

Wirral Council

Parks Allotments and Countryside Service

Ashton Park

Management Plan (2022-2027)

Updated: January 2025



Ashton Park May Fair 2022

Management Plan written and updated by:	Date:
Christine Smyth and the Friends of Ashton Park	January 2023
Management Plan authorised by:	Date:
Anthony Bestwick	January 2023

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Introduction

Wirral Council has produced this document in conjunction with the Friends of Ashton Park to provide a comprehensive framework for the future development of the site.

We encourage suggestions from park users and the wider community to this plan.

For further information or to submit any suggestions contact the Parks and Countryside Service at Wirral Council by email christinesmyth@wirral.gov.uk or write to:

Wirral Council
Parks, Allotments & Countryside Service
Grand Entrance
Birkenhead Park
Park Road North
Birkenhead
CH41 4HD



A rainbow over the park 2022

The Wider Policy Context

Wirral Council's Parks and Countryside Service are based within the Neighbourhood Services Department of Wirral Council. The content and structure of the management plan has been informed by the following guidelines:

cabe.org.uk/files/parks-and-green-space-management-plans.pdf

[Raising the Standard: The Green Flag Awards Guidance Manual \(Keep Britain Tidy, 2016\)](#)

Corporate Objectives

The Council's Vision is that Wirral will be a place where the vulnerable are safe and protected, where employers want to invest and local businesses thrive, and where good health and an excellent quality of life is within the reach of everyone who lives here.

The Wirral Plan agreed by cabinet in September 2021 sets out a series of pledges which the Council and its partners will work to achieve by 2026 focussing on 5 key themes:

- Inclusive Economy
- Safe and Pleasant Communities
- Sustainable Environment
- Brighter futures
- Active and healthy lives

The Wirral 2021-26 plan is available to download online [here](#)

Parks and Countryside Service Objectives

The department's role is to protect the environmental quality of key locations across the borough to influence investors to operate their businesses and encourage new investors. Parks and countryside site maintenance and land uses will be re-aligned where appropriate to achieve resource and economic efficiencies whilst promoting health, social and environmental benefits to our communities.

The Parks and Countryside Service have produced a 10-year Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2014-2024). It is available online [here](#) (awaiting an update)

The Strategy sets out how Wirral Parks and Countryside Service will aim to provide attractive and well managed parks and open spaces, whilst being accessible; and providing positive and healthy activities for all local people, communities, and visitors to enjoy and to attract and retain investment in the borough.

The service also intends to contribute to the environmental sustainability and biodiversity of Wirral to achieve a good balance by protecting habitats while supporting economic growth.

Environmental Initiatives

Wirral Council is committed to carrying out its work in an environmentally responsible manner.

Wirral Council declared an Environment and Climate Emergency at Council in July 2019 and through this committed to action to address the ecological and climate crisis that we face.

The commitment to action aims to:

- cut climate damaging pollution locally in line with global targets, whilst developing resilience to more extreme weather patterns and rising sea levels that impact Wirral
- protect and enhance biodiversity

As a local authority, we can have a positive influence through:

- how we organise our operations and services
- the regulations and policies we set
- the goods and services we buy
- the investments we make
- the example we set to others.

Tackling the ecological and climate crisis presents major opportunities locally to improve quality of life, health, wellbeing and the economy.

Some key initiatives include:

Designating Pollinators and wildflower sites

A large proportion of pollinators are flies, including more than 250 species of hoverfly. Bees make up about a quarter of the pollinating insects and in the UK alone there are approximately 250 species of bee, 24 species of bumblebee, 225 species of solitary bee and just one species of honeybee. Butterflies and moths are also pollinators as well as bugs and beetles.

In line with the council's Climate Emergency Response, steps are being taken to prioritise pollinators. Dependant on the location of a verge, pollinators are prioritised in various ways, these methods can include:

- planting pollinator friendly plants
- not mowing grass verges when wildflowers of significance are in season
- reduced weed removal in the area of pollinator sites

More information can be found online here: [Pollinators](#)

No Mow May

Throughout the month of May, the council takes part in the national No Mow May campaign, <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/campaigns/nomowmay/> which is about stopping mowing in general grass areas in parks to help bees, butterflies and wildlife.

Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland strategy

The Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy is a vital part of the council's efforts to tackle climate change.

There have been a number of achievements since the strategy launched in July 2020. These will help to protect, regenerate and care for Wirral's existing stock. More trees, hedgerows and woodlands have also been planted.

[Read more about the progress of the Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy](#)

Strategy vision statement - 2020 to 2030

In the ten-year span of this strategy over 210,000 trees will be planted, at least 21,000 per year. In doing so we will replace many times over the number of trees unavoidably lost. The trees that are planted will see Wirral's tree canopy cover doubled by the time they are fully grown.

We will adopt the principle of 'the right tree for the right place' to ensure the most resilient tree population possible. We will establish a clear picture of Wirral's tree stock and its benefits. We will work constructively with individuals and groups to deliver this vision.

[View Wirral's tree strategy and 'A Greener Wirral' strategy summary](#)



Model Boat Club sailing on the park lake during the Ashton Park May Fair 2022

Site Information

Name: Ashton Park

Typology: Major Park

Primary purpose:

Intensively managed park of greater than local significance, providing accessible, high quality opportunities for formal and informal recreation and children's play including community events.

Location plan:



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Address: Westbourne Road, West Kirby, Wirral, CH48 7EX

Grid reference: 321583 386418

Ward: West Kirby and Thurstaston

Size: 5.22 Hectares

Brief description:

Ashton Park is a premier park in Wirral both in terms of standards (has had Green Flag status since 2003), use, and the number of events that take place.

Ashton Park is separated into the upper and lower sections by the Wirral Way Country Park, which was formed from the redundant West Kirby to Hooton railway line in 1974. The Wirral Way combines with Ashton Park to offer users an attractive town park and an eleven-mile trail through the Wirral countryside parallel to the foreshore of the River Dee.

Access:

The park has a gate linking directly into the adjacent Westbourne Hall Community Centre and to the Guide Hut with which close partnerships have been formed. The Guide Hut provides the focus for visits from guide groups from all over the country.

The park is a short walk from the town centre, promenade, railway station and bus stops.

The Wirral Way is a linear country park running from the town centre for 13 miles all the way to Bidson.

Cycling and walking connections are excellent.

While the park has no dedicated car parking there is plenty of space available in surrounding streets.

Tenure

The majority of the park is owned and managed by Parks Allotments and Countryside Service. A section alongside Church Road remains within the Diocese of Chester ownership and includes the lodge. Wirral Council leases this church land, known as Glebeland.

Features and facilities:

- Children's play area
- Multi use games area
- 2 bowling greens with bowling pavilions
- 5 grass and 2 tarmac tennis courts
- Rose garden
- Lake
- Formal and informal gardens
- Park lodge
- Imposing gateways
- Teashop and toilets
- Grass junior football pitch
- Variety of native and non-native trees
- Footpath links to Wirral Way
- Litter bins
- Benches
- Picnic tables
- Finger post signs
- Notice boards
- Interpretation boards

A Brief History

The park was first mentioned in the minutes of Hoylake and West Kirby Urban District Council in 1896 and was laid out between 1899 and 1901. Henry Ashton, a wealthy Liverpool merchant who, in 1841, lived at Manor Farm in the Old Village of West Kirby, originally owned the land. The land was later leased from a Miss Emma Mary Ashton, his granddaughter, with the addition of a section of church Glebeland along the Church Road boundary. Initially both areas of land were leased but eventually on the death of Miss Emma Mary Ashton in 1935, then resident in Kensington, London, the Hoylake and West Kirby Urban District Council purchased the bulk of the land.

The Friends continue to research the history of Ashton Park and the background to the Ashton family as local landowners, Liverpool merchants and Wigan industrialists. This research has been used to issue an Ashton Park historical trail and subsequently publish a new account of the history of Ashton Park replacing Barbara Mason's book "A Little Oasis"



Historic view of lake, St Bridget's Church and Church Road bridge over the railway

Progress was slow and the Upper Park was still being laid out in October 1901. In 1901 the Lodge was constructed and the first head gardener appointed.

A number of sports were introduced only after the opening including quoits, tennis, bowling and croquet. The park was used for various events and entertainments such as Coronation celebrations, bands, carnivals, flower shows and children's sports. A further activity was introduced in 1981 with the setting up of the Wirral Model Boat Club.

A tradition of international tennis tournaments grew up initially in the 1970's with Virginia Wade, Margaret Court and Yvonne Goolagong. Displays and interpretation boards are set up in the Upper Park notice board to inform people of the history of Ashton Park.

They were revived in the 1990's when stars such as John McEnroe and Boris Becker visited as a warm-up to Wimbledon. The history of tennis in the park is currently being researched and photos, old programmes and other information is being collected. However in general the tradition of events in the park had, by this time, long-passed.



Edward "Teddie" Hadwin, Ashton Park's second Keeper. In post for 35 years, he retired in 1946, and lived with Annie and his 3 sons in the Lodge.

West Kirby – The town has grown from a small coastal village of local significance only. During the late 19th century, the area developed (aided by the arrival of the railway) into a wealthy commuter suburb and day-tripping centre with a promenade, open swimming pool and marine lake. Its role as a commuting suburb for the Wirral and Liverpool has continued to grow. The town falls within two administrative wards – West Kirby and Thurstaston and Hoylake and Meols containing approximately 32,000 people in total with a further ward (Royden) providing a hinterland to the built-up area of West Kirby containing a further 16,000 people.

Formation of the Park Friends Group

The Friends of Ashton Park was formed in 1991 largely to promote the renewal of the playground in partnership with Wirral. The centenary of Ashton Park was marked in 1996 (somewhat prematurely as this date reflected the date when the park was first suggested at a local Council meeting rather than the opening of the new park in 1901) with a May Fair and a week of events and the May Fair has continued uninterrupted since then.

The development of community links has been a priority of the Friends group, aiming to foster good working relationships with the community. The group has a membership of over 120.

The FOAP have developed an events programme, including band concerts, and recognising the ongoing reduction in parks staff, their volunteers wing has been launched,

History of Usage

Ashton Park is a very well used facility with over 500,000 users a year and in a typical week over 10,000 persons use the park (more when special events are held). The main findings of a 2003 market research (utilising counts and the circulation of 1200 questionnaires) were: -

- Of the 10,000 persons a week using the park, 5,000 are children, 2,200 adults of working age and 2,800 retired.
- Sundays have the highest use.
- The park has strong links with the Wirral Way in terms of usage.
- 42% of people use the park on a daily basis, 75% on a weekly basis.
- The park has a strong role beyond West Kirby – only 39% of users come from West Kirby, 62.5% from the rest of Wirral, 2.5% from the rest of Merseyside and 6% from outside Merseyside.
- The park was highly rated by respondents with the bowling facilities and playground particularly appreciated.
- There was support for the retention of its current character.
- Areas of concern were maintaining standards of maintenance and security, improving the water quality of the lake, improving the toilets and tearoom, extending the playground and providing more entertainment and events. These were all addressed in the Management Plan and it is interesting to look back and see that good progress has been made toward these goals.

A further market research exercise was undertaken in 2009 covering user characteristics and views on the park and future improvements. This confirmed the popularity of the park and high approval rating but also underlined the desire to see improvement of the following: toilets, seats, flowers/shrubberies/bulbs, the condition of the lake, maintenance of railings and gates, security, the tearoom and tennis facilities.

New and updated information is always required to keep market information up to date.



