



Wirral Council
Technical Services Department
Parks and Countryside Service

Victoria Gardens
Management Plan
January 2014



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Introduction

The plan is intended to provide a framework for the development and improvement of the 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 email streetscene@wirral.gov.uk or write to:

**Wirral Council,
Technical Services Department,
Cheshire Lines Building,
Canning Street,
Birkenhead,
Wirral,
CH41 1ND.**

Minicom – 0151 606 2575 - for people with hearing difficulties

The Wider Policy Context

Wirral Council's Parks and Countryside Service are based within the Regeneration and Environment Directorate.

During 2011 Wirral Council undertook a Parks and Countryside Service Procurement Exercise (PACSPE) to consider out-sourcing the delivery of the service. In September Wirral Council's Cabinet resolved to retain the Parks and Countryside Service 'in-house'.

The Parks and Countryside Service is currently producing a 10 year Green and Open Space Strategy (GOSS) that will inform and direct the next 10 years for the Service. It will be available in early 2014.

It is the intention of the Parks and Countryside Service to produce a tree survey for all Parks within the Borough once the vacant post for an arboriculture officer has been filled.

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

The primary focus of the Department is to deliver services that contribute to the '**Your Neighbourhood**' theme in Wirral Council's Corporate Plan (2011 – 14).

The Corporate Departmental Goals for Leisure and Culture are:

'Your Neighbourhood'

Leisure and Culture

- **Provide and maintain high quality parks and open spaces in partnership with local communities.**

- **Provide high quality, value for money leisure and cultural facilities for Wirral residents.**

The focus for the Parks and Countryside Service for 2011/15 is:

- Developing a new Parks and Countryside Service (PACS) including the introduction of a new service monitoring system which involves users
- Delivering a programme of improvements in parks funded by the capital programme

Site information

Name: Victoria Gardens

Address: Victoria Drive, West Kirby, Wirral

Primary classification: Local Park

Primary purpose:

Intensively managed park used primarily by local people, providing accessible, high quality opportunities for formal and informal recreation and children's play including community events.

Location plan:



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Ward: Hoylake & Meols

Size: 0.36 Hectares

Tenure:

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

Partner Organisations:

- Friends of Victoria Gardens
- Wirral Council Community Safety Team
- Wirral Council Youth and Community Services Outreach Team
- Merseyside Police

Stakeholders:

- Friends of Victoria Gardens
- West Kirby Promenade Bowlers
- Grounds maintenance staff

Summary of Features:

- Bowling green
- Clubroom and kitchen
- Machinery shed
- Public toilets (only open when bowlers are on site)
- Ornamental planting
- Victorian shelters
- Feature boundary wall with sandstone sphere detail
- Bench seating
- Friends Information board

Access:

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

History:

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



Victoria Gardens circa 1920

Resources:

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

Grounds maintenance is funded from the annual maintenance revenue budget.

The Area Parks Manager has overall responsibility for grounds maintenance. Staff based at Ashton Park carries out maintenance operations.



Green Flag Assessment

The decline in investment in parks over previous decades has resulted in some deterioration to the built environment and soft landscape of Victoria Gardens, but this has now been addressed.

The intention is for the park to meet the required standards as defined by the **Green Flag**

Award Scheme; further details concerning the scheme can be found at www.greenflagaward.org.co.uk.

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

1. A welcoming place
2. Healthy, safe and secure
3. Clean and maintained
4. Sustainability
5. Conservation and heritage
6. Community involvement
7. Marketing
8. Management

1. A welcoming place

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



View from promenade entrance

Feature brick and sandstone walling with spherical copings bound the gardens on two sides. This incorporates recessed seating to the exterior. The copings were covered with ivy and this required careful removal. Some of the timber slatted seating to the recesses require

repair. The corner of the wall at the junction with the promenade is cracked and should be repaired.

There is currently only small name plate signage indicating site name but no related information. This should be addressed as a priority.

The promenade entrance can be closed with storm boards during the winter to prevent the sea entering the site. At the request of the Friends, these have not been fitted so as to improve the welcome. There is a raised area at this entrance that could be used as a picnic area by the addition of picnic tables. This could be an excellent link to the promenade.

