

Draft

Victoria Gardens

Management Plan and Security Audit

January 2006



Contents

1 Introduction and mission statement

2 The wider policy context

3 Site information

4 Analysis and assessment

5 Aims and objectives

6 Action plan

7 Monitoring and Review

8 Appendix

1 Introduction and Vision

This document has been produced by Wirral Council to provide a comprehensive five year framework for the development of Victoria Gardens. The Management Plan is structured using the CAGE space (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) model and the site assessed using the 8 Green Flag award 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.

Vision: *To be agreed with 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 improvement of Victoria Gardens is included in the plan as a medium term project and is supported by the Council's capital programme.

2 Site Information

Name: Victoria Gardens

Address: Victoria Drive, West Kirby, Wirral

Primary classification: Local Park

Ward: Hoylake & Meols

Size: 0.36 Hectares

Tenure:

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

Stakeholders:

- Grounds maintenance staff
- West Kirby Promenade Bowlers

Summary of Features:

- Bowling green
- Clubroom and kitchen
- Machinery shed
- Public toilets
- Ornamental planting
- Victorian shelters
- Feature boundary wall with sandstone sphere detail
- Seating

Access:

The main entrance to the gardens is located on Victoria Drive. There is a pedestrian access from the promenade and a vehicular access via a removable fence panel to the toilet block when required.

History:

In 1913 Council minutes indicate that a small parcel of land was purchased which was laid out in 1914. In 1920 it was first called Victoria Gardens and during that decade the Victoria Bowling Club was formed. During the 1930's the site was used for putting and bowls and occasional open- air band concerts.

Resources:

There is currently no dedicated capital budget for improvements to the park. However, the Wirral Council Special initiatives team have been successful in acquiring approximately 15K from the authorities capital programme for use in match funding bids as part of the Hoylake and West Kirby regeneration strategy.

Grounds maintenance is funded from the annual maintenance revenue budget. The Area Parks Manager has overall responsibility for grounds maintenance. Staff that are based at Ashton Park carries this out.

3 Analysis and Assessment

The decline in investment in parks over previous decades has resulted in some deterioration to the fabric of Victoria Gardens.

The built environment and soft landscape is 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



There are three access points into the gardens with the main entrance being on Victoria Drive. Mobility impaired access is provided at this entrance, however, at the base of the slope is the remains of a shed base that has a raised edge and should be removed. A removable timber panel for vehicular access is also on Victoria Drive but this is unattractive and a more suitable solution should be sought. The third access point is on the promenade.

Feature brick and sandstone walling with spherical copings bound the gardens on two sides. This incorporates recessed seating to the exterior. The copings are currently smothered with ivy and this requires careful removal. Some of the timber slatted seating to the recesses requires repair. The corner of the wall at the junction with the promenade is badly cracked and should be looked at by a structural engineer.

There is currently no signage indicating site name or related information and this should be sourced as a priority.

The promenade entrance is closed with storm boards during the winter to prevent the sea entering the site. Unfortunately no signage was in place to direct users to an alternative entrance. There is a raised patio area at this entrance that could be used as a picnic area by the addition of picnic tables. This could be an excellent link to the promenade.

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 is not erected or marked at entrances to the site and during my visits I found dog fouling to be excessive.

The siting and type of waste bins requires improving as these are also used for dog waste.

The public convenience building is situated in the south- east corner of the site and is open when the bowlers are on site. A midden at this location is obstructing access to this building and is unsightly.

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 gardens are well overlooked by adjacent Victorian terraced housing, however, the central elliptical shrub beds requires reducing in height by 60% to allow visibility to the Victorian shelter seating.

Anti-social behaviour – Alcohol containers were evident to the seated areas within the Victorian shelters. Roof tiles have been removed and broken to the shelter roofs. Graffiti is evident to walls, seating and timberwork. Dog fouling was excessive and there was no signage to negate same.

Motor vehicles – The feather board barrier to allow vehicular access to the midden area requires improvement or removal and permanent closure.

The park at night – Officers from the Parks and Open Spaces section attend the Police youth tasking and coordinating group meetings. Victoria Gardens is not currently identified as

a 'hot spot', however, there is clear evidence of anti-social behaviour. The gardens are not gated.

Footpaths – Generally flagstone surfaced throughout the site with some up stands that may cause trip hazards.

Boundaries – The gardens are bounded in the main by a rendered brick and sandstone wall that requires Ivy removal and a structural engineer to assess the vertical crack to the junction with the promenade. Recessed seating to the exterior is the responsibility of the Technical Services Department. These do not pose a security problem.