New notice board in the upper park (2021) showing a display of historical photos



Green Flag criteria and assessment

The intention is for the park to continue to meet the required standards as defined by the **Green Flag Award Scheme**; further details concerning the scheme can be found at <https://www.greenflagaward.org/>

The following Green Flag assessment criteria will be used as a focus for the development of the park.

1. A welcoming place
2. Healthy, safe and secure
3. Clean and maintained
4. Environmental Management
5. Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage
6. Community involvement
7. Marketing and Communications
8. Management

1. A welcoming place

Ashton Park provides a draw for people from all over the Wirral attracted by the facilities, its atmosphere and feeling of safety; on average 10,000 persons a week use the park. The Friends of Ashton Park and Wirral are working together to improve the quality and range facilities as well as organise more events and entertainment.

Most of the street entrances have substantial original sandstone pillars and iron gates. The original park-keeper's lodge near the entrance off Westbourne Road is tenanted and well maintained.

All eleven entrances provide easy access for the mobility-impaired, including wheelchairs.

Entrances improvement programme

A programme of improving and replanting entrances is ongoing.

Access between the upper and lower park was poor, so to address the problem Wirral Council constructed a new cross-park access in 2005 to provide a clear, mobility-impaired route to the correct standards and to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1997.

The Wirral Way was upgraded in 2011 to a standard that provides a safe mobility-impaired route to the park from West Kirby. The elderly and park users with scooters and wheelchairs have praised these improvements. Easy access on the pathways within the park is extensive and a programme of repair of the tarmac where roots have lifted the surface is undertaken every winter on a rolling programme basis.

In 2014 the main Wirral Way entrance to Ashton Park was upgraded with sponsorship by the FOAP and Wirral Council. It included new fencing, raising the pathway (to prevent flooding), a soak-away, clearance of undergrowth and the installation of a carved oak gateway. This welcomes people into Ashton Park and references its railway line heritage.

The local information map at West Kirby station shows the park and the route to it; entrance posts on the Wirral Way direct visitors to Ashton Park.



Gateway to the Wirral Way 'before and after' installed 2014

Signage the main entrances on Westbourne Road and Carpenters Lane have large Ashton Park signs to welcome users.

Heritage style fingerposts have been erected at strategic locations to guide new visitors and remind people the park is in two sections.



Highway signage gives directions to the park from the promenade and Grange Road.

Noticeboards throughout the park are used for various displays of information, including the advertisement of community events.

Activities in the Park have been highlighted in successive market research exercises. Support for maintaining its quality and traditional feel while providing more activity was emphasised – so one of the aims of this plan is to expand activities and further reinforce the role of Ashton Park as a welcoming place for the community.

A balance is provided between quiet and noisier activities – football and tennis are grouped together in the Upper Park, the Secret Garden provides for quiet contemplation, the playground, family kick-about and picnic area are within a single field - the lakeside and bowling-greens provide further quiet areas.

Screening from trees and hedges reinforces the separation of activities without significant conflict between users, and without compromising the feeling of personal safety.

Toilets: Toilets are open on weekdays and Saturdays (staff hours) and are also opened on Sundays when the Friends or Bowling Club are present.

The Friends of Ashton Park Tea Shop: The Friends staff the teashop on Sunday afternoons. Funds are raised to improve the Park. Other community groups are encouraged to run the teashop on Saturdays and in school holidays.



Lower Pavilion Refurbishment Back in 2007 pavilion refurbishment was seen as a medium-term objective, and it is a testament to the consistent vision of those involved that the improvements have become a reality. The vision was to extend the teashop working area, provide a new bowlers kitchen, convert the central room into a large multi-purpose room for use by the bowlers, Wirral Council and FOAP, as a meeting room, for historical displays, training room for gardening staff and a room for teashop users in winter.

Seating Wirral Council accepts donations to dedicate new benches to loved ones. New seats are being installed to a standard design, with the eventual aim of a full suite of matching benches. 3 picnic tables were installed in the playground as a response to comments from families using the playground.

Staff training is important to raise the standards of the park and encouraging staff to be ambassadors for the park. Volunteers are also encouraged to engage with users and undertake training when available. Tool box talks are provided to volunteers by council staff.

Achievements

WELCOMING PLACE

- Life in Ashton Park has returned to normal after the release of the Covid restrictions and the holding of events and maintenance activities has restarted :-
- New Upper Park notice board is now being used for rotational displays of historical photos (planning of a railway/Wirral Way theme to mark the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Wirral Country Park in 2023)
- New dolphin woodcarving in the Glade area completed
- Bulb planting undertaken in specific areas (lakeside slopes, bank by the terracing and Upper Park slope below top pathway) to extend spring displays
- Tree surgery has continued to lighten shaded areas and open up sightlines round the lake, Wirral Way entrance and children's playground
- Return of a full programme of band concerts in 2022 after Covid suspension during 2020/1
- May Fair took place again (first since 2019 due to Covid restrictions)
- Willow tree pollarded to maintain area for model-boating at pavilion end
- Cherry Avenue tree failures removed and replanted with a mix of species
- Creation of Queen's Platinum Jubilee Bed in Upper Park



2. Healthy, safe and secure

Dog fouling

The whole of the Wirral Borough is designated under Dog Control Orders (that implement section 55 and 56 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005) these provide increased levels of enforcement for five offences prescribed in a dog control order, these are - failing to remove dog faeces, not keeping a dog on a lead, not putting a dog on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised officer, permitting a dog to enter land from which dogs are excluded and taking more than a specified number of dogs onto land. Failure to comply can result in a prosecution and a maximum fine of up to £1,000.

Signs are provided at entrance points indicating the park is a 'clean it up' area at the entrances. Dog walkers are advised to wrap the droppings and place in a litterbin. Dog fouling is classified in law as litter for street cleaning purposes and can be disposed of correctly wrapped in Council litterbins consequently dedicated 'dog waste only' bins are not provided by the Council. Many dog walkers do use the park's litterbins for the disposal of removed faeces. The waste bins are 'hooded type' as they are also used for dog waste.

Dogs are excluded from entering the play area, which is fenced and signed appropriately.

In 2016 two fixed penalty notices were issued in Ashton Park for dog fouling offences, by Wirral's anti-social behaviour team.

The mess left by the increasing population of wildfowl has been noted and population levels are being monitored. The need for special cleaning of wildfowl faeces off the main lakeside path will be kept under review.



Upper park shrub bed adopted by the Friends volunteer group

Anti-social behaviour

Wirral Council's Community Patrol is established to provide a 24 hour response to any concerns regarding anti-social behaviour on Council land. They provide a reactive response to calls from the public and Council staff and generally they do not undertake routine patrolling. Problems of a persistent or on-going nature can also be raised with the team. Contact: 0151 666 5265.

The Friends encourage their members to report incidents of anti-social behaviour and vandalism to the police. They provide extra 'eyes and ears' for Wirral Council.

Graffiti incidents are quickly reported by the gardeners or the Friends for quick action. An immediate response is instigated for graffiti of an offensive or obscene nature.

The Gardens are covered by Byelaws, made under Section 164 of the Public Health Act, 1875.

Incident reports compiled by Wirral Council's Community Patrol are made available to the Parks and Countryside Service and are provided to the General Manager.

Tree Inspections

Vulnerable trees are identified by the site staff as part of daily patrols and reported to the General Manager, and Parks Tree Officer, whereupon urgent safety work is carried out directly as needed.

Three-yearly tree inspections are made by the Council's dedicated tree inspectors, and urgent works are carried out directly.

Conservation and amenity tree work is carried out where resources allow, by the operations teams as part of the winter works programme.

For details on council owned trees near to or overhanging private property, please refer to the councils policy published on the Council website available at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/transport-and-streets/roads-highways-and-pavements/highway-maintenance/highway-trees>



Tree damage, Church Road, after storm Arwen 2021

Infrastructure

Site staff carry out regular inspections to identify defects within the park that present a safety problem for users, staff and adjacent residents. The following items are appraised:

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

The Council's day-to-day repair system and relevant contractors or onsite staff undertake any repairs requested.

An annual audit of condition of all the pathways is undertaken with a view to prioritising any repairs, largely for safety reasons. Any necessary repairs are carried out under the parks planned preventative maintenance programme. In most years there will be work done to the tarmac paths, often because of tree root damage or wear and tear.

Any major repairs or refurbishment can be included or considered as part of the council's planned preventative maintenance programme or included on the Council's capital programme.

Accumulations of leaves can create risks in the autumn and these are cleared with blowers and brushes by the site-based staff.

Site safety inspections

Annual site safety inspections are undertaken annually, and any necessary repairs are initiated immediately by the Team Leader or Area Park Manager.

Workplace inspections also take place annually, in conjunction with the relevant unions, to ensure the workplace is meeting the required health and safety standards.

Pavilions and buildings are subject to regular water checks, to ensure the risk of disease is kept low.

PAT testing takes place regularly on all electrical appliances.

Fire safety is inspected annually, including fire extinguisher testing, by a designated specialist company.

The defibrillator in the park is inspected regularly by parks staff, and repairs/batteries ordered if needed.

Wirral Council's Health and Safety Policy is regularly reviewed and updated. Annual safety inspections are carried out by the Team Leader/General Manager.

Activities: A range of activities are accommodated, for example – walking, running, orienteering, bowls (Victoria, West Kirby Ladies and West Kirby Park Bowling Clubs), model boating, tennis, junior football, five a side football, U3A bowls, LTA sponsored tennis training, children's playground and basketball. These are largely contained in different areas insulated by paths, grass and trees. The scope for more is limited without creating an over-population of activities. It is the aim of Wirral Council and Friends to maximise use within these constraints while protecting the existing and future character of the park.

The children's playground is the most popular attraction in the park. The safety of the playground is of crucial importance and is inspected weekly by trained playground maintenance operatives. Necessary repairs are undertaken immediately or the item is taken out of use. A written log of each inspection is kept and defects logged and actioned.

The playground was reconstructed in 1996 and a further upgrade was undertaken in 2009 meeting the latest standards with input on new equipment from the local guides and major funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families and Awards for All and an additional activity unit was provided for very young children in 2010.

Cycling is discouraged because of the threat to children and older people on the pathways and generally incidents are few.

A sense of security is provided by gardeners who help to reduce the potential for misuse or anti-social behaviour. This feeling is reinforced by the high use of the park and its use as a route to and from the town centre. The increased use of the park is a priority for the Friends in organising activities and events and marketing. The feeling among people that it is safe and secure are the foundations of a popular park. Well-used parks are safer and most importantly feel safer.

Security is an issue for all age groups and happily the incidence of security concerns and incidents is small although the perception of people is difficult to change. The presence of the gardeners assists in this, bowlers during the season, opening of the teashop on weekends and the presence of Friends as regular users of the park.

Good sightlines allow better supervision of areas such as the Upper Park bowling green that can on occasions suffer misuse. Key sightlines have been identified and have now been opened up as part Winter Works tree programmes. Good sightlines also encourage the full variety of user groups to use the sports facilities.

The gardeners hold a **First Aid** kit and staff have attend regular training. A first aid kit is held in the gardener's messroom and also in the Friends teashop. First aid training is renewed regularly. A defibrillator is available and is checked every two weeks by council staff.

Pest control is provided via a monthly service contract with the Council's Pest Control Team that ensures rats are kept under control and any increase in population is addressed.

