

HIRST PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2016 - 2020



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Current Map of Hirst Park



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and History of Hirst Park



Hirst Park was originally opened in 1915 by Councillor James Strong of Ashington Urban District Council to provide recreational opportunities for the residents of a rapidly expanding neighbourhood of the mining town. It provided the local population with a bowling green, tennis courts, park pavilion, public toilets and shelters. In addition to the recreational facilities a caretakers house and garden was constructed together with greenhouse facilities for the propagation of plants to be used in the Parks beds and borders. Such was the success of the plant nursery and the skills of the gardeners the park was known locally as the Flower Park.

Since the original opening Hirst Park has, over the years, provided free recreational opportunities to the growing population of Ashington. The Park itself has, to a large extent, retained its original layout and character with various improvements and upgrades being carried out over the years. It has always been managed by the local authority, originally this was Ashington Urban District Council until 1974 when Wansbeck District Council was created.

In 2003 Wansbeck District Council embarked on an ambitious plan to revive Hirst Park, which had fallen into decline during the 1990's. Funding was secured from the Single Regeneration Budget, Section 106 funding and SITA to construct a new, modern pavilion and to upgrade the footpaths, play areas and tennis courts. This phase of improvement works was completed in 2006.

On April 1st 2009, under Local Government Reorganisation ownership of the Park was transferred over to Northumberland County Council and it has subsequently been managed by the Neighbourhood Services team. Many of the staff who were previously employed by Wansbeck District Council continued to work for the new authority so retaining close links with Hirst Park.

In 2015 the Northumberland County Council began the process of securing funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Hirst Park Revival Project to regenerate and restore this much loved Park as the centrepiece of Ashington. At the time of writing this Management Plan Stage One Funding has been secured and the Stage Two bid will be submitted in March 2017. The Stage One bid has been managed by the Countryside and Green Spaces team, TGP Partnership and most importantly the local community and stakeholders.

This Management Plan has been revised in conjunction with the Heritage Lottery Fund application and as such many of the objectives have been developed based on the bids proposals. While the bid incorporates the playing fields to the north of the site for the purpose of this round of Green Flag judging we have chosen to submit the application for the formal park only, as in previous years. We will review this annually and update the Management Plan accordingly.

1.2 Site Details

Name: Hirst Park, Ashington

Grid reference: NZ 284 871

Area: 5 hectares

Tenure and legal status: The site is owned and managed by Northumberland County Council.

Access: There are four main entrances into Hirst Park, Ashington

Hirst Park Playing Fields entrance - a pedestrian only access located on the northern boundary of the site.

Fifth Avenue entrance- a pedestrian only entrance located on the southern boundary.

Sixth Avenue entrance - a combined vehicle/pedestrian entrance located on the western boundary of the Park.

Alexandra Road Entrance - a combined vehicle pedestrian entrance located on the eastern boundary.

1.2.1 Local Facilities

Public toilets (including DDA compliant disabled facilities) are available in the Park pavilion and are available when the building is in use.

The nearest alternative public toilets are located 300 metres west of the Park on Milburn Road.

The pavilion has telephone facilities which are available to Park users in the case of emergency.

Hirst Park House is now occupied by the Park Keeper who is able to provide emergency assistance out of hours.

Alternative public telephone facilities are available on the junction of Sixth Avenue and Hawthorn Road

The nearest bus stops are located on Alexandra Road and Hawthorn Road while Ashington Bus Station is five minutes walk to the north of the Park. The bus services link into the Northumberland network with direct connections to Newcastle Upon Tyne and much of the county.

Onsite parking is currently available in Hirst Park by accessing the Fifth Avenue entrance, there is a second car park to the north of the site on Hirst Park Playing Fields. This car park is currently only open when the Playing Fields are in use or when an organised event is taking place.

1.2.2 Facilities and Features within the Park

Hirst Park provides the local community with a variety of recreational facilities and opportunities, the majority are free to use. Unless otherwise stated the Park features are managed and maintained by the Neighbourhood Services team of Northumberland County Council.

- **Bowling Greens:** There are two county standard bowling greens in the Park which is home to Hirst Park Bowling Club. With the closing of the Ashington Leisure Centre in 2016 a further two clubs will be using the greens and facilities in the 2017 season.
- **Hirst Park House:** built to the traditional Edwardian park design the building is located next to the Fifth Avenue entrance. It had been closed and out of use for a number of years and was in danger of falling into a state of disrepair. Recognizing the importance of the building Northumberland County Council refurbished it in 2016 and is now let to the Park Keeper. He provides an on site visible presence in the Park and performs duties associated with the maintenance and security of the site.
- **Hirst Park Pavilion:** Prior to 2007 there were two traditional pavilions located in Hirst Park. They were demolished and replaced by a distinctive modern building which provides a meeting room, public toilets, shower facilities, kitchen, changing rooms together with accommodation and storage space for the Park Keeper.
- **Horticultural Features:** The planting of formal, traditional bedding is concentrated around the bowling greens, car park and Hirst Park. Shrub borders and herbaceous beds fringe the sides of the paths through the Park and there are a number of hedges which provide screening and delineate planting bays.
- **Park Furniture:** The Park has a good stock of seats and bins which are located throughout the Park and this is supplemented by picnic benches around the play area. The furniture is of differing styles and condition dependant upon its age. There is signposting next to pathways directing visitors to the various features of the Park.
- **Play areas:** Play areas are sited in the southern area of the Park providing facilities from the toddler through to youth age ranges. The toddler/junior play area is fenced to discourage dogs, there is also a fitness trail located on the site of the old paddling pool.

- **Sports Facilities:** The Park has two tennis courts which are available in the summer months and are free to use. A Multi Use Games Area provides opportunities for football and other games and there are currently 2 basketball courts set up.
- **Trees:** the main wooded areas are situated around the perimeter of the Park and are predominantly populated by mature, deciduous specimens which are attractive to the local wildlife. Some of the original tree stock is now 100 years old and is in decline. There has been additional planting over the years with varying degrees of success.

1.2.3 Park Stakeholders



The Hirst Park Steering Group

The Hirst Park Steering Group was set up in 2015 as part of the Hirst Park Revival Project and stakeholders from across the Ashington area were invited to join. This group has been crucial in the development of the project and cover a wide spectrum of the local community. As the group has become established it is clear that all stakeholders recognize the importance of Hirst Park as a focal point for the the local community in an area where economic and social deprivation is amongst the highest in the country. The Park engenders great passion among the local community who are keen to see its return to former glories.

Northumberland County Council: Represented by officers from the Countryside and Green Spaces team and the NEAT team (Neighbourhood Environmental Action Team) who are responsible for the management and maintenance of Hirst Park. Local residents are also represented by the local County Councillors who also sit on the Group.

Active Northumberland: A charitable leisure and cultural trust set up by Northumberland County Council which manages leisure facilities and services, libraries, supports culture, helps to develop tourism, and promotes healthy lifestyles.

Ashington Leisure Partnership: A registered charitable trust originally created under the umbrella of CISWO (Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation) it promotes leisure opportunities in the Ashington community.

Ashington Town Council: Following LGR in 2009 the County Council created a number of parish and town councils within the south east area to provide customers with the means to manage their communities at a more local level as has been the case for many years in the rest of Northumberland. Representing the local community Ashington Town Council provides advice and support to both Neighbourhood Services and Active Northumberland on the management and future development of Hirst Park. The Council recognise the importance of the Park to the local community and are keen to provide practical and financial support to future management.

Northumberland College: The nearest campus is based on Hawthorn Road less than a mile from the Park. They are a keen participant in the Steering Group and recognize the importance of the Growing Zone project (part of the HLF bid) as key to providing both horticultural and catering opportunities to the students.

Northumbria Police: The Park does attract an anti social element and this is mitigated by the regular attendance at meetings of the local Community Support Officers. They liaise closely with the Park Staff in identifying instances of anti social behaviour to be monitored and dealt with. In addition they run regular “Cuppa With A Copper” mornings in the Pavilion which affords the opportunity for local people to meet in confidence and discuss any concerns they may have

Hirst Park Bowls Club: The club operate from the pavilion during the summer months. As well as having teams in local leagues the club manages casual use of the green and supports public participation in the sport.

Action For Children: The group is based at the nearby Ashington Children's Centre and provide practical support to local families in an area of social deprivation. They are keen to run events and activities in the park and have participated in the consultation on new play provision in the Park.

BAIT: This Arts Group works in partnership the people of South East Northumberland to create and take part in inspiring and high quality arts experiences. Their remit is to use both the Park and Pavilion to host arts events and exhibitions.

Full Circle Food Project: This charity helps local people to learn the skills to grow their own fruit and vegetables and to cook healthy, affordable meals using seasonal ingredients. All proceeds are channelled back into the Project.

Heart of the Hirst: A local community group based in Beatrice Street near the Park. The group represents mainly older members of the community and hold regular events in the Pavilion promoting wellbeing, healthy eating and friendship opportunities for an isolated and vulnerable group in the community.

Health Organisations: Northumbria Health Care Trust provide practical support to community groups to deliver events and activities aimed at all sections of the community. The MINDActive group use the Pavilion as a venue for summer events when residents from local care homes come into the Park to participate in activities.

1.2.4 Park Activities

Hirst Park provides the local community with a variety of formal and informal recreation opportunities and all facilities are free to use.



Hirst Park World Cup 1966 Event - July 2016

Exercise: as with many areas of dedicated green space in the urban environment the Park is a very popular site for access to exercise and enjoyment of the outdoors. Walking remains the most popular form of activity in the Park providing exercise opportunities for all age ranges and abilities and in addition affords the opportunity to meet up with friends and relatives.

Sporting Opportunities: Hirst Park offers formal sporting facilities for bowls, football and tennis. The Park pavilion provides changing facilities and meeting room accommodation for the bowls club and there are changing rooms and football pitches located on the Playing Fields area. The two fenced tennis courts are free to use or can be hired by educational establishments and other user groups by contacting the Countryside and Green Spaces team. A multi-use games area is also located in the Park which provides opportunities for 5 a side football and in addition there are two basketball courts, again these are free to use. A fitness trail has been set up in the old paddling pool area of the Park.

