

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21ST NOVEMBER 2012

SUBJECT:	PARKS MODERNISATION PROGRESS REPORT
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	INTERIM DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES
KEY DECISION	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a progress update on the Parks Modernisation Project.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 The Parks & Countryside Service Modernisation Project is a complex multidisciplinary project with the purpose of establishing a modern, cost effective and efficient service comparable to that offered by the private sector by Spring 2013.

2.2 An Outline Delivery Plan was endorsed by Cabinet on 24 November 2011 (reference Minute 205) and this was further amended by Cabinet on 12 April 2012 (reference Minutes 408 & 409) and has been set out under four key workstreams all reporting to a Project Board:

- Policy, Processes and Performance
- Human Resources
- Assets
- Communication and Engagement

2.3 In addition there was an urgent short-term project to integrate the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service into the Council for 1 February 2012 on the expiry of the existing external contract.

2.4 This report provides a progress update on the modernisation of the service and achievement of the Delivery Plan endorsed by Cabinet.

3.0 PARKS MODERNISATION PROJECT PROGRESS UPDATE

3.1 Highways Integration Project

Following the decision by Cabinet not to award an external contract for the delivery of Parks & Countryside Service the Highways Grounds Maintenance Service previously

delivered by Continental Landscapes Limited has been integrated into the Council following the expiry of the existing contract on 31 January 2012. Please see an update of the project:

- Human Resources – staff have been successful TUPE transferred from Continental Landscapes Limited to become employees in Council employment. These employees have all been through the usual training and induction processes and are working a flexible ‘annualised hours’ approach as part of their Council Terms and Conditions of employment. All staff have had their KIE Issue and team brief sessions. A fitter has been appointed to ensure the new machinery is kept working at optimum capacity.
- Depot Arrangements – the appropriate interim depot arrangements at Reeds Lane Depot in Moreton are in place to efficiently and effectively deliver the service. The relocation of the Highway Depot at Reeds Lane, where the premises are presently leased, to the Council’s own land at Leasowe is being assessed under the Parks & Countryside Service depot review.
- Plant and Equipment – all the necessary plant and equipment is in place to efficiently and effectively deliver the highways landscape maintenance service. This has included £54,500 spent on purchasing second-hand equipment from Continental Landscapes Limited as reported to Cabinet on 15 March 2012 under Contract Procedure Rule 21 ‘Exceptions to Procurement Procedure’.
- The long term vehicle procurement is being assessed at the present time with guidance from the Integrated Transport Section in the Children and Young People’s Department and Corporate Finance staff.
- A report is going to Cabinet about the procurement of a Highways Tree Contract whilst the expertise for the management of this is developed in the Parks and Countryside Service. An Arboricultural Officer post to lead the development of the management of trees across all the service is part of the draft Parks and Countryside structure under review.

3.2 Policy Processes and Performance Workstream

- 3.2.1 A Project Initiation Document (PID) for this workstream and a programme Risk Register has been produced and will be updated on a regular basis. The ‘Create Excellent Business Processes’ strand is progressing and business analysis has been undertaken to identify and establish current business processes. This work has had the corporate staff resource removed because of urgent work needed on a corporate finance project. This has led to the concentration on the delivery of good standards throughout the season which has been particularly challenging because of the weather, being the wettest summer for 100 years.

The review of Fees and Charges model for grounds maintenance and the review of current grounds maintenance work schedules are complete.

Initial work to look at a Wirral standard and service wide KPIs has been put on hold whilst the present financial freeze and budget considerations are assessed and will be a key part of the Parks and Countryside 10 Year Strategy - Appendix 1.

- 3.2.2 ICT processes for the processing of playground and tree inspections have been examined and the assessment of a similar mobile working to that of the highways staff for CRM and inspection work are being progressed with recommendations to be presented to the Parks Project Board. An outline Business Case for Burial Administration system has been produced and the requirements specification and an outline business case for a Playground mobile software system.
- 3.2.3 The draft plan for the 10 year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework has been drafted to the new agreed timeframe with the final plan to be agreed in December 2013. This will be taken to the Parks Friends Steering Group in November 2012 and the Parks Modernisation Board in December 2012. See Appendix 1.
- 3.2.4 Staff are managing the current budgets to assess performance and value for money. The realignment of the budgets to the new modernised service will await the confirmation of new financial situation and 2013 budget. In year savings of £300,000 have already been made with another £150,000 to be detailed. Additionally significant budget saving options have been put forward to contribute to the £100 million that Wirral Council have to make over the next three years.
- 3.2.5 A workshop for staff and the Friends steering group is being arranged to agree the priorities for the Key Performance Indicators going forward including those based on the national Green Flag Criteria. These will be scaled to fit the new financial situation with a percentage of the Green Flag Standard contributing to the new Wirral Standard. All previous plans are being reviewed to ensure that they are fit for purpose under the new financial circumstances and to ensure benefits realisation.
- 3.2.6 The staff have worked hard and well over the summer to maintain and improve the performance of the new service and ensure it is value for money. They have achieved the best quality standards ever achieved in the Wirral as can be seen by the Service's Green Flag and other quality awards.
- 3.2.7 This year has been the most successful year yet with 16 of the borough's open spaces having received a national quality award and 14 parks have received the Green Flag Award. The awards are a sign to visitors that the park is well-maintained, well-managed and has appropriate facilities for the local community.
- 3.2.8 Uniquely Wirral has a national first - Wirral's Hilbre Island is the only island in the country to hold a Green Flag.
- 3.2.9 These Green Flag awards could not have been achieved without the partnership working with friends groups, volunteers and other community organisations assisting and supporting their local parks teams to achieve the required standards.
- 3.2.10 The Parks and Countryside Service actively support all friends and voluntary groups who play a key and active role and are also a vital link with the local community. They make an invaluable contribution to park life through local events and activities, task days, and making contributions to management plans and other long term projects for their local parks. This year there have been 3 new Friends groups making a total of 46

Friends of Parks Groups on the Wirral. They are making an outstanding contribution to the decision making processes and the standards of parks and open spaces throughout the service.

This year Wirral's Green Flag Parks are:

1. Ashton Park
2. Wirral Country Park
3. Thornton Hough Village Green
4. Birkenhead Park
5. Coronation Gardens
6. Brotherton Park and Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve
7. Eastham Country Park
8. Royden Park
9. Hilbre Island Local Nature Reserve
10. Vale Park
11. The Arno
12. Bidston Hill
13. North Wirral Coastal Park
14. Meols Park

Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm has earned a Green Flag Community Award, which recognises high quality green spaces that are managed by voluntary and community groups

Birkenhead Park has retained its Green Heritage status in addition to its Green Flag. The Green Heritage accreditation is in recognition of the park achieving the required standard in the management and interpretation of this site with national historic importance.

This year even more Wirral residents and visitors to the borough have access to well-managed, high-quality green spaces which have far reaching benefits including health, both physical and mental health, improved local environment and by making the borough more attractive to investors. The service plays a key role in tourism and economic development, through increased visitor spend.

Recent visitor surveys have highlighted the value placed on coast, countryside and open space across the borough. Wirral Country Park and Birkenhead Park alone attract over half a million visitors a year.

In order to achieve Green Flag status, all parks are assessed based on eight key criteria:-

- Health, safety and security
- Maintenance of equipment, buildings and landscape
- Litter, cleanliness and vandalism
- Environmental sustainability
- Conservation of heritage and nature
- Community involvement
- Marketing strategy
- Overall management

Nationally in 2012, 1,424 parks and green spaces will fly either the Green Flag or Community Award, a sign that the value of green space is widely acknowledged as vital to our communities.