Achievements

HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

- Footpath repairs have been undertaken in priority locations
- Establishment of liaison with new Tree Team
- Removal of willow tree from under the Lake wall stonework and footpath (cut back and treated)
- Undertaking of electrical checks, FIRE extinguisher and water safety checks in park buildings
- Undertaking of annual site safety check by Team Leader and Area Park manager
- Tree surveys to identify failing and dangerous trees (including Cherry Avenue)
- Removal of dangerous/failing trees and tree branches that pose a danger to the public or are life-expired
- Crown-raising of trees across the park, removal of low branches and opening up of sightlines including around sports areas, to prevent groups of people being excluded due to feeling insecure
- Fencing replacement along the boundary with the Wirral Way (including children's playground fencing)
- Repair of toilets (roofing and flooring)



Steps to the upper park were re-bedded in 2021 and a handrail added

3. Clean and well maintained

Considerable investment took place in the park in 2016/17 to establish it as a base a Parks Local Area Team. This has led to an increased presence of staff, although successive spending reviews have led to an overall reduction in staff over a number of years.

Horticultural maintenance is carried out in accordance with the 'Ashton Park Service Requirement' (Appendix 3).



Rose beds in Upper Park

Resources Available for Maintenance of the Park

Day to day park maintenance is managed by the Local Area Team Leader, with a mobile team based in the park consisting of two grounds maintenance supervisors, three gardeners, a tractor driver and one ranger (see section 9). The team were relocated into the park in 2017 following a major re-organisation of the Parks Service along geographical lines. A further reorganisation took place in 2021 following a reduction in resources, when staff numbers were reduced.

In view of the close relationship between Council staff and the Friends Group, frequent inspections are held involving the Local Team Leader, General Manager and the Friends. This is a chance to talk over all issues relating to standards, specific tasks, development plans, Friends projects and problems with users. The aim of these inspections is to develop teamwork and understanding between all the parties and ensure togetherness rather than an “us and them” atmosphere.

Horticulture

The Friends undertake gardening work, planting bulbs and primulas, maintaining the Memorial rose Garden and developed a show of hydrangeas adjacent to the Lower Park Bowling Green.

Replanting of rose beds is undertaken when the condition of each bed merits it.

The condition of the shrubberies, invasive ground cover and self-sown saplings is continually in need of improvement and this is now being addressed through the replanting programme as part of a rolling programme of clearance and cleaning up of shrubberies. A rolling programme is focusing on filling gaps in past planting, pruning and shaping over-sized shrubs, and upgrading the planting at all the entrances. It is recognised that this will take some years.

The park has a substantial level of hedging and privet. Internal hedges are regularly cut or shaped by a trained gardener. Those externally are cut by a mechanical trimmer as necessary.



The lake in January

The lake requires occasional dredging due to accumulation of silt, rotting leaves and bread used as duckfood. This has not been undertaken for many years and as a result the water quality deteriorates in the late summer months. The FOAP installed fountain which has relieved this problem over the past decade but the level of silt now blocks the pump so it is not operational. This will be reviewed when the lake is next dredged. Emergency oxygenating pumps are used when necessary.

Dredging is an expensive operation which requires planning. Ideally the lake requires dredging on a 10-15 year cycle.

Seating is being replaced gradually to a consistent design. Members of the public can apply to the General Manager or the Friends Group if they wish to make a donation toward a new bench. A rolling programme of refurbishment is underway.

Footpaths have in places been invaded by tree roots and erupted – a reflection of the age of the park and the amount of trees. Sections are identified for repair and removal of the roots on an annual basis and included in the Winter Works programme.

Buildings maintenance

Buildings on the site are the responsibility of the Council's Asset Management Team and regular inspections are made by the Team Leader and Area Manager. Repairs are carried out via the Council's day-to-day repair system or the planned preventative maintenance and renewals programme. Day-to-day repairs (such as vandalism or leaks) are issued to the council's main contractor, or can be outsourced to contractors on a pre-selected list. Significant renewals (such as the work necessary on the pedestrian footbridge over the Wirral Way) are the subject of bids for inclusion in planned preventative maintenance programmes.

The building stock found in the park includes the main services block / lower bowls pavilion, the ladies bowling pavilion, a tennis pavilion, upper park toilet and storage shed and compound storage units used by model boaters and Friends.

A considerable amount of work has been undertaken on buildings in recent years – retiling of the tennis pavilion in 2011, repair of flat roofs on the Lower Park and Upper Park pavilion, the Upper Park toilet roof (2015), repainting of Upper and Lower Park pavilions (2014/15), refitting of the

Upper Park Pavilion kitchen (2015), refurbishment of the toilets (2022/3) and the refurbishment of the Lower Park Pavilion (2016).



Resurfacing work to upper park 2019

Achievements

CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED

- Removal of willow tree from under the Lake wall, stonework and footpath (cut back and treated)
- Removal of trees from adjacent to lake in preparation for dredging work.
- Replacement of fencing along the boundary between the Wirral Way and the Park
- Renovation the historic Lodge Gates at Westbourne Road entrance.
- Repainting of external Pavilion woodwork by volunteers
- Continued maintenance of rose-beds in the Upper Park by volunteers
- Continued shrub shaping programme across the park
- Maintenance of wood-carvings recommenced (transferred to volunteers from wood-carver)
- Consideration of options to improve drainage in the Upper Park
- Work to control the spread of the invasive Pendulous Sedge and Alexander's plants continuing
- Upper Park pavilion repairs after vandalism and water leak
- Tree Team has undertaken tree management work in various parts of the park
- Fencing replacement along the Wirral Way (including children's playground fencing)
- Planning of maintenance work on railway gateway (removal and repair in workshop)
- Planning of litter campaign through FOAP

4. Environmental Management

Water and energy consumption at the park is monitored and where necessary modification is made to minimise wastage, thereby achieving economies in usage in line with the Council's Environmental Policy and Carbon Reduction Programme 'Cred'.

Pesticide usage at the park is minimised, and glyphosate is no longer used anywhere in the park.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (C.O.S.H.H.) assessment records of the chemical based products used within the park together with pesticide records are retained at the district depot at Arrowe Park. Chemical storage and usage within the park complies with the requirements defined within the current pesticide handling legislation.

Motorised mowing equipment used at the park is checked for emission levels. The council has been gradually introducing battery powered tools, that minimise HAVS issues and reduce fossil fuel use.

Green waste is separated and composted where possible for reuse in the park. Chipped green waste is either left on site to decay, or removed to Arrowe Park depot where it is stored and sold for use as renewable energy. Any waste timber or metals recovered are also separated for reuse/recycling at the depot.

There are plans to construct bays for the recycling and reuse of green waste at the park.

Pest management is delivered under contract with that service within the Council and complies with the required regulations.

Throughout the month of May, the council takes part in the No Mow May campaign, which is about reducing mowing in general grass areas to help bees, butterflies and wildlife. Selected areas in Ashton Park are left to grow from the end of April until the mid-June.

The main rose beds are mulched with well-rotted farmyard manure during the winter.

Sustainable materials are utilised in the park as much as possible with the main item being seating.

A review by the FOAP of the opportunities for solar power on the tearoom, other buildings suggests that there is not a viable or practical basis for using these technologies at the present and that limited resources are better applied to the repair, renewals and improvement of buildings but opportunities will be reviewed as part of these schemes.

Achievements

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

- Desilting project completed
- Research into lake aerating system has commenced (visit to Birkenhead Park)
- Proposal for underground watering systems for bowling greens for inclusion in Council funding programmes (climate change)

5. Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

The design of the park was laid down many years ago and this design still suits the function of the park and range of activities.

The original design features that were laid down in 1901 remain although the green landscape has matured. More recently shrub beds and trees have become over mature in some areas and require replacement as and when funds become available.

Some of the original built features remain including the prominent and welcoming sandstone gateposts with iron gates and lodge.

The character and landscape of the park is to be retained (this approach is backed up by the results of market research) while seeking improvements that respect the heritage and character, using materials, fittings, plants and facilities that lie comfortably within this template.

Nature Conservation:

The ranger is available to lead groups, give walks and talks on the topic of nature conservation, for example regular early evening bat walks.

There are many informal areas set aside for nature conservation, and the site is adjacent to the Wirral Way. An area of grass is set aside to take part in the 'now-mow-may' initiative.

A new lavender bed to commemorate the Queen's platinum jubilee will benefit bees and other insects.

Ashton Park Lake

The lake is one of the principal features of the park except during hot and dry periods when the water condition can deteriorate. The lake gradually accumulates leaf fall that affects the condition of the water.

The lake requires periodic dredging. This is an expensive operation which requires planning. The parks service while it does not have sufficient resource to fund dredging, is able to bid for capital funding from the Council's wider pot.

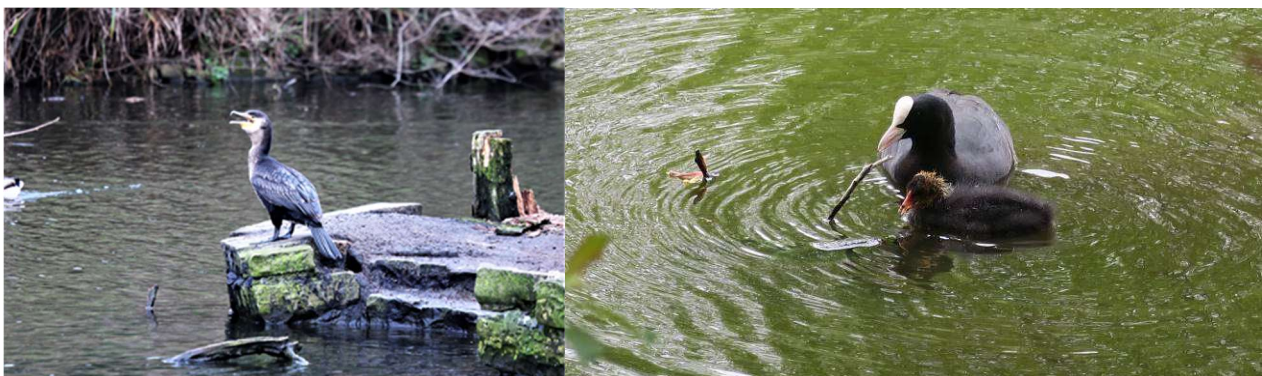
Marginal vegetation at either end of the lake provides interest, and encourages more insect life (such as dragonflies) and will help to improve water quality. However to date the planting has not taken, possibly because of uprooting of the plants by ducks or water quality.

The willows growing out of the banks of the lake are a feature that is enjoyed by many visitors, however they require periodic cutting back to reduce silting and they have a negative effect on the historic stone edging.

The levels of Canada Geese and mallards in some years can become a problem and this is being monitored. The Canada Geese and Mallards occasionally breed on the island. Occasional species such as Grey Wagtail, Tufted Duck, Pochard, Black Swan, Mute Swan, Mandarin, Snow Goose and Shoveler visit.

The installation of small roosting and nesting boxes on the island will, it is hoped, protect the smaller species and encourage new breeds. Measures to encourage restraint by visitors in the feeding of bread have been taken - the sale of wildfowl food has commenced at the teashop to encourage responsible feeding.

An information board has been installed by the Dunraven Road entrance close to the lake to increase understanding of the wildfowl species on the lake and a display on wildflowers has been posted on the upper park notice board. Rotating displays covering events, the railway, tennis tournaments and projects are posted on the upper park noticeboard.



Cormorant and coot chicks on the park lake

Trees

There are a wide variety of trees and these have been surveyed. An annual survey of the condition of tree stock is undertaken and pruning, removal and replanting is actioned as part of the Winter Works programme.

Replanting takes place according to the Wirral Tree Officer's tree planting programme. While memorial trees are not permitted in the park, donations to replace trees are accepted. A mixture of indigenous and introduced species is being used to widen diversity and colour.