There is no direction signage to the park from the main roads surrounding the park.

The storm surge of December 2013 caused extensive damage to the promenade seating, copings and rendering at this entrance. This requires repair and replacement as a priority.

Action:

- Provide direction signage from main roads
- Provide site name and contact detail board (to corner of promenade and Victoria Drive)
- Remove shed base at main entrance
- Consider picnic benches or similar to promenade entrance

2. Healthy, safe and secure

Anti social behaviour

Wirral Council's Community Patrol is established to provide a 24 hour response to any concerns notified to them regarding anti-social behaviour occurring within Council owned land. The Patrol provides a reactive response to calls from the public and Council staff and generally they do not undertake routine patrolling. Problems of a persistent or on-going nature however can be raised with the team. The Patrol can be contacted on telephone number 0151 666 5265.

The Parks and Countryside Service is represented on the ASB Governance meeting, a forum consisting of the following agencies Merseyside Police, Community Safety, Youth and Community groups and other partner organisations. Issues regarding security in Parks and Countryside sites are raised at the meeting with the intention of providing a multi agency approach to addressing any problems.

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.

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

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

The contact details of named Police Officers, based at Upton Police Station, who have responsibility for the Meols Park area, should be displayed within the park's notice board along with Wirral Council's Community Patrol's details.

Wirral Council has a written and up to date Health and Safety Policy.

Infrastructure

The location and type of waste bins requires improving to the 'hooded' type as these are also used for dog waste.

The bowling pavilion / kitchen are well used by the resident bowling club and kept clean by their members.

The public convenience building is situated in the south- east corner of the site and is open when the bowlers are on site. It is in acceptable condition but requires some updating and decorating during the term of this plan.

Flagstone footpaths throughout the site require some maintenance to maintain levels.

It is proposed to introduce an Annual Site Safety Inspection Checklist. It should identify defects within the park that present a risk to staff and/or users and includes footpaths, walls, fences, buildings, furniture and planted areas.

Action:

- Commence annual site safety inspection
- Standardise hooded type waste bins
- Update / decorate toilet facilities
- Point and re-level flagged footpaths
- Repair / replace benches as funds become available
- Display contact details for Police and Community Patrol

3. Clean and well maintained

Responsible dog walking

The whole of the Wirral Borough is designated under Dog Control Orders (that implement section 55 and 56 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005) these provide increased levels of enforcement for five offences prescribed in a dog control order, these are – failing to remove dog faeces, not keeping a dog on a lead, not putting a dog on a lead when directed to do so by an authorised officer, permitting a dog to enter land from which dogs are excluded and taking more than a specified number of dogs onto land. Failure to comply can result in a prosecution and a maximum fine of £1,000. Alternatively offenders may be offered a £50 Fixed Penalty Notice. Wirral's Community Patrol Officers have been authorised to

issue notices. A media campaign 'Don't give a dog a bad name' was launched to highlight the new powers.

The Friends notice board carries a sign encouraging responsible dog ownership on site.

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

The Friends undertake a monthly 'clean up' and remove any dog waste to bins.

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

Tree work in the Park is largely undertaken on a reactive basis as the tree stock has not yet been surveyed. This situation should be improved once an arboriculture officer is appointed during 2014.

Horticultural maintenance is carried out in accordance with a frequency based work programme allied to a specification. The work programme is issued to staff on a quarterly basis; these are used for identifying all maintenance operations on the site and the required standards. It is understood that currently these documents are not being fully utilised and are under review.

The Friends have an 'adopt a bed scheme' and maintain the central feature shrub bed themselves.

The Friends meet with Parks Officer on a formal basis annually to agree improvements and monitor progress.

Action:

- Ensure dog signage is painted / erected to all entrances
- Carry out a simple tree survey
- Remove any graffiti as it occurs
- Produce an annual winter work programme for the site

4. Sustainability



Central planting feature

Wirral Council has an Environmental Policy that the Parks and Countryside section adhere to (see Appendix D).

