

# Wirral Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2014-2024

## Introduction

Wirral Council is facing significant budgetary pressures. The aim of this parks and open spaces strategy is to provide direction throughout the next 10 years - to keep in sight the key priorities and principles needed for success during the anticipated period of financial challenge and necessary change. The strategy seeks to address issues related to parks and open space sites in Wirral that are over half an acre (0.2 hectares) in size.

Wirral's parks and open spaces provide access to a wide range of positive activities for people of all ages throughout the borough. They are a treasure trove of history, from Viking to Victorian times and beyond. They are home to many kinds of wildlife and plants. Birkenhead Park opened in 1847, inspiring the creation of urban parks around the world, including the world famous Central Park in New York. From beaches to historic parks, nature reserves and country parks to playgrounds: parks and open spaces help make Wirral a special place, loved and appreciated by residents and visitors alike.

As we go forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a need for a Wirral parks and open spaces strategy that inspires and one that is also strong enough to meet the challenges and opportunities of the next decade.

## Purpose of the Strategy

- To provide direction for service planning and targeting of resources.
- To create an agreed, targeted action plan.
- To provide support for appropriate funding bids, investment and partnership agreements.

## Vision

Based on feedback from partners, communities and Friends groups a 10 year vision has been created for Wirral's parks and open spaces:

*While recognising and responding to financial pressures, Wirral is proud of its diverse range of historic parks, open spaces, coast and countryside sites which provide an accessible network of good quality parks and open spaces. With input from staff, volunteers, Friends groups and other partners, Wirral's parks and open spaces will be well managed and provide a wide range of positive activities, supporting good health, improved life chances and an excellent quality of life, within reach of everyone who lives in or visits the Wirral.*

There is compelling evidence from the Parks User Survey and Visitor Research Study of how highly local people and visitors value Wirral's parks and open spaces. As a peninsular with a strong regeneration agenda, well connected to the rest of the North West region and with a good public transport network, Wirral is well placed to have an effective, good quality parks and open spaces network.

## **Aims**

To achieve the Vision Wirral's parks and open spaces will:

1. Attract and retain investment in the borough through provision of attractive, well managed parks and open spaces;
2. be accessible, safe and well-used places for local people, communities and visitors to enjoy;
3. help bring different generations together through providing positive healthy activities for local people and communities;
4. contribute to the environmental sustainability and biodiversity of Wirral, achieving a good balance by protecting habitats while supporting economic growth;
5. be funded, delivered and managed through a new, viable business model.

## **Context**

The Wirral peninsula is widely known for its attractive parks, coast and countryside sites. Wirral's parks and open spaces provide many positive benefits for both local people and visitors from the UK and further a field. This is in no small part a testament to the extensive network of volunteers, Friends Groups, and diverse partner organisations who work with Wirral Council to help care for, improve and promote parks and open space sites and related activities throughout the borough.

The distribution, character and design of Wirral's parks and open spaces reflects the history of Wirral's development over the centuries. There are currently over 210 park and open space sites owned by the council, 19 of which achieved a green flag award in 2014:

**Birkenhead:**

Bidston Hill, Birkenhead Park, Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm, The Arno, Victoria Park,

**South Wirral:**

Brotherton Park and Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve, Eastham Country Park, Thornton Hough Village Green,

**Wallasey**

North Wirral Coastal Park, Vale Park, Central Park.

**West Wirral:**

Ashton Park, Coronation Gardens, Hilbre Islands Local Nature Reserve, Meols Park, Royden Park, Wirral Country Park, Victoria Gardens.

## **Key Principles that underpin this strategy**

1. Wirral's parks and open spaces are one of the main reasons why visitors and residents come to, or stay in, the borough. It is important that Wirral has a network of accessible, good quality parks and open spaces in order to support a vibrant local economy and the health and wellbeing of local people.
2. To contribute positively to the economic prosperity of the borough, Wirral's parks and open spaces need to be safe, welcoming, well maintained and have an appropriate range of facilities and activities.
3. Although most of the borough has good or satisfactory access to parks and open spaces, there are some areas where there is a lack of publicly accessible open space. This deficit will be remedied - where possible - to help optimise the health and well being of people living nearby.
4. A significant number of Wirral's parks and open spaces have an international, national or local biodiversity designation. Wirral Council has a statutory biodiversity duty, and will work with partners to conserve and promote the ecological interest and importance of these sites.
5. Wirral's parks and open spaces have a role to play in educating people about the importance of the environment and how people can enjoy and help care for their local areas. Wirral's parks and open spaces also have an important role to play in providing lifelong learning and skills for local people, improving life chances.
6. There are important public health issues and health 'hotspots' throughout the borough which parks and open space sites will help overcome, in partnership with the Public Health Team, voluntary groups and other organisations. The issues include coronary heart disease, diabetes, obesity and mental health as well as encouraging regular exercise to help provide physical and mental health benefits for all ages.
7. Climate forecasts indicate more changeable weather patterns, including drought in summer and more rainfall and flooding in winter. The maintenance of Wirral's parks and open spaces will take this into account, rather than always treating sites as they have been managed in the past.
8. There is a pressing need for new business models to be implemented for parks and open spaces throughout the Wirral. Identifying land that is surplus to requirements, as well as increasing income and funding generation and enhancing roles and opportunities for partner organisations and community groups are economic necessities. Technological improvements and innovation are also necessary to optimise the use of reduced budgets and resources.
9. Wirral Council, Friends groups, volunteers and partner organisations will work together to deliver the strategy through attention to the following aims, objectives, policies and actions.

**AIM 1: Attract and retain investment in the borough through provision of attractive, well managed parks and open spaces.**

**OBJECTIVE 1.1: Wirral's parks and open space support the local economy.**

### **Summary of key issues**

Wirral has a strong regeneration agenda, as set out in its emerging Local Plan. To cater for population growth and change it is important that the Wirral has accessible, high quality parks and open space which help support a happy, healthy, motivated population and skilled workforce with good opportunities for recreation and exercise. Parks and open space need to contribute positively to Wirral's reputation as an attractive place to live and work. As well as parks, coastal management is important both locally and within the context of the City Region aim for the region to be a centre of excellence for integrated coastal management.

Wirral's parks, beaches and countryside play an important role in the visitor economy. The Wirral Visitor Research Study (2011) showed that annually six million visitors come for the day and 753,000 stay over. 68% highlighted the Borough's natural assets as the reason they viewed Wirral as a better than average location. Initiatives such as the Wirral Year of Coast and Countryside and the Wirral Circular Trail attract visitors and many come to visit its beaches, parks and countryside. Events play an important part, with key events including Mersey Pirate Muster in New Brighton, the Birkenhead Park Festival of Transport and the Wirral Golf Classic. Coast, Countryside and Quality Food are the most important considerations for planning short breaks. People are typically prepared to travel up to around an hour to visit the Wirral. 57% of visitors are 55 plus and socio-economically ABC1s account for 65% of visitors compared with 51% of the national population profile of ABC1s.