3.2.11 Birkenhead Park Achievement. For more details please see Appendix 3.

3.2.12 This is the over view of landscape work carried out in the Parks and Countryside Service over the last 12/18 months:

- Surfacing improvement works carried out at over 15 Parks and Countryside sites making the sites more accessible for a greater range of people and reducing users' trips and falls.
- New Outdoor Fitness Equipment installed in Birkenhead Park and Central Park which has exceeded expectations in terms of use and enjoyment.
- Football Pitch improvements and drainage works done at Lingham Park, Ridgewood Park and Thornton Hough. This will make the football pitches useable for a longer period over the winter and in the extraordinary wet weather we have this year.
- General drainage Improvements at Birkenhead Park.
- Play Area Improvements at – Birkenhead Park, Central Park, Ilchester Park, The Grange, Grove Park, Meols Park, Prenton Dell, Ridgewood Park & Vale Park and Eastham Skate Park.
- Tennis Court improvement works at Ashton Park, Higher Bebington Park, Stanley Park, Saughall Grange and Whitfield Common.
- General Improvements - through replacement and new furniture at a number of sites.
- Currently – Former Liscard Hall site redevelopment, with new seating, planting and a performance/meeting area with a sculpture “playful spirit” of two children giving piggy backs which will be joined by a seated sculpture in 2013.

3.2.13 Wirral bereavement services have been awarded a silver award for the second year running under the Charter for the Bereaved. The Charter for the Bereaved has been designed and introduced by the Institute for Cemetery and Crematorium Managers (ICCM) to set standards of service for the cremation and burial industry. To become a member of the Charter a burial/cremation authority must show that it is able to satisfy basic charter rights connected with funerals. It also contains objectives and targets that help authorities to set priorities for future development and improvements whilst providing a national results table which can be a useful tool in benchmarking against other authorities.

3.3 Human Resources Workstream

3.3.1 A revised draft management and operational structure for the service is being prepared for consultation with trade unions and staff in line with the new financial situation and the council's senior management restructure. It is anticipated this new structure will be in place for the 2013/14 financial year.

3.3.2 Regular meetings have been held with Trade Union representatives on the introduction of a range of new working practices and hours. Following discussions with the Trade Union representatives agreement has been reached, and a 12 month pilot

started in May 2012 with a change in working practices for all gardeners, supervisor gardeners and Deputy Area Managers (except the staff who work in the cemeteries as their work is evenly distributed throughout the year).

3.3.3 The key points are:

- the introduction of annualised hours has increased the hours worked for 8 months in the summer to 40 and decreased hours worked for four months in the winter to 27 which improves efficiency and still maintains the 36 average hours per week. The lengthening of the hours worked at the services busiest time of the year has ensured that the standard of the parks has increased. The pilot scheme has the following advantages:
- reduction in time taken for lunch breaks to half an hour,
- Friday afternoon working to prepare parks and other areas for increase in use over weekends
- flexible working across areas
- agreement to work in rain/wet conditions to minimise any loss of productivity due to weather which has been especially useful this summer.

3.3.4 There has been a formal consultation with all staff before the pilot started in early May 2012 and a review to listen to staff feedback. The playground inspectors have been taken out of the annualised hour's pilot following the assessment that the inspections of play areas could not be carried out on the 27 hours a week winter work hours. There will be a further review of all staff in April 2013 to agree how the pilot is taken forward. Regular staff meetings are being carried out to ensure that everyone can have a chance to give their views and contribute to the service going forward.

3.3.5 All Key Issue Exchanges have been completed with staff and comprehensive training and development has been carried out for the new service. One outstanding training session is still to be arranged which is key to the parks modernisation programme. This has been awaiting the appointment of the new delivery organisation for the National Green Flag Award. The tender has been awarded to Keep Britain Tidy October 2012 and a programme of development for staff and Friends will be delivered through Keep Britain Tidy and Greenspace before April 2013. This will be key to the new Wirral Standard that will be developed through the Green and Open Space Strategy.

3.4 Assets Workstream

3.4.1 A review has been completed of existing plant and equipment and a programme of replacement drawn up. Much of the plant and equipment is out of date and in poor condition. Urgent replacement is required for equipment to ensure compliance with requirements for Hand, Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS). Other equipment is now requiring high levels of maintenance and is beyond economic repair. In addition to the Highways plant and equipment detailed in 3.1 above the total estimated value of replacement is in the region of £2.5m. An initial £150,000 has been spent on essential equipment to date and the final £2.3m is awaiting agreement following the present financial freeze whilst the specification and tender is being prepared.

3.4.2 A separate assessment has been undertaken of vehicle requirements. The financial arrangements for their procurement are being reviewed by the Integrated Transport Section and Corporate Finance. The Highways vehicles are being considered in the first phase to eliminate the costly hiring of vehicles the second phase will assess the Parks and Countryside vehicles which have been flagged up by transport to be replaced because of their age and condition.

3.4.3 The buildings and depot review has two stages as below:

STAGE 1

All 117 buildings that provide an operational base from which the service is delivered have been jointly inspected and reviewed by Asset Management and Parks staff. Standard reports have been prepared for each including floor plans, site plans, photographs and comments on condition and redevelopment potential.

From this information, a working party identified 60 properties to be retained and 57 to be disposed of or demolished.

A simultaneous review of service requirements identified as the main priorities the need to vacate leased premises at Peninsula Business Park, Moreton, and Ebenezer Street, Rock Ferry. In addition, it was concluded that the Depots at Warren Farm, Eastham and Central Park, Wallasey should be closed and their operations relocated.

The proposed service model identified a requirement for three main depots at Birkenhead Park, Ivy Farm and Leasowe. It was proposed that the operations working out of Ebenezer Street and Warren Farm would relocate to Ivy Farm, and those at Peninsula Business Park and Central Park would move to Leasowe.

An initial schematic proposal in respect of the proposals at Leasowe revealed that both operations could not physically fit on the site. Two projects below are now being costed:

A) Ivy Farm

Option 1. Accommodation for relocation of Ebenezer Street workshop, a training room, and mess room for existing staff and additional staff from Warren Farm and Frankby

Option 2 Accommodation for relocation of Ebenezer Street workshop, a training room and mess room for existing staff and staff from Warren Farm

Option 3 Accommodation for relocation of Ebenezer Street workshop, a training room and mess room for existing staff

B) Leasowe

Relocation of the Highways operations from Reeds Lane, Peninsula Business Park Moreton to Leasowe Depot, adjacent to Leasowe Castle.

STAGE 2

A second stage of review will consider all non-operational properties on the same basis as in Stage 1. 122 non-operational properties have been registered for Stage 2. Consultation with the Friends of Parks Group will be a key part of this project.

3.4.4 Highway Trees

A report is being taken to Cabinet advising Members of the completion of the "Streetscene Services Arboricultural Contract 2008-2010, with a possible extension of one year," and seeks Members' endorsement of the proposals to provide a continued service in the short-term, together with proposals for the next Arboricultural Contract. This contract is to ensure the health and safety on the Highways whilst the expertise and capacity to manage the highway and parks and countryside trees and woodlands is developed in house.

The future appointment of an Arboricultural Officer is essential to develop and oversee the tree management development for all Parks and Countryside trees. The in-house service will involve the reorganisation of existing tree gangs and also the implementation of a suitable IT solution for data capture of tree survey information. A key requirement to the success of the in-house service is that adequate resources, both staffing and financial, are made available. The procurement of a suitable IT solution for data capture of tree survey information and the management of the Council's tree database are vital for the future.

In summary, a dedicated arboricultural team is a crucial element for the future of the Parks and Countryside in-house service. The long-term aim is for an appropriate tree management system to be the accepted Council policy to ensure that all possible resources are focused on tree management, and especially in managing potential tree related hazards.

3.5 Communication and Engagement Workstream

3.5.1 A communications and engagement plan was started in November 2011 to ensure that staff and residents are kept up to date with any changes and new processes in relation to the Parks and Countryside modernisations project. The plan is updated regularly. There have been regular meetings with staff, trade unions and user groups to make sure they are aware of any developments and changes that are taking place.

3.5.2 Service users

We have been developing our understanding of the users and non- users of our parks and what they want from the service. We have done some desk research using feedback that we already have from regular park users and other recent consultations that have taken place and designed a survey to help develop a long term plan for the Parks and Countryside service. We asked staff, local residents and visitors to tell us what they like about them and if they could change anything what would it be. The findings have been compiled into a draft report which is detailed below. The final report will be published on the Council's web site by January 2013 and it will be used to inform the 10-year plan for Wirral's parks, beaches and open spaces. It has both

overall findings as shown below and individual information about specific parks and open spaces.

