



Northumberland  
County Council

## Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park, Berwick upon Tweed

### Management Plan 2020-2024



Northumberland  
County Council

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# Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park Management Plan

## 2020-2024

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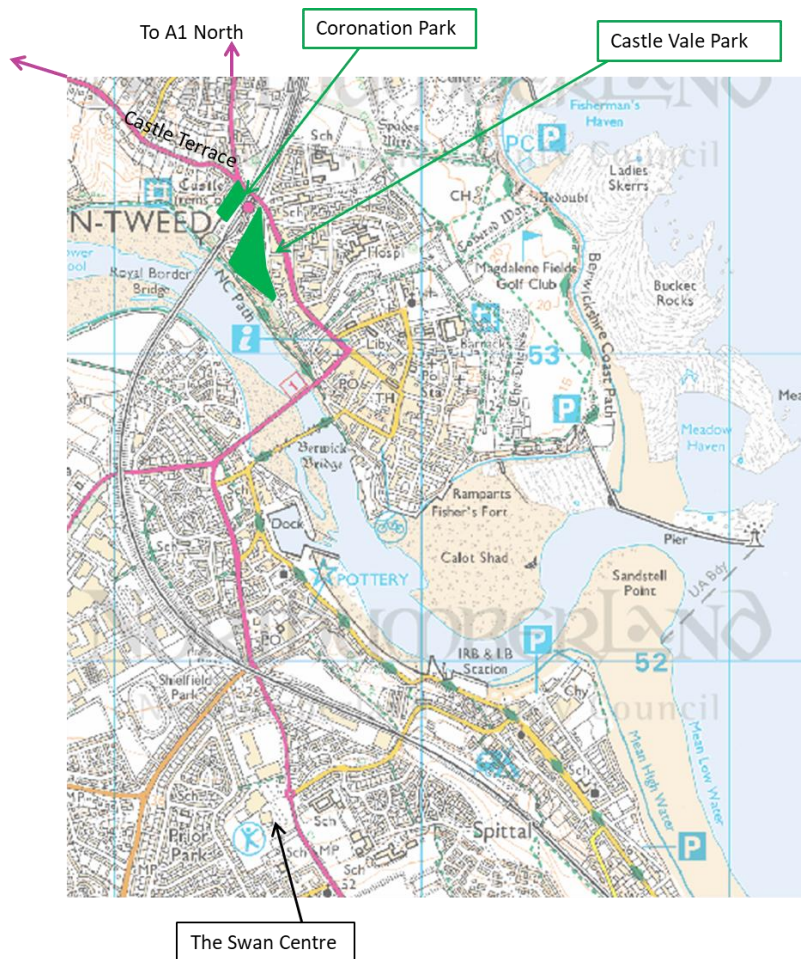
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**Location Map of both Parks**



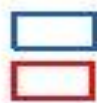




**Northumberland**  
County Council

Local Services  
County Hall Morpeth Northumberland  
NE61 2EF Tel: 01670 533000

#### Location Plan



Coronation Park

Castle Vale Park



Park Entrance/Exit

Scale: 1:3000

## 1. Introduction

## **1.1 Summary of the Plan**

This management plan sets out the current position for Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park, and what can be expected in terms of maintenance and future development. It is intended to be a working document for all staff, volunteers and other stakeholders involved in the management and maintenance of the park.

The plan follows the Green Flag Award format and guidelines set out in 'Raising the Standard' (2009). Each chapter describes the current situation for the parks, and states where improvements are to be made. Work programmes and future projects are included towards the end of the plan.

It is a five-year plan and will be reviewed in its entirety in 2024. The plan was written in Spring/Summer of 2020 in the unusual circumstances of Covid 19. It has therefore been difficult to plan with assurance for the upcoming years and this will be reflected in the plan. This will be reviewed as a picture becomes clearer for the likes of volunteers, events and public participation in the sites

Annual updates about management, work programmes, projects, achievements, activities and visitor numbers are included in Chapters 12 and Appendix 1 & 2

## **1.2 About the Parks**

Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park are located on the northern banks of the River Tweed, on either side of Berwick Railway Station. They are joined by a successful Parks for People grant, awarded to both parks in 2012, under the project name Berwick Parks Project, and physically by the remains of Berwick Castle. Pedestrian routes over the train station and along the River Tweed physically link the parks.

North of the train station, and at just 0.35 hectares, Coronation Park is the most northerly, and possibly smallest, formal park in England. It provides an attractive route from the town to the river, outdoor educational and events space, a sculpture trail, a shelter and pergola, each positioned to make the most of the stunning and timeless view of the Tweed, and wildlife friendly planting. It also provides some of the best accessible views of the remains of Berwick Castle.

Just south of the train station, and popular with people waiting for trains, Castle Vale Park is larger at 1.75 acres. It contains shelters, a lily pond, restored rock gardens and rose gardens, with excellent views of the Royal Border Bridge. This park contains several routes within it which lead down to the river from the town.

## **1.3 A Brief History of the Parks**

### **1.3.1 Castle Vale Park**

Castle Vale Park was formed from land given to Berwick Corporation by local baker and businessman, John Cairns, in 1928. Mr Cairns' old house on Tweed Street backs on to the park and he was said to oversee the activities in the park from a platform in his back garden. The park was laid out by Mr Cairns' gardener and

opened in 1929, with additional planting and hedges added in 1931. Railings and a gate at the Railway Street entrance were added in 1934.

Castle Vale Park lies within a valley, bordered to the east by the Elizabethan Town Wall and by the remains of Berwick Castle to the west. It is located in one of the most historic parts of Berwick, as it is the site of numerous medieval structures built to defend the town during many conflicts.

The park design is an interpretation of art-deco style garden design common to the late 1920s, especially in the shape of the lily pond, the design of the shelters and horticultural planting. Access is pedestrian only through stone pillars near the Rail station across a metal footbridge and again at the bottom of the park near the Town Walls

The park extends eastwards from the main section with the lily pond and viewpoint, to incorporate a chalybeate well, called Conqueror's Well, which dates from c.1882 and is named after Berwick watch and clock maker Peter Conqueror. This is situated on the riverside walk known as The New Road.

### **1.3.2 Coronation Park**

Coronation Park was acquired by the Berwick Corporation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was originally intended to be the site of tree planting to commemorate the crowning of Edward VIII in 1936. His abdication resulted in the crowning of George VI and ultimately the park was laid out in a more formal style, with two shelters, shrub beds, formal planting and footpaths. It was opened for the Coronation of King George VI in 1937.

The site was formerly part of Tommy the Miller's Field, the southern part of which remains in private ownership, and is regularly grazed by cattle. However, the wall that separates the two areas is not new; a boundary along a similar line was mentioned in a survey of the castle in 1538 and is shown on drawings from 1790.