Buildings – Anti vandal paint should be applied to vulnerable buildings at gutter height. There is no security lighting. The bowls pavilion / kitchen is protected by roller shutters. The Victorian shelters require re-roofing with an anti-vandal material that is aesthetically pleasing and in keeping with the gardens.

Play areas – There is not one on site.

Who was on site – Two dog walkers and a youth to one of the shelters.

Is the park well cared for? – The gardens are urban and generally formal. They are currently in need of improvement both to the standard of maintenance and to the physical environment.

iii) Clean and well maintained



There are no site- based members of maintenance staff. Staff, based at nearby Ashton Park, carries out grounds maintenance.

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; these are 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			√
Playing Fields	N/a	N/a	N/a
Ornamental			√
General			√
Rough	N/a	N/a	N/a
Wild Flower Area	N/a	N/a	N/a

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

Walling	Good	Fair	Poor
Maintenance		√	

Graffiti			√
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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			

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 are not being cut to frequency and were excessively long and littered at the time of the assessment. The bowling green required switching, mowing and edging. The sighting boards require painting and one replacing. The gullies require horticultural sand.

Planting – The elliptical shrub bed in the amenity grass area requires remedial pruning and gapping up. Cordyline plants throughout the gardens need dead leaves removing and collecting for composting at Ashton Park. Summer bedding was not removed and these beds looked neglected. Consideration should be given to their removal and possible planting with shrubs.

Hard surfacing - The condition of the footpath surfacing is generally good although there are some uneven flagstones that could cause a trip hazard.

Play Areas – There is no children’s play area.

Litter – Bin types require standardising and some repositioning for full effectiveness.

Buildings / Walls – Maintenance of the buildings within the park is carried out via the Departments day to day repair system. The Victorian shelters require re-roofing. The boundary wall requires the careful removal of Ivy. Cracking to internal walls should be

pointed and painted with high quality masonry paint. As previously mentioned the exterior wall requires assessment by a structural engineer.

Fencing – Generally to the Victoria Drive boundary and constructed with feather board. This is in a good state of repair, excepting a couple of boards.

Drainage – No problems as the soil profile is sand based.

Furniture / Memorials – Approximately 17No benches on site of which 2No need removal as they are beyond repair. Standardisation of design would be more attractive and should begin.

Lighting – There is no security lighting to the gardens but they are well overlooked and illuminated by surrounding housing and street lighting.

Water features – None on site.

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 to analyse findings and report

iv) Sustainability



Wirral Council has an Environmental Policy that the Parks and Countryside section adhere to.

Water and energy consumption in the park is monitored and where necessary modification is made to minimise wastage, in line with the authorities Environmental Policy.

The equipment storeroom that adjoins the offices is not used to store chemicals. No fuel is stored at this location. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations are incorporated into the sections Quality Assurance procedures.

Annual bedding is to be removed from the site and replaced by permanent planting.

The gardens are 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



The historic perimeter brick and sandstone wall requires Ivy removal at various locations to the boundary with Victoria Drive and the Promenade. A structural engineer should assess the large vertical crack to the render at this junction. The flagged copings to 3No pillars at the vehicular access to the midden require replacement. The re-roofing of the feature Victorian shelters should be a priority.

vi) Community involvement.

Victoria Gardens currently has no active Friends group, however, during my visits to the site numerous residents spoke to myself and showed interest the gardens and the possibility of forming a group.

Wirral Council staff should continue to encourage positive use of the gardens 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.

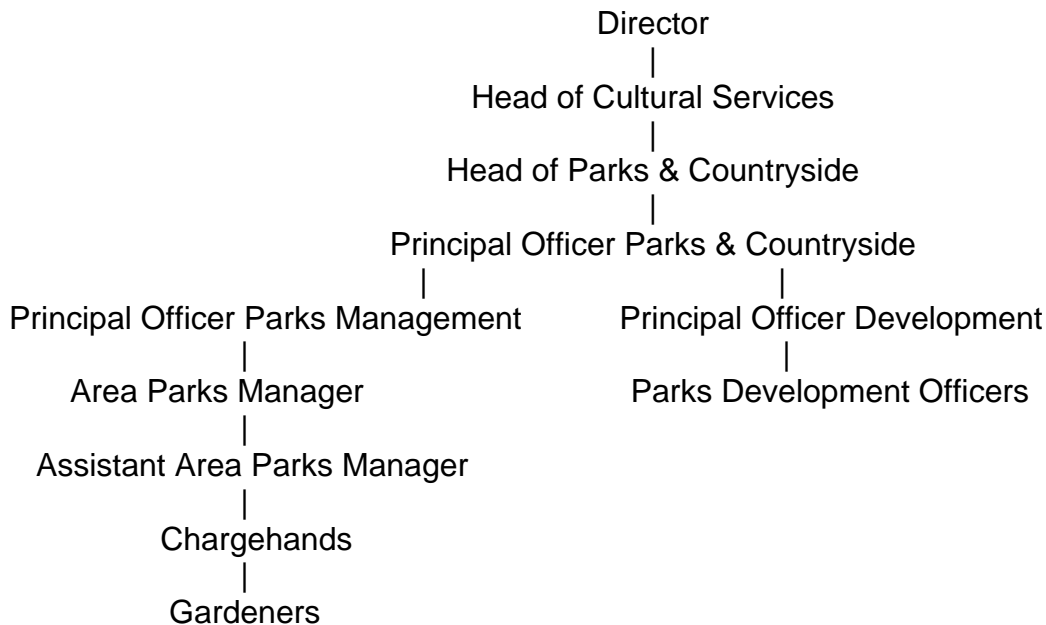
A site name and information board at the main entrance to the park providing current information on local events with contact numbers should be considered.