Family Activities: the grassed areas in Hirst Park provide informal play opportunities for families while the play area has a range of fixed equipment for junior and toddler play. Older children can use the MUGA, tennis courts and basketball courts next to the play area.



Hirst Park Pavilion

Park Pavilion: The Park pavilion provides a meeting room, equipped kitchen, changing facilities and toilets which can be booked by user groups and community organisations for a small charge. It is available for use seven days per week, the on site Park Keeper providing access to the building.

2. THE VISION FOR THE PARK AND POLICIES

To provide and maintain a well managed, clean, safe and attractive park environment offering the local community and visitors from further afield opportunities for relaxation, recreation, play and quiet enjoyment.

Northumberland County Council recognises the significance and importance of its urban Parks to the local community. The management of our Parks will involve their development and maintenance enhancing those elements which will reflect the needs of present and future stakeholders and visitors.

For 100 years Hirst Park has been the focal point for the community of Ashington in a built up, urban environment where there are few other areas of quality green space. Hirst Park is in an area of the town which has been identified in the highest quartile for economic and social deprivation in the country with many households on low income, not in employment and suffering from health problems linked with their circumstances.

The value of Hirst Park to residents is identified in this Management Plan and Northumberland County Council are fully committed to redeveloping the site as a focal point for all sections the local community. We will encourage continued public use and participation in the development of Hirst Park through partnership working and engagement in the Heritage Lottery Funding process. This process which started in 2015 through extensive stakeholder engagement has informed the Vision for Hirst Park summarised as

- Increase the community's sense of pride in their Park.
- Conserve and restore the historic design and fabric of the 1915 Park whilst recognizing the demands and expectations of present and future park users.
- Increase the potential for community use and benefit.
- Raise standards of care and maintenance.

The result of this consultation and positive engagement has driven the development of the Hirst Park Revival Project which, at the time of this 2017 update has reached Stage Two of the Heritage Lottery Fund Application. In summary the specific objectives of the Project are;

- Improvements to the entrances, gates and boundaries to provide a welcoming and attractive introduction to Hirst Park.
- Survey and improve the footpath network in the Park to provide safe and equal access to all.
- The construction and development of the Growing Zone based in the old depot with training rooms, storage areas, welfare facilities, greenhouses, raised beds and an allotment site. This will provide a community growing zone which will be used for educational and training purposes, to encourage healthy eating and increase biodiversity in the Park.
- To reinstate the historical feature known as The Lost Garden as a secure and peaceful space within the Park which will be a showcase for horticultural excellence.
- Create a Performance Area on the site of the former Woodhorn Mining Disaster Memorial to create an attractive community space for events and activities and to commemorate the social history of Ashington.
- The refurbishment of the current play facilities to create the Play Zone which will incorporate a bespoke water play feature and new equipment and facilities to cover all age ranges and abilities.

- Improve the sports area, tennis courts, MUGA and associated fencing. This refurbished area will provide a space for young people to occupy and call their own. Establish an equipped fitness trail through the Park.
- Raise the quality and diversity of horticulture in Hirst Park through new planting schemes and the redesign of existing beds and borders. This work will include new sustainable planting schemes to bring colour back into the Park with the introduction of new plant and tree planting. The work will be closely linked with the establishment of the Growing Zone project.
- The design and installation of a new suite of street furniture to match those in historic photographs of the Park.
- Provision of new street lighting in the Park to increase security with a focus on the main east/west path.
- Development of the Hirst Park branding scheme to provide it with its own recognizable identity reflecting the character of the park and the wider community. Associated with this will be new directional and welcome signage together with interpretation panels through the Park.
- Development of an extensive community participation and education programme through the employment of two Park Development Officers. Their main role will be to organise events and activities, develop a Friends group and volunteering opportunities, coordinate with local schools and colleges to develop an education programme and implement the Conservation Plan for the Park.

Final submission for Stage Two of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid is February 2017 and all documents will be made available to the judges for discussion during their visit in 2017.

With regard to Northumberland County Councils policy for Urban Parks it is best summed up in the Council's Mission, Vision and Values guide whose priorities inform this management plan. We will work with local people, local enterprises and with our partners to achieve these outcomes -

- Improve our places and our environment.
- Enable communities and families to be strong.
- Help people to be healthy and independent.
- Grow our local economy.

The priorities in this vision statement have been developed from the Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017 and associated strategies.

Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017. This document “aims to make Northumberland a better place to work, study and enjoy within the constraints of a prudent economic regime. In doing so it recognises that Northumberland is a special place – somewhere that retains a strong local identity, stemming from the unique combination of its landscape, location and heritage.”

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Policy/Corporate-plan.aspx#corporateplan-introduction>

Neighbourhood Services Service Plan 2015 – 2017. Outlines Neighbourhood Services targets in working with local communities and other stakeholder organisations in improving the physical appearance and quality of life within their local communities making them more sustainable, self sufficient and safer places.

http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/About-the-Council/Performance/Service%20statements/Neighbourhood_Services_SP-040216.pdf

South East Northumberland Green Infrastructure Strategy. Produced to protect and enhance the county's GI (Green Infrastructure) assets. This sets out the vision and strategy for green infrastructure provision within southeast Northumberland to protect and improve existing poor quality green and open space, and develop new green infrastructure.

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Reports.aspx>

Trees and Woodlands Strategy – Growing Together. This document details how the council will meet its legal obligations in respect of the trees it owns or is responsible for, the use of best arboricultural practice together with a commitment to protect existing stock and programme in new tree planting across the county.

http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/Conservation/Growing-Together-NCC-Tree-and-Woodland-Strategy-2015-20_1.pdf

Copies of these strategies are available on the Northumberland County Council website or by contacting the Green Spaces Officer (contact details on the back cover of this management plan)

Northumberland County Council website

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Home.aspx>

3. THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Management Plan for Hirst Park covers the 5 year period from 2016 to 2020. It replaces the previous Management Plan and those aims and objectives which were not completed and which are still relevant have been incorporated into the new plan. The Plan is based on the key criteria outlined in the Green Flag Award Guidance Manual.

- A Welcoming Place
- A Park which is Healthy, Safe and Secure
- A Park which is Well Maintained and Clean
- Sustainability
- Conservation and Heritage
- Community Involvement
- Management
- Marketing

A number of the objectives in the Management Plan have been identified through the community consultation undertaken as part of the Stage One Heritage Lottery Fund process and as such are dependant upon the success of the application. At this time the response to the application has been positively received by HLF. The Stage One application will be submitted in February 2017 with the Stage Two decision being announced in June 2017. The Management Plan will be updated when the result of the application bid is known.

3.1 A Welcoming Place

There should be good, clear signage in the Park and surrounding area.

Routes to the Park should be safe and kept clean and tidy.

Access into the Park should be designed in such a way that provides an attractive and welcoming experience while there should be no physical barriers which prevents equal access to all members of the community.

3.1.1 Physical Access



Current Condition of East and West Entrances

There are four signposted entrances into Hirst Park located on the boundaries on the site. The north and south entrances are pedestrian only, whilst those in the east and west boundary are for both pedestrian and vehicular use.

The entrances afford easy access into the Park with no impediments to movement. The eastern and southern and western entrances still retain the original pillared features and walls which welcome visitors to the Park while the northern boundary is of a more contemporary fenced and gated design.

The Park is relatively flat, sloping gently from 33 metres AOD in the north west corner down to 28 metres AOD along the southern boundary. The paths around the Park are wide, although they are of a varying condition of repair, in general the site is fully accessible with no physical barriers to movement.

Following the Mystery Shopper feedback in 2016 an inspection of all the footpaths was carried out by a qualified member of the Highways team who identified those sections of the network which met the criteria of insurable trip hazards. These sections have now been temporarily repaired and made safe pending the implementation of a resurfacing programme. A further objective of this programme will be the rationalization of the footpath network, removing little used sections and providing additional access along popular routes.

There are currently two car parks which serve Hirst Park, one next to the Pavilion and the other which is accessed from Fourth Avenue via a road where unauthorised traffic is discouraged by droppable bollards.

The Pavilion car park is accessed from Fifth Avenue and requires traffic to drive through a short section of road where there is potential conflict with pedestrians and cyclists. This is mitigated by a chicane system together with speed restriction and warning signage to alert motorists. The car park itself has a good surface and there are identified disabled parking bays.

The car park on the northern boundary is currently opened when the Playing Fields are in use and when there are events in the Park. At other times it remains locked to discourage anti social behaviour and illegal activities.

Brown signage has been provided at the four main entrances but surveys and the Mystery Shopper feedback have shown them to be inadequate and require upgrading and made more prominent. There is currently no signage along the road network within Ashington to direct visitors to the Park. Entrance signage is limited to the eastern and western entrances and is in need of redesign to make it more attractive and welcoming.

Within the Park itself the existing finger posts are in good condition and direct visitors to the various onsite facilities. Whilst there are a number of noticeboards in the Park there are no maps or interpretative panels which provide visitors with facility information or guides to the site.

3.1.2 Social Access

A principal objective in the management and future development of Hirst Park is to ensure that no section of the community should feel excluded from being able to access and make full use of the facilities.

National indices of illness, education and employment show that the Hirst area is severely deprived. It is more 'White English' (95.7%) than the national average, but similar in this respect to the region, where former mining communities such as Hirst remain tight with little outward migration and with several generations of the same families continuing to live in the

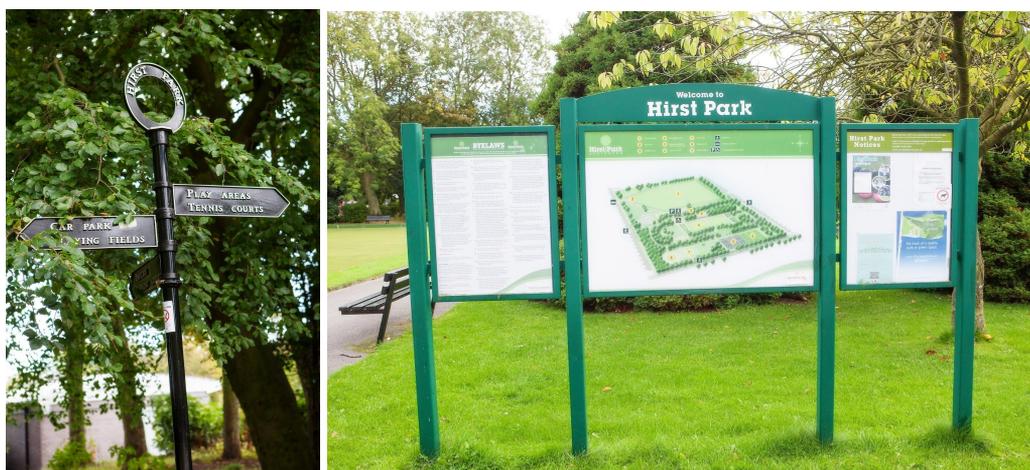
ward despite the lack of opportunities. Unemployment is higher than the national average (10.5%), with many residents in low paid and part time jobs. Over 50% of the properties in the Hirst Ward are social housing or private rented accommodation. 13% of the the local population have illnesses which limit their daily activities.