Parks and Countryside User Survey Update - November 2012

Background

The Parks and Countryside Service and the Corporate Marketing Team undertook research to find out what people think about the current facilities and services provided by the Parks and Countryside Service and to find out if there are any further needs and requirements and to establish any improvements and services that could be put in place.

Timescale and Reach of the Research

Questionnaires have been completed by users and non- users of the park service throughout the winter and early spring of 2012. A second survey seeking views was also undertaken over the 2012 school summer holidays.

The survey data has primarily been collected on-line via the council's website and awareness-raising through various email distributions. In addition to this, paper questionnaires have been circulated to users of parks by park staff via visitor centres and other outlets in parks.

Invitations to take part in the survey were also distributed to other outlets including, libraries, one stop shops and sports centres.

Local press carried editorials highlighting the questionnaire with details on how to become involved.

The questionnaire was developed with the expertise of the Corporate Marketing Team to maximise the number of people willing to complete the form. The data collected is both *qualitative*, e.g. questions encouraging open-ended responses about how people feel about an area or service and *quantitative* questions that give us sound statistical responses to key questions. Please see Appendix 4 for an interim summary of the initial findings. The final report on the findings will be published in January 2013.

3.5.3 Employees

There have been regular meetings with Trade Union representatives to discuss working practices and the implementation of the Parks and Countryside improvement programme. There have been staff consultation meetings on the new working patterns and staff ideas have been sought on for income generation and savings. Staff were invited to participate in working groups established to discuss specific areas of improvement. At present there are key projects on Income Generation and Marketing, Re-Allocation of Land-use, Events, Volunteers and Education. These are key staff led projects that will ensure the engagement, sustainability and value for money of the service going forward.

Parks and Countryside Officer Working Groups

Topic	Lead(s)	Comments
Events	Anne Litherland (Rangers) Peter Whittle (Development)	Next meeting 5 December
Income Generation and Marketing	Jo Hanik (Rangers) Jackie Smallwood (Development)	
Land Use Reallocation	Peter Greenslade/John Jakeman (Rangers) Bill Cooper (Development)	
Volunteers	James Locke (Rangers) Christine Smyth (Development)	

Staff are also involved in a challenge session with regard to the proposed new management and operational structures to ensure that the new structures are fit for purpose going forward.

3.5.4 Media and other stake holders

Information has been shared with the Parks Steering Group and further consultation meetings will be arranged with stakeholders. The February round of Area Forums included promotion of the parks survey. Several articles about the Parks and Countryside Service have highlighted the improved standards of the green flag parks and the contribution of the Friends Groups, for example, The Wirral News Wednesday 18th July "Parks flagged up for Green excellence" and the Wirral Globe "Parks among the best". Birkenhead Park has been cited as one of Britain's leading parks on You and Yours Radio 4, and the Leader of the Council and Service Manager have spoken about Wirral's Parks and Countryside Service at the Parks Summit at the Royal Geographical Society in October this year.

3.5.5 Delivery Plan Progress

Progress against the Delivery Plan approved by the Cabinet in November 2011 is set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

4.1 A register of key risks and mitigating actions under each Workstream has been developed and will be monitored at a future Project Board.

5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 An alternative to the annualised hour's pilot proposal described in Section 3.3 would have been a reduction in full time staff and an increased use of seasonals. The annualised hour's proposal was considered a more cost effective solution.

5.2 The Parks Modernisation Programme ceases because it cannot be delivered under the new financial circumstances. This would lead to the decline in the Parks and Countryside Service and value for money for the Council.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation and Engagement is one of the four key Workstreams and is covered in detail under section 3.5 of this report.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 An important objective of the Modernised Service will be to facilitate the development of relationships with the community and voluntary sector.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

8.1 The new financial situation has led to a decline in the resources available for the Parks and Countryside Modernisation Programme. This has led to a review of the management and operational structures

8.2 A progress update summarising the HR aspects of the project is described in Section 3.3 of this report.

8.3 The proposed Workforce Working Practices Pilot is described in detail in Section 3.3 of this report.

8.4 Asset Implications. A progress update summarising the Asset implications of the project is described in section 3.4 of this report.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Legal Services are a key discipline represented on the Project Board.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review is attached – <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/technical-services-0>

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Environmental Sustainability is an important objective for the Modernised Service.

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Community safety in parks is an important objective for the Modernised Service.

13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 The progress of the Parks Modernisation programme, the improved standards in the Parks and Countryside Service and the substantial effect of the financial freeze on both revenue and capital budgets on the programme is noted.

14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 Revised outcomes for the service will have to be considered with the expected reduction in the Parks and Countryside Budget 2013 onwards.

REPORT AUTHOR:

REPORT AUTHOR:

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Wirral Parks and Countryside 10 year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework

Appendix 2 Parks' Modernisation Project Delivery Plan

Appendix 3 Birkenhead Park Achievements 2012

Appendix 4 Parks and Countryside User Survey Update - November 2012

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet – PACSPE Contract Award	22 September 2011
Sustainable Communities O&S Committee – PACSPE Contract Award Call in	20 October 2011
Cabinet – PACSPE Contract Award (following Call in)	3 November 2011
Cabinet – Parks & Countryside Services Modernisation Project – Integration of Highway Services and Outline Delivery Plan	24 November 2011
Cabinet – Parks & Countryside Services Modernisation Project – Update	12 January 2012
Cabinet – Parks & Countryside Services Modernisation Project – Purchase of Second-hand Vehicles and Equipment	15 March 2012
Cabinet – Parks & Countryside Services	12 April 2012

**Modernisation Project – Progress Update including
Proposed Workforce Practices Pilot Initiative**

**Cabinet – Parks & Countryside Services
Modernisation Project – Plant and Equipment
Capital Investment Programme**

12 April 2012

Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit (from May 2012)

Section 1: Your details

EIA lead Officer: Bill Cooper

Email address: williamcooper@wirral.gov.uk

Head of Section: Mary Bagley

Chief Officer: Jim Lester

Department: Parks and Countryside

Date: 05/11/12

Section 2: What Council proposal is being assessed?

Parks Modernisation Progress Report

Section 2b: Will this EIA be submitted to a Cabinet or Overview & Scrutiny Committee?

Yes

If 'yes' please state which meeting and what date

Cabinet, 21st November 2012

Please add hyperlink to where your EIA is/will be published on the Council's website <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/technical-services-0>

Section 3: Does the proposal have the potential to affect..... (please tick relevant boxes)

√ **Services**

√ **The workforce**

√ **Communities**

√ **Other** (please state eg: Partners, Private Sector, Voluntary & Community Sector)
Partners such as Parks Friends Groups and NHS.

If you have ticked one or more of above, please go to section 4.

None (please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 4: Does the proposal have the potential to maintain or enhance the way the Council (please tick relevant boxes)

Eliminates unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

√ Advances equality of opportunity

√ Fosters good relations between groups of people

If you have ticked one or more of above, please go to section 5.

No (please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 5:

Could the proposal have a positive or negative impact on any of the protected groups (race, gender, disability, gender reassignment, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership)?

You may also want to consider socio-economic status of individuals.

Please list in the table below and include actions required to mitigate any potential negative impact.

