

Wirral Council

Community Services Department
Parks and Countryside Service

Eastham Country Park

Management Plan

2023- 2028



Management Plan Written/updated by:	Date:
Carl Davies	20/01/2023
Management Plan authorised by:	Date:
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Introduction

The plan is intended to provide a framework for the development and improvement of Eastham Country Park. If you wish to find out further information about this document or submit any suggestions, please contact the **Parks and Countryside Service** at Wirral Council on telephone number **0151 606 2004** or report the problem on the website www.wirral.gov.uk or write to:

**Wirral Council,
Neighbourhood Services
Parks & Countryside Service,
Wirral Council
Wallasey Town Hall
Brighton Street
Wallasey
CH44 8ED**

1.1 purpose and scope of the plan

The prime purpose of this *Management Plan* is to ensure that the future upkeep and management of the park will sustain, and continue to improve on, the quality of the park and the facilities it offers.

This *Plan* covers the period from 2023-2028 and will be reviewed and updated on a yearly basis.

The *Plan* is prepared for all those who use, manage or who might have an interest in the park, either now or in the future., it will continue to be subject to discussion and review with key stakeholders, including park users.

Email: carldavies@wirral.gov.uk or dantravis@wirral.gov.uk

1. The Wider Policy Context

Wirral Council's Parks and Countryside Service are based within the Neighbour Services Department of Wirral Council.

The content and structure of the Management Plan has been informed by the following guidelines:

A Guide to Producing Park and Green Space Management Plans (CABE Space, 2004)

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/parks-and-green-space-management-plans.pdf>

Raising the Standard: The Green Flag Awards Guidance Manual (Keep Britain Tidy, 2016) www.greenflagaward.org/media/1019/green-flag-award-guidelines.pdf

1.1. 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:

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50080601/Appendix%201%20Wirral%20Plan%202021-26.pdf>

1.2. Parks and Countryside Service Objectives

The department's role is to protect the environmental quality of key locations across the borough for all local people, communities, and visitors to enjoy and 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 that will inform and direct the next 10 years for the service (running from 2014-2024). It is available online at:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/Leisure%20parks%20and%20events/parks%20and%20open%20spaces/Wirral%20Parks%20and%20Open%20Spaces%20Strategy%202014-2024.pdf>

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.

1.3 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.

More information on the Climate Emergency Declaration maybe found at:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/about-council/climate-change-and-sustainability>

To deliver against these aims Wirral Has developed 'Cool Wirral'. The Cool Wirral campaign is aimed at encouraging local climate-related action in support of the delivery of the 'Cool 2 Climate Change Strategy for Wirral: -

[View Wirral Council's Cool 2 climate strategy and progress reports](#)

The Cool Wirral Partnership (formerly the Wirral Climate Change Group) co-ordinates local action on climate change. The partnership is supported by Wirral Council and a variety of partnership.

More information on the Cool Wirral Partnership maybe found at:

[https://www.wirral.gov.uk/about-council/climate-change-and-sustainability/cool-wirral#:~:text=The%20Cool%20Wirral%20Partnership%20\(formerly,Wirral%20Partnership%20NHS%20Foundation%20Trust](https://www.wirral.gov.uk/about-council/climate-change-and-sustainability/cool-wirral#:~:text=The%20Cool%20Wirral%20Partnership%20(formerly,Wirral%20Partnership%20NHS%20Foundation%20Trust)

Some key initiatives include: -

1.4 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 around pollinator sights

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/environmental-problems/street-care-and-cleaning/pollinators-and-wildflower-sites>

1.5 No Mow May

Throughout the month of May, the council takes part in the [No Mow May campaign](#), which is about stopping mowing in general grass areas in parks to help bees, butterflies and wildlife.

1.6 Trees, hedgerows and woodland

The council have been working with partners and stakeholders to develop a 10-year strategy to consider how we manage and respond to the borough's current trees and the future provision of trees. 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.

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/about-council/climate-change-and-sustainability/trees-hedgerows-and-woodland>

2. Eastham Country Park

2.1. Description and Location

Name: Eastham Country Park

Grid Reference: SJ 363818 (Visitor centre/main car park)

What 3 Words Location - <https://what3words.com/locked.formed.added>

Location: Eastham Country Park is situated on the southeast of the Wirral Peninsular, on the banks of the River Mersey. It lies 1 mile north of Eastham Village and 1.5 miles from the M53 motorway and is reached via the A41 Chester to Birkenhead Road.



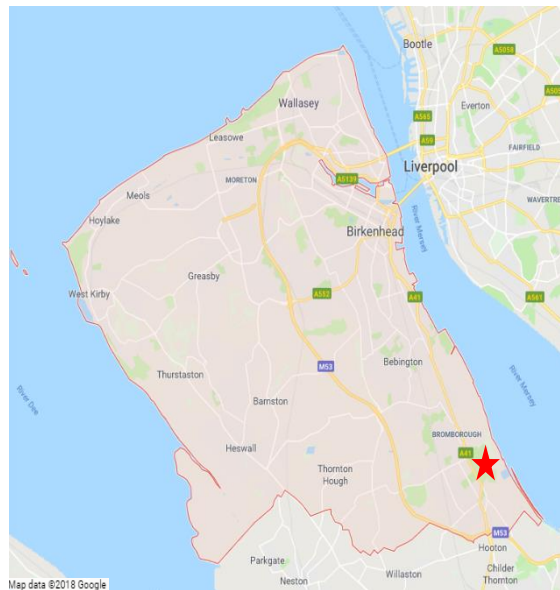
Eastham Country Park location

Address: Ferry Road, Eastham, Wirral, Merseyside, CH62 0BH

Primary classification: Major Park

Ward: Eastham

Size: 42.11 Hectares



Eastham Country Park (marked as red star) in the Wirral Peninsula.

Eastham Country Park holds immense value as a long-standing, major leisure and nature conservation resource with an appeal which stretches beyond its local area into Cheshire and potentially into the rest of the region.

Eastham Country Park covers almost 43 Hectares. It is the last remaining substantial area of undeveloped land with public access on the Wirral bank of the River Mersey between Birkenhead and Ellesmere Port. Its location gives it particular importance as a local amenity, health, wildlife and educational resource.

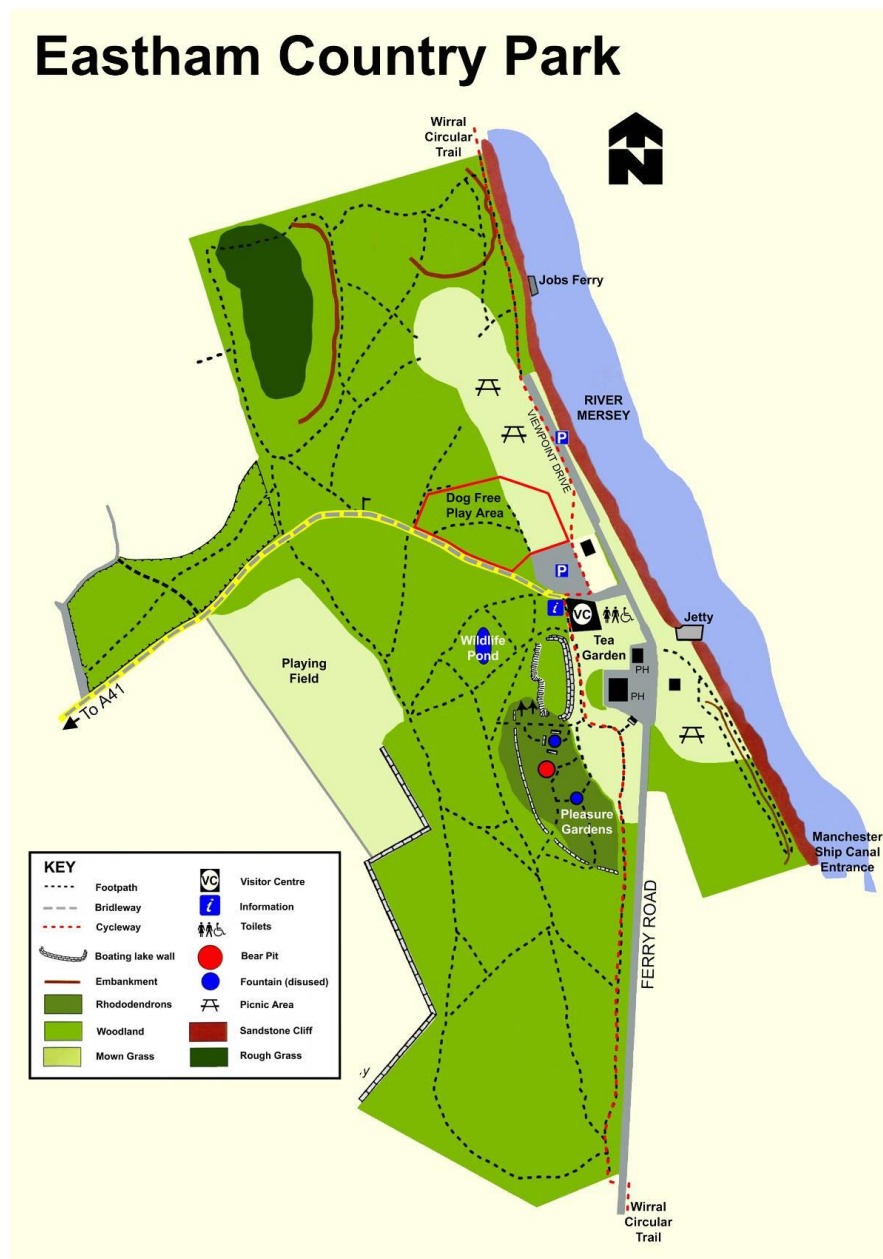
The site includes mature mixed deciduous woodland, amenity grassland, new plantation woodland and natural grassland and scrub. The park also gives access to riverside cliff top and commands superb views across the River Mersey.