At the top of the park is the site of Gallows Knowe. This was the site of public executions by hanging until 1823, the last being Grace Griffin

Berwick Castle is one of the most interesting historic features associated with Coronation Park. The castle sat to the east of the park, isolated on a hill, is surrounded by ravines to the north and east and connected to the town by a causeway. It was the main entrance to Berwick from the Borders. The first reliable record of the castle is from 1165 and it was a focal point of the turbulent history of Berwick, which saw the town change hands between the English and the Scots many times, eventually becoming part of England.

In the mid-1800s the castle's location was deemed to be the best route for the last link in the railway line between London and Edinburgh, and it was sold to the North British Railway Company in 1843. The ravines were filled in, most of the castle demolished, and the new railway line was opened by Queen Victoria in 1850.

The White Walls, part of the north western part of the castle, remain in Tommy the Miller's Field and on The New Road by the River Tweed. Coronation Park provides one of the best accessible places for viewing the walls.



Latterly both parks were owned and managed by Berwick Borough Council, until they were transferred to Northumberland County Council as part of the Local Government Review in 2009.

Work on a Parks for People HLF application began in 2010, led by officers from Northumberland County Council, in partnership with Berwick upon Tweed Town Council, Berwick in Bloom and Castlegate Area Residents Association. The park was awarded the funding in December 2012.

## **1.4 Parks for People Improvements (2013 - 2018)**

Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park were jointly awarded Parks for People funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery in 2012.

The funding has brought the two parks back to life through well planned site improvements and the appointment of a Parks Development Officer, whose role was to ensure maintenance is kept to a very high standard and to maximise community involvement in the two parks. The Parks Development Officer was appointed on a five-year contract in June 2013.

Work began on physical improvements in the park began in November 2013 and were completed in July 2014. These improvements include:

- Restoration of shelters in both parks, improvement of the pergola in Castle Vale Park and creation of new pergola in Coronation Park
- Restoration of the Lily Pond in Castle Vale Park
- Restoration of the Rock Gardens in Castle Vale Park
- Improvements to entrances, footpaths, handrails and steps throughout both parks
- New gates, signage and interpretation
- New seats and bins
- Creation of an open space near the southern shelter in Coronation Park, available to use as an outdoor education space or for events
- Removal of shrubs to improve sight lines and to provide space for more attractive planting
- Creation of a spring bulb and summer meadow in Coronation Park to improve biodiversity
- Removal and crown clearing of selected trees to restore significant vistas
- Installation of electricity supplies to both parks to facilitate events, Christmas lights and other activities.

A condition of the funding is to achieve the Green Flag Award in the year following completion of the physical improvements, and to maintain the award for at least seven consecutive years.

More details of the project, including the activity plan and photographs of the parks, are given in Chapter 11. The final evaluation report is added to Appendix 3

## **1.5 Designations**

Both parks are dedicated Public Open Space and lie within the Berwick upon Tweed Conservation Area.

There are two scheduled ancient monuments in Castle Vale Park:

- Megs Mount
- The Elizabethan Walls at Tweed Street

Berwick Castle borders the Coronation Park boundary.

The Royal Border Bridge is situated to the east of the parks.

The south-west boundary of Castle Vale Park borders the Tweed Catchment Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), The Lower Tweed and Whiteadder Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Tweed Estuary.

The south border of Coronation Park borders an area of Environmental Stewardship which incorporates Carlin Brae and the English Heritage guardianship site where the surviving castle walls are found.

Both parks border Berwick Railway Station which is a Grade II listed building.

## 1.6 Site Details

Grid reference; Castle Vale Park NT994533  
Coronation Park NT993535

Area; Castle Vale Park 1.7ha  
Coronation Park 0.3ha

Access; Both parks are situated in the busy town of Berwick in Northumberland and can be accessed from a number of streets and footpaths. There are 7 entrances in total.

Local facilities; There are no public toilets the nearest being the Rail station and in town  
The nearest public telephone is the Rail station

Transport; Buses  
The Rail station is a transport interchange with buses just outside the station entrance  
  
Train  
Both parks straddle the East Coast Main Line station of Berwick with regular services to Edinburgh and Newcastle

Parking; The nearest car parking is at the Rail station (PAY) otherwise disc parking at Castle Terrace for 3 hours

## 2. The Vision for the Parks

Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park are vital components of the busy historic market town and tourist destination of Berwick upon Tweed. The main purpose of Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park is to offer free to access, clean, well maintained and well managed green spaces, which meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors to Berwick as a place of calm or active and sociable activity. By involving park users and the local community as the main drivers in its development and management, the aim of the parks is to foster a sense of local pride and community cohesion.

**The vision for Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park is to:**

- Maintain and continue to improve the park to a high standard
- Ensure there is strong community involvement in the management and development of the park
- Make provision for recreation, education and healthy living in a safe and pleasant environment
- Provide and improve habitats for wildlife and sustainable use of resources.

### **3. A Welcoming Park**



*Aim - The overall impression for someone approaching and entering the site is positive and inviting.*

### **3.1 Castle Vale Park**

#### **3.1.1 Announcing the Park**

Castle Vale Park has five entrance points, at Railway Street, Tweed Street, Castlegate, with two from the New Road, at the Rowing Club and just downstream of the Royal Border Bridge.

Each entrance has an interpretation welcome panel, circular name plaques or wooden finger post directional signs. All entrances are well maintained and well signed. The consistent use of a 'park style' for handrails, seats, bins and signage provide a well-designed and welcoming feel for the park. There is a notice board at the main entrance where updated information is put on about events talks in the area and notices of interest to the public and where the Green Flag award is posted. There is a directional signpost as you leave the Rail station.

#### **3.1.2 Physical Access**

There are five pedestrian access points and one vehicular access into Castle Vale Park. There is no parking, though parking is readily available in the town centre. The vehicular access is shared with an adjacent property – Castle Vale B&B, and the actual ownership of the road is with the owners of the B&B. There are access rights across this land.



Because of the steep topography of the area, there are many steps and steep slopes within the park, including a new stepped entrance from the train station. However, the Parks for People funding allowed for the creation of a new accessible route from Railway Street to the viewpoint and out to Tweed Street, where previously steps had prevented access by wheelchairs and pushchairs. The access past the Elizabethan Town Walls is narrow, again due to the confines of the topography and the Scheduled Ancient Monument. Steps and steep slopes are shown on the maps on the interpretation panels and in the parks leaflet.

The Park Officer has parked within the gates for ease of use for tool transport, but all other vehicles would be restricted due to the steep topography

There is a bus stop/interchange at the Rail station where numerous buses use the site and a taxi rank. The rail station is on the main East Coast main line and at present 16 trains stop regularly for Edinburgh and London, with some limited stopping at minor stations including Morpeth and Alnmouth.