**POLICY 1.1a: Wirral's parks and open space are an important part of Wirral's quality of life and 'brand' and attract investment in parks, jobs and the wider economy.**

### **ACTIONS**

- Produce and deliver a Management and Development Plan for Key Parks and open spaces including physical infrastructure, business development and promotion. Include within this a schedule of key strategic parks and open spaces infrastructure projects eligible for funding including Community Infrastructure Levy, to support development in line with Wirral's Local Plan while protecting and relieving pressure on environmentally sensitive sites. The Management and Development Plan for Key Parks and open space will also take account of local and sub-regional Strategic Green Infrastructure Plans (*See also Action under Policy 2.1a regarding green infrastructure*). Include within this a review of the management plans for key parks and open spaces.
- Deliver the Wirral Quality Standard for parks and open space - *see Action under Policy 2.2a.*

- Produce and wherever reasonably practicable implement recommendations arising from a Wirral Parks and open spaces Strategy Annual Performance Report - see *Action under Policy 2.2a*.

**POLICY 1.1b: Develop the role of parks and open space in the local, visitor and ‘staycation’ economy, while protecting the essential environmental qualities that make these spaces special.**

**ACTIONS**

- Work with the borough’s tourism team to deliver a parks and open spaces visitor attraction plan which includes:
  - Optimizing appropriate café facilities at key sites as income generators;
  - linking Wirral’s parks and open space to: (a) good value ‘staycation’ packages for the North West region; (b) the Liverpool visitor experience including the growing ‘super ferry’ onshore tours market; and (c) the ‘Golf Coast’ marketplace, subject to the outcome of the review of Council golf provision; (d) the ‘3 C’s’ market for Coast, Countryside and Cuisine based activities; (e) facilities for sports/activity breaks including parks and open space;
  - public access to toilet provision at key locations, subject to their operation and maintenance being demonstrably affordable and viable.
- Produce and implement an Events Development Plan for parks and open spaces.
- Review beach management policies and licences and implement its recommendations. *See also Action under Policy 2.2a regarding Blue Flag standard.*

**POLICY 1.1c: Parks and open space improve Wirral’s skills base.**

**ACTIONS**

- Include Skills, Training and Apprenticeship Project Opportunities in the Management and Development Plan for key parks and open spaces.

**OBJECTIVE 1.2: Wirral’s parks and open spaces contribute to the good health of its population.**

**Summary of key issues**

The Wirral Parks User Survey 2012 shows that walking, informal exercise, access to nature and relaxation are important - and parks, beaches and open spaces have an important social health function. Activities in parks such as volunteering, dog walking and pram walks have a role to play in tackling depression and isolation including post-natal depression for

example. Changing trends need to be understood, for example the growth in girls and women's football, and new facilities considered - for example new fitness equipment is proving popular. There is scope to build on partnership working and initiatives like the Adult Social Services projects in parks such as Royden Park. There is also potential to explore using appropriate areas of parks and open spaces for growing healthy food, for example in areas with allotment waiting lists.

Public health is a key priority in the Wirral. Parks and open spaces can be beneficial for a range of physical and mental health condition priorities as part of a preventative 'natural health service'. Linking deprived communities and people with health related issues to parks and open spaces is more important than ever. Wirral Council has a public health leadership role, working with valued partners, drawing on evidence such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Sport England's Strategy highlights the importance of encouraging young people to play for a minimum of 30 minutes each week. Providing places for exercise for other age groups is important too, including older people.

**POLICY 1.2a Wirral's parks and open space help provide preventative physical and mental health services for people of different ages.**

***ACTIONS***

Support health improvement projects - including physical infrastructure and community outreach and engagement - for inclusion in the Management and Development Plan for key parks and open spaces.

**POLICY 1.2b Wirral's parks and open spaces will help people aged under 17 develop a lifelong exercise habit through taking part in 30 minutes vigorous sports or other exercise each week.**

***ACTIONS***

- Work with health, school, sport and community partners to increase exercise activities for people under 17 in parks and open spaces.

**POLICY 1.2c Provide sustainable healthy living opportunities in parks and open space for a growing number of older people in the population.**

***ACTIONS***

- Encourage appropriate health-focused facilities and activities for older people in Wirral's parks and open spaces, taking into account evidence of need, economic viability and affordability for users and the council.

**POLICY 1.2d Parks and open spaces help reduce Wirral health deficits through increasing participation rates in exercise and sport.**

***ACTIONS***

- Encourage and enable increased sports and exercise participation by vulnerable people (including those at risk of social isolation) in parks and open spaces.
- Provide and maintain accessible fitness circuits comprising surfaced routes and fitness equipment and active play facilities where sufficient funding is available.

**POLICY 1.2e Use parks and open space to deliver mental health and therapeutic benefits.**

***ACTIONS***

- Encourage appropriate mental wellbeing related events and projects in parks and open spaces, including those run by Social Services and other partners.

**POLICY 1.2f Provide sustainable places, facilities and opportunities for both organised sports and informal recreation and exercise in parks and open space.**

***ACTIONS***

- Commission and implement an updated Wirral Playing Pitch Strategy.
- Work with partners to develop and implement a Sports Coaching Volunteering Plan for Parks and open spaces.
- Liaise with local sports clubs to increase training in appropriate parks.
- Review playground and skate park provision as part of the Management and Development Plan for key parks and open spaces.

**POLICY 1.2g Provide sustainable opportunities for growing healthy food.**

***ACTIONS***

- Produce and implement an updated Wirral Allotment Strategy.
- Work with partners and local communities to identify and implement suitable locations for exemplar healthy food growing projects.

**AIM 2: Wirral's parks and open space are accessible, safe and well-used places which its communities and visitors enjoy.**

**Objective 2.1: Provide access to a network of good quality parks and open spaces for Wirral's communities.**

### **Summary of key issues**

Accessibility standards are important to inform service planning and assessment of green space needs arising from major new developments. Local Plan Core Strategy policies on Green Infrastructure, Quantity and Quality, New Open Space and Settlement Area policies also need to be taken into account, to match provision with future growth areas, and balance pressure on sites. Planning for parks and open space also needs to take account of the Public Rights of Way Plan and local and sub-regional Green Infrastructure and Green Travel strategies and projects - so that any strategic missing links in Green Infrastructure network, for example from parks sites into the 'interior' of mid Wirral, can be remedied.