Remnants of the 19th century Eastham Ferry Jetty, Pleasure Gardens and associated buildings add considerable historic interest to the site. The entrance to the Manchester Ship Canal and the Queen Elizabeth 2 oil dock, lie at the southern end of the park and passing shipping is a popular attraction for visitors.

Map of Eastham Country Park

2.2. Facilities and features

The visitor centre (open 7 days a week, from 10:00am to 16:45pm) has the following facilities:



- Educational and informative displays
- Toilets
- Rangers Office
- Volunteer Room
- Wildlife Garden
- Bird garden with viewing areas
- Car parking for approximately 350 cars in 3 car parks
- Neighbouring tearoom and garden

Eastham Country Park has:

- Large 'dog free' children's play area
- Historic buildings and features (including the site of the former Victorian Pleasure Gardens and zoo)
- Picnic and barbecue areas
- Cliff top access with panoramic views of the Mersey Estuary SSSI
- Views of the Manchester Ship Canal entrance and associated shipping traffic
- Mature deciduous woodland
- Extensive network of footpaths
- Facility for orienteering
- Off-road cycleway linking the park to Bromborough and Port Sunlight, as part of the Wirral Circular Trail.
- Bridleway through the centre of the site

The sites facilities and features are shown visually below.



Features and facilities at Eastham Country Park and neighbouring sports fields.

Symbol	Description
	Football
	Car Parking
	Café
	Public Inn
	Visitor Centre
	Hotel
	Cycleway
	Viewpoint

Key of facilities and features

Symbol	Description
	Bluebell wood
	Golf Course
	Tennis
	Cricket
	Mature trees
	Public WC
	Picnic area
	Children's play area
	Historical feature

2.3. Tenure

Eastham Country Park is owned and managed by Wirral Council, Community Services Department, Parks and Countryside. Including two areas held on lease agreements from Burtonwood Brewery (both likely to continue long term):

- An area of 2.2 hectares on the riverfront adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal entrance. This area has been subject to a lease agreement since 1977 for an unlimited term, with annual rent reviews.
- An area of 0.9 Hectares to the rear of the Visitor Centre. This area has been subject to a lease agreement since 1973 with a five-year rent review.

The Tearoom is privately owned but subject to a concession agreement between Wirral Council and the lessee. It currently operates flexible opening hours between Easter and October.

Talks are ongoing with a dog related business for a lease agreement in a currently unused room next to ranger's offices. Lease agreement is on track to be agreed by spring/summer 2019.

2.4. Users of the Park

The park lies between the large urban areas of Bromborough, Birkenhead and Ellesmere Port and has a large catchment area, with regular visitors from Liverpool, Manchester and North Wales. It has good public transport links and road access and is within easy walking and cycling distance of these areas. As a result, it caters for the recreational needs of a large urban population.

Regular users include walkers, dog walkers, joggers, cyclists, birdwatchers, with other uses including school visits, orienteering classes, health walks, photography and attending ranger-led events.

Stakeholders and partners:

- Ward Councillors
- Natural England
- Merseyside Police
- Wirral Council Community Safety Team
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- Eastham Village Preservation Association
- Landowners
- Wirral Wildlife
- Eastham Conservation Trust
- Eastham Day Centre
- Autism Together
- Prince's Trust
- Action for Employment
- TNG training
- Deeside Orienteering Club
- Schools, colleges and nurseries
- Youth groups
- Cycling and walking club

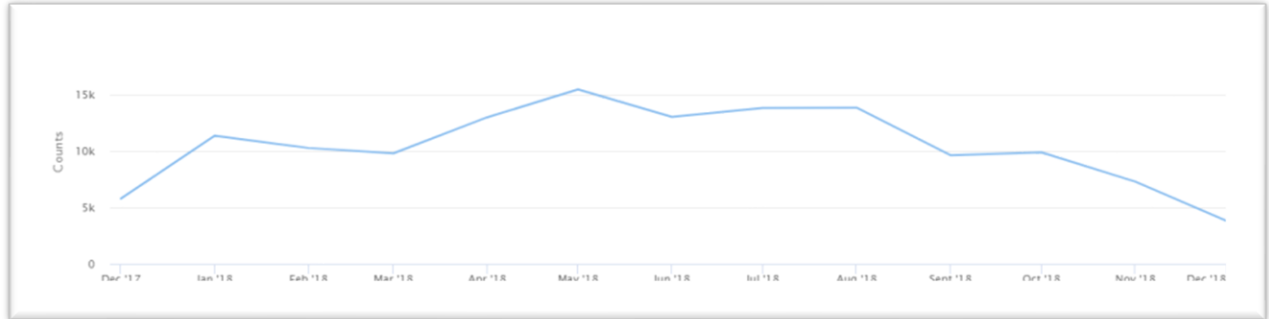
2.4.1. Visitor Numbers

Visitor numbers in Eastham Country Park are monitored for a number of reasons. Firstly, is it a national government aim to identify increases in woodland use, establishing increases to visitor numbers as key measures of performance. Furthermore, visitor data gathering can highlight what days of the week and what seasons of the year people use the park. Predicting times of heavy use can inform the council's parks staff, resulting in more informed resource deployment and strategies to try and encourage users to visit throughout the year. In addition, assessing trends and changes in numbers of people over time can be used to evaluate a particular project, investment or marketing campaign by showing whether they have been effective in attracting more people to visit.

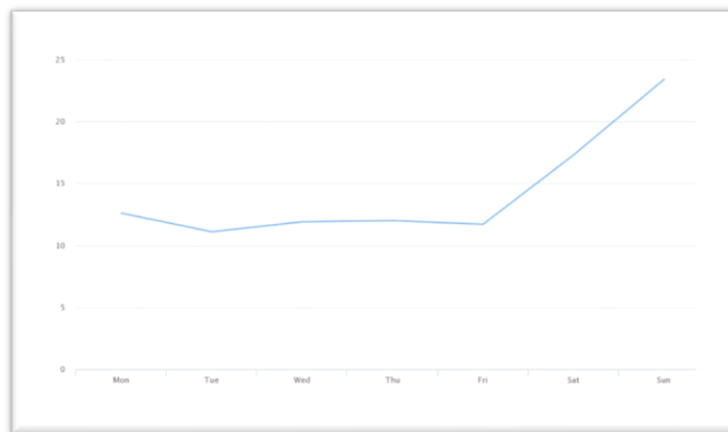
See below for graphs of all the collected data, with the main points from 2018 showing that:

- **The most popular times of year are from April-August** (peaking in May – coinciding with wildflower blooms). Winter months receive the least number of visits.
- **Weekends are the most popular visiting times**, in particular Sunday (almost 25% of weekly visits are on Sunday).

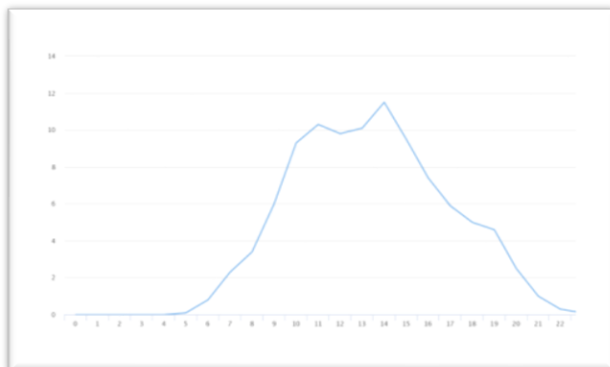
- **Peak times to visit are 2pm** (both on weekends and on weekdays). Weekend visits are primarily between 10am-4pm, whereas weekdays are much more spread out, with visitor numbers sustaining later into the evenings.



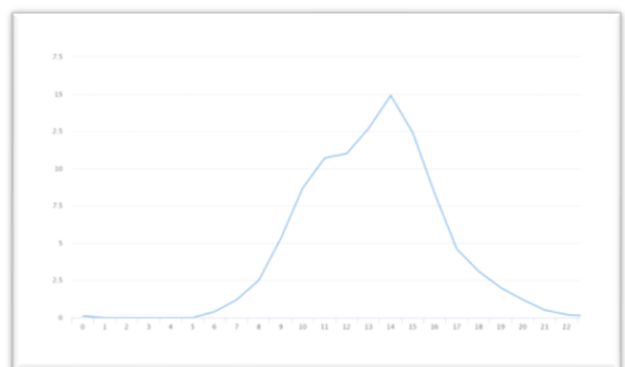
Visitor counts from Dec 2017 - Dec 2018



Daily visitor's ratio (%)



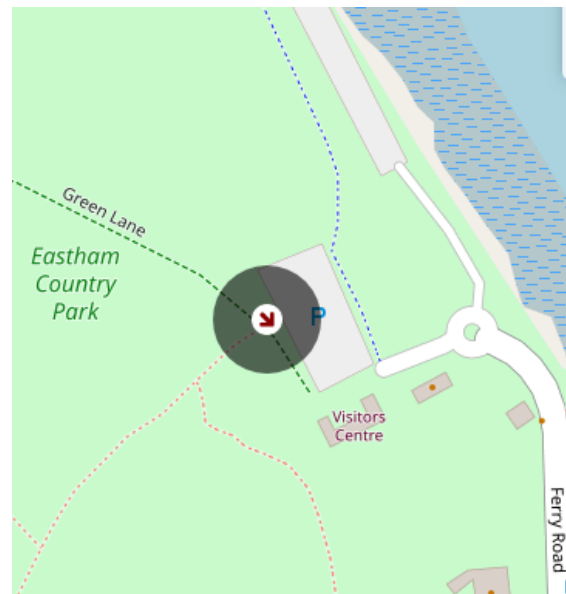
Hourly profile (weekdays)



Hourly profile (weekends)

The data collected is from a single visitor counter located on one of the main entrances to the park, just off the main car park next to the visitor centre.