Many visitors use the park to sit while waiting for trains, particularly in the summer. The park is frequently used by people following town trails and walking down to the riverside areas to take in the views. There are no real restrictions on pedal cycles, but the topography is difficult. Many people use the parks to walk their dogs and general bins are provided for waste. The NCC's animal welfare officer patrols the parks to monitor and encourage responsible dog ownership.

### **3.1.3 Social Access**

In recent years this park has been well looked after by local volunteers and is a key element in the management of the parks and have also provided a welcome and friendly presence on the site, and often report back comments from both residents of the town and visitors. The improvement of infrastructure within the park, combined with the increased staff presence of the Parks Officer also contributes to the welcoming feel of the park. All this adds to the perception of public safety and lessens the fear of crime.

Within the confines of geography and topography we have tried to ensure access for all. There are several steep inclines and major changes of level and some steps are unavoidable. Ramped access and handrails have been installed leading to viewpoints and shelters to help those less mobile. New handrails were added to the lily pond in 2019 following comments about accessibility.

## **3.2 Coronation Park**

### **3.2.1 Announcing the Park**

There are just two entrances to Coronation Park, at Tommy the Miller's field to the south and off Castle Terrace to the north. All entrances are well maintained and well signed. Both give pedestrian access and have attractive, bespoke gates that are visible from inside and outside of the park. The south entrance is marked by

a circular name plaque, while the north entrance gate features a welcome and interpretation panel. There is a directional signpost as you leave the rail station.

Most visitors to the park arrive on foot. Parking is, therefore, not a major requirement, although on-street car parking is available on Castle Terrace. There is a vehicle entrance for works vehicles and grass cutters at Castle Terrace.

There is an interpretation panel, new Nature Trail Board, notice board, and leaflet dispenser at the Castle Terrace entrance that are all updated by the Parks Officer.

### **3.2.2 Physical Access**

Both entrance points are not stepped and are as accessible as possible, considering the steep topography of the park. The park leaflet and interpretation panel at Castle Terrace include a map showing the location of steep banks and steps.

Removal of overgrown, poorly maintained shrubs, as well as major improvements to the planting and the shelters in the park, have created a well-planned and well-maintained feel. This enhances the welcoming feel as you enter.

The main path through the park is a public right of way leading down to The New Road. This public right of way was constructed in 1815 and runs alongside the River Tweed.

Most users in the park walk dogs and as mentioned, there are general bins, and the NCC animal welfare officer can be called into monitor and check on responsible dog ownership.

A new sculpture trail was installed in 2018. This, and a new orienteering course, installed in 2019, provides an interest for younger visitors.

### **3.2.3 Social Access**

The 'Friends of Castle Parks' volunteer group plays an active role, under the supervision of the Parks Officer, in creating a welcoming, well cared for, and safe atmosphere for all park users. There is one set of steps in the park, but there are also ramped paths that allow access to all areas for those with reduced mobility.

## **3.3 Aspects of Design**

Both parks were designed in the 1920s and 1930s and the layout of the parks has been maintained as part of their heritage. However, there is opportunity and scope to deliver features and uses more relevant to today's users, to encourage a desire to explore and discover the parks' features. Recently, this has involved wooden chainsaw sculptures, Bug Hotel and a new orienteering course. The planting in the park contains a good variety of texture, colour and benefits to wildlife, complemented by mix of hard and soft landscaping.

## **4. Healthy, Safe and Secure**



*The Lily Pond, Castle Vale Park*

*Aim - The park is a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Relevant issues are addressed in the management plan and implemented on the ground. New concerns which arise are addressed promptly and appropriately.*

#### **4.1 Healthy Parks & Partnerships**

The most sustainable solution to achieving a sense of security is to ensure the parks are well used and well respected. The presence of the Parks Officer, clearly identifiable with NCC uniform, helps visitors feel secure. The presence of the volunteers, again in logoed clothing, on regular workdays ensures good and effective management and development of the parks and feeling of community engagement. Other agencies/partner organisations that contribute to management included, pre-covid;

- Northumberland Youth Offending Service - uses volunteers to help with conservation projects in the parks
- Northumberland Police and Police Support
- Berwick Friends of Castle Parks - the main source of gardeners, raise publicity through their website, fund raise and help with events
- U3A- have worked on a new nature trail partly in the park
- Berwick Wildlife Group- who assist in wildlife orientated events
- Berwick Rotary Club - assist in provision of bulbs
- Britain In Bloom - participate successfully in their local /national award scheme
- Berwick Town Council - part funded the Park Officer role

- Army cadets/Brownies/Scout units - conservation projects  
Berwick Community Crew Youth Group – conservation projects

Both parks will continue to provide opportunities where possible for these, and other, groups. The Friends of Castle Parks provide a regular presence through practical conservation and the provision of events and activities in the spring and summer months. In 2019 there was a Northumberland County Council horticultural apprentice who helped the Parks Officer weekly. Opportunities will be sought to continue this.

Both parks are well used by walkers and runners. The recent improvements to the infrastructure of the parks mean they are more accessible than before, creating more opportunities for people to enjoy informal outdoor exercise. A rise in use was particularly noted in 2020 under the covid pandemic.

The Parks Officer organises regular volunteer gardening and maintenance tasks, both of which offer a healthy pastime to local people.

The local police force are involved in tackling anti-social behaviour on the sites. Notices are up for the general public to actively report on the 101 service any issues they have. A log of 101 calls made by the Park Officer and the volunteers is kept and reported to the Green Spaces Officer to action. Litter picking events are held with the local police and their Police cadets.

The parks are popular with Berwick Camera Club and art group, who regularly meet in the parks. Berwick Camera Club ran a series of events in the parks in to help people improve their photography skills. Further opportunities for this on a more consistent basis will be explored.

The recent infrastructure improvements and restoration of views and vistas provide plenty of space for peaceful and contemplative use of the parks.

There is some potential to encourage the adjacent residential homes to use the parks more often, as well as to promote the parks to more existing local groups for their enjoyment and benefit. However, the topography is difficult to negotiate in parts for less mobile or wheelchairs

A new orienteering trail was put together and installed in 2019 with Newcastle & Tyneside Orienteers (NATO) which encompasses a route using both the parks and the riverside area. A town wide Nature Trail, launched in Spring 2020, now starts at Castle Vale Park with one start panel and one information point generated by the local U3A group with advice from the Park Officer.

## **4.2 Quality and Safe Equipment and Facilities**

All the features within both parks have been massively improved with the Parks for People funding and are of a high quality, both in design and manufacture. The features within the parks are checked on a regular basis by the Parks Officer and NEAT teams to ensure they remain in a safe condition for visitors, and any issues are dealt with promptly by reporting to either the Green Spaces Officer or Senior NEAT Team Leader.