The Park pavilion has been designed and constructed in compliance with the current building regulations relating to disabled access and use. The building has no ramps or steps and doorways are wide enough to accommodate wheelchair users. The building also provides disabled toilet facilities available when the building is in use. This designs means that groups such as Mind Active are able to make full use of the building as a venue for events. Paths around the Park are generally flat and wide and there are no steps or other obstacles to negotiate. Some sections of the path network require repair and refurbishment and this has been built into the HLF bid.

Northumberland County Council are committed to the principle that the facilities at Hirst Park should be free at the point of use or be low cost where a charge is applicable To encourage the use the facilities at the present time the Pavilion is free to use by local community groups and charity organisations. It is anticipated that this arrangement will continue during the course of the Hirst Park Revival Project to ensure that as many groups within the community can participate in Park activities. In 2016 this has led to a number of successful events based in the Park which has increased interest in the Park improvement programme.

3.1.3 Objectives and Implementation

- **External Signage:** The current signage provision for Hirst Park is currently inadequate and requires upgrading to guide visitors to the Park. The site needs to be signposted from adjacent roads which directs visitors to the Park and to designated car parking facilities. In addition to this more local signage directing pedestrian traffic to main entrances needs to be more more prominent. Both can be achieved relatively cheaply by the the Countryside and Green Spaces team working with the Highways Design team in identifying main routes and appropriate locations for on street brown signage. Funding from this will be identified from existing budgets with an anticipated completion date of 2018.



Internal Signage and information Board

- **Internal Signage:** The current internal finger post signage is fit for purpose and simply requires repainting which will be carried out by the Park Keeper and

volunteers on a rolling biannual programme. This provision of information will be enhanced by the design and manufacture of bespoke interpretation boards which will include maps as part of the funded Hirst Park Revival Project. This work will be carried out by the Countryside and Green Spaces team working with local graphic design companies to produce the boards. Subject to HLF funding the boards will be in place by 2020.

- **Welcoming:** The main entrance features on the western and eastern boundaries together with the brick walls that surround the site will be retained and, where required, repaired. The wooden fence along the western boundary adjacent to Rosalind Street to be replaced with a brick wall to match existing design.
- **Social Access:** Northumberland County Council recognize the potential of Hirst Park as a hub for community participation in an area of high social deprivation. In so doing we will continue to promote use of the facilities by offering them as free to use or, where appropriate, introduce a scale of charges which recognizes the fact that many of the park users come from low income households. This will need to take into account that certain facilities such as the Growing Zone will need to generate income in order to be economically viable in the longer term. The design specification in the Stage Two submission to the HLF will consider the needs of differently abled visitors and hard landscaping and improvement works will be sympathetic to their needs. The Hirst Park Steering Group represents a wide cross section of the local community and will be able to provide advice and comment on improvement works.

3.2 A Park which is Healthy, Safe and Secure

The key to a healthy, safe and secure Park is ensuring it is well maintained, well used and well respected.

This requires the active participation of all stakeholders to monitor the Park, ensure good lines of communication between staff, agencies and users and to address any issues or problems promptly and efficiently.

Equipment and facilities should be well maintained and safe to use. The Park should be clean, graffiti and litter free and dog fouling should be dealt with promptly.

Overall the Park should feel safe to be in and to use.

3.2.1 Equipment and Facilities



Play Facilities in Hirst Park

Northumberland County Council is responsible for ensuring that all facilities are regularly inspected, well maintained and safe for use by visitors to the Park.

The play facilities in Hirst Park were upgraded in 2004 - 2005 as part of the last major refurbishment programme for the site. They are maintained in good condition but are limited in addressing the current expectations and demands of the young visitor. This became apparent during the community consultation exercise undertaken in 2016. This has led to the proposal for the creation of the Play Zone as part of the HLF Stage Two bid. This will create natural play facilities, a bespoke water play feature and accessible and innovative equipment for all age groups that will be robust and sustainable for many years.

The play areas are visually inspected and cleaned on a daily basis by the Park Keeper and members of the NEAT team while a formal inspection is carried out on a weekly basis by a qualified play area inspector. Repairs are carried out as soon as they are reported; if this is not possible the equipment is disabled and fenced off until remedial works can be completed. The play facilities are also subject to an annual inspection by Council appointed insurers. Any recommendations or repairs highlighted are dealt with immediately.

Hirst Park Pavilion is owned and managed by Northumberland County Council and is maintained as part of the duties of the Park Keeper who is responsible for cleaning; open and closing duties and bookings throughout the year. All statutory maintenance requirements and building repairs are undertaken by the Property services team of Northumberland County Council

All Park keeping and grounds maintenance duties are carried out by the Neighbourhood Services NEAT teams. This work is coordinated by the NEAT Team Leader who ensures that all routine maintenance tasks are programmed into work schedules.

3.2.2 Security

Security and anti social behaviour in Hirst Park is an issue from time to time and Northumberland County Council has put measures in place to mitigate against this.

Traditionally the Park has been locked, however this is no longer the case. Pedestrian gates remain open throughout the day while vehicular gates are closed in the evenings.

There are boundary walls, these are of a scalable height and are therefore not an effective deterrent while the layout of the Park is such that it would be difficult to clear it of visitors before securing the site. The Park Pavilion has a monitored alarm system and is shuttered to deter break ins. The Park Keeper does have a small equipment store at the side of the building which is also shuttered and alarmed.

In 2016 one of the key improvements to security was achieved when the refurbishment and occupation of Hirst Park House was completed. The building had been derelict for a number of years and was becoming a target for vandalism. Northumberland County Council recognized that having the building in use was vital to reducing park users concerns over fear of crime and identified internal funding streams to carry out the works. The House is now a tied property and is let to the Park Keeper for a low rent in return for providing monitoring duties and he is key to providing a recognizable figure onsite for local people.

Improved lighting around the Pavilion and on access paths to the building has now been installed which make evening usage of the building safer. While there is no proposal to instal street lighting throughout the east/west route through the Park is important as a link between Millburn Road and Alexandra Road and local schools.

The Neighbourhood Services team and the Park Keeper stay in regular communication with the Police Community Support team and Council enforcement staff exchanging information relating to crime and anti-social behaviour.

Any incidents that do occur are dealt with through close liaison with Northumbria Police, the local Community Beat Manager and Community Safety Team and through Local Multi Agency Problem Solving Group (LMAPS) meetings.

3.2.3 Health and Safety

Neighbourhood Services working with Northumberland County Councils Corporate Health and Safety team review risk assessments relating to grounds maintenance works which are applicable to both the park and wider maintenance environment. A summary of the completed risk assessments have been added to the Management Plan. The full risk assessments are also retained by the NEAT team staff based in the depot adjoining the Park.

The use of chemical based products is assessed in line with COSHH regulations and the use of those products harmful to the environment are minimised. COSHH risk assessments are carried out on products in active usage and are included in the Health and Safety file together with the manufacturer's data sheets.

All NEAT staff are issued with the necessary PPE applicable to their duties and they monitored to ensure that it is worn as per regulations.

The County Trees and Woodlands team review working practices associated with arboricultural operations to ensure compliance with Arboricultural & Forestry Advisory Group (AFAG) guidelines published by the HSE and BS 3998 recommendations for tree work. A method statement has now been adopted and provides guidelines for safe arboricultural operations in the Park environment. This document is available in the Health and Safety file.

Annual health and safety reviews are undertaken and at the present time the following documents are applicable to Neighbourhood Services operations in the Park. These documents are made available to all Neighbourhood Services staff (Health and Safety files are kept in all depots and at key locations for easy reference). In addition all staff are required to attend Tool Box talks which clarify and reinforce the ongoing commitment to Health and Safety in the workplace.

The following policies are applicable to health and safety in the Park.

Policy Statement on Health and Safety at Work – summary of Northumberland County Councils commitment to Health and Safety in the workplace.

Environmental Maintenance Health and Safety Codes of Practice – details good working practice for staff and details safe operational procedures.

Driving Safely Policy – details good and safe practices both on and off the highway.

Tree Work Method Statement for Arboricultural Operations – details safe working practices in the public realm.

As well as being kept on site all available Health and Safety data can be found electronically on our Staff Intranet.

Within Neighbourhood Services there is a rolling programme to train Park staff. Training includes the following:

- Chainsaw use.
- Pesticide use.
- Correct operation of machinery.
- Manual handling.
- First aid.
- Customer care.
- Dealing with difficult situations.

All Neighbourhood Services staff are qualified to a recognised standard where applicable. Northumberland County Council has developed a programme of required learning which all NCC staff are required to complete either online or through classroom delivery. The modules are:

- Freedom of Information and Subject Awareness
- Health and Safety Awareness
- Stress Awareness
- Prevent Awareness
- Fire Safety Awareness
- Information and Data Protection Awareness
- Equality and Diversity
- Safeguarding Children
- Safeguarding Adults

3.2.4 Control of Dogs



Fenced Play Area

Hirst Park is popular with dog walkers and the bylaws allow dogs in the Park provided they are under control.

Section 4 (1) of the Dog Fouling of Land Act 1996 requires that owners pick up and dispose of dog faeces in appropriate receptacles.

All bins in the park are classed as dual use so can be used to deposit both litter and bagged dog waste.

In January 2017 Northumberland County Council, under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 have applied for a (Dog Control) Public Spaces Protection Order which will exclude dogs from all fenced play areas in the County. This will apply to the two play areas located in the Hirst Park area.