Which group(s) of people could be affected	Potential positive or negative impact	Action required to mitigate any potential negative impact	Lead person	Timescale	Resource implications
Disability groups	Positive potential impact - partnership working through delivery of the Ten Year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework could result in increased opportunities with healthcare partners, including DASS and the NHS, to increase services available to people with physical or mental health conditions.	N/A	M Bagley	2013-2024	Partnership working could help to increase external funding. This is subject to partner funding being sustained.
All nine protected groups	Positive potential impact - investment in new plant and equipment will contribute to good standards of site maintenance, making parks as welcoming and safe places as possible - for example through maintenance of surfacing and pruning overhanging branches.	N/A	M Bagley	2013	Funding of £2.4 million is required to purchase the new machinery

All nine protected groups	Potential for positive and negative impacts - new performance standards, supported by the Buildings programme and Infrastructure Capital Programme will contribute to making parks as welcoming and safe places as possible, depending on what funding is available.	Ensure that the service is adequately funded to deliver on standards.	M Bagley	2013-2024	Adequate funding of parks is required to ensure that standards are maximised.
All nine protected groups	Potential for positive and negative impacts - the Buildings and Depots plan could potentially reduce local facilities or focus improvements on some existing.	Engage with local parks users e.g. Friends groups on the Buildings and Depots plan to maximise 'joined up' working.	M Bagley	2013	The plan will require Council investment.
All nine protected groups	Positive potential impact - user surveys will improve understanding of user needs and inform service delivery.	N/A	M Bagley	2013-2024	While much consultation can be achieved though the website some resources will be need for delivering consultation events, paper questionnaires and publicity material.
All nine protected groups, particularly	Positive potential impact - addressing key issues raised by users e.g .dog control and fouling, provision of toilets, personal safety will help encourage use of parks and countryside by	Ensure that the service is adequately resourced to deliver standards.	M Bagley	2013-2024	Adequate resourcing of parks is required to

disabled people, faith and religious groups.	protected groups.				ensure that standards are maximised.
All nine protected groups, particularly disabled people, faith and religious groups.	Positive potential impact - review and implementation of the Communications and Engagement and Branding and Marketing Plans will look at communication channels, to be as inclusive as possible both in terms of methods and information content - for example signage, site interpretation and the website.	Take account of the needs of 'harder to reach' groups in review of communication methods.	M Bagley	2013-2014	Adequate resourcing of parks is required to ensure that standards are delivered.
Socio-economically disadvantaged people	Positive potential impact - training and development will improve workforce and volunteer skills and employability.	N/A	M Bagley	2013-2014	This is subject to training budgets, both internal and partner being available.
All nine protected groups	Positive potential impact – biodiversity projects like meadow creation and biodiversity recording could create opportunities for members of the community to get involved in volunteering.	N/A	M Bagley	2013-2015	Officer resources are required for supporting volunteer working.
All nine protected groups	Potential negative impact – potential future budget cuts could lead to long term decline in parks infrastructure, for example paths, play areas, fences and walls would over time reduce the usability of parks to users including vulnerable people	Work with community-based partner groups to pursue funding for parks infrastructure renewal, informed by infrastructure inspection. Develop new income streams to help fund parks	M Bagley	2013-2015	Officer resources are required for developing partnership working and income generation.

		infrastructure renewal.			This would be subject to partners having sufficient capacity and access to funding.
All nine protected groups	<p>Potential negative impact - reduction of accessible green and open space due to potential future budget cuts would have a negative impact on physical and mental health due to reduced opportunities for exercise, access to nature and relaxation.</p> <p>Every person kept physically active for their life saves on average £40,000 to £50,000 in health service costs. Reducing this activity would increase future costs for public services.</p>	Secure community-based partner management of sites or find alternative use for sites that are beneficial to the community.	M Bagley	2013-2015	Reduction in Council maintenance of sites would result in job losses. Officer resources are required for developing partnership management of sites. This would be subject to partners having sufficient capacity and funding.
Older people	Potential negative impact - reduction in bowling facilities due to potential future budget cuts would impact on people, many of them over 60 who benefit from the physical and mental health benefits of playing bowls as part of a club, including group culture and support.	Secure community-based partner management of sites and/or review and rationalise distribution of bowling facilities.	M Bagley	2013-2015	As above.
Socio-	Potential negative impact - reduced accessibility	Secure community-based			

<p>economically disadvantaged people</p>	<p>of local green and open spaces due to potential future budget cuts would reduce affordable and accessible days out, places to exercise and relax and places to enjoy a 'staycation' for those unable to afford to go away on holiday. This would particularly impact on people on lower incomes.</p> <p>Less people out and about would in turn impact on the local and visitor economy and put jobs in that sector at risk.</p>	<p>partner management of sites or find alternative use for sites that are beneficial to the community.</p>	<p>M Bagley</p>	<p>2013-2014</p>	
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Section 5a: Where and how will the above actions be monitored?

In reports summarising parks user surveys – addressing both feedback from and response to the surveys.

Section 5b: If you think there is no negative impact, what is your reasoning behind this?

N/A

Section 6: What research / data / information have you used in support of this process?

Natural England – Green Space Access Research Summary
Natural England – Health and Wellbeing Position Statement
Wirral Council Parks and Countryside User Survey 2012

Section 7: Are you intending to carry out any consultation with regard to this Council proposal?

Yes

If 'yes' please continue to section 8.

If 'no' please state your reason(s) why:

(please stop here and email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for publishing)

Section 8: How will consultation take place and by when?

It is intended to consult on the Ten Year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework in 2013. Methods will include a questionnaire on the Council's website and engagement with Friends groups and 'harder to reach' groups. The detail of this consultation will be developed in conjunction with the Council's Community Engagement Team.

Any emerging savings proposals will be consulted on as part of stage 2 of the Council's savings consultation.

Before you complete your consultation, please email your preliminary EIA to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk via your Chief Officer in order for the Council to ensure it is meeting

it's legal requirements. The EIA will be published with a note saying we are awaiting outcomes from a consultation exercise.

Once you have completed your consultation, please review your actions in section 5. Then email this form to your Chief Officer who needs to email it to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk for re-publishing.

Section 9: Have you remembered to:

- a) **Add appropriate departmental hyperlink to where your EIA is/will be published (section 2b)**
- b) **Include any potential positive impacts as well as negative impacts? (section 5)**
- c) **Send this EIA to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk via your Chief Officer?**
- d) **Review section 5 once consultation has taken place and sent your completed EIA to equalitywatch@wirral.gov.uk via your Chief Officer for re-publishing?**

APPENDIX 1.

Wirral Parks and Countryside 10 Year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework

Green and Open Space Strategy (2013-2023) Project Plan

Note: Cabinet report 12 April 2012 section 3.2 confirmed Strategic plan completion date of December 2013.

Clarify Area Forums roles/Localism implications.

User survey findings to be added to evidence base across the themes. Officer Working Groups' work on Events, Income Generation and Marketing, Land Use Reallocation and Volunteers to form part of evidence base and inform strategy development.

Strategy due for adoption 2013, to cover the period 2013-2023.

1) TIMETABLE: KEY WORK STAGES (updated November 2012)

10 Year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework: development and adoption		
Stage	Date	Lead Officers/Comments
STAGE 1 Scoping		
SCOPING Scoping of content and key indicators. Agree work plan. Identify key stakeholders and other key related strategies. Define team roles: evidence base; mapping; visioning; authoring; coordination and editing; consultation. Hold scoping meeting with officers	Jul-Nov 2012	BC Done. Done. Done. Development team with input from Ops/Rangers team
Meet Forward Planning Re: mapping, evidence base, CIL and synchronicity with emergent Local Plan		BC, with JS and LV Done. Met July and Nov. Follow up meeting tba in Jan.
Undertake second round of Parks User survey		MG, supported by TS, BC. Done August-September 2012
Complete input, analysis and interrogation of Parks User survey findings - inc		BC and MG. In progress. Meeting J

demographics, distance of respondents to sites		Dixon and G Roberts 14 Nov re data interrogation.
Visioning		BC, AK, MB, AB BC met AK 23 Aug Set up visioning meeting Nov/Dec
Agree draft scope and project plan with Parks Modernisation Board.		MB Dec 2012
STAGE 2 Develop and Produce Strategy		
Review evidence base and links to other strategies and update evidence base e.g. Green Space Audit, PACPSE consultation feedback See also draft Core Strategy Settlement Area policies. Clarify: if refresh of Green Space Audit required timetable/resources for Playing Pitch Strategy (check Sport England capacity) and timetable/linkages with other related strategies e.g. Health, Climate Change, Coastal, Flood/River Catchment, PROWIP, BAP	Dec 2012- Mar 2013	BC
Discussion with key stakeholders/partners inc: Staff Parks Steering Group(s), Friends Groups Other user groups e.g. sporting, nature, 'hard to reach' Older People's Parliament, Youth Executive board Partners e.g. Wildlife Trust, 2 LNPs Consultees from the PACSPE Project.		BC and team
Set up GOSS Partner Steering Group inc: Friends reps; Wildlife Trust; regeneration; business; CYP; sport and rec. Take proposed scope/key issues/programme paper to PSG. Hold workshops on vision/relevant key aspects for relevant groups.		