There are no play or sports facilities within either park, so the main areas are the entrances, shelters, seats, footpaths, steps, bins, handrails and trees. Immediate and obvious dangers are addressed promptly. Repairs



are being done by Northumberland County Council's Property Services, park staff or local contractors where necessary.

An annual checklist, introduced in 2015, monitors and records the condition of trees to the Tree Officer, footpaths, shelters and entrances are reported to the Green Spaces Officer or Senior NEAT Team Leader.

### **4.3 Health and Safety Policies**

Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park fall within the remit of Northumberland County Council's health and safety policies and risk assessments, copies of which are issued to all Neighbourhood Services operational staff, all of whom are on a regular training programme of relevant courses. This can be highlighted in their annual appraisals, including the Parks Officer. Copies are available on the council's internal website. A copy of a risk assessment is attached in Appendix 4. Specific risk assessments are prepared for individual events.

Volunteers working in the park are subject to the same high duty of care as an employee of the council, thus are effectively classed as employees and as such are asked to sign a Volunteers Code. The duty of care extends to ensuring that volunteers are provided with a safe place of work, safe system of work, safe equipment, adequate training and supervision and personal protective equipment when necessary. The onsite training on the day of work for volunteers is undertaken by the Parks Officer. The officer will have checked whether the work needs a specific risk assessment, provides an outline of the work, what tools will be involved and what is to be achieved. Volunteers will also be given a tools demonstration if any tools are unfamiliar. Tools are checked at the end of the task for damage or fault and either repaired or replaced, if necessary. PPE needed for the task is provided by NCC. All volunteers work under the direct supervision of the Parks Officer.

A volunteer's code of conduct is in Appendix 5.

A first aid kit is carried by the Parks Officer and training is provided for all staff. Volunteers have also been trained for outdoor first aid.

Accident reporting is done online by relevant NCC staff.

There will be times when the Parks Officer is lone working, which cannot be avoided. To minimise risk for these occasions, staff are issued with a mobile phone and, if requested, a personal attack alarm. Emergency contact details are kept for staff and volunteers in the event of an accident.

### **4.4 Feeling Safe and Secure**

The compact size and open aspect of the Parks creates a feeling of safety. The presence of the Parks Officer and recent improvements to the park infrastructure and planting schemes create a well-maintained feeling, which contributes to the perception of safety.

Both parks have an open feel, with the improved features, planting and better maintained shrubs and hedges contributing to the well managed and cared for feel in the park. Sight lines have been opened up where possible. There is no lighting in the parks at present. The presence of staff and the Friends group mean that

problems are reported quickly and therefore addressed. There is currently one CCTV camera in Castle Vale Park.

There is generally little antisocial behaviour or criminal damage within the parks. If it does occur it is spotted and dealt with promptly by the Parks Officer or NEAT team and the local community police officer.

However, the town of Berwick upon Tweed has a problem with adults drinking in public places, sometimes including the parks, especially at Meg's Mount in Castle Vale Park. To combat this, there is a town-wide ban on drinking in public places and a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) is in place. There has been funding for the repair of the floodlights in the area (current 2021) and the possibility for CCTV to be installed once funding is found.

One problem area for litter is at Meg's Mount, where cans, glass bottles and plastic bottles are thrown down the bankside. This can become very difficult to remove. A bin has been installed here, and is used by the drinkers, but is insufficient to prevent some litter being thrown down the bank.

The local police are aware of the issue and the problems it causes town wide. Police actively encourage the Parks Officer and volunteers to report incidents of public alcohol consumption. The police response is usually good, other priorities permitting. The police have been involved in and supportive of the parks' improvement project from its inception. The Parks Officer, when there have been issues is able to pass concerns to the Green Spaces Officer. The NEAT teams/Tree Teams will also help to keep the amount of litter under control. CCTV is currently being considered. Notices are put in the notice boards onsite with information on how to report anti-social behaviour. Local police are attending the Friends Group meetings

Evidence of alcohol consumption and antisocial behaviour in the park is monitored and reported to the police. This table is an ongoing log of incidents kept by the Parks Officer from 2019 to 2022

2019	Issue	Park	Action
25/3/19	Drinkers	Castle Vale	Called 101 @ 3.50pm. On hold 20 mins. Gave up.
26/3/19	Drinkers	Castle Vale	Called 101 @3.50pm. Incident #689
15/4	Drinkers	Castle Vale	Called 101 @ 2pm. Couldn't get through
15/4	Drugs	Shambles	Sharps Kit found in hedge
7/5	Drinkers	Castle Vale	Called 101 @ 2pm - 2 police attended. Drinkers not moved on.
8/6	Damage	Castle Vale	Damage to willow fencing. Incident #4270 080619
17/6	Damage	New Road	Drain covers pulled out and thrown in river
15/7	Damage	New Road	Drain covers pulled out and thrown in river
12/7	Faeces	Castle Vale	
15/7	Damage	Shambles	Finger Post sign pulled out
18/7	Faeces	Castle Vale	

29/7	Faeces	Castle Vale	
30/7	Faeces	Castle Vale	
31/7	Faeces	Castle Vale	
29/8	Drinkers	Coronation Park	Called 101 @ 3.10pm
5/9	Drinkers	Castle Vale	Called 101 @ 4.30pm
18/9	Drinkers	Castle Vale	Called 101 @ 9.30am. Couldn't get through
26/9	Faeces	Castle Vale	
1/10	Faeces	Castle Vale	
3/10	Damage	Coronation Park	Sign Damaged
10/10	Damage	Coronation Park	Bin pulled out - reported to police by volunteer
14/10	Drugs	Castle Vale	Sharps kits in and around pond including used needles
14/10	Drugs	Shambles	Sharps kit found by side of path
21/10	Drinkers	Castle Vale	Single female 9am. Approached by Parks Officer, left shortly after.
24/10	Drugs	Castle Vale	Single male. Very stoned so concerned for his safety. Called 101 @ 1.45pm. Couldn't get through.
9/12	Damage	Castle Vale	Damage to willow fencing at Rose pergola.

## 2020

10/2	Damage	Shambles	Finger post pulled out
25/2	Drugs ?	Castle Vale	Young male v. distressed. Called 101. Police responded promptly.
17/7	Drinkers	Castle Vale	Called 101 at 1.30pm. Couldn't get through. Midge Clazie and 2 others (not local).

