Landscape Team designed Beechwood Park during 1992.

Resources:

- Visiting mobile maintenance team
- A range of horticultural machinery and tools
- Management team of the Parks & Countryside section
- Area Parks Manager and Assistant Area Parks Manager
- Parks Development Officer
- Wirral Council Community Safety Team
- Play area safety inspection team

Summary of the known problems

- Derelict children's play area
- Lack of organised community involvement
- Anti-social behaviour
- Lack of capital investment
- Low standard of maintenance
- Deteriorating infrastructure
- Local residents campaigned for the removal of BMX obstacles

Staff and their functions

A tractor visits the park to undertake mowing of the larger grass areas.

A mobile team undertakes pedestrian grass cutting and litter removal.

A playground safety inspection team visits the play area on a weekly basis (Mon. – Fri.) to inspect the safety of the play equipment and the condition of the site. Repair is carried out as required or the equipment isolated until repair can be made.

A forestry team visits the park in order to undertake seasonal tree pruning and felling work.

The Area Parks Manager and the Assistant Parks Manager are responsible for the management of the park. The area grounds maintenance depot is located at Ivy Farm, Arrowe Park, telephone number 0151 678 3555. The park is located in the 'Central' operational grounds maintenance area.

Skill gaps

The **Parks and Countryside Service Plan 2007/08** recognises that a skill gap currently exists within the division's operational staffing, in consequence three main aims have been identified in order to address the issue:

- 1) Review Parks Modern apprentice scheme
- 2) Produce a staff training action plan
- 3) Improve training for parks staff in biodiversity and conservation awareness

Stakeholders

- The parks management and maintenance staff

What standards are management trying to achieve?

The intention is for the park to achieve the standards as defined by the Green Flag Award Scheme

What are the current aims and objectives; level of success has been achieved?

This plan will seek to establish clear aims and objectives over the next five years.

The children's play area is to be upgraded during 2007/8.

4) Analysis and assessment

The current condition of the Park has been assessed using the following criteria as defined by the Civic Trust's Green Flag Award scheme:

- i. A welcoming park
- ii. Healthy, safe and secure
- iii. Clean and well maintained
- iv. Sustainability
- v. Conservation and heritage
- vi. Community involvement
- vii. Marketing
- viii. Management

i. A welcoming park

Due to the closure of the two lower entrances, access into the park is restricted to the two entrances at the top of the park these are situated 34m apart and an entrance from Hillfoot Close.



Greenacres Close entrance



St Oswald's Avenue entrance

- ❑ Graffiti is evident to entrance posts
- ❑ 'P' posts are in place at all entrances to restrict motorcycle access
- ❑ No signage is provided
- ❑ The former entrances have boulder stone features
- ❑ The 'P' posts are in a rusted condition at the St Oswald's Avenue and wheel play entrance
- ❑ The boundary walls to the wheeled play area are covered in graffiti
- ❑ The paintwork to the park fencing is flaking and of a poor appearance
- ❑ Obsolete timber board attached to the perimeter fencing to the left hand side of the Greenacres Close entrance
- ❑ The park does not provide any seating for visitors
- ❑ Lamp columns of poor appearance due to paintwork damage
- ❑ Graffiti on boulder features at entrances
- ❑ Former BMX area now obsolete and of concern to neighbours



Greenacres Close



Former entrance

ii. Healthy, safe and secure

The park is covered under the Fouling of Land Act 1996; this act makes it an offence not to clean up in a public area if a dog under your control does foul. Powers to enforce £50 fixed penalty notices on offenders were extended to include Wirral's Community Patrol Officers in August 2007, a media campaign 'Don't give a dog a bad name' will be launched to highlight the new powers.

Wirral Council's policy regarding dog fouling is to encourage responsibility in dog ownership and owners are expected to clean up after their pets, dedicated dog waste bins are not provided; dog waste can be deposited into the Borough's litterbins consequently becoming incorporated with general waste this does not then entail the problems associated with disposal of faeces only bins.

The Park is designated a 'canine faeces removal area'; however dog fouling was apparent throughout the park, signs are in place at entrance points indicating the park is a 'clean it up' area. Many dog walkers use the park's litterbins for the disposal of removed faeces.