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 gardens and to make it more welcoming.

Objectives:

1. Consider providing direction signage from the main roads.
2. Provide a good quality site name board to the park indicating site name, managing organisation and contact numbers.
3. Improve remaining pedestrian / vehicular entrances into park with improved planting / pruning / picnic tables and signage.

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.
2. Re-position and standardise type of waste bins to entrances.
3. Maintain / improve toilet facilities in the park.
4. Apply anti vandal paint to building roof- lines as appropriate.
5. Repair damaged perimeter walling and remove Ivy.
6. Remove midden and use recycling bays at Ashton Park.
7. Repair / remove vandalised seating as it occurs and standardise type of replacements.
8. Ensure any graffiti is removed immediately.
9. Increase litter-picking frequency.
10. 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 park.

Objectives;

1. Improve the quality and frequency of grass / bowling green maintenance throughout the gardens.
2. Improve quality and maintenance of shrub planting and specimen trees.
3. Begin a rolling programme of footpath inspection / re-surfacing.

4. Produce winter work programmes to reflect this document / action plan.
5. Repair damaged feather board fencing as required.

Aim: To improve sustainable work practices within the park.

Objectives;

1. Improve current recycling procedures for site.
2. Replace annual bedding with shrub planting.
3. 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. Repair and enhance the Victorian shelters with new roofing that is in vogue with the surroundings.
2. Encourage public transport and cycle access to park.
3. Replace missing copings to vehicular entrance pillars.
4. Maintain feature perimeter walling.

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

Objectives;

1. Continue to capacity build with stakeholders.
2. To work in partnership with stakeholders to apply for and achieve Green Flag status.

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. Provide site signage and a community notice board to extend links.
3. 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
Provide direction signage from main roads	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Provide new site name and information board to main entrance	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Provide signage and improve aesthetics to remaining entrances	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Begin Annual Site Safety Inspection	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Maintain / improve	Area Parks	2006	From existing

toilet facilities	Manager		resources
Standardise and re-position waste bins	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Re-erect / repaint dog signage to entrances	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Remove all graffiti as it occurs	Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	From existing resources
Repair damaged perimeter and internal walling and paint as appropriate	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Apply anti vandal paint to building roof-lines	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Remove Ivy from feature walling	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Instigate repairs to damaged fencing as it occurs	Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	From existing resources
Remove midden and use recycling bays at Ashton Park	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Repair vandalised seating as it occurs	Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	From existing resources / Donations
Increase litter-picking frequency	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Improve grass / bowling green maintenance standards	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Improve shrub pruning and maintenance of trees	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Produce annual winter work programmes for site to include replanting	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Begin rolling programme of footpath inspection	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Repair damaged fencing as it occurs	Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	From existing resources
Improve current recycling practices	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Replace annual bedding with shrub	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources

planting			
Produce an Environmental Audit	Environmental Auditor	2006	From existing resources
Renovate Victorian shelters	Senior Parks Development Officer	2006	From capital programme / External funding
Replace copings to vehicular entrance pillars	Area Parks Manager	2006	From existing resources
Maintain feature perimeter walling	Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	From existing resources
Encourage public transport / cycle access to park	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Support and work in partnership with users / stakeholders	Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	From existing resources
Apply for Green Flag Award	Senior Area Ranger	2011	From existing resources
Improve Parks website	Head of Parks	2006	From existing resources
Undertake market research study		2006-2011	From existing resources
To gain external funding		2006- 2011	Funding to be sourced
Create system to monitor grounds maintenance / development	Area Parks Manager	2006-2011	From existing resources
Maintain / review management plan	Senior Parks Development Officer	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

1. Site Plans