## 2021

20/1/2021	Drugs/Faeces	Castle Vale	Used syringe and faeces at steps to railway station
17/2/2021	Drinkers	Castle Vale	4 x local males ( not regulars) at Lily Pond shelter. Police called at 4pm and responded. Follow up call 5.15pm.
26/2/2021	Drinker/youths	Castle Vale	Railway St resident reported lge group of youths 7pm approx. Resident called 101.
1/3/2021	litter/glass	Castle Vale	Bottles,cans,smashed glass
8/3/2021	litter/glass	Coronation Park	Bottles,cans,smashed glass
13/3/21	Drinkers/youths	Castle Vale	Neighbours on Tweed Street called Police 101 pm - incident #1213
15/3/2021	litter/glass	Coronation Park	Bottles,cans,smashed glass, bin liner removed and crushed - £200 to replace
19/3/21	Drinker/youths	Castle Vale	Railway St resident reported lge group of youths 7pm approx. Resident called 101.
22/2/22	Youths	Castle Vale	Large gathering 20+ reported to police at 9pm. Police responded and dispersed.

6/5/2022	Adults	Castle Vale	Report received of x2 people aggressively asking one of our elderly regulars for money. Reported to police.
24/5/22	Youths	Castle Vale	Youths fighting at steps from station. Reported to police.
16/6/22	Graffiti	Castle Vale and Shambles	"1488" Neo-nazi graffiti reported and removed. reported to police.
16/6/22	Drinkers	Shambles	Large group gathered at Shambles pm. Local resident reported to Police.
1/9/2022	Drink/drugs	Coronation Park Shelter	Member of public reported "druggie out of his mind". No response 101. Dialed 999 and reported to police.

#### 4.5 Encouraging Responsible Dog Owners

The parks are popular routes for dog walkers and, as everywhere, dog fouling occurs. The parks are included in the patrol routes for the Animal Welfare Officers, who can issue fixed penalty notices to owners who do not clear up after their dogs. There are new and additional general litter bins in both parks and at or near park entrances on Castle Terrace, Railway Street, Castlegate and at the Boating Club on The New Road. The Parks Officer encourages responsible dog ownership with park users and has engaged the local Scouts to produce posters that raise awareness of the issue, which have been positioned in prominent places onsite. In 2019, we engaged with Brownies and Guides to produce a set of posters to be displayed onsite. A copy of the winning poster is included in Appendix 7. This action will be re-visited post Covid. Furthermore, members of the public can report dog fouling issues on the NCC website.

For both the drinking and dog fouling issues, the increased presence of the Parks Officer and positive general public use, following the recent improvement works, should contribute to a reduction in both type of incidents. This will be monitored during the next three years.

## 5. Well Maintained and Clean





*Aim – Issues of cleanliness and maintenance are addressed for aesthetic and health and safety reasons.*

## **5.1 Litter and Waste Management**

Cleanliness is part of the package that creates a feeling of safety within the park and encourages more positive behaviour from visitors. Poor maintenance produces hazards for the public and staff and creates an atmosphere of unkemptness, disinterest, and worsened perceptions of safety. NCC consider it important, therefore, to maintain high standards of cleanliness and follows the Government Guidelines in the Litter Strategy for England (2017) and Keep Britain Tidy initiatives. Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park are patrolled daily by the Parks Officer and volunteers, and litter picked when necessary.

There are three bins in Castle Vale Park and one in Coronation Park. These are emptied by the NEAT team twice a week. This will be monitored to establish if this is sufficient across a wider period of use. Close working links between the park staff and NEAT teams mean that operational issues of this kind can be identified and addressed easily and quickly.

Litter collected by the Parks Officer and volunteers is bagged and left at park entrances to be collected and disposed of by the NEAT teams as part of their regular town-wide cleansing activities. The use of sharps boxes for needles is monitored and training given in picking up and disposing. Volunteers are not asked to pick up needles but are to report their position in order for staff to collect.

Green waste is at present composted in the two parks where possible. Where trees are pruned or felled, the wood is left in habitat piles and chipped and left onsite as a valuable wildlife habitat.

## **5.2 Grounds Maintenance**

The grounds maintenance operations within both parks are done in-house to a high standard by the Parks Officer, with support from the NEAT team. The Parks Officer cares for the formal horticultural aspects of the park, whilst the NEAT teams grass cut and cut hedges. Operations of such can be seen in Appendix 1. Any tree works are undertaken by the NCC Tree Team under direction from the Tree Officer. The Tree Officer and Green Spaces officer have bi-monthly catch ups regarding site inspection issues that are highlighted by the Parks Officer, Volunteers or the public.

Criminal damage, such as graffiti or vandalism to the parks' infrastructure, are thankfully rare events. However, if they do occur then they are dealt with as soon as they are discovered. The Parks Officer deals with as much as possible, with support from the NEAT team or relevant contractors when necessary. All graffiti, vandalism and criminal damage is reported to Northumbria Police by the Parks Officer. Social media sites are used to highlight the issues to the wider community to promote more reporting of the issues.

## **5.3 Building and Infrastructure Maintenance**

The buildings in the parks are limited to shelters and pergolas; infrastructure includes footpaths, handrails, the lily pond, seats, bins, steps, gates and entrances.

As with grounds maintenance, all buildings and infrastructure are the responsibility of Neighbourhood Services within Northumberland County Council, with support from Strategic Assets Management and Property Services where necessary. There is, at present, little maintenance required as most of the structures are relatively new but regular painting/varnishing is undertaken annually. However, an annual meeting with budget holders highlights upcoming maintenance issues which are to be addressed in the coming years.

## **5.4 Equipment Maintenance**

There is no fixed play equipment or sports equipment in either park. Equipment, including mowers, hedge cutters, strimmers and hand tools, is maintained under Northumberland County Council's maintenance programme. Mechanical equipment is serviced annually during the winter, and hand tools are inspected regularly and replaced or repaired if necessary. All staff undergo an extensive induction covering health and safety and the safer use of machinery and are regularly included in the NCC training programme.

Risk assessments are available on the NCC intranet site and no vehicles are left in the parks at night. There is a small amount of fuel stored for the machinery at the NCC depot in secure containers. Ride on mowers are fuelled at the depots and all equipment checked by operatives before use. Recently, new battery-operated equipment has been purchased for the Parks Officer and volunteers and suitable training is given before use.

## 6. Sustainability



### *Our recycled Christmas Tree -*

*Aim - Methods used in maintaining the park and its facilities are environmentally sound, relying on best practice according to current knowledge. Management are aware of the range of techniques available to them, and demonstrate that informed choices have been made and are regularly reviewed.*

Sustainability means ‘able to be maintained at a certain level’ (Oxford dictionary online). For our parks in Northumberland, sustainability means finding the balance between the best community involvement, environmental practice, available budget and staff resources. Northumberland County Council would like to see the parks maintained as an example of sustainability and good practice so future generations will inherit a better environment. The council therefore values its partnership working with residents, businesses and visitors to the town. Northumberland County Council has a newly formed Climate Action team who are producing a Climate Action Plan 2021-23. This is being published Feb 2021 and will include action points on Engagement & Partnership working, Reducing Waste, Natural Resource Based Carbon Sequestration, for the parks we will action relevant points from the plan when discussions are held with the Climate Change Team.