Ground Flora

Wildflower planting has previously been carried out in the Secret Garden in with guidance and seed mixes from the National Wildflower Centre, however the meadow now requires re-instating and options are being considered.

Wildflowers have been planted in rose beds that have been withdrawn from rose planting to provide more sustainable floral displays.

A good range of wildflowers can be found despite the substantial area of maintained grassed areas. A survey and photographic record has been undertaken and the production of a leaflet will be considered.

The Friends and local Guides have planted cowslips and primroses on the lakeside and they have remained well established.

Bulb planting is a priority and English Bluebells, snowdrops, aconites, cyclamen and daffodils have all been planted involving Friends volunteers, the St Bridget's Sunday Club and local children.



Volunteers young and old planting bulbs



A wide range of fauna is present including grey squirrels, hedgehogs, foxes, voles, mice, pipistrelle bats as well as a wide variety of birds. Bird boxes were first installed in 2005. Further batches have been directed at more special varieties of birds such as tawny owls, house sparrows, treecreepers and nuthatches. Bat boxes have also been installed.

Log piles are left in secluded areas to encourage diversity of fungi and insects.

Built Heritage:

Original artefacts from the built environment remain - sandstone gateposts, gates, the cast-iron box by the Dunraven Road entrance, sandstone edgings to the lake, as well as assorted pavilions and buildings. The pedestrian footbridge over the Wirral Way, refurbished in 2011 is believed to have been installed in 1925.

Building maintenance is the responsibility of the Council's Asset Management team. The park has benefitted from extensive recent investment in the upper and lower park pavilions (2015/16), and the creation of a new depot at the park to house the Local Area Parks Team.



Sandstone gateposts at Westbourne Lodge entrance – gates renovated 2022

There is no evidence that there was ever a bandstand in the Upper Park although there may have been a temporary performance platform. Nevertheless it remains a long term aspiration of the Friends to introduce a bandstand for use in their programme of concerts and other events.



Viking encampment and battle re-enactment 2022

Over the years, the Friends group have installed a set of historical display boards on the park. A heritage trail leaflet is being planned to promote the park, to aid self-guided walks and organised events.

Events are publicised on the Council's website and by use of posters
<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-events>

Appeals are regularly made for information and photos of the park in the past to assist in research and publications/talks on the history of the park. Purchase of old photos, postcards and maps commercially supplements this source.

Research into the history of the park progressed to a point in 2017 where the Friends were able to begin installing interpretation boards around the park covering topics such as the development of the park, the early years of the park, Why Ashton Park, tennis, the West Kirby tank, bowling, the lake and the railway.

Achievements

CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

- Removal of willows growing through the historic lakeside stone wall
- New Lectern Style Interpretation Board covering "The Lodge and Head Gardeners" who lived there installed
- Continuation of research on the history of Ashton Park (mostly using the British Newspaper Archives on line)
- Renovation of Lodge gates in 2022
- Preparation for repainting of other Park gates
- New Upper Park notice board is now being used for rotational displays of historical photos (planning of a railway/Wirral Way theme to mark the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Wirral Country Park in 2023)

7. Community involvement

The role of the Friends of Ashton Park

Community involvement involves a good understanding of the market the park serves, involvement in the park to make it an inclusive part of the community, opening up of the park to as wide a range of activities as possible. It also involves seeking out grants and trust funds that will support the activities of the FOAP in organising events and funding improvements to the park.



Audience for brass band concert

Market research by the Friends, most recently in 2009 has formed the foundation for improved links with the local community within West Kirby and farther a field and has assisted in creating the management plan. Studies always require updating.

The formation of the Friends in 1991 gave a community voice in the management of the park and the committee aims to maintain the profile and ambition of the Friends as a group of people with the desire to make a difference within the local community. The Friends seek to maintain their understanding of the community needs by expanding membership, joining other local organisations, presenting a welcoming face to the public through the teasshop, encouraging events and by a frequent presence in the park. This work is supported by Wirral Council staff and local councillors.

Involvement in local issues and the establishment of links with various organisations is a priority for the Friends. They are involved in local debate and provide a public and local interface between councillors, Wirral officers and the public. Through this commitment to communication, the Friends are able to influence local decision-making and ensure the needs of Ashton Park and other open spaces are taken into account.

Model Boating Club: Wirral Model Boating Club are based in the park, and have regular events on Thursday afternoons. They also hold special events on weekends throughout the year.

Bowling Clubs: Three bowling clubs occupy the two bowls pavilions in the park.

The Park as a focus for community activity

The achievements of the Friends group have been exemplary: open-air theatre, cinema, brass band and jazz concerts, the fairs have been expanded in size and attractions, a grassed performance area created near the teasshop, fingerpost signs installed, new notice boards and

interpretation signs have been erected for information, information provided on wildlife and topical issues, a feature fountain in the lake and good progress is being made on replanting to improve the appearance and interest in the park.

The holding of concerts has been eased with the purchase of a performance tent and a public address system and the conversion of the disused shed in the Upper Park for the storage of the tent and chairs. Electricity has been reconnected adjacent to the tennis courts to facilitate the open air cinema. The supply also helps with other events in the upper park.

The Friends group aim to open the tea shop on Saturday and Sunday afternoons throughout the year, staffed entirely by volunteers, to raise money for the park.

The May Fair is a major local community attraction, with 3000-4000 people attending.

Community organisations take an interest with carol concerts, club tea parties and days out.

Sports development

The competition tennis courts have been converted into a junior league football pitch (hired by West Kirby Panthers).

A multi-use games unit containing a five a side football pitch and basketball court was completed in 2007 and has proved to be incredibly popular with all ages.

Buggy fitness classes are popular, and take place in the park in the summer led by Council staff from West Kirby Concourse Leisure Centre: <https://wirralleisure.co.uk/activities/>

An orienteering course has been set up with assistance from the Deeside Orienteering Club. The course is aimed at introducing schools, guides, scouts and other groups to the sport.

A Boules court was built in the upper park in 2013. Two teams have been established who can use the tennis pavilion.

Education provision

The ranger for West Kirby, Thurstaston and Heswall is available to lead educational visits; the newly renovated pavilion is a resource which has the potential to support education use.

The ranger also supports volunteers and students working towards Duke of Edinburgh Awards at various levels. The park managers and friends recognise the importance of links with community, school and youth organisations (such as the guides, beavers, St Bridget's School and other primary schools, St Bridget's Sunday school, First Contact and the Churches Together.

The Friends developed a tree trail that is on sale at the cafe.

A series of interpretation boards have been installed, and others are in various stages of planning and design.

Work Placements for Students

Work experience placements with the team is sometimes possible. The service also has an apprentice scheme. Further information is available on request.



Tennis Camp in the upper park



Social bowling, May Fair 2022

Achievements

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- FOAP working groups established working twice a month focusing on adopted areas and miscellaneous tasks
- Regular inspections for vandalism and encouraging community reporting
- Planning of new planted bed and pathway in memory of Barbara Mason (author of “A Little Oasis” book on the origins of Ashton Park)
- Monthly FOAP committee meetings now back to normal, new Chair elected for 2023
- May Fair took place again (first since 2019 due to Covid restrictions)
- Meeting with Parks Senior Manager to improve high level relationships after closure of Friends Forum
- Full programme of bowling and model boating activities return to the park after Covid restrictions
- Planning for better links with local schools (litter campaigns, musical events etc)
- Continuation of newsletter publication
- New sealife carving of a dolphin installed



8. Marketing and Communications

The Wirral Council web site www.wirral.gov.uk has information about Ashton Park. The Parks and Countryside Service's homepage now includes links to information about Wirral's Green Flag parks. A website was set up by the Friends in 2005 <http://www.ashtonpark.btck.co.uk/> Work is always needed to keep the website up to date.

Market research is the basis of any marketing in giving an understanding of the users and their needs. Market research was undertaken in 2003 and 2009 and the analysis report is available for inspection on request. Further work is always needed to keep the information up to date.

Community links have been expanded by the Friends to reach the community more effectively. A newsletter (available to non-members in the teashop) has been produced twice a year since 2003, and in 2014 an additional e-mail newsletter covering topical issues and events was launched. An AGM is held for members including a topical guest speaker.

Also Barbara Mason's book "A Little Oasis" is on sale in the teashop. The Friends give talks on the park's history, nature and activities.

Information on events is important to ensure good attendances, raise funds and give credit to our sponsors and grant agencies. Press coverage is issued for events and posters are posted extensively in the local area and farther afield.

A Community Notice board has been erected by the teashop for other organisations to use. It is hoped this will further raise the profile of the park in the local community.

In 2014 the FOAP began taking part in Wirral's annual 'Heritage Open Days' event. Heritage Open Days are an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the local history and heritage. It is an opportunity for the doors of history to be opened and the heritage inside to be revealed and celebrated.

The Friends group have a membership of around 120. The regular news letter written and prepared by the group gives local people news about the park, and an opportunity to contribute to local decision making.



BANDS in the PARK 2022

29 May

Peninsula Jazzmen

12 June

"Like a Hurricane"

3 July

Mold Town Concert Band

24 July

Ellesmere Port Concert Brass Band

11 Sept

Port Sunlight Lyceum Brass Band

Upper Park, Ashton Park

2 – 4 pm Free Entry

Donations Welcome

Bring a blanket and brolly

Tea shop open for refreshments



Achievements

MARKETING

- Upgrade of FOAP website completed
- Maintaining e-mail and newsletter contact with members
- Continued circulation of the Friends regular newsletter



'Clear Signal' play in the park 2022

9. Management

Resources available for maintenance and management of the park

The management of the park is the responsibility of Wirral Council's Parks, Allotments and Countryside team. Following a major restructure in 2015 the parks service was reorganised on into geographical areas. There was a further reorganisation in 2021 to make budget savings. The local team is managed by the Local Team Leader for West Kirby and Heswall. The Local Team Leader, two Grounds Maintenance Supervisors, a mobile team of 3 Gardeners and one Ranger are based on-site at the park.

- General Parks Manager
- Local Team Leader for West Kirby and Heswall based in the park
- 2 Grounds Maintenance Supervisors
- 3 Gardeners
- 1 tractor driver
- 1 Ranger
- Range of tools and machinery
- 2 flat back vans with trailers
- 1 small van
- Further tools, machinery and storage at Arrowe Park depot
- Vehicle repair and maintenance depot in Birkenhead
- Support from the Council's tree team and tree contractor Mancoed
- Wirral asset management team who maintain buildings
- Volunteers, placement students

Enquiries about the management of the park should be directed to the West Wirral General Parks Manager: christinesmyth@wirral.gov.uk

The Parks and Countryside Service like other public services around the country is experiencing budgetary pressure and face challenging times to deliver service improvements. Increasing emphasis on commercialisation will be a challenge for council staff and voluntary groups alike.

The Friends of Ashton Park play an integral part in the management of the park with regular communication in person, by email and at regular monthly meetings.