Northumberland County Council has established a programme to PACE (Police and Criminal Act) train additional members of staff who are empowered to issue fixed penalty notices for both dog fouling and litter offences. Northumberland County Council regards such training as a vital component in efforts to make parks and green spaces clean, healthy and safe. The Neighbourhood Services team works closely with Animal Welfare Officers who patrol the Park and arrange open days educating dog owners on their responsibilities and providing a free chipping service for their pets.

3.2.5 Public Facilities

Toilet provision in the Park for visitors is limited to those times when the pavilion is open. Toilets are located internally and in practical terms the building cannot be left unmanned to allow access due to its design. At times when the pavilion is open the toilet facilities are available for use by the general public.

Emergency first aid and phone facilities are available from the Neighbourhood Services team and in the pavilion when occupied.. Most staff are first aid trained and act as first point of contact in the Park for any visitors who may require further information or support. They also maintain regular contact with the Senior NEAT Team Leader and other members of the Neighbourhood Services team by mobile phones.

3.2.6 Objectives and Implementation

- **Safe Equipment and Facilities:** In house induction training ensures that staff working in the Park are familiarised with equipment and facilities and the reporting procedures for damage and vandalism. This provides staff with clear lines of communication and familiarisation with the management structure to ensure rapid response and remedial action. Where appropriate staff are trained to nationally recognised standards in inspection procedures and the operation of plant and machinery. Ongoing specific training requirements are identified by the Neighbourhood Services manager and NEAT Leaders and are facilitated by the NCC Human Resources Training and Organisational Development Team and Neighbourhood Services. Individual staff records are kept up to date and regularly reviewed. Funding for training is sourced from existing Council budgets and will continue annually as required.

NEAT play area inspectors are trained to the appropriate required ROSPA standard and carry out weekly inspections of the play facilities. Inspections are documented and any damage or vandalism reported to the NEAT Team Leader for remedial action. Repair works are undertaken by experienced local contractors who will, where required, use genuine manufacturer parts. An annual inspection of all play equipment is carried out by the Council's insurer and all recommended works implemented. If repairs cannot be carried out immediately the equipment will be disabled until remedial works can be completed.

Risk assessments require reviewing as this was last done in 2011. This task will be carried out by the Senior NEAT Team Leaders and Neighbourhood Services Manager and supported by the internal Health and Safety team. The process will begin in 2017 and is due to be completed by 2018. Documents are made available on the NCC intranet for staff access and incorporated into regular health and safety talks.

These objectives will continue to be implemented throughout the course of this management plan.

With funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund design and install a new Play Zone in Hirst Park to provide a safe, secure and fun environment for children of all ages and abilities. The Zone will provide a high quality aesthetic to stand the test of time and to increase visitor numbers most notably with the introduction of a sustainable water play facility as can be found in Ridley Park, Blyth.

- **Security in the Park:** The most effective means of tackling anti-social behaviour in Hirst Park is to develop an effective communication network between park users, stakeholders, Northumberland County Council staff and the enforcement authorities.

A high profile presence will be maintained in the Park with both NEAT team staff and the Park Keeper being uniformed and recognizable to visitors. At the present time the site is officially manned daytime Monday to Friday - this on site presence will be extended to cover weekends and evenings as part of the duties of the two Development Officers proposed as part of the HLF bid. These members of staff are due to be appointed in time for the 2018 summer season. Regular meetings of the Hirst Park Revival Steering Group have ensured that all members have the contact details of Council officers via email and phone.

Neighbourhood Services Officers will maintain close links with Northumbria Police, Community Support Officers, NCC Community Safety Team to ensure that any concerns raised by Park stakeholders are addressed. Coordination of these groups is currently undertaken through regular meetings of the Community Safety Hub which is organised by the County Councils Business Compliance and Public Safety Unit. In addition the Park pavilion will continue to be made available to Northumbria Police and other safety groups to hold community consultation and drop in events.

As part of the Hirst Park Revival Project horticultural features around the Park will be reviewed and one of the objectives of this will be to reduce height, introduce low growing species providing a more open aspect through the introduction of low growing species of shrubs.

All lighting in the Park will be regularly inspected to ensure proper operation at the correct times of the day. Any repairs required will be facilitated as a high priority to ensure public safety. New street lighting will be installed along the east/west route through the Park to provide additional security during hours of darkness.

- **Dog Fouling:** continue to raise awareness among dog owners of their responsibilities regarding care of their animals. The Park pavilion will provide an appropriate location to host drop in sessions for dog owners to be hosted by Northumberland County Council Animal Welfare Officers. Such events have proved successful in other parks in raising awareness among dog owners of their responsibilities.

Members of the public will be encouraged to report incidents of dog fouling in the Park using the links on the Northumberland County Council public website. Analysis of these reports allows NCC Environmental Enforcement Officers to identify hotspot areas and to target them for further action.

- **Quality of Facilities:** equipment and facilities will be managed and maintained by Northumberland County Council to ensure all required statutory duties are undertaken. Where works are undertaken by external companies only contractors which have been approved and registered through the NCC compliance and procurement system will be employed.

3.3 A Park which is Well Maintained and Clean

A pre-requisite of a well used, healthy and safe Park is a high standard of maintenance and cleanliness.

3.3.1 Litter and Waste Management

The Neighbourhood Services team are responsible for emptying bins and clearing litter from the Park on a regular basis throughout the year. The Park Keeper carries out a litter sweep and empties the bins on a daily basis Monday to Friday. All park bins are classed as dual use so that litter and dog waste can be disposed of in the same receptacle. General litter collected from the Park is currently transported to the local SITA waste management facility at West Sleekburn (three miles from the site) and then moved in bulk to Teeside and used as a fuel source in an Energy from Waste plant.

Northumberland County Council also manages its own recycling facility at the Cowley Road Depot in Blyth. It is run under an Environment Agency licence and provides facilities for the recycling of green waste, wood, metal, paper and card, rubble and construction waste, electrical equipment and gas bottles which is collected from NCC managed sites including Hirst Park.



Old and New Composting Storage Areas

During the course of the year a significant amount of green waste is produced by horticultural operations in the Park. Grass clippings from larger areas are left where they fall to mulch away naturally. Arisings from fine turf areas together with plant and leaf material are stored in the composting storage bays in the Park which are periodically emptied and moved to the green waste transfer facility at Cowley Road where they are subsequently transferred to JBT Waste Services Limited, Bedlington to be mulched and used for composting. There are currently two wooden bays located in the Park and they are used to store green waste from both the site and Ashington area from where it is periodically moved to the Cowley Road depot for recycling.

Green waste derived from tree operations is dealt with according to the size and composition of the materials produced. Where possible arisings are chipped on site and utilised as mulch for shrub beds. Larger branches and logs are removed from site by a local contractor for resale. This operation provides an additional income stream for the local authority.

Incidents of fly tipping are infrequent in Hirst Park but when they do occur they are investigated by the Neighbourhood Services Environmental Enforcement Officer. Legal action may be pursued if the perpetrator can be identified.

3.3.2 Grounds Maintenance



The Flower Park

Hirst Park is known as the Flower Park to the local residents and the NEAT team continue to maintain formal bedding around the House, Pavilion and bowling greens. The number of formal beds has been reduced in the past few years in response to reductions in funding and the workforce where a number of them have turfed over. The remaining areas of the Park are a mix of deciduous and evergreen shrubberies together with hedging which in general is now in decline and is in need of removal and replanting.

All grounds maintenance operations in Hirst Park are carried out by the local NEAT team of Northumberland County Council who support the work of the full time Park Keeper. At the present time this allows for basic maintenance standards (pruning, grass cutting, fine turf, flower and shrub bed maintenance). Cutbacks over recent years mean that maintenance regimes need to be reviewed in order to improve both the standard and efficiency of the service and how this can be achieved through better training, support from volunteers and stakeholders such as Ashington Town Council, scheduling, time management and use of best available equipment and methods.

Opportunities to renew the horticultural features in Hirst Park lie with the a successful heritage Lottery Fund bid. Analysis of the community consultation undertaken for the bid showed that there was a recognition that the horticultural features were in poor condition and that there was support for a return to high quality formal bedding that led to it being known as the Flower Park.

3.3.3 Buildings Maintenance



Hirst Park House Pre and Post Refurbishment

The Park pavilion is modern and well designed (it was recognized by the Northumbria In Bloom organization with a silver medal for Innovation in Parks and Open Spaces in 2007) so little alteration or change is envisaged or required in the foreseeable future. As discussed earlier Hirst Park House has recently been refurbished and is now occupied.

The only other structures on the site are the old park buildings which are located to the rear of the House. There are in poor condition at the moment, however they will provide the infrastructure for the Growing Zone which is key component in the HLF bid. This will provide Hirst Park with a new horticultural training unit to be managed by the County Council and Northumberland College. As well as providing education and training opportunities for the community, the unit will grow plants for the Park and Ashington area.

The Park Keeper is responsible for the day to day cleanliness of the Park pavilion and user groups are responsible for ensuring the building is left in a clean and tidy condition when they leave. The Park Keeper will also carry out basic maintenance duties and painting as required.

The buildings in Hirst Park are maintained by Northumberland County Council through their Property Services and Statutory Maintenance teams. Repair requests are reported to the Property Services Helpdesk which are electronically logged and given a priority rating before being assigned to a contractor or the Homes For Northumberland maintenance team who carry out regular inspections of the facilities and ensure all statutory duties are undertaken.

The Property Services team also carry out the following statutory duties in relation to the buildings in the Park

- Annual security system agreement.
- Annual inspection of all fire prevention equipment.
- Legionella Prevention contract.
- All electrical inspections in the buildings.
- All insurances for the buildings.

All inspections are documented and where appropriate certification is issued and results are stored centrally at County Hall, Morpeth.

3.3.4 Hard Landscape Features



Footpaths and Seats in the Park

The paths, walls, seats, bins and other hard landscaping features in the Park are managed and maintained by Northumberland County Council. Any repairs are carried out by local contractors or the NEAT teams.

Hirst Park is bounded on all sides by brick walls, hedging and metal and wooden fencing. Both the brick walls and wooden fencing brick walls are in a poor state of repair and will be improved as part of the Revival project. There is no intention to raise the height of the boundary to make the site inaccessible as gates are now left open all hours to allow pedestrian access.