Pesticide usage at the park is confined to non-residual Herbicide for the control of weed growth on pathways. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (C.O.S.H.H.) assessment records of the chemical based products used within the park together with pesticide records are retained at the district depot. Chemical storage and usage within the park complies with the requirements defined within the current pesticide handling legislation.

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

Waste handling within the Parks and Countryside Service was subject to a review during 2006.

Green waste generated at the park is separated out and composted at the area depot at Ashton Park. Any waste timber or metals recovered are also separated for reuse/recycling at the depot.

Waste and detritus collected from work done by the Friends is removed by Wirral Council staff.

Tree brash resulting from tree work is chipped and stored at the depot for reuse.

Peat or peat-based products are not used in any capacity within the park.

Cycle racks are not currently provided at the park.

Action:

- Install cycle racks

- Maintain and where possible improve recycling procedures

5. Conservation and Heritage.



Victorian shelters in the Gardens

The historic perimeter brick and sandstone wall requires regular Ivy removal at various locations to the boundary with Victoria Drive and the Promenade.

A repair should be carried out to the vertical crack of the render at this junction.

The flagged copings to pillars at the vehicular access to the upper garden require replacement and also at the vehicular access on Victoria Drive.

The re-roofing of the feature Victorian shelters was a priority and is now completed.

Action:

- Repair / replace perimeter seating, copings, rendering and paving to promenade wall and entrance on South Parade following storm damage
- Repair crack in promenade wall render
- Replace flagstone copings to vehicular access entrance on Victoria Drive
- Prune Ivy on perimeter wall periodically

6. Community involvement.



A Friend tending their plot

The community of Wirral both in general and in the form of constituted community and voluntary sector organisations are a key partner in relation to Wirral Council's parks service. This is represented in Wirral Council's vision "to provide and maintain high quality parks and open spaces in partnership with the local community".

Victoria Gardens enjoys an exemplary level of community support which has helped to transform the Gardens in recent years.

The Friends have increased usage, giving time and funding for the improvement of the Gardens through planting, monthly tidying, commemorative bench donations and shrub bed adoptions.

An annual neighbourhood picnic is organised by the Friends and supported by the bowling club. The event includes stalls, pony rides, 'have a go' at bowls and a BBQ.





Invitation to the picnic 2013

There have been over 100 subscribers to the Friends group every year since its inception in 2009.

The Friends liaise closely with Wirral Council and other users of the Gardens. They act as 'eyes and ears' for Council reporting misbehaviour and suggesting improvements.

Wirral's Parks Friends groups are invited to attend a Park's Forum, which is held twice a year. This presents an opportunity for the various groups to network and share their experiences. Collectively the Friends of Wirral Parks produce a quarterly newsletter with contributions from all friends groups.

The Council is working closely with the existing 45 Friends Groups and are providing support for new groups. The Friends and stakeholders will be an integral part of the way the Council takes the service forward including the setting of key performance indicators and the future monitoring of performance of the service.

Wirral Council staff should continue to encourage positive use of the gardens by stakeholders and the general public.

The Friends information board provides information about their activities and events for site users.

The Friends committee meets four times per year and holds an AGM advertised via the newsletter from the chairman to subscribers.

Action:

- Continue to support the work Friends and stakeholders in site improvements
- Apply for the Green Flag Award

7. Marketing.



Main entrance information board

Wirral Council has a web site that has links to the Parks and Countryside information.

A site name board should be provided to the main entrance or promenade. An information board in the gardens providing current information on local events has been provided and utilised by the Friends.

The Friends write to subscribers annually and invite suggestions on the future direction of the Gardens. However, market research could be undertaken to give a better understanding of the site users and their views and the findings incorporated into this plan.

Tens of thousands of people come to West Kirby each year and many walk along the promenade. It is the intention of this plan to improve the Gardens link to the promenade experience.

Action:

- Improve Wirral Council website to include details on Victoria Gardens
- Undertake a simple market research study to best inform future improvements

8. Management.

The production of this management plan should provide staff and public with the expectations Wirral Council has for the future development and maintenance of the gardens.