Write consultation draft GOSS, agree engagement plan		BC with MG Corporate Marketing Team + input on strategic themes from appropriate Parks and Countryside officers
Equalities Impact Assessment (note: see also PACSPE EqIA)		MG
Collate, analyse and report to Cabinet on user survey findings.		BC, MB
Refine consultation draft GOSS as needed		
Consult on draft GOSS	Apr-Jun 2013	BC + team
Develop action plan detail		
Commission graphics/illustrations and photographs		
Collate and analyse consultation results	Jul 2013 – Sept 2013	BC + team
Further engagement as needed with key stakeholders to resolve key issues,		
Amend strategy, Brief Members		
STAGE 3 Adoption, publication and monitoring		
Adopt and publish GOSS	Oct-Nov 2013	BC
Embed performance monitoring regime	2013-2014	BC
Monitoring and reporting	2013-2014	BC + team

BC – Bill Cooper; MB – Mary Bagley; MG – Mike Garbutt, TS – Tracey Smith, Boo Stone, AK – Adam King

APPENDIX 2

PARKS & COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES MODERNISATION PROJECT – DELIVERY PLAN (DECEMBER 2011 TO DECEMBER 2013)

A. POLICY, PROCESSES AND PERFORMANCE WORKSTREAM

Key Outcome	Task	Duration	Progress	RAG Status
Create Excellent Business Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish existing 'as is' business processes 	Dec 11 – April 12	Completed	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and redesign business processes 	Jan 12 – June 12	Work not completed. Business processes need to align with new financial situation and key projects. Staff resource from corporate projects has been removed from Parks Modernisation Programme for Corporate Finance Project. Project to be completed by service staff.	R
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procure necessary ICT 	Jun 12 – Dec 12	Some initial IT needs identified and working with Technical Services IT staff to complete project.	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide necessary training and development 	Nov 12 – Feb 13	KIE completed and training and development achieved. Green Flag training outstanding.	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement 'to be' business processes 	Nov 12 – Feb 13	To be agreed in line with the new financial situation.	G

Establish Ten Year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing policies 	Dec 12 – Mar 13	Project Plan Appendix 1	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new Ten Year Strategic Plan and Policy Framework including Annual Business Plan 	Dec12 – Sept 13	Project Plan Appendix 1	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Annual Business Plan 	Dec 13 onwards	Project Plan Appendix 1	G
Establish New Performance Standards and Monitoring Regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline existing performance standards 	Dec 11 – June 12	Initial Green Flag standards on 14 parks and existing standards baselined.	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Partnership Performance Advisory Board (PPAB) 	Jun 12 – July 12	Partnership performance Advisory Board to be established November 2012	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree and implement new performance standards (KPIs, CPIs) 	July 12 – Nov 12	New performance standards to realign to new budget profile. Await budget agreement process.	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and realign budgets to service/ performance areas 	Apr 12 – Nov 12	Await budget agreement process.	A

B. HUMAN RESOURCES WORKSTREAM

Key Outcome	Task	Duration	Progress	RAG Status
Establish New Management Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and redesign management structure 	Dec 11 – Feb 12	Original draft structure to be changed to fit new financial situation.	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree and implement revised management structure 	Jan 12 – Jun 12	Original draft structure to be changed to fit new financial situation	A
Establish New Operational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing operational structure including Terms and Conditions 	Dec 11 – Jun 12	Original draft structure to be changed to fit new financial situation	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree and implement revised operational structure 	Jun 12 – Nov 12	Original draft structure to be changed to fit new financial situation	A
Develop and Implement Training & Development Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake Skills Gap Analysis 	Dec 11 – Jun 12	KIEs used to assess skills gap. New skills will be needed for new financial situation including innovation and creativity.	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Training and Development Plan including Competency Framework 	Apr 12 – Oct 12	New plan to be developed with Corporate HR Nov 12 – Mar 13	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Training and Development Plan 	Nov 12 – Feb 13	In the future	G

C. ASSETS WORKSTREAM

Key Outcome	Task	Duration	Progress	RAG Status
Develop and Implement Plan & Equipment Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing Plant and Equipment 	Dec 11 – Feb 12	Complete	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Plant and Equipment requirements 	Dec 11 – May 12	Complete	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and agree funding and procurement strategy 	May 12 – Jun 12	Complete	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Plan and Equipment Plan 	June 12 – Dec 12	Procurement likely to be complete in April 13	A
Develop and Implement Buildings and Depots Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing Buildings and Depots 	Dec 11 – Feb 12	Complete for operational buildings Stage 1.	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Building and Depot requirements 	Dec 12 – May 12	Complete for operational buildings Stage 1.	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and agree investment strategy 	May 12 – Jun 12	First 2 projects with options being evaluated and costed.	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Buildings and Depots Plan 	Jun 12 – Dec 12		A

Develop and Implement Tree Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and develop tree management procedures 	Jan 12 – Jun 12	Staff resource from Highways working on Highway Tree contract. Arboriculture Officer appointment awaits agreement of new structure and budget agreement.	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree and implement new Tree Management Plan 	Jun 12 – Feb 13	Await appointment of Arboricultural Officer.	A

D. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT WORKSTREAM

Key Outcome	Task	Duration	Progress	RAG Status
Develop and Implement Communications & Engagement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement Communications and Engagement Plan 	Dec 11 – Feb 13	Complete and updated regularly	G
Develop and Implement Regular Public Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and agree new survey format 	Dec 11 – Jan 12	Completed	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement new Public Surveys 	Jan 12 – Jun 12	Completed	G
Develop and Implement Branding and Marketing Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and agree Branding Guidelines 	Jan 12 – Jun 12	Branding working group. New clothing agreed and procured.	G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and agree Marketing Strategy 	Jan 12 – Jun 12	Working Group set up.	A
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Branding and Marketing Plan 	Nov 12 – Feb 13	In the future	G

APPENDIX 3 BIRKENHEAD PARK ACHIEVEMENTS 2012

Introduction

All of the activities in Birkenhead Park strengthen the delivery of the specific corporate goal 'To provide and maintain high quality parks'. In addition, the park's activities deliver Wirral Council's wider purpose as captured in the 28 goals of the corporate plan.

Education Programme

The Education programme continues to be core activity of the park despite the closure of two local schools, cancellations due to bad weather and the loss of the Education Officer. In the summer of 2012 the park received a total of 17 educational visits (including school events) with a total of 526 pupils from eight education establishments; undergoing eight different themes activities. In addition five school events were booked, including an Arts in the Park day led by West Kirby Grammar School for Girls, where 120 pupils attended.

Work Experience

Seven local education establishments placed students for a total 400 hours, up on 284 hours last summer.

Physical Activity to improve the health and wellbeing of Wirral people

Many families and independent young people use the park regularly for safe cycling, walking, exercising the dog and using the very popular play areas. The park is an ideal safe place for children and young people to enjoy physical exercise and social interaction. This year saw the installation of a fitness trail around the lower lake. This has proved to be very popular with all ages, although it is aimed at adults.

The number of regular weekly activities is 21, the same as last summer, but this now does not include all of the independent commercial activity, and therefore the activity level is increasing significantly.

The Birkenhead Park Health walks are part of the Wirral wide 'Walk on' scheme, which gained National accreditation in April 2011.

There are 9 walks in scheme, an increase of 1 on last year.

The number of Active Walkers is 219.

To reduce Wirral's carbon footprint

The continued maintenance of Birkenhead Park as a green-space, in particular a wooded green-space, makes a contribution to Wirral's Climate Change Strategy by reducing pollution, and ameliorating temperatures in Birkenhead,(both by reducing wind chill, providing shading and cooling through latent heat of evaporation through the transpiration of trees and plants).

To minimise waste by encouraging waste reduction and recycling

80% of the park's green waste is recycled for use on site, some is used at other parks e.g. logs taken to the gasifier at Royden Park. The most bulky of this material from tree and shrub prunings is chipped immediately and used as mulch on the parks shrub beds. Most of the parks leaves are collected and allowed to rot down in designated woodland areas

before being used as mulch.

