

Draft

Meols Recreation Ground

Management Plan and Security Audit

2006-2010



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1 Introduction

Wirral Council has produced this document in conjunction with the Friends of Hoylake and Meols Gardens and Open Spaces to provide a comprehensive framework for the future development of Meols Recreation Ground. The Management Plan is structured using the CAFE space (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) model and the site assessed using the 8 Green Flag criteria.

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 or email at neiliron@wirral.gov.uk.

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

Vision: *To be agreed with park stakeholders*

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.

3 Site Information

Name: Meols Recreation Ground

Address: School Lane, Meol, Wirral

Size: 0.84 Hectares

Primary classification: Local Park

Ward: Hoylake & Meols

Tenure:

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

Stakeholders:

- Grounds maintenance staff
- Friends of Hoylake and Meols Gardens and Open Spaces

Summary of Features:

- Children's Play Area
- Shrub / Tree planting
- 5 a side grass football pitch
- Seating

Access:

The main entrance to the park is located on School Lane with additional pedestrian access on Dovepoint Road and Greenwood Road.

History:

Resources:

There is currently no dedicated capital budget for improvements to the park. Grounds maintenance is funded from the annual maintenance revenue budget.

The Area Parks Manager has overall responsibility for the park's management. Maintenance of the park is carried out by a mobile team who are responsible for litter picking and amenity grass and hedge cutting.

A gardener using a tractor mounted gang mower carries out mowing of the larger grass areas.

The children's play area is maintained daily (Monday – Friday) by a dedicated play area safety inspection team accredited by the Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA).

4 Analysis and Assessment

The decline in investment in parks over previous decades has resulted in some deterioration to the fabric of the site however new perimeter railings were erected approximately 6 years ago to the School Lane boundary.

The built environment and soft landscape is still in need of improvement and requires more investment.

Horticultural maintenance is variable.

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



A mixture of boundary treatment surrounds the park. The School Lane fence was replaced approximately 6 years ago using attractive metal railings, the remainder is post and rail coupled with weldmesh and natural privet hedging. The entrance on Dovepoint Road is suitable for wheel chair users, however, to the side of the tarmac the ground is badly eroded and is a fall hazard. The main access on School Lane is not hard surfaced and is eroded; the creation of a tarmac footpath to link with the play area at this point should be a priority. The access points on Greenwood Road are no more than gaps in the hedging and consideration should be given to reducing and/or improving this situation.

There is currently no signage indicating site name or related information to any entrance and this should be considered.

There is no direction signage to the park from the main roads surrounding the park.

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 and up to date Health and Safety Policy.

Signage requesting dog owners to clean up after their pets are not visible at entrances to the site and during my visits I found dog fouling to be excessive. There are 2 No bins situated in the children's play area and 1 No in the park, however, although these are being maintained, the site itself was littered with bottles, cans, plastic bags and branch debris.

There is no public convenience building situated on the site.

The children's play area is fenced and gated providing a dog free area, however, dog ban signage is no longer visible. Consideration should also be given to fitting self-closing type gates to this area. The play area fencing requires replacement of some missing rails.

It is proposed to introduce an Annual Site Safety Inspection Checklist. It should 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:

Sight lines – The park is well overlooked by adjacent housing, although the privet hedge boundary on Greenwood and Dovepoint Roads does offer some privacy. There are no obstructions to sight-lines across the site.

Anti-social behaviour – Dog fouling was evident on the field and there was no signage to advise the public. The children's play area and field was littered with beer cans and other

debris including glass. There was graffiti to the play equipment and seating within the play area.

Motor vehicles – There is no evidence of vehicles on the site.

The park at night – Officers from the Parks and Open Spaces section attend the Police youth tasking and coordinating group meetings. Meols Recreation Ground is not currently identified as a 'hot spot'.

Footpaths – Only a short section from Dovepoint Road is provided on site.

Boundaries – The park is bounded in the main by 1.2m fencing of either, railing, post and rail with weldmesh or natural hedging. Consideration should be given to improving the sight line at entrances between the natural hedging.

Buildings – None on site.

Who was on site – 2No families in the play area.

Is the park well cared for – The park is urban and mainly laid out to grass with a children's play area to the north-west boundary. There is ornamental planting within the children's play area. There are three groupings of mature trees across the site. A lack of attention to litter picking and painting of equipment and furniture, give a feeling of neglect to the site.

iii) Clean and well maintained



There are no site- based members of maintenance staff. Grounds maintenance is carried out via a mobile team supported by a gardener who performs mowing to the larger grass areas and a play area inspection team inspects the children's play area on a weekly basis (Mon.- Fri.).