### 6.1 Horticulture, Peat and Pesticides

Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park have no demanding annual flower beds or sports turf, which significantly reduces the need to use peat or chemicals. The Parks for People horticultural improvements specifically



avoided the reintroduction of annual bedding in order to eliminate regular use of peat as a growing medium, and the high financial and staff cost associated with replacing bedding twice per year.

When bought in commercially, herbaceous and perennial plants were grown and supplied in peat until a reliable, cost efficient alternative growing medium was offered by suppliers. This was to minimise cost and reduce the risk of failed plants as the budget constraints are so tight that there is limited possibility of replacing plants that have died. Affordable peat-free growing mediums are now being utilised. Where plants are supplied by volunteers, we recommend peat free compost where possible.

Currently, if annual plants are used in the parks, they are grown by volunteers. Plant species are wildlife friendly, such as calendula. While staff and volunteer resources allow, all weeding in the beds, footpath edges, and areas under and around the street furniture in both parks will be done using physical or mechanical methods, avoiding the use of herbicides and unsightly browned-off edges of grass.

Unfortunately, in order to improve the biodiversity of Coronation Park through the creation of a meadow, a limited pesticide use had been necessary to eliminate the ruderal weeds and rank grasses on the meadow site. However, the ultimate benefits to wildlife, and the use of the park as a showcase meadow, are considered to be greater than the single, localised application of herbicide. This will be reviewed as the meadow progresses and progressive hand pulling of weeds has been employed.

Green waste generated by weeding, meadow maintenance and hedge cutting from both parks on a small scale can be composted. Large amounts are collected with the council's municipal green waste collections and composted off site at a local SITA green waste recycling site or at Com-Vert green waste composting facility near Alnwick. Chipped green waste from shrubs and trees is recycled for use as mulch on council shrub beds. NCC is currently exploring whether space in the Council depot can be set aside for use to compost and grow on plants. New plans for 2023 include possible composing sites created onsite with the application to the RHS for funding

Whenever possible, and where space and location allow, brash and timber from trees will be wood chipped and used as mulch and to be reviewed for use on the banksides to help with drought and flood issues or are stacked to create invertebrate habitat piles. Bird and bat boxes have also been added to the parks.

All of these have contributed to a wildlife rich resource which monitors any climate change issues and is practised in all operations on the parks and this is showing in the wildlife counts that are happening weekly with some previously unseen species being recorded, such as great spotted woodpecker and small skipper butterfly. The creation of a new bug hotel also has added to the habitat types. Notes on the management of the Wildflower meadow and species types are included in Appendix 6

## **6.2 Energy, Water and Resources**

The nature of Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park and the features in them keep energy and water use and resource requirement to a minimum.



The lily pond in Castle Vale Park is likely to be the biggest requirement for water usage if the water level drops and it needs to be refilled in warm weather. Water consumption will be monitored. The pump for the lily pond is solar powered, storing up energy during the day and operating overnight. However, this has never worked despite several engineer visits. Over previous summers 2021 the pond was monitored by the Parks Officer and found not to need at this stage a pump.

All timber used in the restoration of the parks is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified. Where replacement timbers are required for pergola, shelter or street furniture repairs, these will also be certified by the FSC. The use of recycled benches will be considered in the future.

The use of herbaceous planting in the park has significantly reduced the need to water plants in dry weather. Watering will only be done when it is necessary to avoid the loss of plants. It will be done during cooler times of day and applied topically rather than via a sprinkler system.

The recent purchase of mechanical tools powered by rechargeable batteries helps to reduce our consumption of petrol and oil, thus reducing emissions and reducing noise pollution. (Tool purchase has been funded by the Friends of the Parks, and a successful grant bid, from funds raised predominantly from Open Gardens events).

## **6.3 Arboriculture and Woodland Management**

### **6.3.1 Castle Vale Park**

Castle Vale Park has several distinct areas where the tree cover differs.

The steep valley sides of the River Tweed alongside the New Road are mostly covered with shrubs and young trees. Anecdotal accounts and photographic records of this area show that the banks were unwooded until relatively recently.

The trees and shrubs on these banks provide welcome biodiversity and wildlife habitat and provide ground stabilisation. However, the soil upon which they grow is likely to be shallow, which may create problems as larger tree species mature and outgrow the capacity of the bank to support them. These trees will be monitored and if they pose a risk to the safety of people using the park or the New Road, they will be felled. Wherever possible they will be section felled to a height that enables us to retain a trunk to decompose naturally and provide standing deadwood habitat, which is becoming increasingly rare.

Trees around the lily pond, by the steps to the New Road, and near the viewpoint consist of a mixture of mature mixed broadleaves, as well as a row of semi mature beech behind Tweed Street's gardens and a mature, majestic holly to the east of the lily pond shelter. The trees in this part of the park were surveyed for the Parks for People project. Through that funding, many were crown cleared or crown lifted, with some selected felling for safety and to open up vistas that were originally part of the park's design. They will be inspected annually for safety and any necessary works carried out if any trees become unsafe. A mature ash tree with obvious signs of disease, bracket fungus, has been pollarded, but we are mindful of Ash Die Back also in all other ash in the park, this will be an ongoing assessment

The bank in front of the viewpoint, which faces the Royal Border Bridge, will be managed to maintain the trees to a low height, to retain the spectacular views of the bridge and River Tweed.

### 6.3.2 Coronation Park

There are a number of mature sycamores in the park, which provide reasonable habitat, mostly because of their age and size. The aesthetic impact of large, mature trees is desirable, so these trees will be monitored for safety. If any felling is required, they will be replaced with species with greater biodiversity and aesthetic value, including oak and lime (*Quercus robur*, *Tilia cordata*) sourced locally from a supplier such as Cheviot Trees.

## 7. Conservation and Heritage



*Aim - Particular attention is paid to the conservation and appropriate management of natural features, wildlife and flora, landscape features, buildings and structural features. These features will serve their function well without placing undue pressure on the environment.*

### 7.1 Natural Features, Wildlife and Flora

#### 7.1.1 Castle Vale Park

Castle Vale Park contains a variety of managed habitats, including trees, the lily pond, rock gardens, spring bulbs, and some areas of rough grass and mown grass. From the records held by the Environmental Records Information Centre the only priority habitat near the parks is listed as deciduous woodland.

The lily pond is being managed for the enrichment of wildlife with the introduction of native pond plants and to increase diversity with platforms and shelter areas.

Wherever possible all plants have been selected to be wildlife friendly or nectar rich, providing a long flowering season.