Dog Fouling

Dog fouling is tackled by Community Patrol's Dog Fouling Enforcement Team, making regular patrols around the park's 'hotspots'. They visit Birkenhead Park weekly, giving out clean-up bags and advice to dog walkers in addition to the park's rangers and security staff encouraging them to clean up after their pet.

This summer there have been 3 fixed penalty tickets issued in Birkenhead Park to offenders.

To provide and maintain high quality parks and open spaces in partnership with local communities

Grounds Maintenance

A significant improvement this summer has been the planting of a great variety of flowering shrubs including Azalea (white, orange, pink and red varieties) and Rhododendron varieties in the visitor centre beds, Hypericum, Spiraea and Ribes in the Boothby Ground and Hydrangea by the Swiss Bridge, Buddleia by the Lower Lake, Hebes at Cole Street. Penesetum ornamental grass by lower lake, Cornus by Upper Lake sluice. Lavenders in the Friends Herb Bed by Visitor Centre and Gunnera for Edward Kemp Garden.

Wildlife and Habitat Management

Specific areas in the park have been increasingly managed for wildlife, while still maintaining the features of the historic park.

Regular wildlife surveys are undertaken by the wildlife group set up as part of the Friends of Birkenhead Park and supported by the Park's Rangers.

The annual bat survey revealed the presence of brown long eared bat in addition to noctules, Daubenton's; and two species of pipistrelle bats.

The wildflower meadow was produced a display of flowers in July and August. It was ploughed in September and will be sown in autumn with a cornfield annual mix. The meadow has been improved by the addition of 50 wildflowers donated by Cheshire Wildlife Trust for their 50th anniversary and as part of The Year of Coast and Countryside.

Sports Facilities

The Park continues to offer many sports facilities, including football, cricket, bowls, angling, tennis, and basketball.

Football – The Balaclava and St Mary's Pitches have been reported as being greatly improved following the drainage improvement works; this is despite the summer's wet weather.

Bowls - The Bowls facility is managed in partnership with the Bowls Forum. At a recent meeting, all clubs have endorsed the park's maintenance of the greens, saying that they have seen their continual improvement over the past 5 years.

Tennis - The Tennis Courts are continuing to see the increased use due to the 2 year partnership agreement with Tennis For Free, a National charity which provides free coaching for 2 hours every Sunday morning.

Angling - The Angling facility is managed in partnership with the Association of Wirral Angling Clubs (AWAC). The park's staff liaise closely with AWAC, attending their monthly meetings, and working with their Bailiffs on a daily basis.

'Get Hooked on Fishing' a not for profit organisation, continued to run sessions in the park, including some targeted at pupils from the University Academy. Get Hooked on Fishing have been renamed 'Angling 4 Positive Futures'

The play area has been very heavily used all summer. A **new exercise/fitness course** has been installed in a circuit around the lower lake, starting at the Play Area and finishing at the Visitor Centre. As anticipated this equipment has been very popular, and result in increased opportunities for people in the Birkenhead Park area to improve their fitness and their general state of health.

Flooding

Birkenhead Park soaks up water better than housing and streets, and so the presence of the park reduces severity of flooding incidents in Birkenhead.

Liveability

Birkenhead Park ensures neighbouring houses are more liveable as it provides facilities and services 'on the doorstep'. Many free for all to use including the use of a high quality Grade 1 listed Green Flag Park.

To reduce anti-social behaviour and improve community safety

Birkenhead Park Staff continue to work in liaison with partners from Wirral's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (including Merseyside Police), Wirral's Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Joint Community Safety Team.

Park Watch Scheme.

The Park Watch scheme was launched this spring at the annual Neighbourhood watch event

Dogs

Following a rise in incidents early this summer. A meeting of park staff with partners in dog enforcement came up with an action plan, including: stalls at other events advising visitors of the issue, increased intervention with dog walkers around the lakes, and introduction of an advisory 'Dogs on Lead' zone around the lakes. Also witnesses to dog attacks are advised to report the crime straight to the police, who have attended a number of incidents and made arrests.

This resulted in the number of incidents having halved towards the end of the summer. A number of incidents of Dog defecation were intervened by park staff. More incidents were dealt with by Community Patrol's Dog Enforcement Team who had 3 prosecutions.

Restorative Justice

The Community Payback team continue to operate in the park three days a week. They undertake a wide variety of litter picking, pruning and weeding tasks throughout the park and make a good contribution to improved maintenance standards in the park.

Local Economy

Many organisations directly employ staff in the park; these include Cappucino's Coffee Shop, Active Drama Company, Friends of Birkenhead Park, Birkenhead Park Cricket Club and West Cheshire Cleaning Company, Concept Hygiene, British Military Fitness, and Becky Hunt Fitness.

To market Wirral as a world class location for businesses and visitors

Businesses attract and retain more motivated staff in greener settings, and Birkenhead Park contributes to this. The proximity of Birkenhead Park to the Wirral Waters Project Area will be used to enhance inward investment to Wirral and especially in an area with very low job density.

Tourism

The park also attracts international visitors

The participation of the Park in national events, e.g. the Olympic Torch on Friday 1st June 2012, and the RUN Liverpool Marathon in October, adds to the national exposure of the park to a wide audience.

Awards

The gaining of nationally recognised awards aids greatly in the promotion of the park. Birkenhead Park held both the Green Flag and the Green Heritage Award for the sixth year running, and has gained the Assured Visitor Attraction Award (VAQAS) by the Visit Britain Award for 2012 – for the fourth year running.

Media Coverage

The past 6 months have seen Birkenhead Park receive much positive coverage in the media including the following 88 articles, averaging over **3 per week**, an increase on the 62 during the same period last year.

Television Coverage has remained high. There has been good coverage of the Marathon describing Birkenhead Park as the start of the race. There has also been repeats of three programmes, Dan Cruickshank's 'Public Parks', Michael Portillo's Railway Journeys, and BBC's 'Coast', all with footage of Birkenhead Park.

Events:

The Park has a busy event and activity programme, which has increased from 26 last summer to 30 this summer, not including specialist school holiday events, this is more than one per week!

The highlight of the summer must be the Olympic Torch Relay, where the crowd in Birkenhead Park (estimated at 40,000) was the biggest on the Wirral section of the route.

School Holiday Programmes

A varied programme of activities were delivered, including an events on every day of each School holiday period. This resulted in nearly 1000 children attending the activities between Easter and the end of the summer holidays.

In addition, SureStart ran activities every Wednesday in the holidays averaging 200 attending each day, and there were 28 Angling Activities delivered by Get Hooked on Fishing, with 363 people attending.

Guided Walk Programme

The Rangers offered a full Guided Walks Programme throughout the year.

Gallery

The exhibitions in the Visitor Centre Gallery are very popular with groups, and the space is booked until 2014.

Visitor Centre Functions

The Visitor Centre Function Room when it is not being used by the parks activities (eg education and events) can be hired for public use. This facility is very popular because of its park setting and easy parking. In addition to earning a source of income for the park, it showcases the park to a wider range of audiences.

The 38 bookings this summer is similar to last summers 40 bookings. In addition the room was booked on 29 occasions by non fee paying groups. There is great potential for this to generate more income.

Feedback and Evaluation.

Feedback and Evaluation Forms are issued to all groups and individuals attending a booked facility or event at the Visitor Centre.

All returned forms indicated the users were either very happy or rated the service as Excellent, there were no Good/Satisfactory or Poor evaluations.

49 comments were entered into the Visitors Book, all were positive.

Comments include: 'We from Hungary, This place very nice and interesting. We walking and enjoy the park, Thanks'. (Hungary); 'My first visit. A lovely spot. Well cared for. An excellent amenity!' (Bristol); 'Great Day' (New Zealand); 'Did the tree walk, Great Fun' (Surrey); 'So lovely to see the park I grew up in looking so good and again being used, My granddad Thomas Gill used to be the groundsman here. Just Lovely' (Australia); 'Beautiful and well used and kept' (Southampton); 'Great Help and wonderful park restoration' (USA); 'Amazing, Thanks a lot' (Belarus); 'Lovely place! Great and helpful staff. Thank you for the info about the park, I'll use it in America' (USA); 'Great Place' (Germany); 'A wonderful place to visit' (Canada)

Event evaluation

This showed an increase on returns from last year. From 107 to 139
144 rated the event as excellent, 23 rated it as Good. There were no Satisfactory or poor assessments.