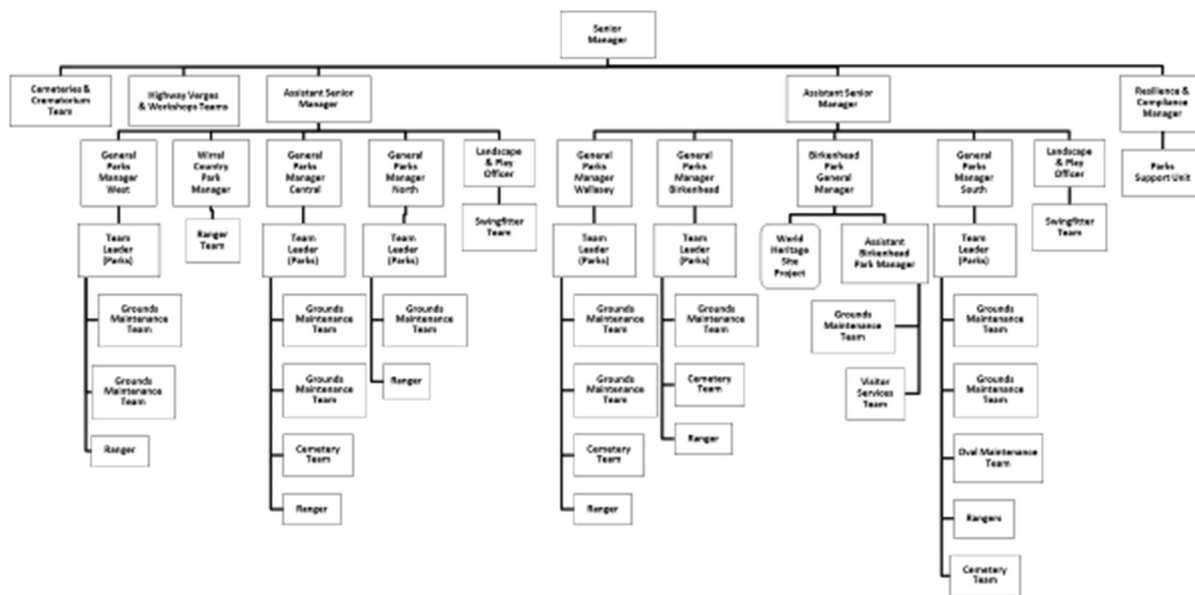
Implementing the management plan

The Friends meet regularly on the first Friday of each month with Wirral Council Staff, and hold an annual meeting to agree updates to the management plan as part of the annual Green Flag reapplication process.

List of grant organisations from which funds have been received:

- Awards for All
- Department of Children, Schools and Families
- Grassroots Grant
- Green Machine
- Merseyrail and Merseytravel
- Grassroots Grant
- St Bridget's Church Community Fund
- Wirral Community Initiatives Fund / Funds for All
- 'Your Wirral'
- West Wirral Community Fund

Current Wirral Parks and Countryside Service organisation chart



Achievements

MANAGEMENT

- New area Team Leader now in post, bringing enhanced depth of horticultural knowledge to the parks team
- New Ranger recruited 2023 bringing additional support to the volunteers and wildlife advice



Park volunteers service launched 2019

Action Plan

Action	Lead Officer	Resource	Target Date	Objective Achieved
A Welcoming Place				
Continue rolling programme of planting improvements	General manager/ Team Leader/ Friends	Council/ Friends	Annual	√2022 √2023 2024 2025 2026
Westbourne Road entrance upgrade planting with rhododendron	Team leader	Council	2023-24	Commenced 2022 2024
Plant fern bed next to performance area	Team leader/friends	Friends group/council	2025-26	
Replace large entrance boards at the Lodge and St Bridgets	General manager	Council, as resources allow	2019	√2020
Provide standardised (Broxap) seating through donation scheme	General manager	Aim for self-funding through public donations with subsidy from parks team	Annual replacement	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Undertake tree surgery to assist under storey planting	Team Leader /Parks tree officer/ tree team	Parks team	Annual	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Plant trees where appropriate across the park	Team Leader/Parks tree officer/ Friends	Friends/ Park staff	Annual - 2024 cherry avenue, play area and magnolias on link path	√2023 √2024 2025 2026
Revitalise Cherry Avenue with 10 new trees to replace dead or failing cherries	General manager/tree officer	Council		√2022/3
Continue bulb planting across Park	Friends	Friends	Annual 2024 adjacent to play area	2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Continue wood carving programme	Friends	Voluntary	Ongoing, looking for new wood-carver	√2022 2023 2024 2025 2026
Healthy, Safe and Secure				
Repair and maintain the orienteering course	Ranger and D of E volunteers	Friends/Uniformed Services	Feb 2017 /2021/2025	2025
Retain the pest control contract	General manager	Parks service	Ongoing	√
Erect Dog signs in sports area as part of implementing Public Space Protection Orders	General manager	Parks service	2025	
Retain and develop links with youth organisations, schools and police	All	Council, aim for self funding	Ongoing	√

Continue rolling programme of footpath repair	General manager/ Landscape Officer	Parks team PPM budget	Annual	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Renew electrics in upper pavilion	Asset Management	Council	2017	
Organise repairs to toilet block: roof, floor and drainage from cisterns	General manager/asset management	Council	2022-3	Complete
Review sightlines on an annual basis and undertake remedial pruning as required	Team Leader	Parks service and Friends	Annual	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Undertake tree safety surveys	Tree officer	Council	Each 2-3 years plus return visits where highlighted	√2022 2023 2024 √2025 2026
Undertake tree safety work as highlighted in tree safety survey	Tree officer	Council	As and when	
Undertake annual site safety audit	General manager/team leader	Council Parks Service	annual	√2022 √2023 2024 2025 2026
Renovate Wirral Way access carving	Friends group/landscape manager	Friends group	Removed and awaiting replacement	2025
Clean and Well Maintained				
Replacement of tennis court chainlink fencing with steel mesh	General manager/landscape officer	As funds become available	?	
Repair metal railing in play area damaged by tree falling	General manager/landscape officer	Parks service	2024	√2024
Resurface bridge over the Wirral Way	General manager	Parks service	2024	√2024
Replace rose bed around lower bowling green with suitable alternative	General manager / team leader	Friends group grant	2025	
Monitor lake wall condition as part of annual site safety inspection	General manager	Parks service	Annual – (large section repaired after willow tree removal 2021)	√2022 √2023 2024 2025 2026
Institute repairs to lake wall	General manager	Parks service	2025	
Maintain metal heritage features on a rolling programme	General manager/Team Leader / Friends	As funds become available	Westbourne rd gates repair 2022	√2022 2023 2024 2025 2026
Renew Fencing along Wirral Way boundary	General manager/landscape officer	Council	2023 and section taken down by beech tree in late 2024	√2022 2025
Address drainage problem on upper bowling green, and in	General manager/Team leader	Within existing resources	Drainage put in under	√2022 2023

rose garden, and continue to monitor			zigzag path 2024 – not working - follow up	√2024 2025 2026
Renew and replace platforms in the lake	Ranger/ Model Boating Club	Parks Service	March 2017	Additional work to upgrade 2020√
Place non-slip surface on second platform	Team Leader /Ranger	Parks service		√2024
Continue bench and notice-board restoration /replacement	Friends/ General manager	Friends	Rolling programme – upper park notice board replace 2021√ Playground and lower pavilion √2024	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026 Picnic benches renovated 2022
Organise for four bench installations from the marine lake project	General manager/coastal engineers	Marine lake sea defence wall project	2023	√
Plant specimen trees in the secret garden	Parks team	Parks team	2017/18 last time, repeat	2018√ 2026
Replant rose beds	General manager/Team Leader/ Friends	Friends/ parks team	In winter as required – upper park	2023 2024 2025 2026
Replace Lower Park Bowling Green Rose Beds, potentially remove roses or replace with perennial shrubs	General manager/Team Leader/ Friends	Friends to fund/ parks team to plan and execute	2025	
Bark to rose beds to labour save weeding	General manager/landscape officer	Parks team	Delayed due to spend freeze	√2020 2025
Replant hedge along Church Road	General manager/Team Leader	Parks team	2019	
Implement tree replacement plan	Parks tree officer	Annual plan over 5 years	Annual	√2020 2021 √2022 2023 √2024
Review options for replacement of the lake fountain with a system to aerate the lake after completion of the lake dredging	Friends	To be determined when dredging completed	2024/25	Project put on hold by friends group
Enhance litter bin provision where needed – playground and fix litter bins to the ground	General manager/landscape officer	Parks team	2023/4	√2023 √2024
Consider use of pathway sweepers (as part of wider Council initiative) 2024	Head of service	Council	2024	√
Sustainability				
Construct compost bays to aid recycling of green waste within the park	General manager / Team Leader/ Ranger	Parks service /friends group	2025	

Aim to reduce and source plants grown in peat free compost	All	N/A	Ongoing	
Continue monitoring gas, electricity and water consumption	General manager	Council	Ongoing	
Continue sourcing furniture from sustainable sources – switch to aluminium notice boards	General manager	N/A	Ongoing	√2023
Monitor lake water quality and improve bio-diversity in the lake by planting	General manager	N/A	After dredging	2024-5
Implement removal of silt from lake	General manager and assistant senior manager	Capital bid internal to council	2023	√2023
Undertake remedial works to lake after silt removal project (tarmac and lake wall repairs)	General manager and assistant senior manager	Parks general budget	2023	
Publicise advice on responsible duck-feeding across the park	all	all	Ongoing – include section on website	√2022 √2023 2024 2025 2026
Sell specialist duck food in the teashop and other outlets to reduce the use of bread by the public	Friends	Friends	Ongoing	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Continue to minimise pesticide usage	General manager/ Team leader	From Existing Resources	Ongoing	√2022 √2023 2024 2025 2026
Discontinue use of glyphosate	General manager	Climate change policy	From 2019	√
Mulch rose beds with bark to improve quality and save maintenance time	General manager/landscape officer	Parks service	2020 and 2025	√2020 2025
Conservation and Heritage				
Consider encourage wildlife and diversity through the installation of bird/bat boxes and maintain?	Friends	Friends/ ranger	Replace ranger in post - 2023	2025 2026
Re-establish further wildflower areas in Park	General manager/ Team leader Friends	To be identified	No mow may	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Continue tree pruning / replanting to aid longevity and re-establishment	Team Leader	From Existing Resources	Annual	√2022 √2023 2024 2025 2026
Install an additional heritage information board, creating a 9 board trail, with a new board covering the Lodge and Head Gardeners". Location by Westbourne Road entrance	Friends	Friends	2024	√2024
Introduce heritage board trail leaflet for the completed trail	To be determined	To be determined		

Install new displays in the pavilion (historical and topical subjects)	To be determined	To be determined	2019	√2019 Repeat?
Progress display of historic Tennis Tournament scoreboard	General manager	General manager	2025	
Community Involvement				
All groups to work together in a positive way, and maintain constructive relationships	All	ALL	Ongoing	
Arrange a special meeting of the Friends group to discuss options for the future of community involvement – feed into management action plan	Friends group		Feb 2023	√
Deliver campaign aimed at reduce littering in the park	Friends	Local schools	2023	√2023
Establish and maintain a regular volunteer maintenance group to meet 2xmonthly with ranger.	Ranger / Team Leader/ friends group	Council support, voluntary labour	Commenced from January 2020, revived push for volunteers in 2025 due to lack of support	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Deliver a varied annual programme of events	Friends/ General manager	Friends self-funding	Annual (suspended for covid-19)	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Continue to seek external funding for events and park improvements	General manager/ Friends	N/A	Annual	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Continue working with schools and youth organisations in the park	Ranger/ Friends	Aim toward self-funding where possible	Ongoing (suspended for covid 19)	√2022 √2023 2√024 2025 2026
Initiate tennis development programme in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association to increase use of tennis courts	LTA/ Contractor	Contractor now in place		√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Encourage use of boules court, refurbish the court and rules plaque	Friends	U3A	2018√	√
Research outdoor table tennis installation	Friends	Aim for self-funding	2017/18	√ researched – options decided to abandon
Reintroduce drama in the park	Friends	Aim for self-funding Friends and schools	Unknown due to covid-19	
Investigate watering systems for Upper and Lower Park greens, and sources of funding	Bowls clubs	Aim for self-funding	Long-term goal	
Marketing				