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. It is apparent that 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	√
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		√	
Young staked trees	N/a	N/a	N/a
Mature Trees		√	
Woodland	N/a	N/a	N/a

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			√

Litter	Good	Fair	Poor
Collection			√
Bins		√	

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

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:

Grass – Amenity grass areas appeared to have not been cut for some months. Erosion to the 5 a side football pitch should be remedied as a priority.

Planting – Mature willow trees to the boundary with the Railway Inn public house require crown raising to assist grounds maintenance.

Hard surfacing - Construction of a tarmac footpath from School Lane to the children's play area should be a priority.

Play Areas – Replacing the woodchip safety surfacing under the combination unit with rubber surfacing would be beneficial. Painting of equipment and furniture is overdue. Fencing requires repair. Self-closing gates would be desirable. 5 a side goalposts require urgent attention to the paintwork.

Litter – One litterbin to the park area and two to the children's play area should be sufficient. Dog fouling was evident particularly to the grass areas. The bins were being maintained but litter over the site was left. Litter was also evident in all shrub beds and tree areas.

Buildings / Walls – A low sandstone wall to the Greenwood Road boundary is in good condition. No buildings are within the park.

Fencing – Railings are relatively new. Post and rail fencing to the children’s play area is in need of some minor repairs.

Drainage – No major problems but eroded areas holding water should be re-graded and re-seeded as a priority.

Furniture / Memorials – Benches within the children’s play area require refurbishment.

Lighting – There is no security lighting to the park but it is well overlooked and illuminated by surrounding housing and street lighting.

Water features – *Not applicable.*

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).

Principal Officer Parks Management/LF to analyse findings and report

iv) Sustainability



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

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations have been incorporated into the service’s Quality Assurance procedures.

The park is well served by public transport infrastructure.

An environmental audit should be carried out for the site.

v) Conservation and Heritage

Bio-diversity report to follow

A bio-diversity action plan to increase the parks ecological interest and variety should be produced.

Much of the built environment in the park is relatively recent. The perimeter railings were constructed approximately 6 years ago drawing on the original design features. The shrub bed within the children's play area should be the subject of a rolling programme of gapping up and replanting.

Consideration should be given to providing suitable cycle racks.



vi) Community involvement.

Meols Recreation Ground has an active Friends group who liaise regularly with officers from Wirral Council. They organise events and apply for grants to raise funds for improvements to the site.

Wirral Council staff should continue to encourage positive use of the park by stakeholders and the general public.

Provision and use of information boards should be considered to better links with the site users.

vii) Marketing.

Wirral Council has a web site that has links to the Parks and Countryside information.

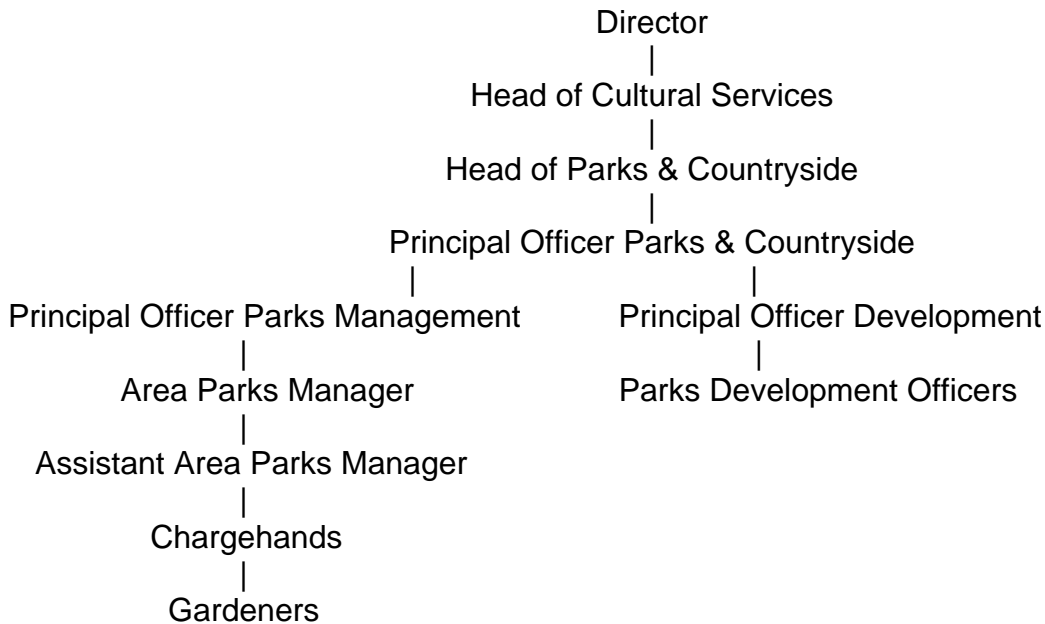
A site name and information board at the main entrance to the park providing current information on local events with contact numbers should be considered or linked with the Meols Lower Green site opposite.