Wirral Council operates a 24 hour Community Patrol force, established to provide a response to any concern notified to them regarding anti-social behaviour occurring within Council owned land. The Patrol can be contacted on telephone number 666 5265

The park is covered by Byelaws, made under Section 164 of the Public Health Act, 1875,

It is proposed to introduce a 'Site Safety Inspection Checklist' this is intended to identify defects within sites that present a safety problem for staff, users and adjacent residents. The checklist requires the appraisal of the following items:

1. Paths, steps, ramps
2. Walls, fences, gates
3. Buildings
4. Furniture – signs, seats, litterbins etc
5. Soft landscape – grass, planted areas, water features etc
6. Trees

Parks and Countryside are represented on the Joint Agency Group (Junior JAG) a forum consisting of Merseyside Police, Community Safety, and youth workers. Issues regarding security in parks are raised at the meeting with the intention of providing a multi agency approach to addressing problems.

The park is covered by Byelaws, made under Section 164 of the Public Health Act, 1875,

A **Security Audit** was undertaken and assessed the park under the following criteria:

- A. Sight-line visibility

- B. What evidence is apparent of anti-social behaviour or undesirable activity in the park?
- C. Motor vehicles
- D. The park at night
- E. Pathways, pedestrian routes
- F. Boundaries
- G. Buildings
- H. Children's play areas
- I. Is the park well cared for?

A. Sight-line visibility – The Park generally has good visibility along the footpath routes, planting had recently been heavily pruned Cornus, Alnus, rosa etc

B. What evidence is apparent of anti-social or undesirable activity in the park? – Heavy graffiti is apparent to the boundary walls of the wheeled play area and also on walling of the convenience store situated adjacent to the kick-about area (see photo below).



The children's play area has been subjected to considerable damage over the years resulting in removal of the equipment.

C. Motor vehicles – Wear was apparent to the grass banks of the wheel play area possibly indicating that mini-motorcycling is taking place. 'P' posts installed at the entrance points help prevent motorcycles from gaining access into the park.



D. The park at night – The Park has lighting columns along the main footpath route some of these appeared inoperable. Lighting columns line the footway through the wheel-play area.

Incident reports compiled by Wirral Council's Community Patrol are made available to the Parks and Countryside Service and are provided to the Area Parks Manager; no assessment is currently made of this available data in order to establish the types and frequencies of incidents occurring.

Anecdotally it is assumed that the majority of incidents associated with youths causing annoyance and anti social behaviour take place between 18:00 hrs and 21:00 hrs during Fridays and Saturdays predominately in the spring and summer months

E. Pathways, pedestrian routes – The surfacing of the footpath network is in a reasonably good condition.

F. Boundaries – The walls of the wheel-play area are covered in graffiti the area is over-looked by neighbouring properties.

Perimeter fencing to the park is in good condition.

As stated the two entrances situated at the lower end of the park have been closed to prevent access. A close board timber fence form the boundary to the neighbouring residential home on.



A section of the fence to the park's Bidston Green Drive boundary has been damaged due to vehicle collision. The overall appearance of the boundary fencing is poor due to the condition of the paintwork.

G. Buildings – There are no buildings located within the park. The One O'Clock Gun public house is situated next to the park's kick-about area. Glasses and bottles left outside can occasionally lead to broken glass within both the park and kick-about area. The small convenience store located close to the former entrance is protected with steel shutters and security fencing.

H. Children's play area



The children's play area is in poor condition; graffiti is apparent to both the surfacing and the play equipment. It is proposed to refurbish the facility during 2007/8. The children's play area is designated a 'dog free' zone.

I. Is the park well cared for?

The park is well used and the main park footpath is used as a connecting route between St Oswalds Avenue and New Acres Close. The main issue affecting the image is the standard of maintenance within the site. It is acknowledged that a well-maintained environment has a positive effect on the behaviour of users, lessening the potential of vandalism and other forms of abuse.

iii) Clean and well maintained

Horticultural maintenance is carried out in accordance with a frequency based work programme allied to a specification. The work programme or "job card" is issued to staff on a quarterly basis; these are used for identifying all maintenance operations on the site for the period. Currently these documents are not being fully utilised and are under review.

The maintenance regime is carried out to meet general standards set out in a Borough-wide grounds maintenance 'frequency based' specification. The specification sets out corporate standards of maintenance.

There are no site-based members of staff, however, a mobile team carry out operations within the park, supported by a swing fitter operative.

The Senior Park Development Officer has carried out an assessment of the current maintenance condition of the park under the following 13 headings. The facilities and features are simply categorised as good, fair or poor and can only represent findings at the time of writing.