Please note that car parking charges have been instated by Wirral Council at this car park in 2018, resulting in a fall in visitor numbers from this entrance by approximately 28% (compared to 2017). This does not mean the parks actual visitor numbers have fallen, as many people are now using alternative entrance points and parking in free car parks located on Ferry Road or Old Hall Road.



Visitor counter location

2.5. Designations

Eastham Country Park is located in the Green Belt conservation area. The park includes Eastham Woods, which is designated as a Site of Biological Importance (SBI) for its lowland deciduous woodland, coastal cliffs and scrub, ornithological interest and rich ground flora. Nationally, SBIs are known as Local Wildlife Sites.

The Mersey Estuary adjacent to the park is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the European Union's Birds Directive and a Ramsar site under the Ramsar Convention of Wetlands of International Importance. It is consequently designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is primarily important for its assemblages of wintering waders and wildfowl and for birds on migration.

The areas of special interest within the park are:

- Long Plantation
- Bluebell Wood
- Eastham Ferry Jetty
- Job's Ferry
- Victorian Pleasure Gardens
- Visitor Centre

2.6. Easements and services

- Essar Oil U.K underground oil pipelines: there are two pipelines within the park boundary. Where these run beneath woodland, a regular programme of felling is required along the route to avoid damage from tree roots. This work is identified and carried out by contractors working for Essar Oil U.K.
- Scottish Power overhead cables: these cross the park for a short distance in the Northwest corner. Where these cables pass over woodland, a regular programme of pruning is required. This is identified by Scottish Power and carried out by their contractors, although most of the trees affected were coppiced in 1995 and are now maintained as low growth by the Ranger Service.
- Scottish Power underground cables: there are two underground power cables within the park boundary.
- Water Main: this runs beneath woodland and sports pitches from the Northwest corner of the park to the southeast corner. Contractors carry out all maintenance works.
- Sewage disposal: sewage and wastewater from the public toilets in the courtyard, the Rangers Office and a privately owned adjacent property 'The Cottage', is disposed of into a septic tank on Green Lane.

2.7. Access

2.7.1. Vehicle

The Country Park has three car parks, all of which are open 24 hours.

- Main car park – situated off Green Lane at the end of Ferry Road has a capacity for 90 cars including 4 disabled spaces and is suitable for coaches.
- Cliff top car park – At the end of Ferry Road with a capacity for 60 cars.
- Leverhulme Playing Fields car park - located off Riverwood Road, Bromborough and has a capacity for 200 cars.
- In addition, vehicles are permitted to park on Ferry Road adjacent to the Country Park.

In 2018 car parking charges were introduced to the main car park.

There is 'authorised vehicle only' access through the park on the Bridleway (Green Lane) via lockable barriers.

2.7.2. Pedestrian

There are four main pedestrian entrances around the site and numerous lesser entrances, including several from each of the car parks and at various points around the park boundary.

The main pedestrian access points are situated at:

- Main entrance at the visitor centre. There is good disabled access and a visitor counter installed to monitor visitor numbers. See [section 3.4.1](#) for visitor numbers for 2018.
- Golf club. This is a well-used entrance. A recent housing development has further increased use.
- Ferry Road opposite the Manchester Ship canal entrance. This has increased usage in 2018 due to parking charges at the main entrance. Safety barriers have been installed inside the entrance.
- Green lane access from A41 – well used path with good access.
- There are other minor access points off Riverwood Road.

Pedestrian access around the site is good with an extensive network of surfaced paths and reasonable gradients. Most of the main surfaced paths are accessible for wheelchairs, prams and child's buggies.

2.7.3. Equestrian

Horse access is restricted to Green Lane Bridleway (BR32), which runs through the centre of the park between Ferry Road and New Chester Road (A41).

2.7.4. Cycle

Cycle access is restricted to Green Lane Bridleway and the cycleway between Riverwood Road and Ferry Road / Torr Drive corner.

Three Rights of Way are recorded on the definitive map:

- Green Lane Bridleway (BR32) - between Ferry Road and New Chester Road (A41). Wirral Unitary Development Plan classifies Green Lane Bridleway (BR32) and the northern stretch of cycleway as 'Greenway'.
- Footpath 27 (FP27) - between Ferry Road and Job's Ferry.
- Footpath 31 (FP31) - between Green Lane Bridleway (BR32) and Riverwood Road.

2.7.5. Public Transport

Bus services operate to Eastham Ferry at the end of Ferry Road and along the New Chester Road (A41) from which the park is a 10-minute walk.

The nearest train station is at Bromborough Rake, a distance of 1 mile, from which the park is a 20-minute walk.

See www.merseytravel.gov.uk for times and routes.

2.8. Historical Significance

The area now within the Country Park boundary was once part of two private estates, Bromborough Hall and Carlett Estate. Ferry services operated from various sites along the coastal strip from the Middle Ages until 1929.

In 1846, the owner of the ferry service built the Eastham Ferry Hotel and Pleasure Gardens and ran a paddle steamer ferry service between Eastham and Liverpool.

The Pleasure Gardens were a major attraction and consisted of a zoo, with bear pit, lions, monkeys and antelope, an entertainment stage, tea rooms, bandstand, ballroom, boating lake, water chute, a wooden roller coaster, amusement park and ornamental gardens. It attracted thousands of visitors per year. The Gardens covered 40 acres of woods now within the park boundary.



Remains of the fountain and historic zoo enclosures.

In 1934, much of the land now included in Eastham Country Park was purchased by the Borough of Bebington and managed as public open space. Eastham Country Park was officially opened as a designated Country Park in 1973.

The Friends of Eastham Country Park was set up in 1991 as a user and support group for the park.

Historical Features

There are many features of important historical interest within the park. Job's Ferry at the northern end is the remains of a jetty made from sandstone blocks cut from the adjacent cliffs. The original steps cut into the cliff stone, still lead down to the jetty. The exact date of Job's Ferry is uncertain, but a ferry service across the River Mersey is believed to have operated from the site as early as the 12th Century.

Eastham jetty dates from the early 19th century and was last used in 1929 by passengers on the paddle steamers visiting the Eastham Ferry Hotel and Pleasure Gardens. Only the sandstone section of the jetty remains. The nearby ferry ticket office, now a refreshment kiosk, was built in 1857.

The owners of the Eastham Ferry Hotel built a Pleasure Gardens and zoo in 1847 as a tourist attraction. Remnants of numerous features still exist, including a bear pit, boating lake, fountains, walls, paths and flowerbeds.



Remains of the bear pit in the Victorian Pleasure Gardens

The buildings surrounding the courtyard, which now house the Visitor Centre, ranger's office and toilets, are mostly constructed from local sandstone and date from the early 1900's. They were once the stables linked to the ferry service, where coach horses were kept.

Towards the northern end of the park, are the remains of a sandstone wall, which is believed to have been the boundary between the parishes of Eastham and Bromborough.

2.9. Landscape and Biodiversity

The park lies within an area of green belt between the A41 New Chester Road and the river Mersey, which includes Eastham Village Conservation Area. Industrial and retail development to the north, industrial development and docklands to the south and residential development to the west border the park.

Landscape

The park slopes gently north eastwards down to low sandstone cliffs on the River Mersey and overlooks the inter-tidal mud flats, salt marshes and sandbanks of the estuary. Soil is mostly shallow and organic, overlying Triassic Red Sandstone bedrock, with frequent outcrops.

Habitats in the park:

Woodland

The woodland and ground flora are designated a Site of Biological Interest (SBI). Oak and beech dominate the canopy, with a secondary layer of oak, beech, sycamore, sweet chestnut, and birch. Each of these species is locally dominant over areas of the woodland. Holly, with locally abundant rhododendron, dominates much of the under-storey. Rowan and elder are frequent and scattered throughout the site.



Beech woodland at Eastham Country Park (uploaded to Eastham blog website, photo taken by resident Stephen Grimes)

Ground flora is locally abundant but absent from large areas of the woodland. At the northern end bluebells are abundant and there are localised patches of wood anemone, wood sorrel and red campion throughout the wood. Ivy dominates the ground flora at the southern end. Fungi and bramble are common throughout. Ferns and mosses are locally abundant, particularly around sandstone outcrops and walls. A wide variety of grasses and herbaceous species have colonised clearings and path edges.

Bird life is abundant with numerous nesting species, including great spotted and green woodpecker, sparrowhawk, tawny owl, little owl, nuthatch and treecreeper.

Three species of bat have been recorded in the woodland, pipistrelle, brown long-eared and noctule and the habitat is suitable for roosting sites. Badgers are occasional visitors.

Grassland and scrub

Most of the grassland is mown amenity grass, but uncut areas on the boundaries are more species rich. An area of scrub vegetation at the north end is dominated by bramble, hawthorn, grasses, ferns and mosses which is abundant in small

mammals and birds and provides a feeding ground for kestrel, barn owl, little owl and buzzard and several species of bat.

Ponds

Two ponds were created in 1994/1995 to provide an all-year-round water source for wildlife. These are now rich in aquatic invertebrates and amphibians. Both are fenced and the protected areas are rich in small mammals and nesting birds. Several seasonal ponds, in natural hollows at the southern end of the site, dry up in summer, are acidic and species poor.