Upgrade information on the Wirral Council website	Service Manager	Parks service	2017√	
Refresh the Friends website/facebook content	Friends	Volunteer time	Completed, new website launched	√2023
Refresh market research	Friends/General manager	Parks service, volunteer time	Put on hold due to lack of time	
Introduce heritage board trail leaflet for the completed trail	Friends	Friends	2024	
Take part in Heritage Weekend event?	Friends	Friends/ voluntary	Annual	2023 2024 2025 2026
Publish regular newsletter and email bulletins	Friends	Friends/ voluntary	Seasonal	√2022 √2023 2024 2025 2026
Investigate wider use of social media	Friends	Friends/ voluntary		2024?
Management				
Maintain Green Flag status through continuous improvement, apply for award	All	Parks budget, income generation schemes, Grants	Ongoing	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Maintain a management plan to deliver short-term and longer-term improvement to the quality of the park	All	Parks budget, volunteer time	Annual review as part of GF reapplication process	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Pursue funding for events and improvements, and generate income for the park through new projects	All Parties		Annual	√2022 √2023 √2024 2025 2026
Establish Ashton Park as the working base for the Local Area Parks team by redeveloping the works yard	Council Parks Service and Asset Management Team	Transformation budget, Asset Management and Parks Service	Commenced December 2017	2018/19√
Prepare wirral-wide tree policy to guide tree management in individual parks.	Council Parks Service – senior management team and Parks Tree Officer	Council Parks Service	2019/20	2019√
Replace parks machinery over 3 year period	Head of service	Council		√2023 2024 2025
Replace parks vehicles over 2 year period	Head of service	Council		√2023 2024 2025



8. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Location Plan



Appendix 2: Aerial Photograph



Appendix 3: Ashton Park Service Requirement

Cleansing: litter, rubbish & leaf collection

Collect and remove litter and refuse from all of the sites included within the service requirement. In the case of adopted highway verges this responsibility is limited to the occasions immediately prior to grass cutting activities. Government guidance and Regulations for the disposal of noxious or hazardous waste, for example empty chemical containers or 'sharps' shall be followed.

Inspect and empty all litter bins, and dispose of the rubbish, clear all litter from around each bin.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 does not specify frequencies and this requires the requisite standards to be maintained by:

- Ensuring familiarity with site plans and locations
- Programming works effectively
- Applying resources appropriately

Litter control shall conform to the Environmental Protection Act 1990: Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (updated November 2006).

The park shall be maintained to Grade B standard in accordance with the Code of Practice Part 1: litter and refuse

- Predominately free of litter and refuse apart from some small items

The maximum response time to restore to Grade A standard (no litter or refuse) if it falls below Grade B shall be 1 day; this means by 6pm the following day.

Ensure that all staff uses their reasonable endeavours to collect and minimise the effects of litter on the sites, whenever it is encountered in the pursuance of their duties, whether or not those duties are primarily litter control.

Sweeping and cleansing

This requirement is applicable to all surfaces other than grass within all sites. The entire surfaces of all tarmac, concrete or paved areas, rubberised surfaces and tiles, including play facilities and safety surfaces and other surface areas including loose surfaces such as bark and shale shall be kept clear in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act 1990: Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (updated November 2006) to Grade B standard.

Sweeping, including gutters and drainage channels within the surface areas, shall be carried out by appropriate methods that do not damage or disrupt the surface.

Surfaces shall be washed down whenever necessary in order to maintain a clean and useable area.

All paths and hard surfaces shall be swept at even intervals and be kept cleared of grass cuttings following mowing operations.

All slippery surfaces caused by whatsoever nature, shall be made safe by the removal and / or treatment of the hazard.

All hard surfaces shall be maintained in a substantially weed free condition including moss and algae growth.

Fallen leaves

Fallen leaves shall be regularly cleared from areas of:

- Main entrances and key pedestrian routes and paths
- Visitors' centres and attractions
- Ornamental grass areas
- Soft horticultural features such as bedding and herbaceous borders
- Surfaces within play areas
- Grass sports pitches and facilities
- All weather sports pitches and facilities

Leaf clearance shall take place so that the features remain:

- In good horticultural condition
- And / or useable for sports play
- And / or with a safe, well drained hard surface

Any leaves that have accumulated into drifts or are unsightly or damaging to plants and bulbs shall be removed as a priority.

The operation shall be carried out frequently throughout the autumn in order to facilitate shrubbery and rose bed cultivation, and to prevent leaves from spreading back onto lawns, paths, hard surfaces, sports and horticultural features. Where necessary, after leaf clearance, beds shall be lightly pricked through to remove footmarks.

The final clearance of all autumn leaves shall be completed by the end of December in each year of the contract period.

Graffiti and fly-tipping

Information on graffiti and fly tipping shall be collected. Data shall provide such data to the Service Manager on a weekly basis as part of his weekly inspection reports.

Data for incidents of graffiti shall include:

- Date
- Location
- Surface type
- Paint type
- Description including offensive characteristics

Offensive or racist graffiti shall be reported as a priority. This shall be reported to the Service Manager within one hour of identification, to enable this to be removed by the Employer's specialist operator within 24 hours.

Fly tipping shall be defined as any single quantity of tipped material that cannot be lifted by two members of staff and removed from the site. If tipped material can be lifted by two members of staff, it is deemed to be covered by the litter control clauses of this service requirement.

All instances of fly tipping shall be reported to the Service Manager.

Grass maintenance

The use of growth regulators will not be permitted.

All grass cutting machinery used across the entire range of standards shall be appropriate and fit for the purpose of achieving the specified standard.

On each occasion that grass cutting takes place the following shall be achieved:

- An even, uniform sward to the requisite height across 100% of the surface area, including all obstacles, grass margins, weed growth, seed and flower spikes and bents.
- Litter on areas to be mown shall be removed immediately prior to mowing.
- Any litter subsequently shredded as a result of the mowing operation, shall be collected and removed

Should grass exceed the maximum permissible height, the grass shall be brought back into conformance by frequent repeat mowing.

The use of herbicides around obstacles and margins shall not be permitted on ornamental and associated grass areas. The use of appropriate herbicides to kill growth around obstacles and margins in other areas shall be permitted unless otherwise stipulated in the relevant site management plan or by instruction from the Service Manager. In such areas, the maximum bandwidth of kill shall not exceed 50mm.

The edges of turf adjacent to hard surfaces, cut backs, planted borders, beds, channels and kerbs shall be kept maintained to a neat even line. On each occasion of re-cutting all finished bed edges shall be sharp, neat and vertical.

In the case of ornamental lawns all cuttings, clippings or other mowing arisings, no matter where they fall, shall be removed for recycling or reuse immediately on completion of the operation.

All cuttings, clippings or other mowing arisings across the complete spectrum of grass mowing operations which land on hard surfaces, shrub borders or flower beds shall be cleaned up and removed immediately on completion of mowing.

Arisings that fall on general grass/amenity grass, highway urban verges and rural verges shall not normally require removal, unless excessive growth has occurred, in which case arisings shall be collected and removed for recycling or reuse.

Unless otherwise stipulated in the relevant site management plan, grass areas over naturalised Narcissus, Galanthus and Crocus bulbs etc, shall remain uncut from the commencement of the grass cutting season to the third week in May, unless the bulb leaves have died down sooner, at which time the grass and bulb tops shall be cut and removed and the areas brought into conformance with the surrounding areas. Subsequently these areas are to be maintained to the same standard as the rest of the area.

In drought conditions, subject to the approval of the Service Manager, the height of cut shall be adjusted so as not to cause added stress and damage to the sward. If grass growth is at a standstill an obligation remains to control grass and weed flower spikes by cutting.

On resumption of mowing operations after adverse weather conditions have caused them to cease, ensure that a return to the appropriate standard is achieved by increasing the frequency of mowing.

General/amenity grass

All general/amenity grass areas shall be maintained within the specified height range:

- Minimum height 25 mm
- Maximum height 60 mm

Hard landscape infrastructure: hard surfaces – roadways, pathways, car parks; parks and green spaces site infrastructure – benches, lighting, fencing, walls (see also Cleansing: litter, rubbish & leaf collection)

Undertake a rolling programme of condition surveys of the hard landscape infrastructure of parks, open spaces and other sites.

Hard surfaces weed control

Undertake a programme of effective weed control on all hard surfaces including roads; footpaths, car parks, steps, ramps and bridges Including the bases of all walls and fences where adjoining hard surfaces, along kerbstones and around landscape and park furniture. The use of residual herbicides or glyphosate shall not be permitted.

Hard surfaces gritting, salting and snow clearance

Hard surface gritting, salting and snow clearance is required to ensure that, where reasonably practicable, safe passage along a road or footpath is not endangered by snow ice.

Although there is no requirement to treat all roads and footpaths there are locations where this is required. The sites and areas to be treated are limited to those where essential only access is required which includes to cemetery chapels, access for planned burials, visitor and community centres and known problem locations and hazardous gradients.

Treatment shall include pre-treating to prevent ice from forming and post treating when ice has formed or snow has accumulated.

Benches and seating

All benches and seating, including picnic benches & tables, shall be kept clean at all times, and in good order through the use of such means as repainting or re-staining surfaces according to type of material.

Fences, railings, walls, gates, handrails, stiles, boardwalks, revetments and bollards

Any minor repairs such as loose bolts, protruding nails and sanding of sharp edges shall be undertaken. All other repairs must be reported to the Service Manager.

Defects, which represent a hazard that cannot be repaired immediately, must be made safe until an effective repair can be undertaken.

Regularly maintain gates, locks and mechanisms to ensure good working condition.

Notice boards and signs

Keep all signs, signposts and notice boards clean at all times and in good order through the use of such means as repainting or re-staining surfaces according to type of material of construction.

Shrubs, roses, herbaceous and annual bedding

Maintain shrub beds attractively presented, free of litter, weeds, other unwanted vegetation, and pests and diseases. The use of residual herbicides shall not be permitted.

Shrubs shall be maintained by pruning and training using the best horticultural practices to allow the development of each shrub in keeping with its habit, location and purpose.

Cultivation work in weather or ground conditions that would be harmful to the soil condition and its structure shall not be undertaken.

Observe that the purpose of pruning is to establish a strong framework of branches, keeping the shrubs healthy and vigorous, maintaining the size, shape and balance, whilst ensuring the maximum amount of flowering wood and fruit are produced.

Carry out the pruning of individual shrubs and roses appropriate to the requirements of each species or cultivar.

Annual spring and summer bedding

General requirements:

Herbicides shall not be used in beds that are used for annual bedding Cultivation. Work in weather or ground conditions that would be harmful to the soil condition and its structure shall not be undertaken.

The original shape of the bed shall be maintained and all work performed in a manner that protects the bed and its turf edges.

Replace and clean up any plants damaged by minor acts of vandalism.

Replace any plants damaged during maintenance operations.

Remove all stones, weeds, roots and other debris generated by the cultivation and planting operations.

Annual Spring and Summer Bedding - Plans and Schedules:

By June of the previous year submit to the Service Manager for approval his proposed schedules of bedding cultivars and designs to be used. This will be based on existing bedding plans and bed quantities.

Annual Spring and Summer Bedding - Supply of Plants and Bulbs:

Have responsibility for the supply, delivery, quality, quantity and health of all plants and bulbs

- From delivery
- Throughout the distribution and planting process
- Whilst in-situ in beds
- Until the plants are stripped at the end of the appropriate flowering season

Bedding plants shall be high quality fully finished plants, acclimatized and ready to plant out. Plants shall be well rooted, of uniform growth, and pest, disease and weed free.