The Wirral Open Space Assessment and Green Space Audit provides data about the quantity and accessibility of parks and open spaces. While the Wirral generally has a comparatively good or satisfactory provision of public parks and open spaces there are some localised deficiencies in more built up areas, such as lack of access to natural/semi-natural green space in parts of East Wallasey and Birkenhead. The Open Space Assessment also identified a 126 hectare deficiency in access to nature/Local Nature Reserves.

**POLICY 2.1a: Provide an accessible network of parks and open spaces that meets the current and future needs of Wirral's communities, as part of its green infrastructure network.**

### **ACTIONS**

- Support planning policy in Wirral 's Local Plan for quantity and accessibility standards based on a target minimum distance of 400m from people's homes to parks and open spaces, wherever reasonably practicable.
- Remedy localised deficiencies in parks and open spaces through planning applications and other processes.
- Protect and enhance existing green links through Local Plan policy and allocations.
- Work with the Public Rights of Way team and Green Infrastructure partners to identify and remedy strategic 'missing links' for people and wildlife in the Green Infrastructure and Green Travel network between settlements and key parks and countryside locations.
- Review bye-laws and/or user codes for cycling, walking and horse riding and implement recommendations.



**POLICY 2.1b Consider alternative uses for low amenity value green spaces in areas with plentiful supply of parks and open spaces.**

**ACTIONS**

- Identify potential sites for disposal or alternative uses through undertaking a Land Use Reallocation Project.

**OBJECTIVE 2.2: Deliver safe, welcoming, inclusive and well functioning parks and open spaces that are well used and suitably maintained all year round.**

**Summary of key issues**

The rich heritage within Wirral's parks and open spaces should be recognised and where practicable protected, enhanced, promoted and interpreted. The needs of people with disabilities and the needs of 'hard to reach' groups should be taken into account, including provision of accessible paths and equipment as well as provision of mental health outreach programmes. There is a need for activities, events and facilities to engage different generations of people. It is also important to use the right information and communication channels to let different groups know what parks and open spaces have to offer.

Findings from the Wirral Parks User Survey 2012 and the parks and open spaces Stakeholder Workshop (April 2013) showed that the feeling of being safe in parks and open spaces remains an important priority. Performance management was also highlighted as being vital, building on existing Green Flag awards and through work with Friends groups, volunteers and partner organisations to help monitor, maintain and improve standards. It is important for local people, site users, partner organisations and staff to have pride in the sites. As evidenced by the Wirral Parks User Survey 2012, reducing dog fouling, providing suitable visitor facilities where viable and providing seats, bins and play areas makes for positive perceptions of parks and open spaces in Wirral. Feedback from users shows that drainage on some sites still causes difficulties and needs to be improved if possible.

**POLICY 2.2a: Deliver good quality parks and open spaces, achieving a suitable balance of facilities for different user groups. Deploy staff and resources effectively by working with and local people and volunteers, informed by site management plans, operational knowledge and feedback from the Wirral Parks and Countryside Partnership and Performance Board.**

**ACTIONS**

Introduce and deliver the Wirral quality standard for parks and open spaces. The Standard is to achieve a 'Fair' or Good rating for all parks and open space using Green Flag scoring system for all parks, based on the following minimum key site performance principles:

1. Welcoming, with entrance(s) easy to find;
2. Safe for people to use;
3. Generally cared for appearance with evidence of 'TLC' through:
  - 3.1 Tidy and generally litter-free;
  - 3.2 Adequate levels of hard landscape infrastructure, in sound condition;
  - 3.3 Well maintained and designed horticulture, appropriate for the site: e.g. grass and/or plants and/or trees;
  - 3.4 Facilities are well maintained and open as advertised;
4. Appropriate site character and sense of place ('genius loci'); e.g. appropriate types of planting, hard landscape; protection of key landscape and heritage features or vistas;
5. Appropriate balance of amenity and wildlife interest;
6. Any staff are identifiable and approachable;
7. Appropriate involvement of local people and community groups.

Sites will be scored against the following Green Flag criteria, with additional criteria for play and health added:

**1. A welcoming place**

- Good safe access
- Effective signage to and in park
- Something for everyone

**2. Healthy, Safe and Secure**

- Equipment and facilities safe to use
- Secure place for all members of community to use or traverse
- Dog fouling dealt with
- Health and Safety policies in place and reviewed
- Access to toilets, drinking water, emergency equipment

**3. Well maintained and clean**

- Litter and waste management
- Grounds, buildings, equipment well maintained
- Policy on litter, vandalism, maintenance reviewed

**4. Sustainability**

Environment Policy: energy conservation  
 Pesticide use, pollution reduction, horticultural, resource conservation  
 Horticultural and arboricultural standards

**5. Conservation & Heritage**

Natural features - wildlife flora  
 Landscape features  
 Buildings and structures

**6. Community Involvement**

Knowledge of user community and level and patterns of use  
 Community involvement  
 Appropriate provision of recreational facilities

**7. Marketing**

Strategy  
Information to users  
Promotion

## **8. Management**

Management plan - reflects what on the ground  
Financially sound management

Plus additional criteria:

## **9. Health Facilities and Activities & 10. Play Value**

- Review and deliver park and open space site management and development plans in conjunction with Parks Friends, user groups, partner organisations and staff, to an agreed programme and informed by evidence of user needs and site conditions.
- Produce and implement a review of key strategic parks and open spaces heritage sites and assets. Include viable key heritage projects within the Management and Development Plan for Key Parks and open spaces.
- Report on performance to the Wirral Parks and Countryside Partnership and Performance Board. Implement recommendations arising from the Report and Board wherever reasonably practicable.
- Publish a Wirral parks and open spaces strategy Annual Performance Report, including: core sections on Wirral Council Parks and Countryside performance and on delivery of the Parks and open spaces Strategy Action Plan; and a summary of achievements for parks and open space.
- Retain existing Green Flag awards and increase the number of new Green Flag award parks by at least one per year whenever reasonably practicable, in consultation with the Wirral Parks and Countryside Partnership and Performance Board.
- Achieve Blue Flag status for two beaches, subject to meeting criteria including water quality and agreeing a viable seasonal dog exclusion zone on an appropriate part of the beach for part of the year.

**POLICY 2.2b: Wirral's Parks and Countryside workforce is well-motivated, appropriately skilled and focused on delivering the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, Business Plan and the requirements set out in the specific Site Management and Development Plans.**

### **ACTIONS**

- Undertake and implement a review of Wirral Council's Parks and Countryside staff structure, informed by the move to constituency based working, along with customer and partner organisations' feedback, to ensure effective targeting of resources.

- Improve Wirral's fleet of parks and open spaces equipment and machinery.
- Develop and implement a Staff Training and Recognition Action Plan.