Shore and Estuary

The Mersey Estuary is a SSSI, SPA and Ramsar site. It is internationally important as a feeding ground for waders and wildfowl and is of major importance to migrating birds. Harbour porpoise and grey seals have been recorded more frequently in the estuary in the last decade. The low sandstone cliffs and narrow strip of inter-tidal rocky shoreline provide a valuable feeding ground and secure habitat for a variety of waders.



Sunrise over the Mersey Estuary, taken from Eastham Country Park.

Available resources to conserve maintain and improve the site:

Available resources are targeted at maintaining the site to a safe and useable standard. In particular ranger's activities, grant aid and volunteers are an essential ingredient for improvement and enhancement.

The following resources aid the park:

- Site based ranger
- Volunteer groups
- Task groups from various external organisations
- Parks grounds maintenance staff and equipment

- Visiting building maintenance staff
- Vehicle and off-road vehicle
- A range of hand and mechanical tools
- Annual operating revenue budget
- Park staff implemented mowing regime for amenity areas.
- Winter work support from the parks grounds maintenance section for tree work and small refurbishment projects.
- Grants and donations

3. Green Flag Analysis, Assessment and Feedback

The intention is for Eastham Country Park to continue to achieve the standards as defined by the Green Flag Award Scheme; further details about the scheme are available at www.greenflagaward.org.uk

The park was first awarded a Green Flag in 2008. The following Green Flag assessment criteria are used as a focus for the future development of the park.

3.1. Assessment Criteria

- 1) A welcoming place
- 2) Healthy, safe and secure
- 3) Well maintained and clean
- 4) Environmental management
- 5) Biodiversity, landscape and heritage
- 6) Community involvement
- 7) Marketing and communication
- 8) Management

Eastham Country Parks action plan can be found in Appendix 1.

3.2. Assessment

3.2.1. A Welcoming Place

Eastham Country Park's main entrance lies at Eastham Ferry, at the northern end of Ferry Road, Eastham. The main entrance to the park has ample parking with a nearby bus stop and the welcoming courtyard contains toilet facilities, rangers' office and visitor's centre.

See [section 3.7](#) for full details on all access points for pedestrians, vehicles, cycling and public transport.

Good and safe access

The three vehicle entrances are all well surfaced and clearly defined, with the main entrance at Eastham Ferry.

There are four main pedestrian entrances, with numerous other small entrances throughout the park. All entrances are regularly checked for access issues.

The Wirral Way cycleway runs through Eastham Country, with a maintained cycle path located that joins at the northern end of the park following the River Mersey. Secure cycle stands are located in the main car park and in the visitor centre courtyard.

Public transport to the park is good and information about bus and train services is displayed in the visitor centre, at bus stops and at Eastham Rake station. Bus stops are located at Eastham Ferry and run hourly. More frequent services run from the A41 to Liverpool/Chester, which is about 10 minutes' walk from the edge of the park.

Signage

Signage to the park is situated on the main A41 road from both directions, in Eastham Village at the entrance to Ferry Road and at Eastham Rake Station Park and Ride.

Large timber signs indicate the main car park, visitor centre, ranger's office and toilets. Name signs are sited at all entrances. Car parking charges were introduced in 2018 into the main car park, with new signage situated around the car park informing people of the charge. Improvements to the main car park will be looked at, including assistance with leaf removal and paint re-marking. Due to Covid-19 pandemic car parking charges were temporarily suspended from April 2020 till February 2021.

There is a self-guided trail around the site with numbered posts to aid navigation. A map is available from the Ranger's office and in noticeboards.

Noticeboards

There are four information noticeboard cabinets around the site:

- Main carpark
- Main events field
- East end of Green Lane
- Riverfront at Eastham Ferry

These are updated regularly with events posters and site information. There is also an information/events board in the visitor centre. For information on events held annually at Eastham Country Park see [section 4.2.6](#).



Noticeboard located in the main car park, with details of events, a map of the site and other site information

One of the major aims of the park is to increase the number of volunteers to assist the rangers, ongoing efforts include posters across the site alongside pursuing advertising in the Wirral View newspaper.

Eight further information display panels were installed at key locations within the park in 2014. These include historical and ecological information about key areas within the park including the Victorian pleasure gardens and the Beech Grove.



One of numerous information displays located around Eastham Country Park

In 2020 further historical interpretation boards were installed by the Eastham Archive Group.



Historical Information Board installed in 2020

The Courtyard

The courtyard is the first 'arrival experience' for many visitors. It is kept tidy and welcoming, with bench seats, a cycle park, planted borders, flower tubs and hanging baskets which are all maintained.

Starting in 2019 the courtyard will now be maintained by the Women's Institute (WI). New bedding plants will be planted and maintained, alongside a small number of shrubs and a small tree. In the newly created flowerbed, a selection of plants will be added with the plan to have a trellis installed on the courtyard wall to support a clematis plant.

In preparation for this South Wirral's rangers have removed a number of aged and untidy shrubs, created a new flowerbed and provided all the pots for new planting. The planting started in 2019 and is still maintained by the WI.



New flowerbed in the courtyard created for planting

The visitor centre, ranger's office, toilets, blacksmiths forge display, volunteer room and rangers tool store are also located off the courtyard. A sign is clearly visible from the car park. All the facilities are open seven days per week throughout the year with the exception of a few days surrounding Christmas. The courtyard is accessed through a gateway; the gate was replaced in early 2019 with a similar wooden style to fit with the character of the area.

Public toilet provision

Public toilets are located within the courtyard with facilities open 7 days a week all year round (with exception of a few days surrounding Christmas). They are cleaned regularly by a contracted cleaner, with provisions stocked up by the on-site ranger and team leader.

Visitor Centre

The visitor centre has good disabled access. Information displays are user friendly, and a variety of information and leaflets are available. There are no dedicated visitor centre staffs, but opportunities do exist for volunteers to staff the V.C. A visitor's survey was conducted in 2018 to look at improvements to the displays and the bird garden (located at the back of the visitor centre). For full details of the survey see [section 4.2.6](#) and [Appendix 2](#).

Catering

There is a small tearoom and garden next to the visitor's centre, open most days throughout the year. A refreshment kiosk is situated on the riverfront, which is open seasonally. Both adjacent public houses sell meals, snacks and hot drinks.

3.2.2. Healthy, Safe and Secure

Dog-free and smoke-free play area

The park boasts a large 'dog-free' children's play area and picnic area - created in 1997 adjacent to the main car park. Repairs were carried out in 2018 on the story telling area seating to maintain it for the future.



"Story Telling Area "Within the children's play area

Wirral council has signed up to a voluntary 'Play Smoke free' code. The aim is to de-normalize smoking so that children are discouraged from taking up the habit in later years. The 'Play Smoke free' code is being run by the charity 'Heart of Mersey' with Wirral Council and NHS Wirral. Special signage designed by Hayfield School pupils are planned to be installed in the play area asking that children be allowed to 'Play Smoke free'.

The play areas aim is to promote a safe and secure area for which children and young families can enjoy and explore the natural environment, with feedback from the visitor survey in 2018 describing the area as a fantastic "au-natural" play area

Control of dogs and Dog fouling

The park is very popular with dog walkers, with the vast majority presenting no issue to the park or its users. However, we know from the evidence produced from the Wirral Parks Survey (2012) that dog fouling and dogs off leads are a major concern for park users across the Wirral.

In response to concerns raised, the courtyard and visitor centre have been designated a 'dogs on leads' area. This has been very successful in reducing

dog fouling and nuisance in the courtyard. The children's play area is also deemed a dog free area.

In response to dog fouling enforcement officers from Wirral Council, working in partnership with a Kingdom environmental protection division will issue a £50 fixed penalty notice to anyone caught not cleaning up after their dog.

The park has signs at the entrances and other locations indicating it is a 'clean it up' area. Dog walkers are advised to wrap the droppings and place in a litterbin. Litterbins are located throughout the park and are emptied on a regular basis (co-ordinated with rangers and other parks staff).



Signage relating to both dog control and dog fouling

For further information regarding dog fouling, visit:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/environmental-problems/street-care-and-cleaning/dog-fouling>

Anti-social behaviour

The rangers work with many local youth groups, in an effort to instil a sense of ownership of the park and an understanding of the problems caused by anti-social behaviour. Groups help the rangers with tasks such as litter picking, clearing fly-tipping and repairing vandalism damage.

Wirral Council operates a Community Patrol force, established to provide a 24-hour response to any concerns notified to them regarding anti-social behaviour occurring within Council owned land. The Patrol can be contacted on telephone number 0151 666 5265.

The park is 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 Area Parks Manager for each relevant ward.

There are very few problems with vandalism and graffiti at the park. The council has a graffiti team who can be called upon to deal with incidents.

Car parks

Signs warning visitors not to leave valuables in their vehicles are displayed in the car parks. The main car park is open and visible from the courtyard. Vegetation around the car park is kept as open and low as possible to increase visibility. All car parks are unlit and unlocked at night. Thefts from vehicles do sometimes occur.

Buildings

The courtyard gates and all the buildings are locked at night. The gate was replaced in 2019, resulting in a more secure courtyard. The Visitor Centre, ranger's office and shop all have fire alarms.

The Council's Asset Management team is responsible for repair and maintenance of buildings and to ensure the building complies with legislative requirements.

Site based staff support the management of the facilities by inspecting buildings and reporting any problems to the Asset Management Team.

Perception of personal safety

The ranger's office is signposted at key points within the park. Guided walking routes of the park are available free from the visitor centre and are located on boards throughout the park. There is a large map of the park in the visitor centre. Vegetation along pathways is managed to maintain lines of sight.