Bedding plants shall conform to amc 6 pack size for main bedding plants and amc 9 for all edging plants. Specimen and dot plants shall be in individual pots.

Any plants that are damaged, that die, or are vandalised, stolen or fail to establish, shall be replaced within 48 hours of discovery.

Be fully responsible for the storage and/or disposal of all containers, boxes and pots.

Annual Spring and Summer Bedding - Density of Planting:

On completion, beds shall be fully stocked to sufficient density that the bedding foliage covers at least 80% of the surface area leaving no more than 20% as exposed soil.

Annual Spring and Summer Bedding – Clearance:

The previous season's bedding shall be cleared twice per annum, normally in May and October, when individual spring and summer bedding displays have finished flowering.

Annual Spring and Summer Bedding - Planting and Maintenance:

Bedding plants, including edging plants, specimen or dot plants, corms, bulbs or tubers, shall all be planted in accordance with good horticultural practice.

Planting of all beds shall be carried out within two weeks of clearance of the previous season's bedding. Plants and bulbs shall be positioned and planted in accordance with the planting schedules.

Preparation and maintenance for annual bedding displays shall include all necessary:

- Cultivation
- Incorporation of organic matter
- Fertilizing
- Levelling and consolidation
- Adjustment of soil levels
- Irrigation
- Dead heading/removal of dead and damaged foliage
- Weed control
- Staking and tying
- Pest and disease control
- Removal of early flowering bulbs

Hedges – ornamental and non-ornamental

Maintain all ornamental and non-ornamental hedges to their previously cut height, width and shape, ensuring that the top and sides of each hedge are cut neatly so that all growth is removed to the point of the previous cut on the old wood. Maintain hedges to ensure the safe and free flow of motor traffic along adopted highways and other vehicle routes, and to ensure the safe and free flow of pedestrians and cyclists along adopted highway footpaths and all other access routes across sites.

All trimmings shall be removed for recycling or reuse.

The base of the hedge shall be left clean, tidy and vegetation free on every occasion the hedge is cut.

Be aware of his obligations when undertaking any work on or near a highway with regard to public safety and traffic regulations.

Planting areas general – replacement, renewal and new planting

Where requested by the Service Manager proposals for replacement, renewal and new planting of shrubs, roses and hedging shall be submitted.

Children's play areas

Play areas shall be inspected, maintained and repaired to ensure that they are safe and all equipment is in working order in accordance with the relevant British Standard or other relevant standard.

Refer to British Standard EN1176 Part 1-7 and 1177 and to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) for guidance on all aspects of play area and play equipment maintenance; in particular, their information sheets for:

- Inspection and maintenance of playgrounds
- Regular inspection of playgrounds
- Legal aspects of safety

This information is available from www.rospace.com

Inspection shall be recorded either manually or electronically and logged with the Employer within the week following the inspection.

Only trained and competent staff, that has attended a recognised and appropriate course run by RoSPA or similar training body, shall carry out maintenance operations which shall be undertaken in a safe and thorough manner.

Minor repairs and adjustments shall be carried out to play equipment, gates and safety surfacing to ensure that they are safe and usable at all times including weekends, bank holidays and public holidays. Any play equipment, gates and safety surfacing that cannot be repaired immediately shall be made safe until an effective repair is undertaken.

Minor repairs shall include replacement of swing seats, chain, links, bearings, and loose-fill safety surfacing and rubber tiles.

Major repairs identified during the inspection shall be reported immediately to the Service Manager.

Painted and timber surfaces must be treated on a regular basis to ensure good condition and presentation. This includes all play equipment, gates and furniture.

Arrange for an independent annual recorded inspection of all play areas by RoSPA or similar accredited organisation. The inspection shall be a full mechanical and physical examination and include a risk assessment for each play area, and indicate compliance with the Equality Act.

Public toilets

Be responsible as key-holder for opening, closing and securing the buildings.

Maintain public toilets to a sufficiently high level of cleanliness to protect public health and maintain good appearance.

Toilets shall be kept free from unacceptable odours. All sanitary ware shall be kept free from all, stains; dirt and any build up of lime scale or dry germ. A streak and smear free finish shall be achieved.

Replace where necessary all consumables such as toilet rolls.

Use best endeavours to conserve supplied utilities including electricity and water, and arrange access for the reading of meters by the utility suppliers.

Store all equipment and materials in a safe condition and provide and display the necessary warning signs/barriers to ensure public safety during cleaning operations.

Remove any graffiti as part of the cleaning operation.

Comply with all the responsibilities and requirements on waste collection and disposal.

Inspect the premises after each cleaning operation and notify the Service Manager immediately of any fitting or part of the building requiring repair or replacement.

Trees and woodland

All tree work shall be undertaken in accordance with BS 3998: 2010 'Recommendations for tree work'. Be responsible for making all necessary checks to determine if there are any laws and regulations, including Tree Preservation Orders that would affect any work proposed, and to ensure that all permissions and licences are gained prior to proceeding with work.

All persons employed to undertake tree work, shall be suitably trained and qualified and shall be in possession of appropriate certification.

Consider all paths, grassed areas, pavements, kerbs, approach roads, manhole covers, fences, walls, overhead cabling etc that are either adjacent to or on the work area. These are to be preserved in good condition and make all necessary arrangements to make good any damage to the entire satisfaction of the Service Manager.

Include for stump removal and subsequent surface reinstatement following tree felling in highways locations. Stumps intended for permanent retention should be cut at a specified height and left free from snags.

On completion of all tree work ensure that the work area is thoroughly cleaned and is left in a condition appropriate for its intended use.

All timber and brushwood resulting from tree work shall be disposed of. The only exceptions to this shall be at woodland locations where the Service Manager may instruct timber and brushwood to be retained on site. The Service Manager may on occasion instruct delivery of brushwood chippings to sites within the Borough where these materials are required for composting, mulching, or creating footpaths or bridleways.

All trees and woodland – emergency and out of hours call out service

Provide a 24 hour, 365 days a year, emergency and out of hours call out response service for trees or limbs that have collapsed or are in a dangerous condition. A response unit consisting of a minimum of two suitably trained staff with appropriate vehicle and equipment shall be provided within one hour's notice following notification of an event by the Service Manager or emergency services authority. Incidents of this nature are often associated with high winds, collision damage, root severance and acts of vandalism.

Provide sufficient labour, vehicles and equipment required for emergency tree work operations. Heavy lifting equipment and cranes will need to be obtained as soon as reasonably practicable for special operations.

Trees in parks

Have a duty of care to ensure that users of parks, green spaces, cemeteries, churchyards and golf courses and all adjacent land and neighbouring properties are not at unreasonable risk from possible failure of trees. As part of the regular site health and safety inspections assess and act on any tree related risks.

Individual trees in parks and green spaces – arboricultural management

Undertake reactive management of selected trees in parks, green spaces, golf courses, cemeteries and churchyards in response to hazard risk identification, through an agreed programme of work. This may be supplemented by requests/complaints received from members of the public and others.

Individual trees in parks and green spaces – replacement and renewal

Undertake occasional requests for commemorative and other tree planting within cemeteries, parks and green spaces.

Vandalism and third party damage (see also Cleansing: litter, rubbish & leaf collection)

Work with community stakeholders and partner organisations to reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour in sites covered by the service.

Soft landscape

Rectify minor incidents of vandalism or third party damage to soft landscape features including trees, planted and grassed areas within 24 hours, inclusive within his routine maintenance activities. This shall include any minor incidents of damage caused by any other source.

Hard landscape infrastructure

Rectify minor damage to fencing, gates, walling, furniture, signage, notice boards, lighting and surfacing and other hard landscape infrastructure resulting from any act of vandalism or third party damage within 24 hours, inclusive within his routine maintenance activities. This shall include any minor damage caused by any other source. Minor damage shall be defined as requiring no more than 1 hour of labour per occasion to rectify with a minimal requirement for materials.

For more significant incidents of vandalism or third party damage make safe immediately.

Appendix 4: Green Flag Judge's Feedback and response

2024-25

Name of Site	Ashton Park, West Kirby
Managing Organisation	Wirral Council

Date of Assessment	4 th April 2024
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OVERALL RESULT	Pass	YES	Fail	☐
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NOTES ABOUT THIS REPORT
Strengths and recommendations are provided for each criteria. Photographs are included, where appropriate, to support the feedback from the judge(s) in relation to both strengths and recommendations. Please refer to the Raising the Standard guidance manual here for further information on the criteria.

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	Response
Presentation	The management plan is very comprehensive, well illustrated throughout and very useful appendices. A good initial summary of the plan with key aims, objectives, policies, initiatives, etc. All very readable and logically laid out. Also good links to specific key information. History and usage of site delineated.	Keep updating as required.	Thankyou for your comments
Health, Safety & Security	H&H policy is regularly reviewed and updated as required. Policy on dog fouling with penalties for offenders. All aspects appear to be covered.	No action needed.	Thankyou for your comments
Maintenance of Equipment, Buildings & Landscape	Within the plan there is much evidence that all aspects of infrastructure are identified and suitable given attention to in regards to prescriptive treatment and maintenance.	Continue to update as required.	Thankyou for your comments
Litter, Cleanliness, Vandalism	Much evidence of ensuring that the site is kept suitably clean with regular emptying of bins plus response to graffiti and vandalism.	Perhaps needs a little more detail.	Thankyou for your comments

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	Response
Environmental Management	Very encouraging environmental initiatives – including: pollinators, reduced seasonal mowing, hedgerows, tree and woodland strategy.	Continue in the same vein.	Thankyou for your comments
Biodiversity, Landscape & Heritage	The plan is encouraging in its policy of recycling its green waste, standing deadwood, felled/fallen timber, etc. Reducing pollution and herbicides is also encouraging. The landscape and heritage both appear to be acknowledged and treated with sensitivity. Potential for wildlife throughout the site is well identified.	Continue to explore other avenues and continue to reduce herbicides. There isn't mention of peat use. Please update the plan to advise on this.	Thankyou for your comments Glyphosate is no longer used in the park. Peat use is minimised, and bedding out no longer takes place.
Community Involvement	This is well informed and impressive. It is evident that there is a very active volunteer programme and much engagement with the community.	Carry on the good work.	Thankyou for your comments
Marketing & Communication	Much emphasis here on reaching out to the local and more further afield potential users. This is an impressive section.	Carry on in the same vein.	Thankyou for your comments
Overall Management	The management structure is clearly defined. Excellent action plan which includes responsibilities, target dates and objectives achieved. Very detailed management services within the appendices.	No action required	Thankyou for your comments

FIELD ASSESSMENT

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	Response
A Welcoming Place	Entrances to the park were very inviting, well maintained, open and attractive. Informational signage and maps of the park prove very useful for the visitor. Strategic areas have had selected trees and other vegetation removed to ensure clear sight lines. Good smart fingerpost signs.	Carry on in the same vein to maintain the standard.	Thankyou for your comments
Healthy, Safe & Secure	All facilities/equipment appeared to be a good safe condition. Failed/damaged tarmac had been highlighted. Play equipment is inspected weekly by a trained member of staff and a ROSPA inspection (with report) is carried out annually. The management has responded to 'safer parks for women and girls' recommendations. Accordingly vegetation has been cleared/cut back around the bridge to ensure good sight lines and a more open aspect. Generally the site did not appear to have any safety issues.	Just a couple of areas of failed/damaged tarmac that need to be addressed to avoid them becoming trip hazards.	Tarmac areas are programmed in for repair/replacement, due to pond de-silting works. Annual inspection programme takes place to identify areas for replacement of degraded tarmac
Well Maintained & Clean	Policy on dog fouling in place and no fouling witnessed. The site was free of litter and the Friends carry out regular litter picks. It was noted that facilities, buildings, structures and infrastructure were in clean and good condition: these include; gates, railings,	Carry on in the same vein.	Thankyou for your comments