Paths are subject to visual inspection by the Park Keeper when on duty and any defects are reported to the NEAT Team Leader for remedial action as required. In addition they are cleaned on a weekly basis using a mechanical sweeper and edged on an annual basis to prevent weed encroachment and damage. All paths are also inspected annually by a qualified Highways Inspector whose main remit is to check for insurable trip hazards. Any potholes that are identified as such are filled in immediately. The condition of the path network varies through the Park. Some sections have been resurfaced and are in good condition, others are in need of attention and this will be picked up as part of the HLF bid.

Seats and bins are visually inspected by NEAT staff with maintenance works being carried out as required. Repainting works of seats and bins are carried out on a bi-annual schedule. At the current time there are a variety of both seat and bin styles around the site, the aim will be to rationalise these and provide a suite of street furniture which is of a uniform design and in keeping with the refurbishment of the site.

As with many Parks of this age a number of drains on the site are in a poor state of repair and are subject to root ingress and collapse. While the main drains are in good condition surveys have revealed that the subsidiary network, notably around the bowling greens, are now so badly damaged they lead to flooding of the sports turf during periods of heavy rainfall. The network is periodically cleared of roots, there is a requirement for relining of the system to provide a longer term solution to the problem.

As with many urban parks graffiti is an issue from time to time. When it does occur it is photographed (if it is tagged) and then removed by the Park Keeper or NEAT Team staff. This rapid response is effective in discouraging further incidents and if it becomes a persistent issue it is reported to the Environmental Enforcement team and Police for further investigation.

3.3.5 Equipment Maintenance and Use – Staff

All staff who operate in the Park are trained in the use and maintenance of small machinery and hand tools as a basic requirement. Staff who use specialist tools such as chainsaws and spraying equipment are trained to the required standard for their safe operation.

Large plant and machinery are housed at the Council depot at Stakeford and the Park Keeper has a small store in the pavilion where pedestrian mowers and small plant and tools are stored. Stakeford Depot houses a chemical store where all materials are secured in accordance with COSHH regulations. The depot also provides staff accommodation for the NEAT team.

All machinery is maintained and repaired by qualified employees or by Council approved external contractors.

3.3.6 Objectives and Implementation

- **Litter and Waste Management:** Neighbourhood Services staff and the Park Keeper will empty bins regularly and carry out litter sweeps of the Park during busy periods. At peak times in summer this will be daily gradually reducing to twice per week in the winter. This work can also be improved by the use of volunteers and user groups to support the work of the NEAT team in keeping the Park tidy.

Neighbourhood Services staff will remove graffiti as soon as it appears. Incidents will be reported to the South East Area Environmental Enforcement Officer who will attempt to identify and prosecute offenders. This work is carried out when required.

At the present time compostable materials will continue to be collected and transported to the Northumberland County Council Waste Transfer facility for mulching. The proposed Growing Zone will have its own composting facility and when completed will allow for green waste recycling with the compost produced being used on site.

These objectives will be implemented and maintained throughout the course of this management plan



Current Horticultural Works

- **Grounds Maintenance and Horticulture:** Current maintenance regimes will be audited by the Green Spaces Officer, Senior NEAT Team Leader and Neighbourhood Services Manager in order to identify where improvements can be made in order to improve the standard of the horticulture. Key to this will be the establishment of a network of volunteers who can assist by carrying out basic horticultural duties allowing the NEAT staff to concentrate on key tasks. One of the main roles of the new Park Development Officers will be to establish this volunteer network from the local community and to support the development of a Friends Group for the Park.

Northumberland County Council will continue to provide young people with opportunities to train and qualify in Horticulture. The Neighbourhood Services team are working in partnership with Northumberland College to provide practical experience to apprentices in grounds maintenance and horticulture. As well as receiving practical experience through working alongside skilled NEAT operatives apprentices attend classes and assessment at Kirkley Hall College leading to a qualification in NVQ Level 3 in Horticulture. The scheme is proving to be very successful in introducing young people to Horticulture and has now been extended to 2017.

The construction of the Growing Zone will provide formal training opportunities for young people and members of the local community. It is proposed that the facility will be managed jointly with Northumberland College and trainees will be encouraged to undertake horticultural duties in the Park and also use it as a practical training ground. In addition to this the trainees will grow plants on site which will then be used in the formal bedding around the Park. This is a longer term objective and at the present time the anticipated completion date for the Growing Zone is 2021.

As part of the Hirst Park Revival project there will be an audit of the horticultural features with the objective of providing more sustainable and less labour intensive flower and shrub beds. There is also a desire within the local community to see colour returned to the Park and this can be achieved by both formal planting and the introduction of herbaceous perennial planting.

- **Path Maintenance:** Develop a programme of works to repair and, where required, resurface the path network in the Park. Neighbourhood Services staff will provide weekly visual inspections to identify any potentially hazardous defects while Highways Inspectors from will carry out a formal inspection annually. Minor structural repairs will be undertaken when required from existing NCC budgets, while the HLF Stage Two bid includes a programme for the removal of redundant paths, full depth construction of new footpaths and new pin kerb edging and wearing course throughout the Park.
- **Building and Infrastructure Maintenance:** Paths will be checked daily by NEAT staff and inspected annually by a qualified Highways inspector. Any required remedial works will be carried out by the Highways team or their chosen sub-contractor. As part of the Revival project all paths in the Hirst Park will be surveyed to develop a programme of refurbishment works which will include the rationalisation of the existing network removing redundant paths and creating new link pathways to busy areas.

A programme of works has been identified within the HLF bid to identify costs and allocate capital funding for the creation of the Growing Zone, repairs to the main gates and boundary features, upgrading of play areas and the construction of a water play facility on the site of the old fitness area. This work will be rolled out over the five year period of the funding bid. Following on from the construction phase NCC will be required to develop procedures to ensure that, following restoration, buildings are adequately inspected and maintained.

The drain infrastructure in the Park will need to be fully surveyed in order to identify those sections which require root cutting work and relining. This work has already begun around the bowling greens and clearance works carried out. A programme of works and costings will allow the Parks and Playing Fields Development Officer to identify potential funding streams to finance the works.

3.4 Sustainability

Those who administer parks and green spaces have a responsibility to manage and maintain them in an environmentally sustainable way.

Such facilities should also educate and inform the wider community of the benefits and necessity of adopting a more sustainable lifestyle.

Northumberland County Council is committed to sustainability by finding a balance between best environmental practice and available budget and resources.

3.4.1 Chemical Use

Neighbourhood Services and Northumberland County Council recognises the importance of reducing chemical use to protect the health of Park users, staff and the biodiversity of the Park.

Changes to working practices and new legislation have led to a reduction in the application of chemicals in Hirst Park.

The NEAT team use chemical means to suppress weed growth in path surfaces and around tree bases. Pesticides and herbicides are currently used for bowling green maintenance and where possible non residual chemicals are utilised. While this limited use is considered necessary for the present the Neighbourhood Services team are committed to explore innovations in new sustainable chemical treatments and methods for weed suppression.

Chemical use on herbaceous and shrub beds has now been eliminated by the introduction of a mulching programme to deal with weed suppression. Much of the mulch is produced on site from green waste from the Park.

All pesticides are COSHH registered and stored in an approved secure container at the Stakeford depot with the NEAT Team Leader being responsible for the issuing and recording of all chemicals used. Only staff who are qualified to PA1 and PA6 standard use COSHH registered materials.

3.4.2 Plants and Materials

Annual bedding for Hirst Park is grown at the Northumberland County Council horticultural unit based at Stakeford where plants are brought on from commercially sourced plugs or seed. At the present time peat is the favoured medium for growth as it remains both cost effective and reliable in ensuring quality plants. As the unit is only 3 miles away from Hirst Park transport costs are kept to a minimum.

Native and specimen tree species which offer a sustainable habitat for native wildlife are introduced when planting in the Park. Arboricultural works are programmed in the autumn and winter to minimize disruption to the local wildlife.

3.4.3 Pollution Reduction

Because of the size and location of Hirst Park engine pollution from vehicular use is not considered excessive. Machinery for grounds maintenance operations are housed in the Stakeford depot while pedestrian mowers and smaller items of equipment stored onsite for use by the Park Keeper. There is a requirement for vehicular access to the Park to drop off larger supplies of plants and materials from the local depot and due to the requirements of efficiency and economy some grass cutting operations will continue to be carried out by ride on machinery.

Much of the daily maintenance work in Hirst Park is now carried out by the Park Keeper which means that vehicular movement of staff and machinery is kept to a minimum. Maintenance regimes in Hirst Park have been reviewed and changed over the last five years which has led to less annual bedding, small areas of meadow and sections of the site left to grow wild. This is particularly the case around the boundaries of the site.

All machinery in the Neighbourhood Services fleet are regularly maintained and serviced to ensure they operate efficiently and economically. In the majority of cases machinery is serviced at the local Council depot or by a local contractor. All staff are trained in the correct use of machinery including proper filling techniques and how to properly deal with spillages should they occur.

Northumberland County Council are currently trialling the use of electric vehicles and a recent project has seen the introduction of charging points at a number of depot and office facilities. At the present time usage is limited to smaller vehicles, as the technology develops there may be scope to invest in larger electric powered vans and machinery.

3.4.4 Water and Energy Efficiency

The principal water and energy usage in Hirst Park is confined to the pavilion building, park house, irrigation system and street lighting. These facilities are of a modern design so efficiency is not considered to be a major issue.

Buildings are regularly inspected by qualified contractors and members of the Property Services team who ensure that all water systems are properly maintained and operating correctly. The pavilion is metered for electrical consumption and their systems are regularly inspected to ensure they are operating as efficiently as possible. There is a requirement to survey these buildings and identify further potential savings together with simple ways in which the use of existing energy can be made more efficient.

The installation of a tank-fed irrigation system for the bowling greens has seen savings in both manpower costs and water usage, it is operated on a timer system which means it can be operated in the early mornings allowing for more efficient use.

Over the next five years the Hirst Park Revival Project will see the construction of the Growing Zone and the installation of a new water feature, both of which will be designed to exploit the latest technologies in water and energy efficiency. In the case of the water play feature there is an option to use a closed system where water is recycled reducing usage which is similar to the facility at Ridley Park, Blyth. During the development for the design of the Growing Zone there are discussions underway to install a biomass system to heat the buildings and greenhouse which could utilise fuels from the green waste produced arboricultural works.