Emergency contact numbers are displayed on the gate of the Visitor centre, on the entrance to the rangers office and in the main notice boards.

As the visitor centre and rangers' office is not always staffed, new signage has been installed in the courtyard to inform visitors on what to do in the event of needing assistance or emergencies.

3.2.3. Well Maintained and Clean

Site based Rangers undertake regular patrols and make note of any minor maintenance issues as they arise. The Local Team Leader prepares a

programme of 'winter-works' to be undertaken each year by the ground's maintenance team.

The program is based upon the general service requirement ([Appendix 3](#))

The Rangers 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:

- Paths, steps, ramps
- Walls, fences, gates
- Buildings
- Furniture – signs, seats, litterbins etc.
- Soft landscape – grass, planted areas, water features etc.
- Trees

Any problems that cannot be dealt with by the site ranger are highlighted with the Local Team Leader and the work is either assigned to the park staff or to our asset management team (who appoints a contractor).

Litter management

There are large bins situated in the car parks, which are emptied on contract once per week. Recycling bins were present until 2014 but were removed due to sustained misuse. There are litterbins at all main entrances and at key points around the site. These are also emptied at least twice per week.

The main 'hot spots' for litter are the car parks, picnic areas and children's play area. Rangers and volunteers clear these at least twice each week and are further supplemented by a weekly volunteering litter pick group on Mondays. In addition, all members of parks staff are prepared to pick up litter as and when they see it.

Any reports of littering or fly tipping are dealt with as soon as possible either by the Rangers or the park staff.

Building and Infrastructure Maintenance

There is a programme of works for improving the appearance and maintenance of the courtyard in 2019, described in [Section 4.2.1](#).

The addition of an outside tap (installed 2018) means easier cleaning and watering of plants for the courtyard, with the gate replaced in early 2019.

The electrical supply of the buildings surrounding the courtyard is in the progress of being tested, with any upgrades or necessary changes to be completed before summer 2019.

There is a well-surfaced path network, suitable for wheelchairs, throughout most of the park, which includes Green Lane (Bridleway 32) and the joint use cycle/walkway.

Sections of Green Lane (BR32) are surfaced with tarmac, which although worn in places, is generally in good condition.

Rangers regularly improve sections of path that have become worn or have poor drainage.

Funding was sourced from the Forestry Commission in the form of a Woodland Improvement Grant in 2012 to upgrade the main perimeter path though the site (Appendix 4).

Graffiti is removed immediately by patrolling staff or volunteers on site wherever possible. Any more difficult instances of graffiti are reported via the 'Streetscene' helpline run by the Council's waste department. This helpline is also available to the public. Priority is given to offensive material.

Fencing

The fencing in Eastham Country Park is designed to keep visitors safe, to denote the park boundaries and to protect sensitive wildlife habitat.

The cliff top railings fences are in good condition and regularly checked. Fencing surrounding the dog free area was replaced in 2020. Replacement of the fencing surrounding the long plantation (an area containing high wildlife value including native bluebells) is ongoing. There are two wildlife ponds on site that are fenced to protect wildlife from dog access.

Low wooden fencing is currently being implemented in areas with sensitive ground flora, to try to prevent trampling damage. The areas currently fenced are Long Plantation (which features the bluebell wood), Bills Glade and an area off Green Lane that has wood anemone growing.



*Some of the current low fencing,
with the aim of extending these to
cover paths surrounding bluebell
woods*

Horticultural Maintenance

Horticultural maintenance is carried out in accordance with a frequency-based work programme.

The courtyards planting regime will be dealt with primarily by the volunteering WI group (see [section 4.2.1.](#)), with the rest of the site managed by the onsite ranger and volunteers.

Arboricultural Maintenance

Tree safety inspections are conducted based on the parks and countryside's tree policy ([Appendix 5](#)).

Potentially hazardous trees are identified by the ranger and reported to the Local Team Leader, whereupon urgent safety work is carried out directly as required. Conservation and amenity tree work is carried out where resources allow, as part of the winter works programme. In addition, individual property owners who neighbour the site may make occasional demands for tree pruning.

Wirral Council's grounds maintenance team undertake a programme of seasonal tree work related to tree safety and responds to emergencies. Tree work related to woodland management and habitat management including thinning, removal of non-natives and coppicing is carried out by the site ranger with the help of volunteers and horticultural students.

The majority of the site is woodland and tree stock is allowed to naturally regenerate. In certain areas the ranger will plant certain native species to provide more habitats for woodland species or to provide an amenity value. For instance, several dogwood saplings were planted on the fringe of the woodland to limit the spread of bracken (which can dominate the understorey vegetation).

Dogwood saplings planted to try to limit the spread of bracken



Most timber from the woodland is left in situ, which aids biodiversity by providing habitats for invertebrates. If the deadwood is too numerous then it is either

reused to mark path desire lines (where safe to do so) or wood-chipped for use on site.

Equipment Maintenance

All picnic benches, barbecue stands, and seating are assessed as part of the parks general service requirement. There is currently no play equipment in the dog-free play area; however, fencing surrounding the area is currently in progress of being replaced.

Parks vehicles include a van and a four wheeled quad bike. The rangers regularly inspect and service the quad bike. The van undergoes a yearly service and MOT and is taken by a member of parks staff to the transport department at the Wirral Council.

3.2.4. Environmental Management

Wirral parks and countryside team put sustainability at the heart of decision making and service delivery. We seek to have a positive impact on the environment, both now and for the future. Our key commitments are:

- Improve our sustainable performance
- Comply with environmental legislation
- Purchase sustainably
- Use natural resources sustainably
- Travel sustainably
- Minimise waste
- Manage land sustainability
- Raise Awareness
- Work in partnership

These key commitments are adhered to in all of Wirral Council's parks, including Eastham Country Park.

For full details of the sustainability aims see [Appendix 6](#).

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Eastham Country Park has a policy of reducing the usage of unnecessary items, for instance printing on when necessary. After the product has been used it is then either reused (if appropriate) or recycled. A grey recycling bin is located in the visitor centre courtyard, where both staff and visitors can use it. Placing a sign and moving it to a more prominent public location is a plan for 2019.

Other environmental policies adopted in the park are:

- Recycled paper is purchased for office use
- Wastepaper from the office is recycled or re-used
- Footpaths are surfaced with pH neutral recycled materials

- Removal of green waste from the site is kept to a bare minimum, reducing carbon emissions from transport
- All redundant office equipment such as telephones and computers are taken for recycling
- Scrap timber is sorted and re-used whenever possible

Peat Usage

Any plants or trees for the park are bought in and is produced, to the Council's specification, using compost that is 100% peat free.

Chemical Use

Herbicide usage is restricted to non-residual herbicide for the control of weed growth only when deemed necessary. Applications are used only in certain defined areas, for instance direct spraying of variegated yellow archangel (invasive, non-native plant), but only in winter when all other species are dormant in the ground and won't be affected. Efforts to curtail usage are ongoing with an agreement in 2019 to reduce the width of spraying undertaken.

Chemical storage and usage comply with requirements as defined in the current herbicide handling legislation. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) assessment records of all chemicals are retained at Warren Farm Depot.

Invasive Species Management

A small area of Japanese Knotweed has been identified in Eastham Country Park, located on the slopes of the demolished power station in the north of the site. It is treated by stem injection of herbicide by a fully qualified parks staff member with a NPTC PA61NJ licence, meaning that only the Knotweed is affected and doesn't affect surrounding plant life.

For the Wirral Councils policy on dealing with Japanese Knotweed see here: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/environmental-problems/street-care-and-cleaning/grass-cutting-and-ground-maintenance/wirral-council>

Energy and Water

The ranger's office and the visitor centre are heated and supplied with hot water by a condensing 'combi' gas boiler.

Buildings are equipped with energy efficient lighting on the whole.

Water consumption is monitored centrally. The toilets have systems that minimise water use.

Motorised mowing equipment used at the park is checked for emission levels.

A review of the visitor centre in 2019 will look into the possibility of having LED lighting that will operate by motion sensing. If implemented this would reduce the electric usage significantly. The review will also look at renewable energy generation, with solar panels located on the rear of the visitor centre considered.

Climate Change Adaption

Wirral Borough Council has a climate change adaption strategy, which has two main goals:

- to substantially cut climate pollution associated with Wirral
- to adapt Wirral to unavoidable climate change

The strategy and yearly progress reports are available here:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/about-council/climate-change-and-sustainability/cool-climate-change-strategy>

The progress report for 2018 can be found [here](#).

Eastham Country Park puts sustainability at its heart of every decision. One example is by choosing species that are able to adapt to a changing climate, for instance drought tolerant plant species. Plant species are chosen in the courtyard that requires minimal watering (such as deep-rooted shrubs or clematis), which is important as climate projections foresee that long-lasting dry and hot conditions (like we saw in 2018) are set to increase in frequency and intensiveness.

3.2.5. Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

Eastham Country Park is well-used by visitors, and an important part of the work of the team is to balance the needs of recreation with the conservation of the park's habitat and heritage.

Management of Natural Features, Wild Fauna and Flora

As previously mentioned, Eastham Country Park and woods host important habitat for wildlife. The biodiversity is largely managed by the onsite rangers, with assistance from numerous parties including volunteers, the biodiversity officer for South Wirral and wildlife trusts. Part of the site has been locally designated as a Site of Biological Interest (for details see [Appendix 7](#)). As such, it is monitored by Wirral Wildlife – the Wirral branch of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Wirral Wildlife acts as a source of guidance to the rangers and the parks

management team. The bird garden situated at the rear of the visitor centre is especially important for many bird species, helping to reduce stress during breeding months, gain strength needed for migration and to survive harsh winters. The bird garden, alongside the visitor centre will be discussed for improvements in early 2019. A ranger-led event in 2018 was organised to build several bird boxes for Eastham woods. In January 2019 the boxes were found suitable locations across the park, with the aim of attracting the attention of birds scouting for nesting locations.