Comments included: 'very popular lovely activities well organised', 'enjoyed the kite making event', 'brilliant activities in the holidays', 'fantastic, kids loved it and staff are super', 'brilliant loved it, would pay a small donation', 'have been to many events, every one so kind and helpful, keep up work', 'Fun activities which we all enjoyed', 'Enjoyed talk by very enthusiastic ranger', 'Very interesting informative talk. Well presented. It has renewed my enthusiasm to visit the park', 'Staff excellent, friendly and helpful, activity well thought out and executed', (Family came into park from Hertfordshire and staff advised them of activity which they really enjoyed)

Eight Thank you letters were received, an increase on the seven last summer. A thank you was received from a foster mum in Bidston to Anne Litherland, Senior Ranger for all the Activity Programme which were considered essential to her and her 3 children especially her children with disabilities.

Wider public sector partnerships

The Friends of Birkenhead Park

The Friends of Birkenhead Park are a major community partner in the management of Birkenhead Park. This partnership is strengthened by regular liaison with their elected representatives – often daily, and attendance at their quarterly general meetings and more recently at their Park Development Sub-Committee.

Volunteers

Volunteers are offered a wide variety of roles in the park totalling 13 job descriptions. The volunteer programme registered 4745 hours in the 12 months to 30th September. These figures equate to more than two and a half full time equivalent staff, although their benefit is much more as they provide opportunities to improve personal health, social inclusion, active citizenship and much more.

107 volunteers were active during April to September. This includes 82 on the programmes within the park, and also 25 on the adjoining Friends' Edward Kemp Community Garden and Growing Area.

Management Plan 2012 -2017

The Birkenhead Park Management Plan was praised by the Green Flag Judges and has been declared to be the benchmark for all of Wirral's Green Flag Park Management Plans.

APPENDIX 4 Parks and Countryside User Survey Update - November 2012

Not only was there an excellent response to the questionnaire but also there were some very clear results showing the importance of Parks and Countryside to local people and visitors to the Wirral.

The amount of local people using the open spaces is outstanding. 98% of the respondents use the parks, beaches and open spaces on Wirral and the biggest percentage of people visit them more than once a week in both Summer and winter. Most people visit the open spaces with someone else with only 30% visiting by themselves. 66% visit the open spaces to walk and 57% to exercise with 40% visiting for the children to play.

In relation to performance the graphs below show that 81.4% rate the park as overall very good or good. 72% rate the cleanliness as very good and good and 44% regarded the visitor facilities as very good or good. The drop in this last figure may relate to the respondents second most important factor that influences them against using the open spaces – the lack of good toilet facilities. The other two biggest reasons that prevent people using the open spaces are dog fouling (54%) and more spare time (38%)! Please see the more detailed results below.

The final report will be published in January 2013 and meanwhile staff are looking at the survey to inform our present management and the future 10 year strategy.

Final survey collection information

Winter / Spring 2012

Online questionnaires completed	779
Number of paper questionnaires completed	245
Total number of questionnaires completed: Winter/Spring	1024

Summer 2012

Online questionnaires completed	125
Number of paper questionnaires completed	120
Total number of questionnaires completed: Summer	245

TOTAL:

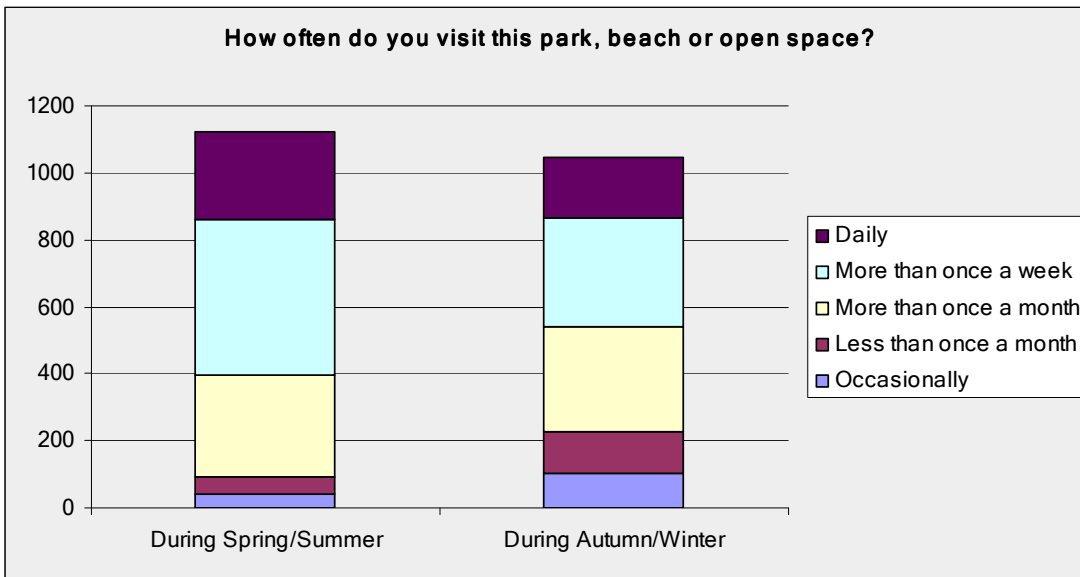
ALL online questionnaires completed	904
ALL paper questionnaires completed	365
TOTAL	1269

Interim summary of the questionnaire findings

Do you use parks, beaches or open spaces in Wirral?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	98.1%	1213
No	1.9%	24
<i>answered question</i>		1237

How often do you visit this park, beach or open space?

Answer Options	Daily	More than once a week	More than once a month	Less than once a month	Occasionally	Response Count
During Spring/Summer	259	468	299	55	40	1121
During Autumn/Winter	179	325	312	124	105	1045
<i>answered question</i>						1128

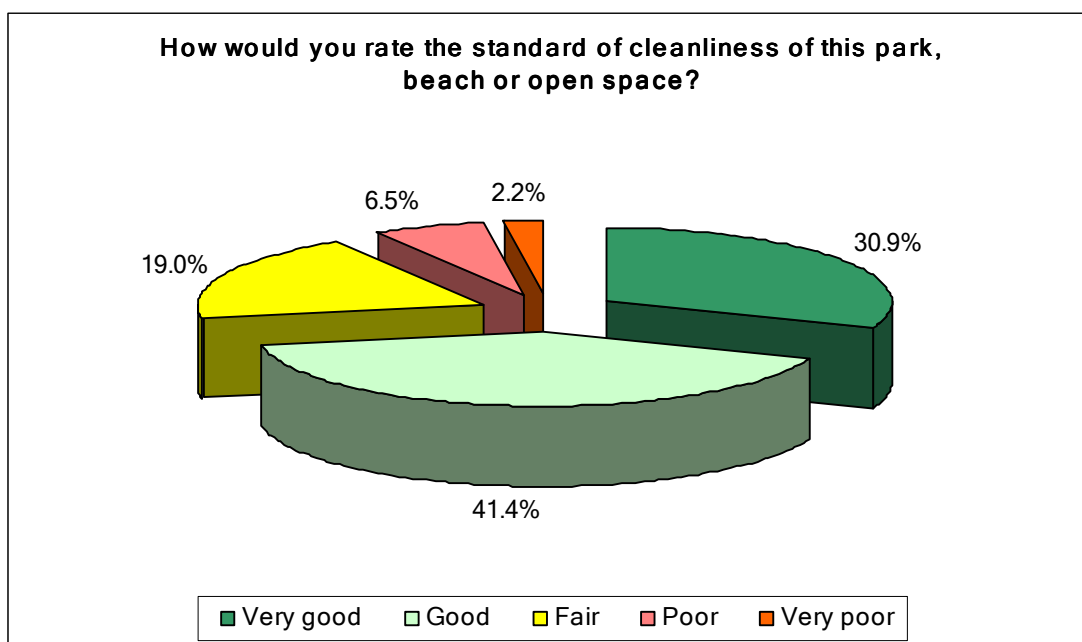


Who do you normally visit this park, beach or open space with?