The Area Parks Manager and the Assistant Area Parks Manager are responsible for the management and maintenance of the site. The area grounds maintenance depot is located at Warren Farm, enquiries regarding the management and maintenance of the park can be made to the Area Park Manager on telephone number 0151 327 1336.

As referred to above Wirral Council's Parks and Countryside Service was subject to considerable change during 2011/2012; when the service was subject to a procurement exercise. During November 2011 Wirral Council's Cabinet resolved to retain the service 'in-house'. This will require a complete change of approach in the delivery and management of the service and a monitoring system that fully involves users is in development. Users will be invited to join the Partnership and Performance Advisory Board and will help develop and be actively involved in establishing key performance indicators (KPI's) and collective partnership targets (CPT's).

The friends group are important to the future of Victoria Gardens as they add value to the Gardens as a source of funding for development projects and a ceaseless provider of ideas.

They are both stakeholders and partners with Wirral Council.

Friends and stakeholders will be an integral part of the way the Council takes the service forward including the setting of key performance indicators and the future monitoring of performance of the service.

The Friends have public liability insurance for their events and a blanket Wirral Council insurance cover when working in the Gardens.

The management plan should be reviewed and updated annually.

Action:

- Create system to monitor maintenance and improvements, in partnership with the Friends
- Maintain and review management plan annually

Appendices

A. Site Plans



A1. Aerial photo



B. Site Elements Quantities Table and Schematic Plan

ITEM	QUANTITY	TYPE
Premium Ornamental Grass		
Ornamental Grass		
General Grass	1232m ²	
Rough Grass		
Wild Flower Grass area		
Playing Field		
Soccer Pitch		
Mini Soccer Pitch		
5 Aside Pitch		
Rugby Pitch		
Summer Sports		
Bowling Green	1198m ²	
Putting Green		
Tennis Court		
Cricket Square		
Cricket Artificial Wicket		
Cricket Outfield		
Cricket Nets		
Hedge two side and top		
Hedge one side and top	188m ²	
Hedge one side only		
Annual Bedding		
Perpetuity Grave Bedding		
Herbaceous Border		
Rose Bed	27m ²	
Shrub Bed	351m ²	
Hard Surface	160m ²	
Bitumen Macadam Sports		
Water Bound Hard Porous Sports		
Play Area		
Muga/Goal Ends/Kickabout area		
Skateboard Park		
Ditches and Water Courses		
Lakes and Ponds		
Golf Green		
Golf Green Surrounds		
Golf Bunkers		
Golf Fairways		
Golf Roughs		
Golf Tees		
Golf Automatic Irrigation		
Pitch and Putt Greens		
Pitch and Putt Green Surrounds		
Pitch and Putt Grass Banks		
Pitch and Putt Fairways		