**POLICY 2.2c: Address anti-social behaviour issues in parks and open space.**

***ACTIONS***

- Produce and implement a review of appropriate bye-laws and control orders in parks and open spaces, including those for dog control to encourage responsible behaviour by dog owners.
- Produce and implement a user engagement plan to break down inter-generational barriers, for example through outreach work with schools. Include within this a Wirral Green Space Code for socially responsible use which can be used in educational projects.

**POLICY 2.2d: Maximise positive use of parks and open space, in particular addressing under-used sites in built up areas, facilities within sites or times of lower usage. Provide welcoming and vibrant places with the right facilities that can be realistically maintained to a good standard to draw people in.**

***ACTIONS***

- Where viable in terms of maintenance, include ways to increase or improve facilities and activities known to increase footfall in parks, in the Management and Development Plan for key parks and open space.

**POLICY 2.2e Ensure parks and open space are places where people can easily 'connect' to activities, user groups and facilities in their area.**

***ACTIONS***

- Deliver training/briefings for staff and Friends groups on how to 'connect' local people and parks and open spaces users to positive activities, user groups and facilities in their area. For example through being accessible, knowing customers' needs and what information and services are available in their area.
- Develop a Green Spaces Marketing Plan based on survey evidence. Include in this parks and open spaces information 'hubs' such as park visitor centres, online information, use of notice boards and inclusion of Friends groups and partner organisations' parks activities.

**AIM 3: Wirral's parks and open spaces will help engage local communities and bring different generations together.**

**OBJECTIVE 3.1: Engage and empower communities in the design and delivery of parks and open space related events services through working with Friends groups, partner organisations and volunteers.**

### **Summary of key issues**

Wirral has a well established, active Parks Friends network, comprising 47 constituted groups in 2014. These are represented by the Parks Steering Group which meets regularly with the Council's Parks and Countryside team. In addition, the Wirral Parks Friends Forum meets twice a year. The Council's Parks and Countryside staff liaise on an ongoing basis with Friends groups over a wide range of projects and issues.

Key messages from the parks and open spaces Stakeholder Workshop (April 2013) were as follows: Friends groups help develop projects, secure funding and generate income. Friends groups have a key role to play in performance monitoring as a 'critical friend'. It is expected that the role of partners, Friends and volunteers will increase over time, both due to budgets and need. While some groups are active in landscaping and horticultural volunteering, many do not feel they currently have the capacity or desire to take on core ownership and maintenance of parks sites. The type, size and capacity of groups varies - some get involved in 'hands on' tasks and events, some focus more on fundraising. Many sites still do not have Friends groups and some existing groups are interested in helping new ones to get set up or to possibly extend their remit to include nearby sites. There is more scope for groups to network with, advise and support each other. Key questions include how to sustain and build capacity of groups and how to ensure they are as representative as possible of their communities. There is need to balance aspiration with realism and manage expectations, given the future local authority budgetary picture; as well as service delivery and performance management. Wirral Council has a key role in facilitating and communicating with Friends groups. The Council has a key role in preparing site management plans in conjunction with the local community. Some allotment groups expressed an interest in joining Friends Forum. In terms of volunteering, there is demand to develop a broad 'menu' of volunteering opportunities in conjunction with Friends and other partners including Wirral Conservation Volunteers and Community Action Wirral (CAW).

Key messages regarding partner organisations were as follows. Partners can: lever in funding; help provide an evidence base to support investment; provide technical expertise; play a 'critical friend' role in performance monitoring and provide input into service planning; possibly taking on more future management of some sites. This might involve mechanisms like Community Asset Transfer, Community Interest Companies, Social Enterprises and Trusts or a mixture of these. With Wirral Council moving to a constituency based model there is also scope to develop more constituency area-based working.

### **POLICY 3.1a Support and strengthen the work of Wirral Parks Friends Groups.**

#### **ACTIONS**

- Hold regular Wirral Parks Steering Group, Friends Forum and Partnership and Performance Board meetings.
- With partners develop deliver a training programme for Friends groups e.g. task days, events, assessing parks quality, managing volunteers, recruiting and retaining members, funding bids and fundraising and/or other courses to meet identified needs, including networking and skills/information exchange.
- Establish a Friends Group Buddy Plan through which established Friends groups can provide advice and support to new groups to help them set up or expand their remit to sites in their area which do not have Friends groups. At least one additional site per year to be supported by a Friends group.
- Support Friends groups to sustain and refresh their capacity and membership levels through annual Wirral Friends activities and volunteering promotion, linked for example to Love Parks Week or equivalent.

### **POLICY 3.1b Maintain and promote partnership working at strategic and neighbourhood level.**

#### **ACTIONS**

- Engage with relevant environmental bodies and other partners including in the fields of health, education, community safety and sports.
- Engage with relevant neighbourhood bodies, for example Wirral Council Constituency Committees or equivalent.

### **POLICY 3.1c Provide a menu of volunteering opportunities in parks and open space.**

#### **ACTIONS**

- Develop and implement a menu of volunteering opportunities with partners including Friends Groups and Voluntary and Community Action Wirral. Opportunities may include a range of activities from, for example, administration and publicity to fundraising, events organisation and practical conservation tasks.

## **OBJECTIVE 3.2: Education and aspiration**

### **Summary of key issues**

In terms of education, key messages from the Parks and open spaces Stakeholder

Workshop (April 2013) were as follows. Parks and open spaces have an important role to play in lifelong learning 'outside the classroom' and skills acquisition for local people, users and staff. Parks can provide opportunities for horticultural, ecological, historical and sporting education. There is scope to modernise the environmental education offer and link to schools' curriculum requirements through initiatives such as Forest Schools and Beach Schools.

Parks and Countryside Rangers have an important role to play in environmental education. In addition, the Council and partners can provide work experience opportunities in parks and open space to help increase local people's skills and life chances.

**POLICY 3.2a Encourage environmental, horticultural and sports education programme in parks and open space in partnership with local schools and other partners.**

**ACTIONS**

- Encourage the development and delivery of a programme of cost effective environmental education projects using parks and open spaces. The programme will be developed in partnership with local schools and or colleges and link to their curricula. As part of this programme a 'Wirral Schools Adopt a Park' scheme will be piloted and developed where appropriate, including opportunities for education, activities and conservation tasks.

**AIM 4: Wirral's parks and open spaces contribute to the environmental sustainability and biodiversity of Wirral, achieving a good balance of use by protecting sensitive habitats while supporting economic growth.**

**OBJECTIVE 4.1: Fulfil the Biodiversity Duty in Wirral's parks and open spaces.**

**Summary of key issues**

Biodiversity provides important economic and health benefits to people in Wirral. More than two thirds of visitors highlight the Borough's natural assets as the reason they view Wirral as a better than average location (Wirral Visitor Research Study, 2011). Wirral Parks User Survey 2012 showed that seeing wildlife is an important reason why many people visit local parks and open spaces. More than two thirds of people rated nature and wildlife protection as good or very good in Wirral's parks and open spaces.