Regular weekly bird, butterfly and flora surveys have been done by the Park Staff and volunteers. From 2019, emphasis was put on butterfly, meadow, and birds surveys in conjunction with Berwick Wildlife Group to support the Friends group, with results recorded and monitored (See Appendix 6 ). Survey results are entered into the national BTO Garden Birdwatch database, thereby contributing to national as well as local wildlife monitoring.

There are grey squirrels in Castle Vale Park. Links have been made to the Northumberland Red Squirrels Group to investigate whether culling of greys is possible or practical in this area. Culling is being actioned in the River Tweed Estuary area at present.

Events including the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, Bioblitz, Big Beastie Hunt and the Heritage Open Days give the public the opportunity to learn about the wildlife in the park and the adjacent area and create bat and bird boxes for use in the parks and at home. In 2019, community reparation volunteers built tawny owl and kestrel boxes, installed by Northumberland County Tree Team. Timber was donated by a local construction firm.

The management of all the wooded areas is carried out to cause minimum disturbance to the wildlife and to enhance the natural woodland. No tree felling will take place during the bird breeding season and bat hibernation season unless the tree poses a risk to park users. Fallen deadwood is usually left on the ground, where possible, to provide alternative habitats. Safe standing deadwood will also be left.

### 7.1.2 Coronation Park

Coronation Park was formerly a patch of green desert, adjacent to wildlife rich areas like Tommy the Miller's field and the Tweed estuary. There was no formal floral planting, solely overgrown, poorly managed shrubs that were not allowed to flower. However, the Parks for People improvements have significantly improved the natural habitats in the park and the opportunity to create more.

All herbaceous plants have been selected to be wildlife friendly or nectar rich, and to provide a flowering season that lasts as long as possible. An increase in the number of butterflies in the park has already been observed, and monitoring will continue.

The Parks for People funding provided an opportunity to create a spring bulb and summer meadow on previously short mown amenity grassland. The meadow species composition is based on NVC grassland MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* - *Centaurea scabiosa*, with fewer grasses and more perennial flowering plants. The bulbs in the meadow include narcissus, galanthus and hyacinth.

Additional work was required in 2015 to prepare the ground, plant bulbs and sow the meadow seed. In 2016, the area was re-sown to improve diversity. In subsequent years the meadow will be cut in late summer, with arisings removed and recycled into soil improver off-site (see Appendix 6 for details).

Many self-sown sycamores have been removed from the bank on the south eastern edge of the park, primarily to improve the views of the castle walls. Smaller trees species, including crab apple, hazel, hawthorn and guelder rose, have been planted on the bank to compensate for the loss of the sycamores, with the added benefit of a having greater ecological value. The understorey in this area is dominated by spear thistle and native and cultivated spring flowers, including garlic mustard, wood anemone, bluebell, wild daffodil and wood tulip. The bank will be managed lightly to encourage a wider diversity of plant species.

Through the work of the Parks Officer at events and with schools and local groups, additional habitats such as log piles, insect homes and shelter boxes have been created to benefit invertebrates, and bird and bat boxes have been installed. The park will see a new native hedge to be planted in 2021/22 in time for the Queens Platinum Celebration by the Friends Group after a successful application to the Woodland Trust

## 7.2 Landscape

Castle Vale Park hugs the steep sided valley of the River Tweed, to the east of the remains of Berwick Castle. The viewpoint at the rose garden has one of the town's best views of the Royal Border Bridge and is popular with photographers and train spotters.

West of the train station, Coronation Park has spectacular views of the river to the west. The shelter and pergola in the park are ideally situated to make the most of this view, and obstructing trees and shrubs have been removed.

The steep valley-side of the Tweed makes up the landscape of the parks and was one of the key factors in the location of Berwick Castle. For this reason, the views to the castle from Coronation Park have been restored.

Vistas will be maintained through sympathetic tree and woodland management.

### **7.3 Buildings, Structures and Historic Character**

With just four buildings or structures in Castle Vale Park and two in Coronation Park, management requirements are not onerous.

In Castle Vale Park, the lily pond and lily pond shelter have been restored to reflect their original historic character. The pergola, which was added by CARA in 2002, has been enhanced by the addition of timber beams in the same style as the northern shelter in Coronation Park, and an additional shelter has been restored at the viewpoint.

In Coronation Park, the southern shelter has been restored to its original condition and design and colour scheme and will continue to be managed as such. The original northern shelter was in such poor condition and of little heritage significance that it was felt appropriate to be removed. It was replaced with a pergola, designed in a style reminiscent of the era when the park was originally laid out, and will continue to be managed as such.

## **8. Community Involvement**



*Aim - Park management authorities will actively pursue the involvement of members of the community with representation of as many park user groups as possible.*

Community involvement is at the heart of the successful use, management and improvement of the two parks. The support of local people, user groups, partners and other stakeholders is fundamental to the parks' success.

Community involvement in Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park was a fundamental element in the success of the Parks for People award, thanks to the immense efforts made by a small number of volunteers and two local groups, Castlegate Area Residents Association and Berwick in Bloom.

Since the Parks for People award the number of people involved in the parks has increased significantly, with more volunteers, groups and events, as well as more input from the original people. Groups involved so far have included Berwick Academy, Berwick Youth Group, U3A, Berwick Wildlife group and individual volunteers. A list is included in Chapter 4.1. The Berwick Parks Project Friends Group has totalled over 1600 hours of voluntary work in 2019. 2020 has proven to be a different picture due to Covid restrictions on persons meeting outdoors and this will be reflected in any figures. However, in 2021 volunteer hours have expanded to over 2,000, Covid had also impacted on the number of hours that were available for general weeding and maintenance. New volunteers are always actively recruited on events via the public, notices on the social media sites of the Friends Group and notices onsite.

NCC also has a new Volunteer Co-ordinator post in place from 2019 with a view to progressing a more uniform approach to all the volunteer groups that NCC operate and to keep in contact with all listed volunteers

## **8.1 Patterns of Use**

For the final evaluation report that was undertaken for the Parks for People Project, a visitor survey was carried out by staff and volunteers in 2018. This was done in order to understand the patterns of use and wishes of groups, residents and visitors who have a stake in how the parks develop. Monitoring attitudes to the parks ensures that management and future developments meet the needs and expectations of all park users. A copy of the Final Evaluation Report is attached in Appendix 3

## **8.2 Volunteers and the Friends Group**

The two original groups that were involved in the Parks for People project have now merged into one group called The Friends of Castle Parks. So far, community involvement has included practical maintenance and gardening, help with events, monitoring and evaluation, representation on the former steering group and an emerging Friends group. This will continue and expand through the work of the Parks Officer.