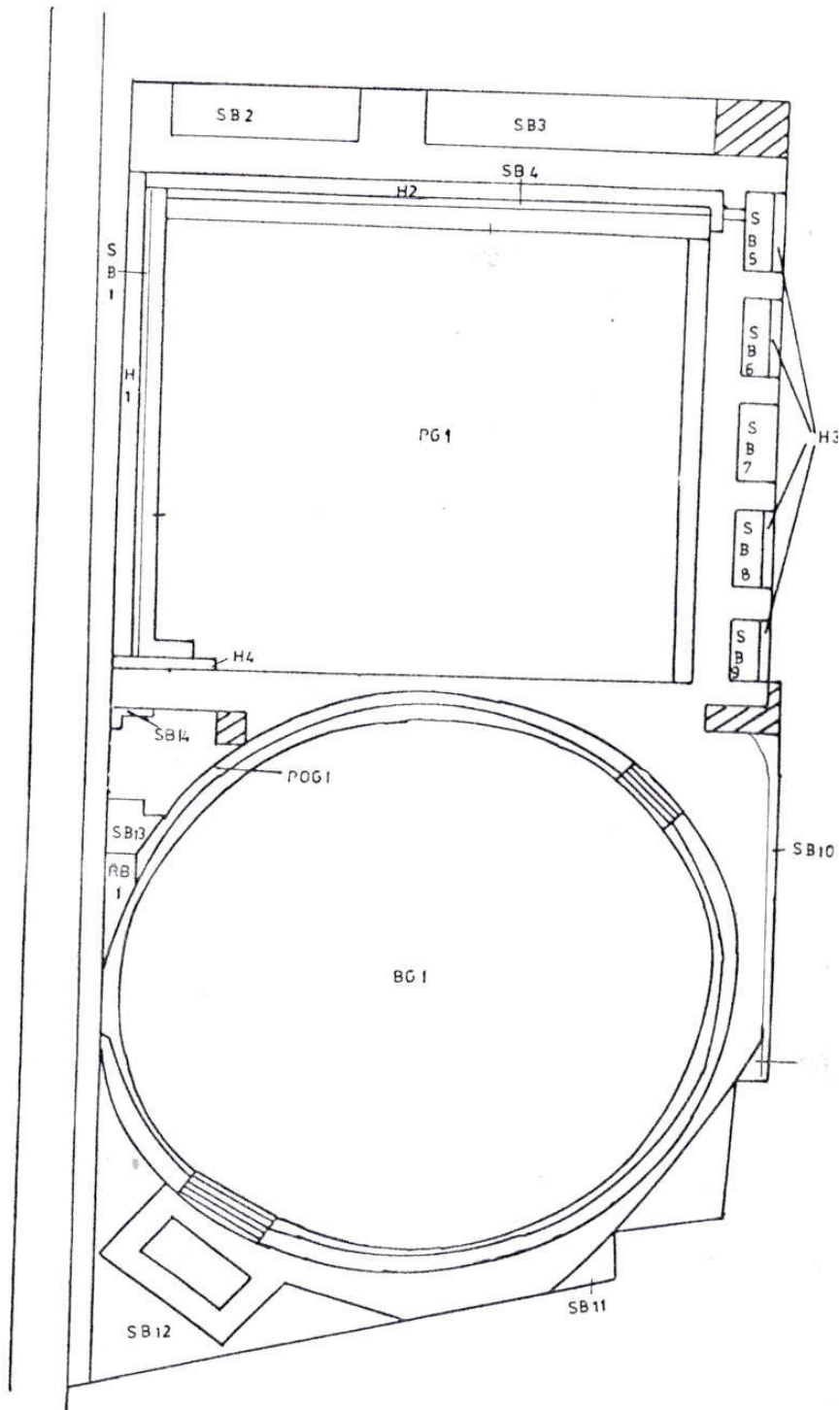
Pitch and Putt Tees		
Buildings	1 no.	Toilets
	1 no	Bowlers pavilion
	1 no	Gardners' store
Tree Stock	Yes	
Woodland		
Natural area		
Storm Boards	Yes	

All quantities and measurements should be considered as indicative

VICTORIA GARDENS

	<u>m2</u>	<u>W/F</u>
BG1	1,198	-
PG1	1,120	-
POG1	101	-
POG2	11	-
SB1	20	-
SB2	25	-
SB3	34	-
SB4	20	-
SB5	13	-
SB6	14	-
SB7	15	-
SB8	17	-
SB9	9	-
SB10	7	-
SB11	10	-
SB12	38	-
SB13	7	-
SB14	2	-
RB1	27	-
		-
		-
		-
		-
		-
		-
H1	76	1.75H X .33W X 37LM 1 S & T
H2	67	1.52H X .33W X 36LM 1 S & T
H3	35	1.25H X .33W X 22LM 1 S & T
H4	10	1.25H X .33W X 6LM 1 S & T