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	Response
	play/sport/, steps, bowling greens, hedges, trees, shrubberies and rose beds.		
Environmental Management	Rose beds have been lined and mulched to suppress weeds. Felled/fallen site timber has been suitably reused on site and sculpted favourably. New (and planned) tree planting is ensuring continuity.	Carry on exploring new initiatives.	Thankyou for your comments
Biodiversity Landscape & Heritage	The heritage of the is acknowledged. A variety of landscape styles ensures interest for everyone. Naturalistic areas have been created and fit nicely into the site's landscape arrangements. A drainage scheme has been planned to deal with localised wet problems. Good mature and varied tree stock along with a variety of other flora ensures good habitat, nesting, roosting and feeding potential for wildlife.	Carry on in the same vein.	Thankyou for your comments
Community Involvement	On site signage and notices are indicators of much community activity and engagement. The Friends Group are very active in many aspects of the site, including organising events; an orienteering route has been established and there have been educational initiatives.	Continue to explore suitable initiatives.	Thankyou for your comments
Marketing and Communication	Signage and notices confirm good marketing of the site. Further 'reach out' includes	Keep up the excellent work.	Thankyou for your comments

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	Response
	general bands, brass bands and the Viking event.		
Management	A diversity of hard and soft landscape management is required and all appeared suitably accomplished. It appears that the aims, objectives and policies of the management plan are being adhered to.	Carry on in the same vein.	Thankyou for your comments

Summary and additional comments:

(Highlighting the result, and the main areas of strength and recommendation)

Congratulations to all involved in retaining the Green Flag standard. Impressive site throughout.

Thankyou for your kind comments, which are much appreciated by the council parks team and Friends group.

Appendix 5: Project bank

PROJECT BANK		
Project	'Ballpark' cost estimate (inc design and contract management fee)	Justification, policy fit and evidence of need
Consider options for the provision and funding of a bandstand in the Upper Park	£150k	
Remove shelter from upper park – replace with sculpture reflecting history of the park – tennis player from day of International Tennis Tournament?		Completed 2018. Friends group have adopted the replacement flower bed
Fitness machines un upper park alongside tennis/football area.	Unsuccessful NHS bid (2014)	
Fern bed in the lower park		
Refurbish old tennis pavilion		Work begun 2017 now in use
Dredge park lake		Achieved

Appendix 6: List of Achievements

2020 and 2021 Achievements

Achievements have been restricted by the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and the associated lockdowns which has prevented the teashop opening, events happening (May Fair, the September heritage weekend walks and summer band concerts), repairs and improvements going ahead (like woodcarving and the dredging project) and FOAP Committee meetings have been suspended for periods. Activity during 2021 has picked up and is reflected below:

A WELCOMING PLACE

New Upper Park notice board installed (for historical photo displays).
Commissioning of new dolphin woodcarving in the Glade area (work to progress in 2022).
Bulb planting in specific areas (like the Old Shelter Bed by the Upper Green).
Replacement of old seats with Broxap memorial benches has continued (number?).
Tree surgery has continued to lighten shaded areas of the park where necessary.
Return of 3 band concerts in 2021 after Covid suspension during 2020.
Removal of unsightly wall in the children's playground and landscaping of the space.

HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

Repairs have been undertaken to the Orienteering Course.
Rebuilding of terracing steps in the Upper Park.
Replacement of fencing on Upper Park terracing with low maintenance, robust design.
Footpath repairs have been undertaken in priority locations and in association with the removal of willow trees from under the Lake wall stonework and footpath.
Undertaking of electrical checks in park buildings.
Tree surveys to identify failing and dangerous trees.
Removal of dangerous/failing trees and tree branches that pose a danger to the public or are life-expired.
Action following gales (Storm Arwen etc) to remove fallen trees across roads/pathways and other trees and branches.
Action with various groups to counter youth ASB in the Upper Park arising from Covid lockdown and restrictions.
Covid management measures (safe use of of park and facilities, maintenance, volunteering activities and reopening facilities for bowlers, model boaters and bands).
A brick wall was removed from the play area and slope regraded to improve the safety of the area

CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED

Removal of large willow tree damaging the lakeside footpath (tripping hazard and maintenance issue).
Repair of railings in various locations.
Quotes received for the renovation the historic Lodge Gates in 2022.
Maintenance of rose-beds in the Upper Park by volunteers.
Continued shrub shaping programme across the park
Maintenance of wood-carvings recommenced.
Tree donation made (a second *Betula Utilis Jacquemontii*) for Old Shelter Bed in Upper Park.
Consideration of options to improve drainage in the Upper Park
Work to control the spread of the invasive Pendulous Sedge and Alexander's plants have started.
Picnic bench repairs in the children's playground.
Upper Park pavilion refurbishment following flooding.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Planning for dredging of the lake with contractor discussions working to an Autumn 2022 start.
Proposal for underground watering systems for inclusion in Council funding programmes (climate change)
Participation in the 'no-mow-may' initiative

BIODIVERSITY, LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE

Removal of willows growing through the historic lakeside stone wall.
Restoration of historic lakeside stone wall under the Cedrus Glauca Atlantica (bowling green end).
Wildflower seeding of fallow rose-beds.
Preparation for new Lectern Style Interpretation Board covering "The Lodge and Head Gardeners" who lived there (2022 project).
Continuation of research on the history of Ashton Park (mostly using the British Newspaper Archives on line).
Letting of contract for renovation of Lodge gates in 2022.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

FOAP working groups established working twice a month (within Covid-19 restrictions).
Regular inspections for vandalism and encouraging community reporting.
Proposal for underground watering systems framed for Council budget bids.
Planning of new planted bed and pathway in memory of Barbara Mason (author of "A Little Oasis" book on the origins of Ashton Park).

MARKETING

Upgrade of FOAP website commenced (completion April 2022).
Contract issued for future website maintenance and management.
Maintaining e-mail and newsletter contact with members during Covid restrictions.

MANAGEMENT

Management reorganisation to improve delivery of parks management and maintenance being implemented (completed in 2021).
Re-writing of the management plan for 2022.

2022 ACHIEVEMENTS

Life in Ashton Park has returned to normal after the release of the Covid restrictions and the holding of events and maintenance activities has restarted :-

A WELCOMING PLACE

New Upper Park notice board is now being used for rotational displays of historical photos (planning of a railway/Wirral Way theme to mark the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Wirral Country Park in 2023).
New dolphin woodcarving in the Glade area completed.
Bulb planting undertaken in specific areas (lakeside slopes, bank by the terracing and Upper Park slope below top pathway) to extend spring displays.
Tree surgery has continued to lighten shaded areas and open up sightlines round the lake, Wirral Way entrance and children's playground.
Return of a full programme of band concerts in 2022 after Covid suspension during 2020/1.
May Fair took place again (first since 2019 due to Covid restrictions).
Willow tree pollarded to maintain area for model-boating at pavilion end.
Cherry Avenue tree failures removed and replanted with a mix of species.
Creation of Queen's Platinum Jubilee Bed in Upper Park.

HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

Footpath repairs have been undertaken in priority locations.

Establishment of liaison with new Tree Team.

Removal of willow tree from under the Lake wall stonework and footpath (cut back and treated).

Undertaking of electrical checks, FIRE extinguisher and water safety checks in park buildings.

Undertaking of annual site safety check by Team Leader and Area Park manager.

Tree surveys to identify failing and dangerous trees (including Cherry Avenue).

Removal of dangerous/failing trees and tree branches that pose a danger to the public or are life-expired.

Crown-raising of trees across the park, removal of low branches and opening up of sightlines.

Tendering of fencing replacement along the Wirral Way (including children's playground fencing).

Repair of toilets (roofing and flooring) and arrangement of temporary toilets (between the yard and lakeside).

Lifting of Covid management measures (safe use of park and facilities, maintenance, volunteering activities and reopening facilities for bowlers, model boaters and bands).

CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED

Removal of willow tree from under the Lake wall, stonework and footpath (cut back and treated).

Removal of trees from adjacent to lake in preparation for dredging work.

Replacement of fencing along the boundary between the Wirral Way and the Park.

Renovation the historic Lodge Gates at Westbourne Road entrance.

Repainting of external Pavilion woodwork by volunteers.

Continued maintenance of rose-beds in the Upper Park by volunteers.

Continued shrub shaping programme across the park

Maintenance of wood-carvings recommenced (transferred to volunteers from wood-carver).

Consideration of options to improve drainage in the Upper Park

Work to control the spread of the invasive Pendulous Sedge and Alexander's plants continuing.

Upper Park pavilion repairs after vandalism and water leak.

Tree Team has undertaken tree management work in various parts of the park.

Tendering of fencing replacement along the Wirral Way (including children's playground fencing).

Planning of maintenance work on railway gateway (removal and repair in workshop).

Planning of litter campaign through FOAP.

SUSTAINABILITY

Planning for dredging of the lake with contractor discussions working to an Autumn 2023 start (tree management round the lake completed in preparation).

Research into lake aerating system has commenced (visit to Birkenhead Park).

Proposal for underground watering systems for bowling greens for inclusion in Council funding programmes (climate change)

CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

Removal of willows growing through the historic lakeside stone wall.

Preparation for new Lectern Style Interpretation Board covering "The Lodge and Head Gardeners" who lived there (2023 project).

Continuation of research on the history of Ashton Park (mostly using the British Newspaper Archives on line).

Renovation of Lodge gates in 2022.

Preparation for repainting of other Park gates in 2023.

New Upper Park notice board is now being used for rotational displays of historical photos (planning of a railway/Wirral Wat theme to mark the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Wirral Country Park in 2023).

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

FOAP working groups established working twice a month focusing on adopted areas and miscellaneous tasks.

Regular inspections for vandalism and encouraging community reporting.

Planning of new planted bed and pathway in memory of Barbara Mason (author of "A Little Oasis" book on the origins of Ashton Park).

Monthly FOAP committee meetings now back to normal.

May Fair took place again (first since 2019 due to Covid restrictions).

Meeting with Parks Strategy Manager to improve high level relationships after closure of Friends Forum.

Full programme of bowling and model boating activities return to the park after Covid restrictions.

Planning for better links with local schools (litter campaigns, musical events etc).

Continuation of newsletter publication.

New sealife carving of a dolphin installed.

MARKETING

Upgrade of FOAP website planned (to be completed in 2023).

Maintaining e-mail and newsletter contact with members.

Continued circulation of the Friends regular newsletter

MANAGEMENT

New area Team Leader now in post, bringing enhanced depth of horticultural knowledge to the parks team.

2023 Achievements

New bed by the play area cleared and prepared for trees

Bulbs planted by volunteers in the bed by the play area

Silt removal project completed

New Ranger recruited

New Friends website launched

May Fair held

New chairperson for the Friends Group elected

Bins replaced in the playground with new doubles

Bins anchored to the ground on Carpenters Lane

Memorial benches relocated from the seafront into the park

Notice board beside the teashop replaced with aluminium

New interpretive board installed at the Westbourne Road entrance

Machine shed purchased for the Ranger

Review of chemical storage completed

New machines purchased for the service, yet to be deployed