One of the bird boxes installed at Eastham Country Park in 2018

The area surrounding the pleasure gardens was planted in the Victorian era with non-native species such as rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*), monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria Araucana*), laurel (*Laurus nobilis*) and giant redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) among many others. These species are left to grow in this area as it adds to the heritage of the site. However certain species namely laurel, and rhododendron are able to spread fast and often outcompete much of the native flora. So, the ranger alongside volunteers regularly cut back and removes these species to prevent spreading to the rest of the woodland. In 2018 there were numerous ranger led task days for laurel removal.

Ecological surveys are important to assess and improve upon wildlife found in the park. A full Ecological Assessment with accompanying management notes was carried out in 2001 by Dr Hilary Ash of Wirral Wildlife Trust - the report is still relevant and used to inform the conservation management of the site. In 2018 the Wirral Wildlife Trust recommended an area of wildflowers be created, which could help local butterfly populations, among other invertebrates. Areas will be looked at for 2019 onwards for a suitable area.



Proposed extension of the wildflower meadow area

An existing area of wildflower meadow is in the progress of being expanded upon at the back of Ferry Hotel. This area contains a naturally occurring abundant seedbank, which has been promoted using mowing and raking to remove nutrients and the active removal of saplings or encroaching shrubs. Work is set to continue in 2022 and onwards, with the long-term aim to create 3 new adjacent regions. This aim is dependent on resources, with the bulk of the work needed to be carried out in early autumn each year. The plan of expansion is shown visually above.

An extensive tree planting programme took place to extend the woodland onto a former playing fields site. In December 2020, 1500, trees were planted, the new trees are all native broadleaf woodland species and have been chosen for their suitability to conditions at Eastham Country Park. The height of the trees varies between each species with some taller trees like Oak and Lime which, when fully mature, can grow up to 30 metres tall and smaller trees such as

Blackthorn and Hazel which grow to a maximum height of around 10 metres. The full list of species which have been planted includes:

Pedunculate Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Large leaved Lime	<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Whitebeam	<i>Sorbus aria</i>
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>

The new trees will be placed on a three-year inspection cycle and will be looked at by a tree inspector again in November 2023 to assess their growth.



Tree planting in December 2020

Built heritage

The park and surrounding area has a rich historical background.

Eastham used to be an important jetty, which has been recognised with a sandstone plinth and brass plaque depicting the Wirral Peninsula and its

surroundings stands on Eastham Jetty. It was erected to commemorate the opening of the park in 1973.

Wirral Council's Special Initiatives Team in conjunction with local interest groups and the Ranger Service have produced a series of 'Maritime Heritage' plaques around the Wirral coast. One of these is situated adjacent to the original plaque on the jetty. Major repairs to the sandstone base of Eastham Ferry Jetty were carried out in 2006. Also on the jetty is an old anchor, which was discovered hidden in the undergrowth on the riverside walk. It was moved to the jetty in 2012 where it forms a visitor attraction.

Jetty area showing anchor in foreground with Maritime Heritage plaque and the River Mersey in the background



The Victorian pleasure gardens and zoo was and still remains a major attraction for tourists across the region. Work was originally carried out in 1994/1995 to preserve the remains of the fountains and bear pit, with further work in early 2019 taken place. Laurel removal is set to continue for conservation and amenity reasons surrounding the pleasure gardens.

The Victorian history of the park provides interest for visiting school groups.



School group with rangers

Information boards are situated within the pleasure gardens explaining the former attractions and animals that resided there. Further information on the history of the Victorian Gardens, the Manchester Ship Canal and the ferries can be found in the visitor centre.

Heritage, wildlife and habitat walks are a feature of the annual Wirral Walking Festival and are popular with visitors. The ranger also hosts an annual history walking tour, which looks back in time at the history of this unusual and interesting site.

3.2.6. Community Involvement

Stakeholders, partners, volunteers and friends are an integral part of the way the Council will take forward the Parks and Countryside Service.

Annual Visitor Survey

In 2018 a visitor's survey was conducted to determine perceptions on future plans for the park. The survey revealed the wide variety of leisure attractors that are drawing people into the park. These include the natural kids play area, cafe facilities, historic and ecological information, opportunities to see and walk in nature, the bear pit and various ranger led events.

The survey gave an opportunity for people to engage and give their opinions on potential upcoming projects. One of these projects is the "bird and butterfly project" which aims to provide a better learning facility for visitors and to create better habitats for living things. The responses will be used to influence decision making in 2019 on the direction of improvements within the park and visitor centre. The survey sheet can be seen in [Appendix 2](#).

Volunteers

Despite there being no current friends group operating at Eastham Country Park, there is active volunteer groups that assist the ranger on a weekly basis with various activities or projects. An aim for is to re-establish a friend's group or advisory group at Eastham Country Park. This can be achieved by promoting it locally, online and in newspapers with the help of several parks liaising with existing partners, volunteers and other stakeholders.

Task groups are a vital part of the team and the rangers provide training for those groups and individuals they work with. Rangers also help and provide advice with conservation projects on several local school and community sites.

The visitor centre's courtyard will now be managed primarily in 2019 onwards by the WI. They will liaise with parks staff and manage the flowerbeds, pots and shrubs, creating a welcoming entrance to the visitor centre and toilet complex.

Community groups at Eastham Country Park

The parks staff works with the following groups on a regular basis:

- The ranger runs a weekly volunteer task days, with a regular group of volunteers turning out to assist with conservation work in the park.
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Service work with the Rangers for their Service section
- Wirral Conservation Volunteers help with conservation work several days per year
- Corporate task days, for example Timberland and the Environment Agency
- Weekly health walk run by a volunteer
- WI volunteers managing the courtyard

Events

One of the principle aims for 2021 onwards is to increase visitor numbers to Eastham Country Park. And according to the Wirral Parks survey conducted in 2012 (for full details see [section 4.2.7.](#)) Events are a major driver of people to parks, with a quarter stating that more events would encourage them to use these places more.

So, in December 2018 the Christmas Fayre was launched by the parks staff, in order to draw in more visitors and to raise some money for the park and to good causes. The event saw several stalls including woodcarving, a pop-up shop, dogs trust cake stall, meet-the-owls of an owl sanctuary and Christmas crafts. The event was hosted inside the visitor centre and was largely a success, with the aim to start small and to increase visitor numbers year on year.

The aim for future events is to increase visitor numbers and to provide improvements to the visitor centre, so that it is more suitable for winter events. To achieve this advertising will be broadened, targeting younger families who seek out events via social media or online event websites. The visitor centre will also be assessed in 2019 for improvements, which may include new heating and automatic closing doors.



Christmas Fayre event 2018, people gathering around an educational talk from Moonshine Owl Sanctuary.

There are also several ranger led events held annually at Eastham Country Park. These include:

- **Wildflowers in the Woodland** – A walk around Eastham woods in early May, spectating on the blooms of many wildflower species, in particular the wonderful displays of native bluebells.
- **Eastham Country Park History Walk** – A walk around the park, looking back in time at the history of this unusual and interesting site.
- **Mini Forest Schools** – Aimed at children aged between 5-12 years old, this event sees fun activities and games in the local woodland setting.
- **Apple Day** – Eastham Country Park hosts the Wirral south rangers, alongside Wirral Wildlife Trust and Wirral Tree Wardens for a range of activities from apple tasting, juice making to children's activities and a performance by the Mersey Morris Men.
- **Acorn Hunt** – A walk around Eastham woods, hunting for acorns and other tree seeds, whilst looking for different species of trees. The rangers will then grow saplings from the seeds and plant them in Eastham woods, thus aiding regeneration of native trees in the site.

3.2.7. Marketing and Communication

Marketing of the park

Eastham Country Park is widely advertised, and site information is available across many different platforms:

- Wirral Council website: Includes information on opening hours, facilities, access information, contact details and link to the Green Flag management plan for the site.
- Eastham Country Park website: Maintained and managed by parks staff, this advertises any events and information relevant to the park. Currently in the progress of being modernised, with an events page being added.
- Visit Wirral Website: Wirral's tourism website, which gives details on activities and facilities to do in the park. This website gives the park a wider international audience and promotes the parks website.
- Green Flag Award website: Gives a great overview of the site, alongside park facilities and contact details. Allows people to see online that the park has achieved this prestigious award.
- Eastham Country Park appears as one of Google's "Things to do in the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral".
- Featured in Wirral's Nature Guide
- Walking guides, that promote the link between the park and the wider countryside
- Wirral's Circular Trail: A circular cycle trail around the Wirral runs through the park.
- Paper copies of walking or information leaflets are available in the visitor centre, and at other locations across the Wirral including nature reserves, libraries etc.

Social media now plays a large role in finding events or new places to visit, especially for young families. Eastham Country Park has its own Facebook page and although it's currently not managed by the council it is used to promote events hosted by the council or partners. An aim for 2019 is to gain control and manage the Facebook page, in order to promote the park and its events.

Wirral Parks Survey

This was undertaken in 2012 to find out what visitors think about their parks, beaches and countryside, and to inform management of Wirral's Parks.

The survey showed that Eastham attracts visitors from the local area and beyond Wirral into Cheshire. During the survey, the minimum distance travelled was 0.4 miles, the maximum 7.7 miles, with an average of 1.9 miles travelled.