From Natterjack Toads at Red Rocks to bee-friendly meadows, many of Wirral's parks, countryside and coastal sites are rich in biodiversity, providing habitats for plants, birds and animals and opportunities for access to nature for people, with the associated therapeutic and educational benefits. Wirral Wildlife (the Wirral branch of Cheshire Wildlife Trust) surveys local Sites of Biological Interest (SBI's) on a 10 year rolling programme, which informs the site review process undertaken by the Local Sites Partnership. Biological

Records are fed into the Cheshire Local Record Centre by the Wirral branch of Cheshire Wildlife Trust. When the Trust monitors a site owned by the Council, copies of the reports are given to site managers.

Parks and open spaces of note for nature conservation include Thurstaston, Dibbinsdale and Heswall Dales Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs) which are managed under Higher Level Stewardship, agreed with Natural England. Wirral's internationally designated sites around the coast are also SSSIs and are subject to Natural England's monitoring, management and reporting requirements.

Local authorities, including Wirral Council, have a statutory Biodiversity Duty which requires the following: incorporating biodiversity conservation into strategies; participating in local biodiversity partnerships to deliver Local Biodiversity Action Plans; promoting beneficial land management for biodiversity; ensuring up to date biodiversity data is available to the local authority through the Local Record Centre for example; identifying Local Sites of importance for biodiversity; and supporting access to nature and biodiversity education.

With anticipated pressures on future local authority budgets the ten year strategy needs to look realistically at opportunities to 'green up' existing assets through less intensive maintenance of appropriate sites or parts of sites. This will mean finding solutions which strike a suitable balance between enhancing biodiversity and also maintaining amenity value and leisure uses for local people, through working with Friends groups, Councillors and partner organisations. Priorities include conservation and enhancement of key habitat types such as heathland, grassland, woodland, ponds and wetland.

It is important to have regard to local and sub-regional green infrastructure strategies and opportunities, including possible biodiversity offsetting opportunities. Nature in parks and open spaces also offers a myriad of opportunities for Rangers, Friends and partners to engage with and provide educational opportunities for local communities.

**POLICY 4.1a Fulfil statutory duties including the Wirral Council's Biodiversity Duty and requirements for management Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and European designated sites. Use the Local Wildlife Site System to inform site management and land use policy.**

***ACTIONS***

- Develop and implement a 'Wild About Wirral' project to deliver more nature friendly site management where appropriate, balanced with protecting core site amenity and recreational use.
- Implement site management plans including those for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), European designated sites and Local Sites of Biological Interest (SBIs).
- Include within the Management and Development Plan for Key Parks and open space a programme of habitat protection, enhancement and creation projects for priority habitats and geologically important sites including coast, heathland,



wetlands, meadow and woodland for bees, birds, amphibians and other species, in line with the local Biodiversity Action Plan.

- Deliver sub-regionally significant area nature projects, in line with Local Nature Partnership endorsed strategies, where appropriate and viable.

## **OBJECTIVE 4.2: Wirral's parks and open spaces address climate change issues and deliver environmental sustainability.**

### **Summary of key issues**

The parks and open spaces strategy needs to take account of Borough wide strategies and policies including the Climate Change Strategy, Environmental Management System (EMS), Shoreline Management Plan, Coastal Strategy and Floods and Water Management Act.

Long term climate forecasts (Climate UK), indicate a likelihood of higher average temperatures and more seasonal extremes. This might include a decrease in summer rainfall and an increase in heat waves, and/or an increase in 'flash' rainfall resulting in more flooding, higher sea levels and waterlogged soils. There is therefore a need to build climate adaptability into the maintenance of Wirral's parks, open spaces and coastal facing sites. This will in turn impact on the selection of species for planting, choosing specimens that are resilient to unpredictable weather conditions. Sustainable drainage capacity in parks and open spaces will be increased and there will be a need to improve drainage of sports pitches and a potential need for more irrigation in summer months where funding is available. The strategy also needs to take account of the North West River Basin Management Plan in order to help optimise water quality and ecological status of rivers and streams in parks as well as in Wirral's estuaries. Site management and development will need to accommodate wetter winter conditions and drier/hotter summer conditions, for example better provision of shading. There will also be a need for flexible deployment of staff and resources in response to greater and more unpredictable seasonal variations.

There is potential to improve and promote the environmental sustainability of parks and open spaces and associated buildings and operations, for example, using low emission machinery/vehicles where possible. Wirral's parks and open spaces can play an important role in reducing the borough's carbon and environmental footprint through for example recycling and composting of parks waste, encouraging local food growing; exploring biomass planting and micro-generation of energy if viable and appropriate to sites. In addition, encouraging cycling, walking and public transport use where appropriate.

**POLICY 4.2a Parks and open space help alleviate flood risk while protecting their core amenity and recreational uses.**

### **ACTIONS**

- Seek funding for a Programme of Sustainable Drainage Projects at suitable parks and open spaces and implement where appropriate as part of specific site management and development plans.

**POLICY 4.2b Increase the environmental friendliness of parks maintenance operations**

**ACTIONS**

- Increase composting and recycling in parks and open space operations.
- Favour use of fuel efficient, low emission vehicles and machinery.

**POLICY 4.2c Deliver low carbon exemplar parks sites and buildings.**

**ACTIONS**

- Develop at least four low carbon, low emission projects, subject to funding.

e.g. energy efficient retrofitting, new building/s, changes to parks and open spaces site management.

**AIM 5:**

**Wirral's parks and open space will be funded, delivered and managed through an innovative and viable business model, based on a sound understanding of customer needs, site and service capacity, trends and technology.**

**OBJECTIVE 5.1 Have a sustainable, strategic, efficient and accountable business model. Make best use of Council and partner roles and resources.**

**Summary of key issues**

The parks and open spaces Stakeholder Workshop (April 2013) identified the need for realism and a new, stable business model based on the ten year budgetary outlook.

In terms of business model key questions include:

- i) what is the likely future funding level and what can be realistically achieved
- ii) how to get the best out of parks and open spaces in austerity conditions
- iii) how to realistically achieve most effective deployment and targeting of resources

The possibility of an expanded future role for partner organisations, self management of some facilities by user groups, Community Asset Transfer, Community Interest Companies, Social Enterprise and Trust are also pertinent issues to explore.

Income generation and increasing fees and charges to cover the full cost of the services provided are likely to play an increasingly important part of the future business model for

Wirral's parks and open spaces.