Grounds maintenance site checklist

Park	Beechwood Community Park
Date	2006

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 / semi-mature trees		√	
Mature Trees	N/A	N/A	N/A
Woodland	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

Play Areas	Good	Fair	Poor
Maintenance			√

Litter	Good	Fair	Poor
Collection		√	
Bins		√	

Buildings	Good	Fair	Poor
Repair / Maintenance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Graffiti	N/A	N/A	N/A

Fencing	Good	Fair	Poor
Repair / Maintenance		√	

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

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

Signage	Good	Fair	Poor
Repair / Maintenance			√
Graffiti			√

Furniture / Memorials	Good	Fair	Poor
Repair / Maintenance		√	
Graffiti	√		

Lighting	Good	Fair	Poor
Maintenance			√

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

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

Generally Beechwood Park receives a fair standard of maintenance however incidents of vandalism and antisocial behaviour bring many items down to a poor quality rating.

iv) Sustainability

Pesticide usage at the park is confined to non-residual Herbicides.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (C.O.S.H.H.) assessment records of the chemical based products used within the park form part of the Departments Quality Assurance procedures. Pesticide records are retained at the district ground maintenance depot (Central Park). Chemical storage and usage within the park complies with the requirements defined within the current pesticide handling legislation.

Motorised mowing equipment used at the park is checked for emission levels.

Cuttings generated as a result of pruning work are chipped onsite and utilised on shrub beds for mulching.

v) Conservation and heritage

Parks Development Officer to report on nature conservation potential and biodiversity.

The park is relatively recent in terms of its construction the conservation and heritage value of the park is limited given this fact. The park's planted landscape represents the main conservation issue.

vi) Community involvement

Currently the park does not have the benefit of a recognised local park user group.

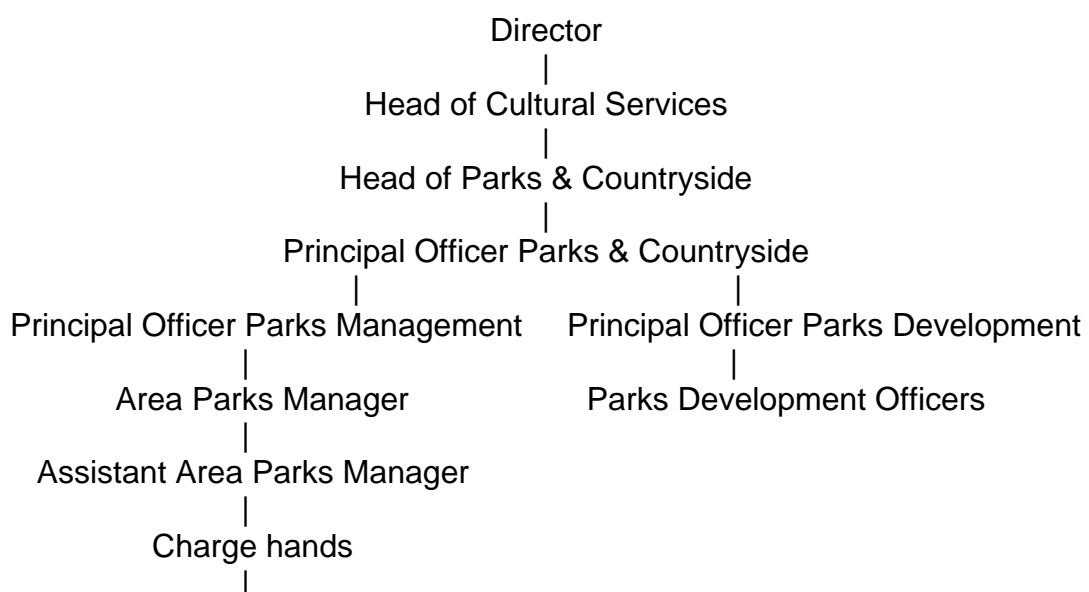
The park does not currently host to any community-organised events.

vii) Marketing

The Wirral Council's internet web site, www.wirral.gov.uk, has links to the Parks and Countryside Division's information. No information regarding Beechwood Park is currently available on the site. The site is not currently marketed.

viii) Management

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



5) Aims and objectives

Aim: To make the park more welcoming

Objective:

- Consult with community over the re-opening of the two lower entrances to improve access
- Remove graffiti from all surfaces
- Provide welcoming signage at entrance points
- Paint perimeter fencing
- Replace damaged panel of fencing
- Provide suitable appropriately designed seating and furniture
- To work with local residents groups on determining the future use of the old BMX area which is now a track for wheel play

Aim: To make the park healthy, safe and secure

Objective:

- To raise the profile of the issue of dog fouling within the park
- Establish a procedure of rapid response to deal with incidents of graffiti
- Undertake annual 'Site Safety Inspection'
- Report incidents of anti social behaviour to Community Patrol and Merseyside Police. Youth disorder of a more serious and ongoing nature should be brought to the attention of the Junior Jag representative
- Check the park's lighting and initiate any repair required through Streetscene
- Monitor incident reports in order to establish an adequate level of response to problems

Aim: To improve the overall maintenance standard in the park

Objectives:

- It is intended to bring the maintenance standards up to a fair standard within the period of this plan
- Achieve the standard as defined by the Green Flag award scheme if additional resources are made available

Aim: To improve the park's sustainability

Objective:

- Continue to reduce and minimise pesticide usage in the park
- Undertake an environmental audit of the park
- Review waste handling associated with the park
- Ensure all green waste is recycled for use in the park

Aim: To improve the parks conservation value

Objective:

- Parks Development Officer to recommend areas where wildlife habitats can be created or improved

Aim: To increase community involvement in the park

Objective:

- Promote the park for use for community organised events
- Assist and support community members to establish a park user group/friends group

Aim: To improve the marketing of the park

Objective:

- Improve the available information on the council's internet website
- Produce information leaflet highlighting the smaller park sites in Wirral

Aim: To manage the implementation and review of this plan

Objective:

- To create mechanisms to actively review both maintenance and improvements

6) Action plan

No	Action	When	Responsibility	Financial
1. To make the park more welcoming				
1.1	Remove closure panels from across the two lower entrance points and fit 'p' posts in order to restrict motorcycle access.		Parks Development Officer (PDO)	Additional funding required (AFR) £5k
1.2	Remove graffiti from all surfaces		Area Parks Manager (APM)	Within existing resources (WER)
1.3	Install welcome signs with park contact information at the 7 entrance points		PDO	AFR £10k
1.4	Re-paint perimeter fencing (including wheel-play area) total approx 455 Lin M and also the fencing to the play area at 59 Linear Metres		PDO	AFR £5k
1.5	Install new park seating and matching litter bins			AFR £10k
1.6	In conjunction with local residents establish the future use of the former BMX area			AFR £25K
2. To make the park healthy, safe and secure				
2.1	Leaflet dog walkers and provide bags to encourage responsibility of dog walkers		Partners	WER
2.2	Establish a procedure for the rapid response to graffiti, removing any incidences within 24hrs		APM	WER
2.3	Undertake annual 'Park Safety' inspection		APM	WER
2.4	Ensure all incidents of anti-social behaviour are reported to Merseyside Police and incidents of a more serious or ongoing nature are referred to The Junior Jag group via the designated representative		APM/Chargehand	WER
2.5	Check the operation of the parks lighting columns and initiate repair as required		APM/Streetscene	WER
2.6	Monitor incident reports to ensure adequate level of response		APM	WER

3. To improve the overall maintenance standard in the park

3.1	Bring maintenance standard to 'fair' by 2012		APM	AFR £2.5K p.a
3.2	Achieve the standard as defined by the Green Flag award scheme		APM	AFR £5K p.a
4. Improve the park's sustainability				
4.1				
4.2	Introduce native species planting to encourage wildlife Guelder Rose, Hawthorne, Rowan,		PDO	AFR £5K
4.3	Minimise pesticide usage in the park adopt cultural control methods where appropriate		APM	WER
4.4	Carryout an environmental audit of the park		Partner departments	WER
4.5	Review waste handling policy		APM	WER
4.6	Re-cycle all green waste		APM	WER
5. To improve park's conservation value				
5.1	Appraise the parks Bio-diversity and include recommendations into the management plan		PDO	AFR £1K p.a
6. To increase community involvement in the park				
6.1	Promote the park within the estate as a venue for community events		Partner Organisations	AF may be required
6.2	Support and work in partnership with user groups		Partner Organisations	"
7. To improve the marketing of the park				
7.1	Improve the parks internet website		Parks Officer	WER
7.2	Produce parks information leaflet		"	WER
8. To manage the implementation and review of this plan				
8.1	Create system to monitor and review progress of this plan		APM	WER

7) Monitoring and Review

There will be a precise and clear process for monitoring both maintenance and development.

The Principal Officer for Parks Management will incorporate progress on Management Plan actions into the 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 carryout random inspections of the site between programmed monitoring visits.

The Area Parks Manager will carryout a quarterly inspection of the site with the relevant gardeners to assess maintenance standards and check against the issued work programme and specification.

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

Appendix.1



Aerial photograph Beechwood Park