a:\saw\zones



C. Action Plan

Actions	Lead Officer	Target date	Funding source	
A welcoming place				
Provide direction signage from main roads	Development team	2014	Requires additional funding £500	
Provide new site name board	Development team	2014	Requires additional funding £1K	
Provide new information cabinet	Friends			Completed
Remove defunct shed base to main entrance	Area Parks Manager	2014	From existing resources	
Consider picnic tables to promenade entrance raised area	Friends / Development team	2015	Requires additional funding £1K	
Healthy, safe and secure				
Point all flagged footpaths and re-level as required	Area Parks Manager	2014	From existing resources	
Replace annual bedding with shrub planting	Area Parks Manager		From existing resources	Completed
Begin Annual Site Safety Inspection	Area Parks Manager	2014	From existing resources	
Standardise and re-position waste bins	Area Parks Manager	2014	From existing resources	
Update / decorate toilet facilities	Asset Management / Area Manager	2015	Requires additional funding £5K	
Repair / replace / standardise benches as funds become available	Friends / Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	Requires additional funding £400 each	
Display Police and Community Patrol contact details	Friends / Area Parks Manager	2014	From existing resources	
Clean and well maintained				

Re-erect / repaint dog signage to entrances	Area Parks Manager	Annually	From existing resources	
Carry out a simple tree survey	Arboriculture officer	2014-2019	From existing resources	
Remove all graffiti as it occurs	Area Parks Manager	Ongoing	From existing resources	
Produce annual winter work programme for site	Area Parks Manager	2014-2019	From existing resources	
Sustainability				
Install cycle racks	Area Parks Manager	2015	Requires additional funding £500	
Maintain / Improve current recycling practices	Area Parks Manager	2014-2019	From existing resources	
Conservation and heritage				
Prune Ivy on perimeter feature walling periodically	Area Parks Manager	2014	From existing resources	Completed
Repair / replace promenade recessed seats, rendering, flagstones and copings following storm damage	Development team / Asset management	2014	Requires additional funding £5K	
Replace copings to vehicular entrance pillars	Area Parks Manager	2015	From existing resources	
Repair crack to render of corner boundary wall	Area Parks Manager	2014	From existing resources	
Renovate Victorian shelters	Senior Parks Development Officer		From capital programme / External funding	Completed
Community involvement				
Support and work in partnership with Friends / stakeholders	Area Parks Manager / Development team	Ongoing	From existing resources	
Apply for Green Flag Award	Development team / Friends	2014	From existing resources	
Marketing				
Improve Parks	Service	2014	From existing	

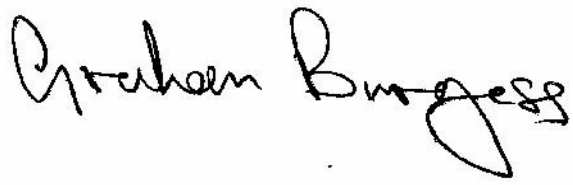
website	manager		resources	
Undertake market research study	Friends	2015	From existing resources	
Management				
Create system to monitor grounds maintenance / development	Area Parks Manager / development team / Friends	2014-2019	From existing resources	
Maintain / review management plan	Senior Parks Development Officer / Friends	2014-2019	From existing resources	

D. Environmental Policy

Wirral Council provides essential services to more than 312,000 residents across a number of key areas and recognises that its activities and services have both beneficial and adverse impacts on the environment.

In working toward a more sustainable future we will:

- Maintain an Environmental Management System which satisfies the requirements of the international standard ISO 14001.
- Comply with all applicable legal requirements and with any other requirements which relate to the Council's environmental aspects.
- Continually seek to minimise negative environmental impacts, prevent pollution and reduce waste during delivery of our services.
- Reduce carbon emissions arising from public sector buildings, operations and service delivery, and encourage others to do so.
- Increase the proportion of socially responsible goods and services that we procure.
- Increase the amount of waste reused and recycled and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.
- Undertake actions to improve our resilience to current and future climate change.
- Improve the quality and sustainability of the built and natural environment.
- Consider environmental costs, risks and impacts when making planning, contracting, purchasing and operating decisions.
- Regularly monitor and review our environmental performance.
- Ensure that all employees are aware of their environmental responsibilities through communication, training and support.
- Communicate this policy to employees, partners and the public.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Graham Burgess". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'G' and a long, sweeping underline.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

WIRRAL COUNCIL

Date: 9th October 2012