**POLICY 5.1a Achieve a viable funding model for Wirral's parks and open spaces.**

**ACTIONS**

- Produce and implement medium term Parks and Countryside Operations and Budget Plans for the periods 2015-2018 and 2019-2023 including financial savings to be made and introduction of new income streams arising from the Land Use Reallocation Project.
- Within this planning include consideration of alternative delivery options such as: self management by clubs of football pitches and bowling greens; introduction of social enterprises, community interest companies or moving the operation of the borough's parks and open spaces to one or more Trusts.
- Develop and implement a parks and open space Foundation Fund (or site specific funds) to enable people and organisations to donate money for the promotion, care and improvement of parks and open spaces, for example as legacies through their wills.

**POLICY 5.1b Optimise the appropriate use of parks and countryside buildings.**

**ACTIONS**

- Reduce the number of depots and buildings in use by the parks and countryside service by working with the community asset transfer team to find suitable uses for empty or underused parks and countryside buildings, without jeopardising the operational effectiveness of the team.

**Policy 5.1c Maintain an effective evidence base about parks and open space use, customer needs and quantitative needs assessment to inform service planning.**

**ACTIONS**

- Obtain and analyse information about Green Space users and non-users through a borough wide public Parks and Open Spaces User Survey every three years, supplemented by other Council, Friends group and partner organisations user survey data.

**Policy 5.1d Achieve fair fees, charges and income generation which are reasonably affordable for both service user and service provider.**

**ACTIONS**

- Develop and implement a programme of income generation opportunities for parks. Include within this a review of Fees and Charges and Policies for Events to achieve full cost funding for all activities in parks and open spaces.

- Review Parking Charges in appropriate parks and implement recommendations.

**Policy 5.1e Any potential disposal of surplus sites or parts of sites will be subject to assessment against the following criteria and will be subject to community consultation.**

**Criteria**

- An acceptable supply of parks and open spaces is maintained in line with the (400m) access standard. Disposal of a site or part of a site will not create a local deficiency measured against this standard.
- An acceptable level of essential amenity and function is preserved in the locality overall - for example for access, play and sport.
- Efficient targeting of resources is achieved within the locality to deliver the Wirral Quality Standard.
- Local biodiversity and landscape character is taken into account, with particular reference to local landscape or townscape character assessment and biodiversity targets and duties.

**ACTIONS**

- Appropriately assess and publicly consult on any potential site disposals prior to implementation.

**OBJECTIVE 5.2 Provide versatile, appropriate, innovative and cost effective parks and open spaces for the benefit of local people.**

**Summary of key issues and needs**

To provide cost effective, well managed parks and open spaces in ways which help maintain and increase local pride and resident satisfaction, active lifestyles and associated economic benefits, there is an ongoing need to review and where appropriate adopt new working methods and technology.

**Policies and actions**

**Policy 5.2a Deliver services which are fit for purpose.**

**ACTIONS**

- Deliver policy-responsive working that identifies and responds effectively to changing needs, for example introducing new types of activities and new facilities and equipment - such as fitness trails.

- Use, and share, efficient and effective technology for site inspections, mapping, logging of repairs, fleet management, taking payment and bookings and providing information about facilities, activities and events in parks and open spaces.

## ACTION PLAN WIRRAL PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY 2014-2024

Wirral Council, Friends groups and partner organisations will work together to deliver the following actions.

Action	Target/Indicator	Target Date	Lead body/ies/(Officer) Key resources needed/comments
<b>Policy 1.1a Wirral's parks and open space are an important part of Wirral's quality of life and 'brand' and attract investment in parks, jobs and the wider economy.</b>			
Produce and deliver a Management and Development Plan for Key parks and open spaces	Deliver the projects in the Plan	Produce CIL Schedule: 2014  Produce the Plan: 2015  Deliver the Plan: 2016-2023	Council Parks and Countryside Team /Various Partners
Deliver the Wirral Quality Standard for parks and open spaces	See Action under Policy 2.2a.		
Produce and implement Wirral Parks and open spaces Strategy Annual Performance Report	See Action under Policy 2.2a.		
<b>Policy 1.1b Develop the role of parks and open space in the local, visitor and 'staycation' economy, while protecting the essential environmental qualities that make these spaces special.</b>			
Produce and deliver a Visitor Attraction Plan for Parks and open space	Deliver the actions in the Plan	Produce the Plan: 2016  Deliver the Plan: 2016-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team /Destination Marketing
Produce and implement a Major Events Development Plan for Parks and open space	Deliver the actions in the Plan	Produce the Plan: 2015  Deliver the Plan: 2015-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team /Destination Marketing
Complete a Review of Council Golf Provision on the Wirral and implement its recommendations	Deliver the recommendations	Complete the Review: 2014  Deliver the Review recommendations: 2014	Wirral Council
Review beach management policies and licences and	Deliver the recommendations	Complete Review: 2014	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Coastal Partners

implement its recommendations		Deliver recommendations: as per Review milestones	
<b>Policy 1.1c Parks and open space improve Wirral's skills base.</b>			
Include skills, training and apprenticeship project opportunities in the management and development plans for key parks and open spaces.	Deliver the management and development plans for key parks and open spaces	Produce the Programme: 2015  Deliver the Programme: 2016-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Friends Groups/Training and Education Partners
<b>Policy 1.2a Wirral's parks and open space help provide preventative physical and mental health services for people of different ages.</b>			
Support health improvement projects for inclusion in the management and development plan for key parks and open spaces.	Deliver the Programme	Produce the Programme: 2015  Deliver the Programme: 2016-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Health Partners/Friends Groups
<b>Policy 1.2b Wirral's parks and open space help get people aged under 17 into the lifelong exercise habit through undertaking at least one 30 minute vigorous exercise session per week.</b>			
Work with health, school, sport and community partners to increase exercise activities for people under 17 in parks and open space	Develop and deliver activities in partnership	Develop and deliver activities in line with partner programme timescales 2014-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team /Children and Young Peoples Services/Sports Development/Sports and Health Partners
<b>Policy 1.2c Provide sustainable healthy living opportunities in parks and open space for a growing number of older people in the population.</b>			
Encourage appropriate health-focused facilities and activities for older people in Wirral's parks and open spaces, taking into account evidence of need, economic viability and affordability for users and the council.	Develop and deliver activities in partnership	Develop and deliver activities in line with partner programme timescales 2014-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team /Friends Groups/Social Services/Sport and Health Partners
<b>Policy 1.2d Parks and open space help reduce the health inequalities gap on the Wirral through increasing participation rates in exercise and sport.</b>			
Encourage and enable increased sports and	Develop and deliver activities in	Develop and deliver activities in line with	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Social