Important general information was learned from the survey including the following:

- Peak times for use are afternoons, with evening use greater on weekdays than at weekends. The majority of visits are from half an hour to two hours. Around one in five people visit for more than two hours. These findings were echoed by the visitor number counter here at Eastham Country (see [section 3.4.1.](#)).
- One sixth of Wirral people visit parks, beaches and open spaces for events. A quarter said more events would encourage them to use these places more.
- Less dog fouling and more and better toilet provision stand out as the top two things that people say would encourage them to use parks, open spaces and beaches more, with 53.7% and 46.5% of responses respectively.

Almost three quarters of people rate Wirral's parks, beaches and open spaces as having a very good or good standard of cleanliness and being maintained in a very good or good condition.

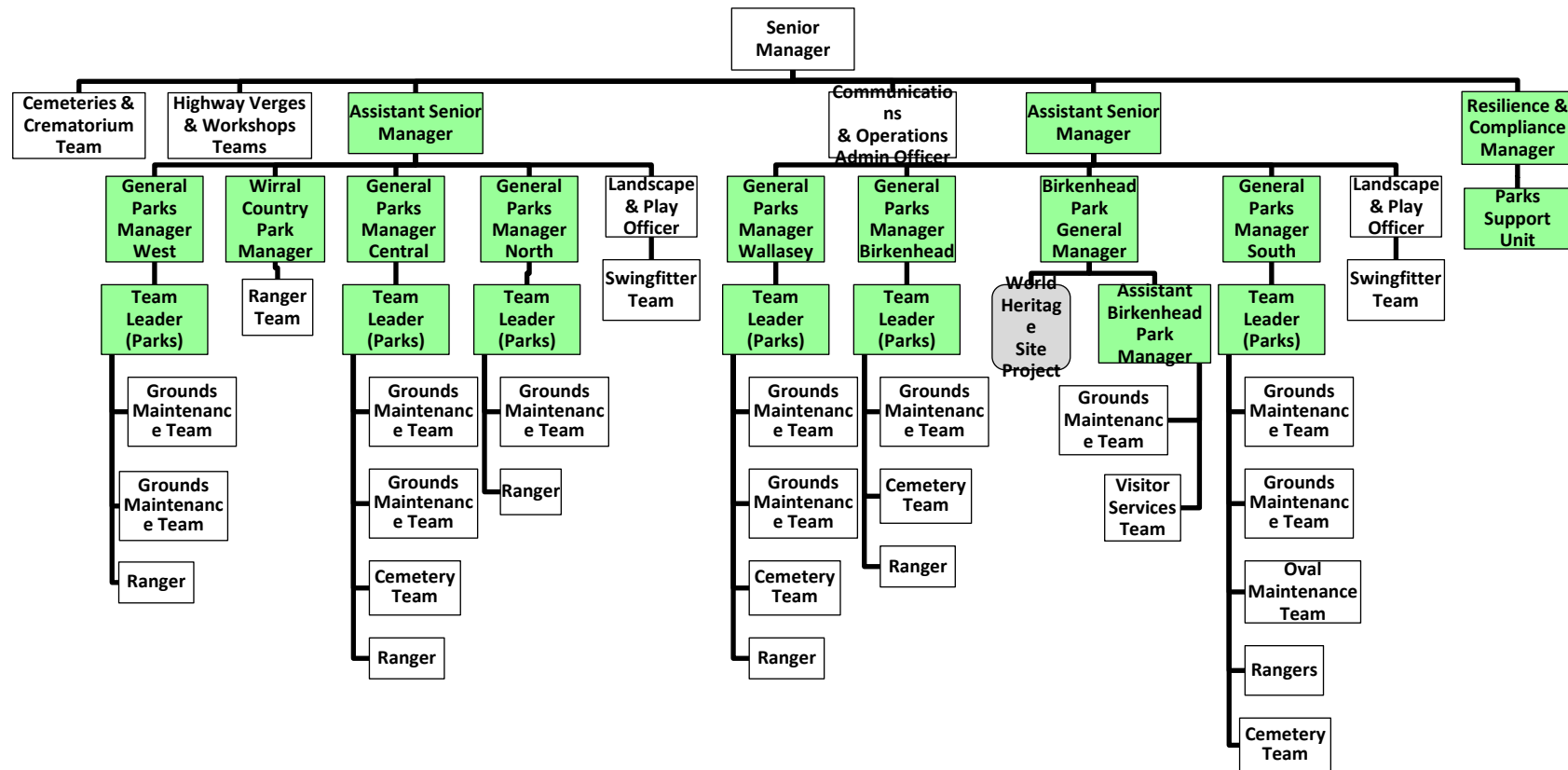
Since then, Eastham Country Park has updated its toilet facilities and ensured that its facilities are open from at least 10am-4pm every day of the year (except for a few days surrounding Christmas). Events are held regularly throughout the year, with a new Christmas Fayre event launched in December 2018 and set to continue to grow for 2019 onwards. Dog control measures such as restricting dogs in the play area, mandating leads on dogs in the courtyard and consistent signage on cleaning up after dogs.

3.2.8. Management

The General Parks Manager (Parks Allotments and Countryside Department) is responsible for the management and maintenance of the site (see figure below for service organisational chart). With the daily task assigned to rangers and ground maintenance supervisors.

This management plan aims to inform staff and members and the public about the aspirations Wirral Council and the creation of a friend's group to have a sound platform for the future development and maintenance of the park.

The Parks and Countryside Service like other public services around the country is experiencing budgetary pressure and face challenging times to deliver service improvements.



*Wirral Parks and Countryside service organisational chart.
Eastham Country Park falls under South Wirral*

The site was judged in 2023.
The following is the report for 2023 including the General Managers responses and actions planned.

Green Flag Judge's feedback



FEEDBACK REPORT: 2023-24

Name of Site	Eastham Country Park
Managing Organisation	Wirral Council
Date of Assessment	11 th May 2023

OVERALL RESULT	Pass	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fail	<input type="checkbox"/>
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NOTES ABOUT THIS REPORT
<p>Strengths and recommendations are provided for each criteria.</p> <p>Photographs are included, where appropriate, to support the feedback from the judge(s) in relation to both strengths and recommendations.</p> <p>Please refer to the Raising the Standard guidance manual here for further information on the criteria.</p>

DESK ASSESSMENT

(Management plan and supporting documentation)

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
Presentation	A very simple yet effective management plan and has been regularly updated by the management team with updates	

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
	clear and obvious and set out in a manner which makes it usable and transferable.	
Health, Safety & Security	All risk assessment, health and safety emergency procedures are in place, satisfactory and suitable to the site. Links and procedures are all current and well set out.	
Maintenance of Equipment, Buildings & Landscape	Well covered within the plan.	<p>A bit more detail on who is responsible for what and where inspection records are kept too?</p> <p>NOTED – Our maintenance of Equipment is held at our maintenance department in Ebenezer Street Workshops, Wirral.</p> <p>Our building repairs and maintenance are held online via Concerto.</p>
Litter, Cleanliness, Vandalism	litter is picked regularly and litterbins are emptied when needed. Building and structure cleaning schedule is good. There are good procedures in place to deal with graffiti, vandalism and ASB. The site was very clean and it is good to see that there are good resources to manage this. Vandalism is an	None to mention.

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
	occasional issue but from the site visits, none were apparent.	
Environmental Management	The management plan reflected what was being delivered on site	None to mention.
Biodiversity, Landscape & Heritage	Identification of history and organisation is adequate. Many of the original landscape features are intact and remain a great feature and have been enhanced with thought and care throughout the site	<p>However, this section should be strengthened further with how the opportunities and plans for the bear pit, fountains and buildings are to be delivered. There is no detail on this, and this is an important aspect of the long term vision of the site.</p> <p>NOTED – We understand the importance of these structures and are currently planning to update and protect over the next 2 or 3 years, depending on funding.</p>
Community Involvement	Well documented in the plan and a real strength.	None to mention.
Marketing & Communication	This is documented and covered.	We would like to see more on how this site can be promoted with its unique features. It seems to be in the shadow of its great neighbour up the

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
		<p>road and this place has so much more to offer.</p> <p>NOTED</p>
Overall Management	Overall an excellent management plan and captures what it needs to.	<p>A few additions needed to bring it up to date, re buildings especially and the management of heritage.</p> <p>NOTED</p>

FIELD ASSESSMENT

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
A Welcoming Place	Easy to find, car parking excellent and a lovely entrance to the site, unique in a fantastic setting.	<p>The courtyard area is an interesting area, with some indication of what is here and its relevance. It was a bit lacking in information</p> <p>NOTED – Funding would be needed for interpretation boards/history boards. We will try and involve the Heritage group in Eastham</p>
Healthy, Safe & Secure	Well signposted and easy to find your way around the site, with good interaction with locals, it is clearly popular. The site is well maintained with a great use of volunteers. Paths etc were what you would expect for such a site. Good to see how much work had been done since the last major storm.	<p>Storm damage significant. Perhaps some indication of progress here and notification on site as some may perceive the site as 'messy' when it clearly isn't.</p> <p>NOTED – Again, external funding would need to be sourced for Environmental plaques to indicate why some of the deadwood is left in situ and the benefits to the site.</p>
Well Maintained & Clean	No litter apparent, the site was very well maintained and use of volunteers excellent.	None to add

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
Environmental Management	Lots of this visible on site especially after the storms. Clear vision for the site and how areas are managed for habitat and excellent opportunities taken for new tree planting, despite the square shape!	As above re the storm damage.
Biodiversity Landscape & Heritage	The site has remarkable biodiversity as well as incredible heritage. The fountains and bear pit were simply incredible features to see.	<p>There is a story to be told here about this site either on site more but also in greater detail. There are snippets online but how does the visitor learn about the importance of this site whether through a leaflet, or a booklet or dedicated website / microsite. There is an amazing story here but it appears a bit lost. Tell it.</p> <p>Noted – We will task the Ranger on site to pool all the historic information and work with the local Historic and Heritage group to see what we can produce. Again unfortunately external funding would need to be sourced to proceed with any works.</p>
Community Involvement	Fantastic community involvement and use of volunteers	<p>Is there an opportunity for a voluntary group to research the history further and tell the story? County Gardens Trust?</p> <p>NOTED – Thank you for the advice.</p>
Marketing and Communication	Very good and some boards onsite	See above – lots more opportunities here. Tell that amazing story.