3.4.5 Arboriculture and Woodland Management



Woodland Areas in the Park

The arboricultural features of Hirst Park are managed by the Northumberland County Councils Trees and Woodlands Officer who has a dedicated and trained squad to carry out all required maintenance operations. The tree stock is surveyed every two years and results are recorded on the central Treewise database. In addition to this the local Neighbourhood Services staff that operates in the Park are encouraged to visually check the trees and report any issues they observe. From this information the Trees and Woodlands Officer formulates an annual maintenance and selected removal programme as well as managing the planting of new tree stock.

3.4.6 Objectives and Implementation

- **Pesticide Use** - Neighbourhood Services will continue to minimize the use of pesticides in Hirst Park. We will keep in regular contact with suppliers to ensure we remain fully informed and use the latest biological and organic control methods which have a reduced impact on the environment.

NEAT teams will use non chemical methods for weed removal and suppression on horticultural features. Where practical weeds will be removed from hard surfaces by mechanical means.

The Highways and Neighbourhood Services teams will continue to monitor the condition of paths and paved areas and eliminate environments which encourage weed growth. Path edging will be carried out on an annual basis to prevent encroachment. This work will be carried out by mechanical means and hand edging eliminating the need for the use of chemicals.

- **Environmental Sustainability** – As part of the Hirst Park Revival Project there will be an audit of the horticultural features and a programme of rationalisation and replanting will be undertaken. Emphasis will be on the introduction of planting which is sustainable, drought resistant and attractive to native animals and insects. The introduction of perennial planting on the site will reduce costs and time spent on intensive maintenance. Some areas of the site will be set aside as wildlife areas to encourage biodiversity and this will be more fully discussed in the Conservation and Heritage section. Where possible plants will be provided by local suppliers who are able to provide evidence of sustainable propagation methods.

Through regular monitoring of the horticulture industry and contact with suppliers we will continue to follow the latest developments in alternatives to peat as a growing medium.

The selection of external suppliers for any new or replacement street furniture will favour those companies which can demonstrate the use of sustainable and recycled materials in the manufacture of their products.

Work with the NEAT teams and Fleet Transport team to evaluate current vehicular requirements for use in Hirst Park. From this information assess whether the provision of an electrically powered vehicle would be a viable option.

- **Water and Energy Efficiency** - Neighbourhood Services will work with the Council's Energy team to monitor all utility bills for the Park to identify any areas of high consumption. Investigate whether reductions in high usage can be achieved through effective maintenance works or removal of unnecessary services. Negotiate with utility companies to ensure we receive the most economic tariffs for consumption. Both the new Growing Zone buildings and the water play feature in the the Park will be implemented to ensure that use latest technologies to be both water and energy efficient.
- **Arboriculture and Woodland Management** - Tree inspections will carry out by the Trees and Woodlands Officer or his team. There will be a full survey every two years with all results being recorded on the Treewise database. The Trees and Woodlands Officer is responsible for ensuring all staff are fully trained and qualified and that all work is carried out in accordance with latest regulations. All training will be carried out by properly registered training organisations. A tree replacement programme will be developed as part of the Hirst Park Revival Project.

3.5 Conservation and Heritage

Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of

- flora and fauna
- landscape features
- buildings and structural features

3.5.1 Flora and Fauna

Hirst Park provides an important habitat for native flora and fauna in the centre of a built up area where opportunities for wildlife to thrive is limited. Within the boundary of the site there are amenity grassland, hedgerows, areas of broadleaved plantation woodland and ornamental shrub beds. Within the shrub beds species such as Hebe are present which provide nectar sources for local invertebrates.

Hedgerows and trees provide nesting opportunities for local bird species such as members of the Tit family, finches and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. There have also been sightings of fox and red squirrel which also thrive in the woodlands of the nearby Queen Elizabeth II Country Park.

There have been projects to improve the biodiversity of the site with limited success over the years. There has been an attempt to introduce meadowland regimes and tree planting in the Park. Management operations which have come under increasing pressure has meant they have not been maintained and there has been a degree of vandalism which has resulted in the loss of tree stock.

The Friends of Hirst Park (now disbanded) created a wildlife area along the northern boundary of the Park with the introduction of wildflower planting, feeding stations and bird and bat boxes. Again this project, while initially successful has since fallen into decline. As part of the Hirst Park Revival project a phase one habitat survey has now been completed which will provide the basis for a programme of development of natural habitats within the Park.

In addition to the habitat survey, a full tree survey has now been completed as part of the HLF bid from which a programme of arboricultural works will be developed to create a more diverse and sustainable woodland environment. In the meantime the tree stock will continue to be managed by the NCC Arboricultural team to ensure public safety and to provide habitat opportunities for the native wildlife.

All tree works are done outside the breeding season and prior to any felling an inspection for bat roosts is made. Standing trunks are left as habitat poles in the Park to provide a natural environment for birds, bats and fungi and where appropriate branches are stacked and left to decay naturally on the floor of wooded areas.

3.5.2 Local History and Buildings



Woodhorn Miners Memorial

Stakeholder involvement in the development of the Hirst Park Revival HLF bid has led to the gathering of important information about the history and its place in the development of the town of Ashington. It is clear that the Park has a fascinating history which will be central to the success of the project. Hirst Park is an early example of an Urban District Council Park which was provided for the benefit of the local community. The site of the Park lay on farmland in a fast expanding urban area and Ashington Urban District Council purchased the land to lay out a park with curving paths, greens for bowling and tennis, public conveniences, a heated greenhouse and growing facilities to provide a wide range of floral bedding for the park. A substantial Park Keeper's house was also constructed together with wooden pavilions and shelters. Hirst Park is also culturally significant due to its association with the footballers Jackie and Bobby Charlton and Jackie Milburn who all grew up using the site as their playground.

During the course of consultation the existence of a feature known as the Lost Garden has come to light which was located in the SW corner of the Park. where the fitness area is currently located. This was a sunken garden which featured crazy paving, herbaceous borders and a central pond feature, little now remains of it other than the urns which are in reasonable condition and stored in the Park depot. One of the aims of the project will be to recreate the Lost Garden using the available information as a main feature in the Park.

The built historical landscape of the site the Hirst Park House and the east and west entrance gateways are the only remaining significant features which exist in their original condition. The House is now refurbished and is occupied while the entrance features along with the boundary walls will require a structural survey to assess their condition. Little now remains of the depot buildings to the rear of the House which will be incorporated into the design for the new Growing Zone.

In the centre of the Park is the site of the 1916 Woodhorn Mining Disaster statue which was erected in 1923. In 1991 the statue was removed and relocated to the Woodhorn Museum and Archives. Stakeholder consultation identified this move as a bone of contention with the local community who expressed a desire to see this area used again to commemorate and celebrate the mining heritage of the town. This site has been identified in the HLF bid as the location of a new performance area and community space which will provide a heritage focus for the history of Ashington through interpretative features, events and activities.

3.5.3 Objectives and Implementation

- **Conservation of Natural Features, Fauna and Flora:** Building on the Phase One Habitat Survey and the Tree Survey the Parks Development Officers will develop a conservation management plan to identify existing habitats and actions that will be taken to increase biodiversity. Staff and volunteers will be trained in biodiversity and conservation in order to facilitate the objectives of the plan. A programme of planting of native flora through bulbs, plugs and seed will be implemented to encourage native fauna while the introduction of bird and bat boxes, bee hotels and habitat piles will provide shelter and breeding opportunities. The plan will include clear objectives and maintenance regimes for different natural landscaped areas in the Park.

Included in this plan will be a tree management section which will detail the maintenance and future development of the woodland habitat within the Park. It will be based on the survey completed in 2016 and include a planting programme which will aim to diversify the age and species range of the trees in Hirst Park. Northumberland County Councils Trees and Woodlands Officer will contribute to the development of this plan with the Parks Development Officers.

The Green Spaces Officer and senior NEAT Team Leader will work with the appointed landscape architect team to design and implement a horticultural improvement scheme for the Park which will provide sustainable features that increase the biodiversity of the site. This will involve increasing the number of herbaceous perennials that will encourage bees, butterflies and other pollinators.

- **Conservation of Local History and Buildings:** The Lost Garden will be reinstated within the boundary of Hirst Park using plants which reflect original planting but also incorporate species which respond to modern day conditions such as deep shade and climate change. The new Lost Garden will incorporate the urns which are the last surviving features of the original structure and the pond feature will either be water based or will be re-imagined using planting. The feature will need to be relocated from its original site as that area will be used to house the new water feature being installed as part of the Play Zone.

Hirst Park House will remain in the ownership of Northumberland County Council as tied accommodation for the Park Keeper. While there have been modifications to take into account developments in energy efficiency the NCC Property Services team will maintain the property in a sympathetic manner to reflect its original design of the building. The depot buildings to the rear of the House will be incorporated into the design of the new Growing Zone, at this time it is unclear how much of the original building will be utilised and this will be dependant upon the structural survey to be carried out as part of the HLF bid.

The eastern and western brick pillared entrances will be retained as original features in Hirst Park. Photographic evidence for their design and that of the gates is limited. We will use the historical information that has been collated to conserve both entrances per their original design while incorporating sympathetic modifications to take into account visitor safety and modern access requirements. Within the new design new floorscapes will be introduced to improve the attractiveness of the entrances a new signage will be installed incorporating new commercial branding and information relating to the history of the Park.

The creation of the new performance area in the Park will provide a new accessible low level stage area with electric supply and seating which feel welcoming and secure connecting the Flower Park area to the Play Zone. The landscaped design of the area will provide the opportunity to incorporate interpretation linking the social and mining history of Ashington. The appointed landscape design team will work alongside local schools and community groups to design the interpretative features and when complete will be managed by the NCC Park Development Officers to organise community events and activities.

3.6 Community Involvement

Community involvement will provide the driving force for the future development and management of Hirst Park.

Successful involvement can make the Park a focal point for the local community and ensure that it is well respected and used to its full potential.

Community involvement can be developed on a number of levels and involve all Park users.