exercise participation by vulnerable people (including those at risk of social isolation) in parks and open spaces.	partnership	partner programme timescales 2014-2024	Services/Sport and Health Partners
<b>Policy 1.2e Use parks and open space to deliver mental health and therapeutic benefits.</b>			
Encourage appropriate mental wellbeing related events and projects in parks and open spaces including those run by Social Services and other partners.	Deliver and deliver activities in partnership	Produce the Review: 2016  Deliver recommendations: 2017-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team)/Social Services/Health Partners
<b>Policy 1.2f Provide sustainable places, facilities and opportunities for both organised sports and informal recreation and exercise in parks and open space.</b>			
Commission and implement an updated Wirral Playing Pitch Strategy	Produce and implement the strategy	Produce the strategy 2014-15  Implement the strategy: 2016-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Sports Development/ Sport Partners
Work with partners to develop and implement a Sports Coaching Volunteering Plan for Parks and open space	Develop and Deliver Activities in partnership	Develop and deliver activities in line with partner programme timescales 2014-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Sports Development
Liaise with local sports clubs to increase training in appropriate parks	Develop and deliver activities in partnership	Develop and deliver activities in line with partner programme timescales 2015-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Sports Development/ Sport Partners
Review playground and skate park provision as part of the management and development plans for key parks and open spaces	Deliver management and development plans for key sites	Produce the plan 2015 Deliver the plan 2015-2024	Wirral Parks & Countryside Team/Friends Groups/Childrens and Young Peoples Services
<b>Policy 1.2g Provide sustainable opportunities for growing healthy food.</b>			
Produce and implement an updated Wirral Allotment Strategy	Deliver the Strategy	Produce the Strategy: 2014  Deliver the Strategy: 2015-2023	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
Identify and implement suitable locations for exemplar healthy food	Implement new sites	Identify new sites: 2015	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Local Food and Health



growing projects		Implement new sites: 2016-2024	Partners/Friends Groups/Allotment Groups and-or Societies
<b>Policy 2.1a Provide an accessible network of parks and open space that meets the current and future needs of Wirral's communities, as part of its green infrastructure network.</b>			
Support planning policy in Wirral's Local Plan for quantity and accessibility standards based on a target distance of 400m from people's homes to parks and green spaces wherever reasonably practicable.	Produce Planning Policy	In line with Local Plan timetable	Forward Planning Team
Remedy localised deficiencies in parks and open spaces through response to planning applications and other processes	Remedy localised deficiencies	By 2024, through planning application processes, working with partners	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Forward Planning team/Biodiversity Partners
Protect and enhance existing green links through Local Plan policy and allocations	Enhance green links	Target and monitor through Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Forward Planning team/Public Rights of Way/Biodiversity Partners
Identify and remedy strategic 'missing links' to parks and countryside sites in the Green Infrastructure and Green Travel network	Deliver 'missing link' projects	Identify projects, possibly as part of CIL Schedule: 2014  Deliver the projects as funding becomes available between 2015 and 2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Forward Planning team/Public Rights of Way/Highways/Travel Partners/Developers
Review bye-laws and/or user codes for cycling and horse riding and implement recommendations	Deliver Review recommendations	Produce Review: 2015  Deliver recommendations: 2016-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Public Rights of Way/Friends and User Groups
<b>Policy 2.1b Consider alternative use of low amenity value green spaces in areas with a plentiful supply of green space.</b>			
Identify and implement potential sites for alternative use through a Land Use Reallocation	Identify sites	Assess sites 2014  Implement agreed alternative uses: 2015-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Biodiversity and Sustainability Partners

Project.			
<b>Policy 2.2a Deliver the highest possible quality standards for Wirral's parks and open space to achieve a good balance of facilities for different user groups. Effectively deploy staff, resources and volunteers, informed by site management plans, operational knowledge and feedback from Wirral Parks and Countryside Partnership and Performance Board.</b>			
Deliver the Wirral Standard for parks and open space quality	Deliver the standard	2015-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Friends Groups/Partners
Review and deliver park and open space site management plans in conjunction with Parks Friends and user groups and maintenance staff	Annually update: All candidate Green Flag site management plans plus 4 other Parks and Countryside site management plans (e.g. 1 per each Constituency Area per year, different sites each year)	Review target number of management Plans annually: by 31st January each year prior to Green Flag submission deadline for Green Flag candidate sites; and by June 30th for non-Green Flag candidate sites	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Friends Groups
Produce and implement a Review of key strategic parks and open spaces heritage sites and assets	Implement the Review	Produce the Review: 2017  Implement the Review: 2017-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Heritage Partners/Friends Groups
Publish a Wirral Parks and open spaces Strategy Annual Performance Report to the Wirral Parks and Countryside Partnership and Performance Board. Implement recommendations where practicable	Publish Annual Performance Report	Report annually each Autumn to Wirral Parks and Countryside Partnership and Performance Board	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Partnership and Performance Board
Retain existing Green Flag awards and increase the number of new Green Flag award parks by at least one per year whenever reasonably practicable, unless otherwise agreed with the Wirral Parks and Countryside Partnership and Performance Board	Achieve target number of Green Flag awards	Annually by July (subject to Green Flag judging timetable)	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Friends Groups

Achieve Blue Flag status for two beaches, subject to meeting criteria including water quality and agreeing a viable seasonal dog exclusion zone on an appropriate part of the beach for part of the year	Achieve Blue Flag status for two beaches	Achieve Blue Flag status for one beach by December 2016 and Blue Flag status for a second beach by December 2019.	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Coastal Partners
<b>Policy 2.2b Wirral's Parks and Countryside workforce is well-motivated, skilled and focused on delivering the Strategy and Service Plan.</b>			
Undertake and implement a Review of Wirral Council's Parks and Countryside staff structure	Implement the Review	Produce the Review: 2014  Implement the Review: 2014-2015	Wirral Council
Improve Wirral's fleet of parks and open spaces equipment and machinery	Procure equipment and machinery	2014	Wirral Council
Develop and implement a Staff Training and Recognition Action Plan	Implement the Plan	Produce the Plan: 2015  Implement the Plan: 2016-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
<b>Policy 2.2c Address anti-social behaviour issues in parks and open space.</b>			
Produce and implement a review of appropriate bye-laws and control orders in parks and open space, including for dog control	Implement Review	Produce Review: 2015  Deliver recommendations: 2016-2017	Wirral Council
Produce and implement a user engagement plan to break down inter-generational barriers, including a Wirral Green Space Code	Implement the Plan	Produce Plan: 2016  Implement the Plan: 2017-2024	Wirral Council/Community and Education Partners