Market research could be undertaken to give a better understanding of the site users and their views and the findings incorporated into this plan.

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 park and to make it more welcoming.

Objectives:

1. Consider providing direction signage from the main roads.
2. Consider provision of a good quality site name board to the park indicating site name, managing organisation and contact numbers.
3. Re-grade / re-seed edge of footway at Dovepoint Road entrance.

4. Improve / reduce access points through hedge on Greenwood Road.
5. Construct a suitable footpath from School Lane to children's play area.

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

Objectives;

1. Erect / paint dog 'clean it up' signage to entrances and 'dog ban' to the children's play area.
2. Standardise type of waste bins to site.
3. Ensure any graffiti is removed immediately i.e. play equipment / seating.
4. Replace missing rails to fence in the children's play area.
5. Improve standard of litter picking to include all the site not just bins.
6. Begin Annual Site Safety Inspection.
7. Consider self-closing gates to children's play area
8. Consider replacing wood chippings with rubber safety surfacing in the children's play area.

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

Objectives;

1. Produce winter work programmes to reflect this document / action plan.
2. Improve frequency / standard of amenity grass cutting.
3. Improve surface management of 5 a side football pitch.
4. Carry out remedial tree pruning to the Railway Inn boundary.

5. Improve maintenance / re-plant ornamental grass beds.
6. Spot treat weed / brush footpaths regularly.
7. Paint children's play equipment, benches and 5 a side goal posts annually.

Aim: To improve sustainable work practices within the park.

Objectives;

1. Produce an Environmental Audit for the park.

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

Objectives;

1. Encourage public transport and cycle access to park.
2. Begin re-planting / gapping up of shrub bed to the children's play area.

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

Objectives;

1. Continue to capacity build with stakeholders.
2. Consider provision of an information board to improve links with park users (possibly linked with Meols Lower Green).

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

Objectives;

1. Improve the Wirral Council website.
2. Undertake a market research study of park users.

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

Objectives;

1. To gain funding to make as many quality improvements to the park as possible.
2. To create mechanisms to actively review both maintenance and improvements.
3. Maintain and review a management plan.

6 Action Plan

Actions	Lead Officer	Target date	Funding source
Consider providing direction signage from main roads	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Consider providing new site name and information board to main entrance	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Renovate edge of footpath from Dovepoint Road	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Improve / reduce access from Greenwood Road to one entrance	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Construct a tarmac footpath from School Lane to the CPA	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Re-erect / repaint dog signage to entrances and CPA	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Begin Annual Site Safety Inspection	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Remove all graffiti as it occurs	Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	From existing resources
Improve standard of litter picking to whole site	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Standardise type of waste bins	Area Parks Manager	2007	From existing resources
Replace missing fence rails to CPA	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Consider self-closing gates to CPA	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Replace woodchip with rubber safety surface in CPA	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Produce annual winter work programme for site	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Improve standard of amenity grass cutting	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Improve surface	Area Parks	2006	From existing

management of 5 a side pitch	Manager		resources
Prune willows to Railway Inn boundary	Area Parks Manager	2006 / 2007	From existing resources
Gap up ornamental shrub beds in CPA	Area Parks Manager	2006 / 2007	From existing resources
Brush / weed kill Footpaths to frequency	Area Parks Manager	2006 - 2011	From existing resources
Paint CPA equipment, benches and goalposts annually	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Produce an Environmental Audit	Environmental Auditor	2006	From existing resources
Encourage public transport / cycle access to park	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Consider providing information board (or link with Meols Lower Green)	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources / Friends
Support and work in partnership with users / stakeholders	Area Parks Manager / Senior Parks Development Officer	Ongoing	From existing resources
Improve Parks website	Head of Parks	2006	From existing resources
Undertake market research study		2006-2011	From existing resources
Gain external funding		2006- 2011	Funding to be sourced / Friends
Create system to monitor grounds maintenance / development	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Maintain / review management plan	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	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.

Chargehands 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 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 Appendix