3.6.1 Community Consultation and Participation



Hirst Park Revival Community Consultation Events

A close and effective working relationship between all stakeholder groups, Active Northumberland and Northumberland County Council is a key to the future development of the facility and the success of the Hirst Park Revival Project. Incorporated into the Heritage Lottery Fund bid is the appointment of two Park Development Officers who will take a lead role in developing community engagement opportunities. The community consultation exercise which was started in 2015 as part of the HLF application process has led to the creation of the Hirst Park Steering Group which will provide a basis for future community participation. Representatives from the following groups attend the Steering Group meetings (also see 1:3:3)

- Northumberland County Council
- Active Northumberland
- Ashington Leisure Partnership
- Ashington Town Council
- Northumberland College
- Northumbria Police

- Hirst Park Bowls Club
- Action For Children
- BAIT
- Full Circle Food Project
- Heart of the Hirst
- Health Organisations

Members of the group have organised a series of events in 2016 which has increased community involvement in the Park and raised awareness and support for the Hirst Park Revival Project.

- Ashington Town Council organised an event in July 2016 screening the 1966 World Cup on its 50th Anniversary. It recognized the contribution of the local footballing heroes Bobby and Jackie Charlton who both played in Final. It was estimated that 1,000 visitors attended the event.
- 200 people attended a community photography event which was held in the Pavilion as was organized by BAIT an arts group engaging local people in South East Northumberland and the Heart of the Hirst community group.
- The Heart of the Hirst Community Group have worked with Ageing Well and NCHT to hold the Stepping Into Spring Event (23rd April 2017) and a Winter Warmer Event (26th November 2017). The events were aimed at providing health and well being advice to older residents and giving an opportunity for isolated and vulnerable members of the community to make new contacts.
- Northumberland County Council in conjunction with local community groups organised the Hirst Party In The Park on 17th September. It was primarily a family fun day with many free attractions and stalls.
- Bernicia, the local housing association regularly use the Pavilion to host Dog Chipping sessions where local residents can come along to get practical advice on the care of their pets and have them chipped free.
- MindActive hold an annual event which brings in residents from local care homes to enjoy a day out in the Park.

3.6.2 Education

The Hirst Park Revival Project has significant potential to provide educational facilities to the local community and schools. The Park has scope to provide outdoor educational opportunities to local schools as part of their environmental curriculums and the pavilion can act as an indoor classroom as required. At the present time these opportunities have not been fully explored or implemented. Much of the groundwork to provide a quality educational experience in the Park has already been done through the historical research, habitat and tree surveys. This source material will be important to develop an educational and interpretative programme.

Through the establishment of links with local schools and community groups we will encourage participation in the conservation, education and heritage objectives of the Hirst park revival Project and the management plan.. This will be achieved through practical work the Park Development Officers, Neighbourhood Services team and community organisations together to develop local history and conservation research projects linking in with current school curriculums.

A major aspect of the proposed educational opportunities offered to the community will be the establishment and success of the Growing Zone, a joint venture between

Northumberland County Council and Northumberland College.

As well providing formal training horticultural training there is an option within the development to provide catering and hospitality opportunities to students using produce grown onsite. The training and educational opportunities will also be extended to local community groups and interested individuals through organised training courses.

3.6.3 Objectives and Implementation

- **Community Involvement:** Northumberland County Council will continue to engage with the local stakeholders through the Hirst Park Steering Group which will provide the initial link to community involvement in the development and future management of the site. A key element of the Hirst Park Revival Project will be to engage with all groups within the local community, to encourage consultation and participation. The Stage Two bid to the HLF includes a detailed Activity Plan to implement which will be the responsibility of the Park Development Officers posts created as part of the project. As well as carrying out practical day to day duties in the Park the Officers will also be responsible for:
 - Establishment of a Friends group
 - Community engagement.
 - Facilitation of community events and activities.
 - Working with schools and educational establishments, local community groups, work placements and volunteers.

At the present time the Park does not have an established Friends Group which can provide practical and volunteering opportunities to members of the local community. It is anticipated that this can be developed from the current Steering Group. This will require an agreement to a minimum level of support that can be provided by the Park Development Officers and Northumberland County Council.

- Frequency and attendees at meetings.
 - Financial support for the establishment of the group.
 - Development of a welcome pack to promote the aims and objectives of the group.
 - Provide practical support to Friends in organising events and activities.
 - Assist the Friends in identifying and securing external funding to carry out improvements in the Park.
 - Provide training and support to Friends and volunteers.
 - Use the Friends group as a forum to promote wider participation in Park activities.
- **Appropriate Provision for the Community:** Increase community awareness and use of the Park by holding events, promoting the facilities through websites, the local press and promotional materials. This will be facilitated through Northumberland County Councils marketing strategy plan which is included in the management plan which in turn will be supported by the objectives of Hirst Park Revival Project.
 - **Education:** There are two principal methods by which education and training will be delivered over the five years of this Management Plan. The most high profile of these will be through the development of the Growing Zone project to deliver horticultural and other training opportunities to both young people and other members of the community.

Key to this will be Northumberland College who are keen to work in partnership with Northumberland County Council to deliver formal horticultural and sports pitch maintenance training to their students. Using the Zone as a base for delivery affords the opportunity to do practical training within the Park environment and to support Northumberland County Councils NEAT workforce. A second partner in the Growing Zone site is the the Full Circle Food Project who will be managing the raised beds and allotment area to teach members of the local community to grow and cook seasonal fruit and vegetables.

The second key element in identifying and delivering educational opportunities in Hirst Park will be through the appointment of two Park Development Officers. They will work alongside schools, community groups and other organisations to provide education and training opportunities through onsite events and activities. Education packs will be developed in conjunction with schools which explores the social history of the Park in relation to the community of Ashington and the habitat and biodiversity and ecology of the site.

4. Marketing Strategy

Active Northumberland and Northumberland County Council wish to promote their formal parks to residents, schools, community groups, local businesses and visitors to the county highlighting the unique features of each park. The focus will be on the availability of activities, events, volunteer activities and Friends of groups which will enable visitors to make informed decisions about how to access the park and to attract new visitors and to encourage multiple repeat visits.

The council also wishes to obtain the views of people who do and don't visit the parks utilising this information to inform the management decisions for our formal Park sites.

In Hirst Park this will be facilitated by the Park Development Officers supported by the Countryside and Green Spaces Team.

What we need to do – our objectives

Our communications and marketing plan aims to do three things:

- Raise awareness of our formal parks to residents, visitors, community groups and businesses to encourage first and repeat visits.
- Encourage people, groups, schools and businesses to get involved in the parks through events, volunteer activities and Friends groups.
- Find out what people think of our parks and use ideas, suggestions, comments and complaints to inform our management decisions.

Where we are now – the current situation

Northumberland County Council has 13 formal and country parks, ten of which hold Green Flag Award status in 2016. The council is committed to increasing the number of Green Flag Parks by one each year.

Currently each park is promoted independently of the others.

Very few surveys have been carried out for any of the parks.

We have the opportunity to combine the best of each of the parks current means of promotion and to create a countywide communication and marketing plan for all of our formal parks ensuring a consistency in delivery of service across the county.

What we need to say – our key messages

Our communications and marketing work will say:

- In Northumberland we are committed to valuing and improving our parks.
- Our parks provide free access to nature, floral displays, events, walks, play and sporting activities and much more.
- Our parks are important places as, according to annual access to the countryside surveys done by Natural England, public parks are the most visited green spaces in the country.
- Access to the natural environment improves health and wellbeing, prevents disease and helps people recover from illness.
- We want more people to enjoy our parks, especially through events and activities.
- We want people, groups and businesses to volunteer in our parks.
- We want to know what you think of our parks, this can do this by contacting the parks teams directly or by completing our parks survey.

There are a number of ways you can contact us:

Contact the Green Spaces Officer for your area –

South East – Steve Johnson 01670 620048 steve.johnson@northumberland.gov.uk

West – Sam Talbot 01670 625583 sam.talbot@northumberland.gov.uk

North – Frances Povey 01670 623509 frances.povey@northumberland.gov.uk

Contact us via the website www.northumberland.gov.uk

Who we need to say it to – our public

Initial groups to target include:

- Internal audiences: staff at the council, schools and children's' services, adult services and healthcare providers, councillors and board members, customer service staff within the council.
- Residents.
- Visitors to the county.
- Businesses and community groups, including scouts, guides, U3A, gardening clubs, etc.

How we will say it – our media

A variety of communication methods will be used as follows, but the main medium we wish to use is web based:

- Northumberland Life Events listings.
- Northumberland County Council website and partner websites.
- NCC Social networking profiles (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Site specific leaflets for parks where suitable, at the minimum to include Carlisle Park, Hexham Parks, Hirst Park, Ridley Park, Castle Vale Park, Coronation Park
- Site based interpretation, information panels and noticeboards for parks where suitable, at the minimum to include Carlisle Park, Hexham Parks, Hirst Park, Ridley Park, Castle Vale Park, Coronation Park
- Targeted local poster campaigns (events, Friends of groups and activities) in libraries, shops, tourist accommodation and Tourist Information Centres
- North East based radio station with good coverage of Northumberland. Koast Radio, BBC Radio Newcastle.
- Northumberland News.
- Press release to local press and media.
- Staff room and internal communications channels for staff and members.
- Relevant and targeted online advertising.
- Relevant parish and local magazines.

How we will measure it – our targets

Detailed performance measurements will be produced. We will use these to judge the overall success of our communications and marketing plan. This will include:

- The number of people completing our parks surveys.
- Number of people attending events, activities, volunteer tasks and Friends meetings.
- Evaluation forms from events, activities, volunteer tasks.
- Calls or emails to the Green Spaces Officers.
- Media monitoring.
- Website traffic.
- Leaflets required per site per year.

What we need to do the job – our resources

To complete the plan we will need to:

- Create and publicise a web-based parks survey.
- Develop an evaluation form for events, activities and volunteer tasks.
- Analyse findings from surveys and evaluation forms and use them to inform park management decisions.
- Ensure all parks are listed on Northumberland Life to promote events and activities.
- Compile relevant local lists for advertising parks events through posters and leaflets.
- Develop, plan and style for production of park promotional leaflets and interpretation panels.
- Identify content for the website and liaise with the web team.
- Cost any photography, design and production of leaflets or panels needed for the plan.
- Secure budget for graphic design for parks brand and publicity material.