<b>Policy 2.2d Maximise positive usage of parks and open space, in particular addressing under-utilised sites, facilities within sites or times of lower usage. Provide welcoming and vibrant places with the right facilities that can be realistically maintained to a high standard to draw people in.</b>			
Undertake and implement a Review of Council-run and partner-run events and activities programme and policies	Implement the Review	Produce the Review: 2015  Implement the Review: 2016-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
Where viable in terms of maintenance, include targeted provision, maintenance or increase in facilities known to increase footfall in parks, where viable in terms of maintenance in the management and development plan for key parks and open spaces	Deliver the management and development plans	Produce the Plan: 2014  Deliver the Plan: 2015-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
<b>Policy 2.2e Ensure parks and open space are places where people can easily 'connect' to activities, user groups and facilities in their area.</b>			
Deliver training for staff and Friends on how to connect parks and open spaces users to activities, user groups and facilities in their area	Deliver training	2016	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team /Health and Volunteering Partners
Develop a Green Spaces Marketing Plan	Deliver the Plan	Produce the Plan: 2016  Implement the Plan: 2017-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team /Destination Marketing/Communications
<b>Policy 3.1a Support and strengthen the work of Wirral Parks Friends Groups.</b>			
Hold regular Wirral Parks Steering Group, Friends Forum and Partnership and Performance Board meetings	Hold the meetings	As per groups' terms of reference	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Friends
Develop and deliver a	Deliver the training	2014-2023, dates to	Parks Steering Group/Parks

training programme for Friends groups		be agreed by Parks Steering Group/Parks Friends Forum	Friends Forum/ Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
Develop and implement a Friends Group Buddy Plan	One site per year with a new Friends group	Annually	Parks Steering Group/Parks Friends Forum
Have an annual Wirral Friends promotional week	One week per year	Annually	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Parks Steering Group/Parks Friends Forum
<b>Policy 3.1b Maintain and promote partnership working at strategic and neighbourhood level.</b>			
Engage with relevant environmental partnership bodies and other partners including in the fields of health, education, community safety and sports	Hold Partnership and Performance Board meetings	Ongoing, frequency as per groups' terms of reference	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Various partners
Engage with relevant neighbourhood bodies, for example Wirral Council Constituency Committees or equivalent	Appropriate partners to attend Council Constituency Committee meetings	Ongoing, frequency as per groups' terms of reference	Wirral Council /Various partners
<b>Policy 3.1c Provide a menu of volunteering opportunities in parks and open space.</b>			
Develop and implement a 'menu' of volunteering opportunities in parks and open spaces	Implement a 'menu'	Produce a menu: 2016 Implement a menu: 2017-2024	Community Action Wirral/ Friends Groups/Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
<b>Policy 3.2a Provide an environmental, horticultural and sports education programme in parks and open space in partnership with local schools and other partners.</b>			
Encourage the development and delivery of a programme of cost effective environmental education projects using parks and open spaces, including a 'Wirral schools adopt a park' .	Deliver the Programme	Produce a Programme: 2015 Implement a programme 2014-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Education partners

<b>Policy 4.1a Fulfil statutory duties including the Wirral Council's Biodiversity Duty and requirements for management Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and European designated sites. Use the Local Wildlife Site System to inform site management and land use policy.</b>			
Develop and implement the 'Wild About Wirral' project to deliver more nature friendly site management	Deliver projects	Identify projects: 2014  Deliver projects: 2015-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Friends Groups/Biodiversity Partners
Implement site management plans including for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), European designated sites and Local Sites of Biological Interest (SBIs)	Implement management and development plans for SBI/SSSI sites	Milestones to be confirmed with partners	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team//Biodiversity Partners
Include within the Management and Development Plan for Key Parks and open space a programme of habitat protection, enhancement and creation projects for priority habitats	Deliver projects	Identify projects: 2015  Deliver projects: 2016-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Friends Groups/Biodiversity Partners
Deliver sub-regionally significant area nature projects, in line with Local Nature Partnership endorsed strategies, where viable	Deliver projects	Timescales to be confirmed with Local Nature Partnership	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Biodiversity Partners
<b>Policy 4.2a Parks and open space help alleviate flood risk while protecting their core amenity and usage.</b>			
Seek funding for a Programme of 4 Sustainable Drainage Projects at key strategic parks and open spaces locations (as part of site specific management and development plans)	Deliver projects	Identify projects: 2015  Deliver projects: 2016-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Sustainable Environment Partners

<b>Policy 4.2b Increase the environmental friendliness of parks maintenance operations.</b>			
Increase composting and recycling in parks maintenance operations	Target(s) as agreed for Wirral Council's Environmental Management System	Milestones as agreed for Wirral Council's Environmental Management System	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team /Sustainable Environment Partners
Use more fuel efficient machinery	Machinery to be brought into operation	2014	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
<b>Policy 4.2c Deliver low carbon exemplar parks sites and buildings.</b>			
Develop and deliver a minimum of four major low carbon parks site or building projects. These could include energy efficient retrofitting, new build or parks site management	Three major low carbon parks site or building projects  Council's Environmental Management System targets	By 2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team /Sustainable Environment Partners
<b>Policy 5.1a Achieve a viable funding model for Wirral's parks and open space.</b>			
Produce and implement medium term Parks and Countryside Budget Plans for the periods 2015-2018 and 2019-2023	Produce and Implement budgets	Produce budgets: 2015 and 2019  Implement budgets: 2018 and 2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
Develop and implement a parks and open space Foundation Fund (or site specific funds) to enable people to leave money through their wills for the care/enhancements of specific parks.	Implement Foundation Fund	Implement Fund/s: 2014-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
<b>Policy 5.1b Optimise the appropriate use of parks and countryside buildings.</b>			
Reduce the number of depots and buildings in use by the Parks and Countryside Team through a buildings optimisation programme	Deliver programme	2014-2024	Wirral Council's Community Asset Transfer Team and Parks & Countryside Team

<b>Policy 5.1c Maintain an effective evidence base about parks usage, customer needs and quantitative needs assessment to inform service planning.</b>			
Undertake Parks User Survey	Undertake the Survey	2015, 2018, 2021	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
<b>Policy 5.1d Achieve fair fees, charges and income generation which are reasonable and affordable for both service user and service provider.</b>			
Develop and implement a programme of income generation opportunities for parks and open spaces.	Deliver Programme	Produce Programme: 2014  Implement Programme: 2015-2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team
<b>Policy 5.1e Any potential disposal of surplus sites or parts of sites will be subject to assessment against the following criteria and will be subject to community consultation.</b>			
Appropriately assess and publicly consult on any potential site disposals prior to implementation	Assess any proposals against criteria and consult on them	Timescales to be confirmed	Wirral Council
<b>Policy 5.2a Deliver a service which is fit for purpose.</b>			
Deliver policy-responsive maintenance that adapts to changing demands and needs, for example new types of facility or equipments such as fitness trails	Deliver appropriate maintenance	Ongoing to 2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team/Appropriate partners
Use and share efficient and effective technology for site inspections, mapping, logging of repairs, taking payment and bookings and providing information on facilities, activities and events in parks and open spaces	Use relevant technology	Ongoing to 2024	Wirral Council Parks and Countryside Team