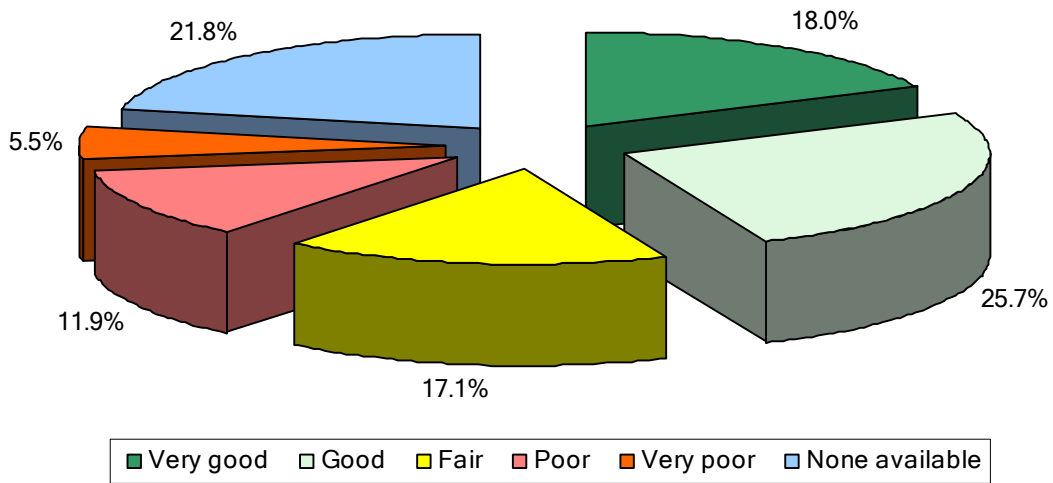
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Alone	28.3%	311
Children	39.7%	436
Other family	25.9%	284
Partner	39.2%	430
Friends	25.3%	278
Team/club	3.4%	37
Mixed group	3.7%	41
It varies	12.8%	140
Other (please specify)		69
<i>answered question</i>		1098

Why do you use this park, beach or open space? (tick all that apply)

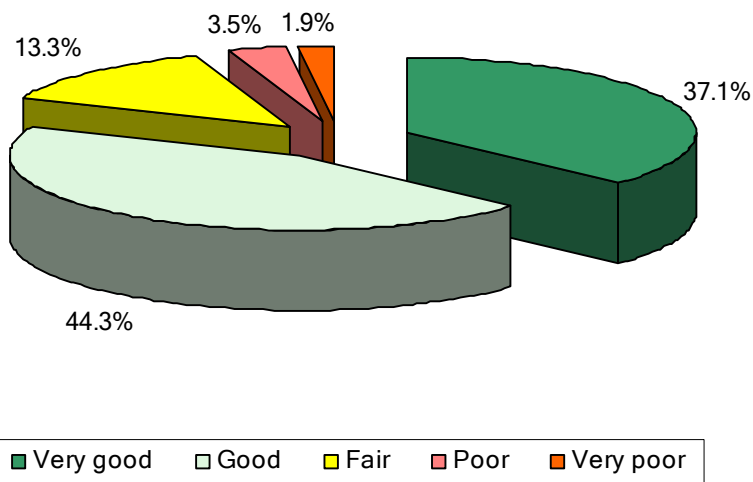
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Children's play	39.7%	441
Dog walking	27.7%	308
Events	15.4%	171
Exercise	57.3%	637
Feed the wildlife	17.5%	195
Meeting place	11.6%	129
Organised events/activities	13.4%	149
Picnic	21.4%	238
Play sport	10.3%	115
Ride a bike	19.8%	220
See wildlife	40.0%	445
Short cut	9.5%	106
Sit and relax	37.8%	420
Walking	66.2%	736
Other reasons (please specify)		128
<i>answered question</i>		1112

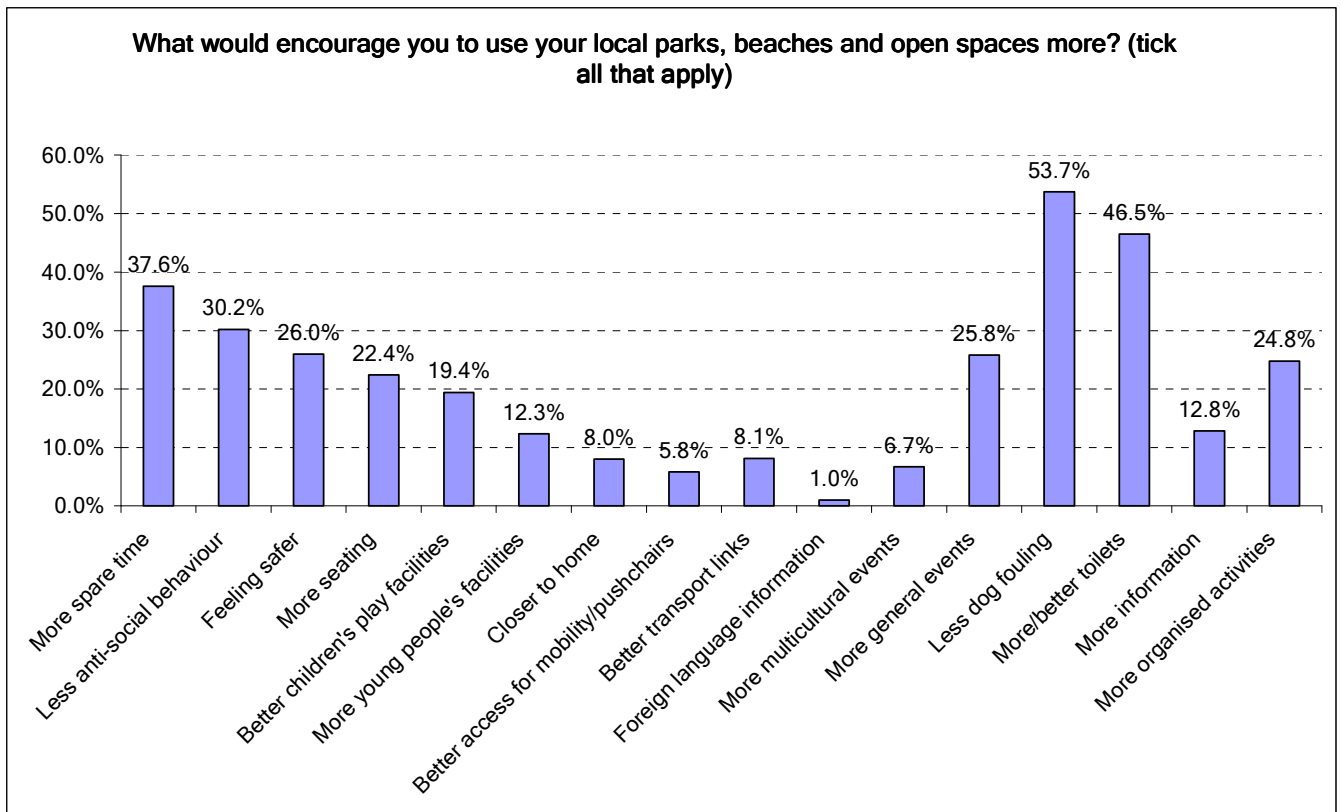


How would you rate the visitor facilities that are available e.g. toilets, cafe?



How would you rate this park, beach or open space overall?





Sample of customer comments on Wirral Parks and Open Spaces from the Parks and Countryside User Survey 2012

Reasons for satisfaction

- I am very proud of Wirral and think we are very lucky with our coast line and well maintained parks. The fact that I can walk my dog everywhere encourages me to get out every day and I am grateful for this.
- Safe and are all well kept.
- Children's facilities are very good.
- The peninsula really lends itself to cycling.
- Some excellent beaches, parks and open spaces.
- More organised activities would encourage greater usage.
- I love my walks and observe the nature. Wirral has very special places that all communities should share and enjoy.

Aspects needing addressing

- Need wardens to control dogs and dog fouling, fed up of large dogs just taking over the open spaces and owners who don't consider people who don't own dogs.

- Broken glass and dog mess in particular is a real problem and underage drinking and safety is another worry, especially in the evenings.
- The lack of toilet provision and other facilities.