During stakeholder consultation and community engagement undertaken in 2015 - 2016 it was evident that Hirst Park did not have a recognizable identity which could be successfully marketed. Therefore a branding scheme will be developed which will provide the Park with its own identity, aiming to reflect the character of the site and the local community. This branding will be used on all marketing and promotional materials and media formats to raise awareness and encourage greater use of Hirst Park.

5. Monitoring and Plan Review

- This management plan has been drafted in 2016 and will act as a working document for the development of Hirst Park over the next five years.
- The development and management of the Park will be regularly monitored by the Countryside and Green Spaces Team of Northumberland County Council, Hirst Park Steering Group and local stakeholders.
- The plan will be reviewed annually to reflect developments and improvements in the Park and to reflect the implementation of the Hirst Park Revival Project.
- Monitoring will be achieved through the consultation process with stakeholders together with a regular internal audit of this management plan by the Countryside and Green Spaces team.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix 6.1 Hirst Park Key Roles and Responsibilities

Activities	Staff	Frequency
Supervision of Neighbourhood Services NEAT staff	NEAT Team Leader	Daily
Emptying litter bins throughout Park	NEAT teams	Three times per week throughout the year
Litter pick throughout Park	NEAT team	Three times per week throughout the year
Checks/removal of graffiti	NEAT team. Tags photographed by Environmental Enforcement Officer for identification. Graffiti removed by NEAT Team staff.	As required
Fly tipping removal	All fly tipping reported to local Environmental Enforcement Officer for investigation. Removed by NEAT teams	As required
Dog Fouling Enforcement duties	NCC Public Protection team	As required
Check footpaths and maintenance	Neighbourhood Services staff. Highways Inspectors check once per year. Potholes and other repairs carried out by Highways team.	Daily/Annual Inspection
Inspection of play equipment	Daily inspection by NEAT teams and weekly inspection by ROSPA qualified NEAT Team staff	Daily/weekly
Play equipment repairs	Qualified external contractors.	As required
Inspection of Park seats and bins	NEAT team	Daily in summer, weekly at other times
Painting of seats and bins	External contractors	Biannually
Grass cutting throughout Park	NEAT team	7 working days
Bowling green maintenance works	NEAT team	Twice a week in summer, and Autumn and Spring maintenance works
Tree Surveys and arboricultural operations	Trees and Woodlands Officer and Arboricultural team	Tree Survey carried out every 3 years and as required in response to reports

Activities	Staff	Frequency
Pavilion opening and closing	Astley Park Management Committee, pavilion keyholders and NCC staff	As required
Toilet cleaning duties	Astley Park Management Committee and pavilion users	As required
Facilities Bookings	Astley Park Management Committee	As required
Co-ordination of Green Flag Award application	Green Spaces Officer South East	Annually
Liaising with partner agencies and user groups including Astley Park Management Committee	Green Spaces Officer and Countryside and Green Spaces Manager and Active Northumberland team	As required
Event planning and facilitation	Astley Park Management Committee, Active Northumberland, community groups and partner organisations	As required
Interpretation, promotion and marketing	Northumberland County Council Internal Comms, Countryside and Green Spaces team	As required
Secure external funding to develop Alexandra Park	Countryside and Green Spaces Team	As required
Maintenance and repair of Park buildings	NCC Property Services team	As required
Annual Legionella testing programme	NCC Property Services team	Monthly
Fire equipment inspection	NCC Property Services team	Annually
Pavilion Fire Risk Assessments	NEAT Team Leader	Annually

Useful Contacts

Name	Position	Contact
Ray Wealleans	Neighbourhood Services Area Manager	01670 625579
John Croyle	Senior NEAT Team Leader	01670 620059
Steve Johnson	Green Spaces Officer (South East)	01670 620048
Mike Jeffrey	Countryside and Green Spaces Manager	01670 623020
Ian Graham	Trees and Woodlands Officer (South East)	01670 623016
NCC	Property Services Team	01670 624843

Appendix 6.2 Alexandra Park Management Plan 2016 – 2020
Summary of Key Objectives and Timelines

TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
A WELCOMING PARK							
Design and installation of gateway features	NCC, stakeholders and community groups	NCC, external funding opportunities	Survey and review	Consultation and design	Implementation	Regular inspection and maintenance	
Improve signage directing visitors to the Park from adjacent streets and cycle ways	NCC, Transport and Tourism teams and Sign Shop	NCC	Survey and review	Consultation and design	Implementation	Regular inspection and maintenance	
Play area improvements	NCC, Active Northumberland, stakeholders and community groups	NCC SITA Section 106 Funding	Survey and review	Consultation and design	Implementation	Regular inspection and maintenance	Regular inspection and maintenance
Path network inspection and repairs	NCC, Highways Team	NCC, Cramlington Town Council	As specified in 3.1.3 of the management plan		Survey and design	Manufacture and installation	Ongoing as required following inspection
Installation of new street furniture and picnic tables	NCC and external manufacturers	NCC, Cramlington Town Council	Survey and review	Consultation and design	Implementation	Regular inspection and maintenance	Maintain
A PARK WHICH IS HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE							
Ensure all NCC staff are properly qualified and trained to carry out their duties	Neighbourhood Services, HR and external training providers where required	NCC	Ongoing and regularly reviewed				
Horticultural improvements to manage overgrown areas	NEAT Team	NCC	Work to begin around the bowling green area	Removal and replanting works to be completed	Maintain and manage	Maintain and manage	Maintain and manage
Maintain links with Enforcement Agencies to deal with anti social behaviour issues and dog fouling	NCC together with Police, LMAPS, Enforcement Officers	NCC	Through stakeholder and other enforcement meetings				

TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
A PARK WHICH IS WELL MAINTAINED AND CLEAN							
Regular bin emptying and graffiti removal and recycling of waste	NEAT Team	NCC	As detailed in management plan 3.3.1	As detailed in management plan 3.3.1	As detailed in management plan 3.3.1	As detailed in management plan 3.3.1	As detailed in management plan 3.3.1
Ground Maintenance and Horticulture apprenticeships and training	NCC and Kirkley Hall College	NCC	Apprenticeship scheme secured until 2017	Apprenticeship scheme secured until 2017	Identify funding to continue scheme	Identify funding to continue scheme	Identify funding to continue scheme
Floodlighting around the MUGA and skate park areas	NCC, Highways and Streetlighting teams	NCC	Survey lighting columns and establish their long term viability	Implement any recommendations			
Ensure all statutory tests and inspections to be implemented	NCC, NEAT Teams Property Services and Highways	NCC	As detailed in management plan 3.3.3, 3.3.4 and 3.3.5	As detailed in management plan 3.3.3, 3.3.4 and 3.3.5	As detailed in management plan 3.3.3, 3.3.4 and 3.3.5	As detailed in management plan 3.3.3, 3.3.4 and 3.3.5	As detailed in management plan 3.3.3, 3.3.4 and 3.3.5
Reduce chemical use in the Park	NEAT Teams	NCC	As detailed in management plan 3.4.6 Chemical Use	As detailed in management plan 3.4.6 Chemical Use	As detailed in management plan 3.4.6 Chemical Use	As detailed in management plan 3.4.6 Chemical Use	As detailed in management plan 3.4.6 Chemical Use
Introduction of environmental sustainable horticulture	Neighbourhood Services and NEAT Teams	NCC	Survey existing horticultural features in the Park	Design up alternative and more sustainable horticultural beds	Plant and maintain	Plant and maintain	Plant and maintain
Arboricultural Management – selective tree pruning, removal and replacement	NCC Trees and Woodlands Officer and Tree Squad		Ongoing through course of the management plan	Ongoing through course of the management plan	Ongoing through course of the management plan	Ongoing through course of the management plan	Ongoing through course of the management plan

TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	FUNDING	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE							
Environmental audit of the flora and fauna	NCC, stakeholders and external conservation bodies	NCC	Survey and review	Consultation and design	Implementation	Regular inspection and maintenance	Regular inspection and maintenance
Research history	NCC, Woodhorn Archives, local community and schools	NCC	Research work to 2017	Research work to 2017			
Develop an online resource covering the conservation of natural features and social history of the Park	NCC, IT Team			Consultation and design	Implementation	Regular inspection and maintenance	Regular inspection and maintenance
New interpretation boards for the Park	NCC, Graphic Design Company		Survey and review	Consultation and design	Implementation	Regular inspection and maintenance	Regular inspection and maintenance

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT							
Development of an event programme to promote the Park and establish links with target groups	NCC, Active Northumberland	NCC		Develop event programme	Implementation	Implementation	Implementation
Creation of Friends Group	NCC, Active Northumberland, stakeholder groups	NCC	Identify interested parties through advertising and promotion	Support development of Friends group	Support and provide input into the group	Support and provide input into the group	Support and provide input into the group
Promote the facilities and recreational opportunities in the Park	NCC, Active Northumberland	NCC	Through Active Northumberland Marketing Strategy see 3.7	Through Active Northumberland Marketing Strategy see 3.7	Through Active Northumberland Marketing Strategy see 3.7	Through Active Northumberland Marketing Strategy see 3.7	Through Active Northumberland Marketing Strategy see 3.7

Appendix 6.3 - Useful Links

Green Flag Award Scheme	http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/
Keep Britain Tidy	http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/
Northumberland County Council Website	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/
Alexandra Park Webpage	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=16484
Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=11021
Northumberland County Council Sustainable Community Strategy	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=10150
Northumberland County Council Service Plans	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1451
Northumberland Council Trees and Woodlands Strategy	http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=721

6.4: Travel directions to Hirst Park

From the A189 take the 2nd exit onto the B1334.

Go straight over the traffic lights and over the next mini-roundabout.

At the next roundabout take the 3rd exit onto College Road and continue until road turns into Hawthorn Road. After approximately one mile turn right onto Fifth Avenue which leads you to the entrance of Hirst Park.

For GPS purposes the nearest postal address is NE63 9AZ

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

Hirst Park Management Plan

Steve Johnson
Green Spaces Officer
Blyth Riverside Business Park,
Cowley Road,
Blyth,
Northumberland, NE24 5TF
(T) 01670 620048
(F) 01670 620041
Steve.Johnson@northumberland.gov.uk