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
Management	Great staff enthusiasm as ever from the team, well managed, determined and committed. Management Plan well considered.	Nothing to add

Summary and additional comments:
A really good visit and a fantastic site that has a story to tell. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1: Action Plan

No.	Action	Lead Officer	Target Date	Resources	Achieved
1. A Welcoming Place					
	Regular ongoing discussions with WI over plans for courtyard	Ranger	Ongoing	Within existing resources	√2021 √2022
	Pursue improvements and upgrades to the visitor centre	General Manager	2019/2020	Capital Bid required	√2022 Ongoing
	Ensure car parks and entrances are well maintained	Ranger/ Team Leader	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
	Pursue a programme of improvement to the main car park, including assistance with leaf removal and paint re-marking.	Ranger/ volunteers/ highways team	Ongoing	Highways/ Within existing resources	Ongoing
	Ensure all onsite information is regularly updated	Ranger/ Team Leader	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
2. Healthy, Safe and Secure					
	Raise the profile of the issue of dog fouling to encourage responsibility by dog owners	Ranger/ General Manager	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
	Fit new fence surrounding bird garden to prevent dogs entering and disturbing wildlife in ponds.	Ranger/ Team Leader	2021	Within existing resources	Ongoing repairs
	Report hazardous trees to Area Park Manager for action	Ranger/ Team Leader	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
	To target resources effectively report all incidents of anti-social behaviour to Merseyside Police	General Manager	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
	Electrical safety test of all buildings	General Manager	Ongoing	Asset Management	√ 2021 √2022

3. Well maintained and Clean					
	Electrical supply and equipment upgraded in line with safety test recommendations conducted in 2019	General Manager	Ongoing	Asset Management	Ongoing annually
	Replace fencing around long plantation.	Ranger/ Team Leader	2022	Funding required	Ongoing
	Review provision and condition of all park furniture	Ranger/ Team Leader / General Manager	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
	Oversee and hold regular talks with WI over appearance and maintenance of courtyard	Ranger	Ongoing	N/A	Ongoing
	Rolling programme for clean, repair and repaint all furniture	Ranger/ Volunteers/ Team Leader	Ongoing	Volunteers, Rangers	Ongoing
	Replace sections of damaged or worn fencing on an annual basis, alongside the addition of new fencing to protect trampling damage.	Ranger/ Team Leader	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
4. Environmental Management					
	Review into energy efficiency savings such as LED lighting and motion sensors.	Ranger/ Team Leader	Ongoing	N/A	Ongoing when require replacement
5. Biodiversity, landscape and heritage					
	Extension of the wildflower meadow at the rear of the ferry hotel	Rangers and volunteers	2019/ 2020 onwards	Ranger and volunteers	ongoing
	Replace fencing in Long Plantation to prevent trampling of sensitive ground flora	Ranger/ Team Leader	2022	PPM	Ongoing
	Reduce number of desire lines through woodland areas to lessen impact on ground flora and allow natural regeneration of trees	Ranger/ Team Leader	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
	Lay and maintain hedges in the dog free play area. Lay hedge at the rear of visitor centre.	Ranger/ Volunteers/ Tree team	Ongoing	Wirral Conservation Volunteers	2021 2022 Ongoing
	Restore historic features	Ranger/ General Manager	Ongoing	Requires additional funding	ongoing

	Engage contractor in to cut back laurel and remove off-site	Ranger/ Team Leader	Ongoing	Within existing resources	ongoing
	Prevent the spreading of non-native species from the pleasure gardens to the rest of the woodland.	Ranger and volunteers	Ongoing	Rangers and volunteers	Ongoing
6. Community Involvement					
	Continue to organise task days with a variety of volunteers and user-groups	Ranger	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
	Increase involvement of local community groups within events	Ranger	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
7. Marketing and Communication					
	Modernise and expand the parks website, with the addition of an events page	General Manager / IT Team	Ongoing	Within existing resources	2022
	Continue to promote the site through Council publications and investigate new opportunities	Ranger/ Team Leader/ General Manager	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
6. Management					
	Enhance branding of the park	Ranger/ Team Leader/ General Manager	Ongoing	Within existing resources	Ongoing
	Ensure that funding is used in ways which supports the special character of the site.	General Manager/ Team Leader	Ongoing	Existing resources and any additional funding	Ongoing

Appendix 2: Eastham Country Park Visitor Survey (2018)

1) What do you like about the park and the visitor centre?

2) Are there any improvements that you would like to see in the park or visitor centre?

3) There is a vision to improve the visitor centre and bird garden (Bird and Butterfly Garden Project) at the back of the visitor centre, some of these improvements are to provide better facilities for visitors, and others are to create a better habitat for living things (Biodiversity). The proposed improvements include:

- Greater abundance of plants that attract bees/butterflies
- Tiered ponds to improve the garden's potential to attract birds, insects and other animals
- Wildlife cameras (with possible website to livestream viewings)
- Bird and butterfly identification displays
- LED lighting, with motion sensors, in visitor centre (reducing our electricity consumption)

What other improvements, would you like to see?

4) Would you be willing to support this project either by volunteering or by donating to a Project Fund?

Yes

No

Thank you for taking part in this survey for the future of Eastham Country Park, please place the form in the box on the table in the visitor centre.

If you are interested in finding out more information about the Bird and Butterfly Garden Scheme, please provide your email address below:

Appendix 3: Parks and Countryside Service General Service Requirement

Parks and Countryside Service General Specifications applicable to Eastham Country Park

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 exception 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, cutbacks, 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.

Premium ornamental and ornamental grass

Premium ornamental areas and ornamental areas shall be maintained so that they are substantially free from weeds, coarse grasses, moss and algae by cultural methods and the application of approved pesticides. Cutting machines shall be cylinder type for fine turf maintenance. For premium ornamental areas the arising's shall be boxed off and recycled or reused. For ornamental areas there is no requirement for boxing off arising's.

All premium ornamental and ornamental grass areas shall be maintained within the specified height range:

- Minimum height 8 mm
- Maximum height 15 mm

Premium ornamental and ornamental grass maintenance shall include all necessary:

- pest, disease and weed control
- fertilising
- scarifying
- aeration
- rolling
- irrigation
- seasonal renovation

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 the park

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 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 team leader.

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 planting

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.

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.

Planting areas general – replacement, renewal and new planting

Where requested by the team leader 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, who have 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 Safety

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 team leader 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 team leader.

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 team leader may instruct timber and brushwood to be retained on site. The team leader 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.

Refer to section 'Waste management including recycling of biodegradable waste' (green waste).

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 team leader 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.

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/result/?q=trees>

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: Special Project - Woodland Improvement Grant

A Woodland Improvement Grant (WIG) was applied for by the Parks and Countryside Development team awarded by the Forestry Commission in August 2012 for improve woodland accessibility.

The objective is to construct and upgrade pathways to improve access for more people and to create a good quality circular route through the woodland, linking into existing, good quality hard surface tracks. A smaller separate section of path will be constructed to provide decent access within a woodland area designed to provide natural play for children (the dog free area). Woodland furniture will also be installed in the form of benches and picnic tables which can be used by disabled users to complement the pathway. New interpretation panels will be installed to replace the existing out of date ones, and new routed way markers installed.

The scheme is funded at 80% of cost. Match funding has been allocated from the councils Green Flag budget

All project work was completed, and money claimed by the end of December 2014.

The programmed works included:

- 1174m of footpaths to be upgraded,
- 11 Routed way markers,
- 4x A1 interpretation boards,
- 4 benches,
- 2 picnic benches,
- Selective tree pruning

Appendix 5: Parks & Countryside Tree Policy

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/about-council/climate-change-and-sustainability/trees-hedgerows-and-woodland>

Appendix 6: Wirral Parks and Countryside Service – Sustainability

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/about-council/climate-change-and-sustainability>

Appendix 7: Site of Biological Importance Citation

Site name: Eastham Woods

Site code: B50

Ward: Eastham

Grid Reference: SJ363816

Area: 27.4 ha

Date of Notification: 1980

Date of Revision: 2002

Status: Country Park owned by WMBC. Adjacent to Mersey Estuary SSSI

Description: Although a mixed deciduous woodland with oak (*Quercus* spp.), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and birches (*Betula* spp), the site also contains old pleasure grounds, grasslands, coastal cliffs and scrub. Part of the woodland has a rich ground flora including bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), but much is heavily used and with limited ground flora.

The ornithological interest is considerable with a range of breeding species including all three Woodpeckers, Nuthatch and Redpoll.

The area also includes the adjacent rocky foreshore with Permo-Triassic sandstone and Quaternary clay cliffs.

Criteria for selection: (i) (ii) (iii) (iv)

Habitats: Woodland - mixed (plantation)

Percentage:

Grassland - improved

Rock

Open water - standing water

Scrub

CONFIDENTIAL: N/A