The Friends group encompasses both parks. They are proactive in conversing with businesses and have worked at attracting funding bids; a successful bid in 2018 saw a grant from the private firm Suez to create the wildlife sculptures in Coronation Park and in 2019 a bid to NCC's Community Chest award for equipment.



Activities in 2020 have been curtailed due to Government Guidelines for Covid -19 and at present this is still being reviewed by the NCC Volunteers Officer who has produced individual risk assessments and job descriptions. The group have started to work in 2021 on trying to bring back some events, and indeed the Open Gardens went ahead, to great success. There are also planned a series of winter talks all added to the website and notice boards. The volunteers have also started to work on other areas around the town where help is needed, this includes being directly involved in the new Community Orchard in the north of the town and Flagstaff Park, both owned by NCC

### **8.3 Events**

The Parks Officer organises and leads a wide range of events in the park, including dawn chorus walks, wildlife monitoring and heritage walks. There are opportunities to increase this offer through links with Berwick Youth Project, The Maltings and Active Northumberland.

A programme of events for each year, is developed and advertised locally, regionally and online, making use of events listings already produced by Berwick upon Tweed Town Council and Northumberland County Council or Active Northumberland. From the end of the Parks for People Project in June 2018, the events programme has been taken on board by the Friends of Castle Parks Group forming their own committee for event planning. Unfortunately, 2020 had seen only one event take place and limited events in 2021. The very successful Open Gardens for 2020 was online but able to go ahead in 2021. Plans are being made to increase the events programme back for 2022

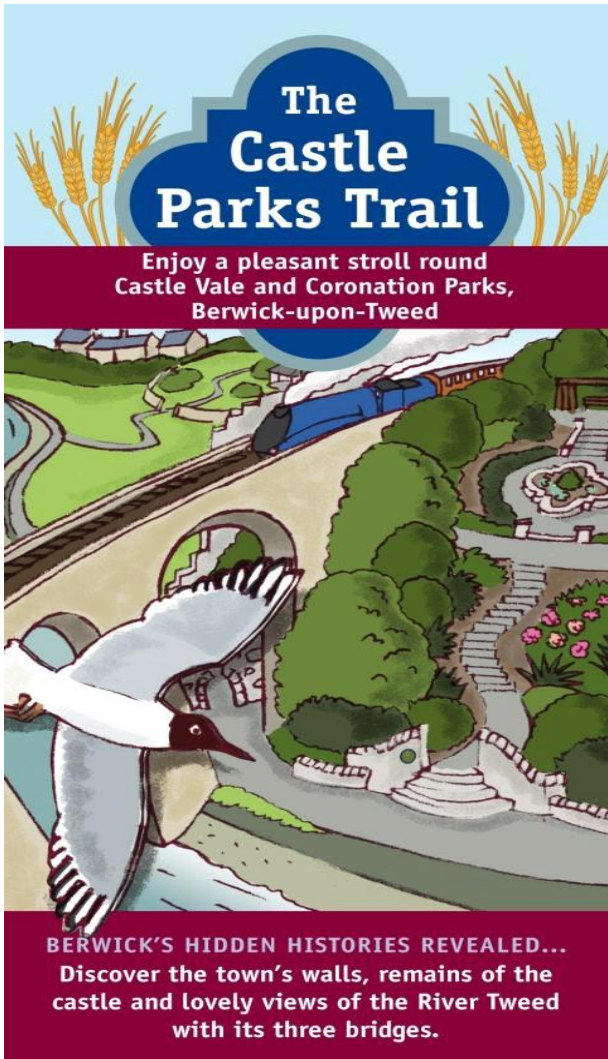
### **8.4 Schools and Other Groups**

There is an opportunity to increase use of the park by local schools. During the development stage of the Parks for People project, Berwick Middle School and Holy Trinity First School expressed an interest in using the renovated park but have not yet actualised this. The Parks Officer is working on finding out what the park can offer local schools and how they can use the park more, but to date the schools have not taken up any offers to engage. One idea discussed involved a sculpture trail, installed in 2019 and developing a relevant education pack or programme. A further idea that was moved forward was the creation of the new orienteering route that utilises both parks and is widely available both from the NCC and Friends website. A copy is also held at Berwick YHA and used by visiting groups.

The activity plan created for the Parks for People project identified several existing groups who could get involved in the parks in a variety of ways. Berwick Youth project have completed a film of the parks' restoration. The Parks Officer has continued to work with other groups, including Guides, Scouts, Army Cadets, the towns youth project, as required and as projects become apparent.

We have built up a good working relationship with the Youth Community Reparation Team who attended weekly pre-covid to carry out maintenance works and work on projects as they arise. This is as yet to be re-engaged due to covid issues

## 9. Marketing



### 9.1 Marketing Strategy

Marketing of a park involves understanding the aspirational goals and current position of the park in terms of use, events, public perception and public needs for the site, then responding to that information in a way which increases use and the sense of public involvement and ownership of the park.

The aspiration for Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park is that they return to their status of well loved and respected areas of green space within the town of Berwick, with excellent standards of maintenance, good community involvement at all levels from management to events, education activities and volunteer activities and adequate staff resources to deliver these.

The current position for the parks is that they have excellent standards of maintenance and infrastructure, as awarded in national schemes such as Green Flag and Britain/Northumbria in Bloom, (2021 saw Castle Vale awarded the 'Best Park in the Northumbria Region') and have excellent opportunities for increasing the

community involvement and ownership through the Parks Officer, Friends Group and existing strong volunteer base.

In order to increase community involvement, the message that the park has been improved and has something to offer must be conveyed to residents, schools, workers, tourists, and visitors to Berwick. This will be done through regular events, promotion of the park, and activities through various outlets listed below and others as they become available. Examples include using shop windows in the town centre to display information about the improvements and events, posts on social media, leaflets and events such as public talks.

Monitoring and evaluation of the parks was part of the Parks for People project and completed in 2015 and 2017. Visitor surveys were done in Summer 2015 and 2018, to assess patterns of use and visitor impressions of the park, to discover why they do or do not visit. Responses are used to inform future park management and events for example schools wanted to have an orienteering course which was installed in 2019 and a sculpture trail for kids. At present all plans for visitor surveys are on hold due to Covid and few staff to undertake them. This will be reviewed in line with Government restrictions. An activity plan was produced for the Park for People Project see Chapter 11 and a plan for 2021-2022 will be drawn up post covid-19. NCC are currently investigating an online visitor feedback form for all its parks, with comments that can be left for individual parks. This will hopefully be running in 2022.

A full marketing strategy for all of Northumberland's Parks is available from the Green Spaces Officer if required.

## **9.2 Information Provision and Interpretation**

Information about the parks is provided in the following places:

- Welcome and interpretation panels at Castle Terrace, Castle Vale Park, The New Road and Gillies Brae.
- Inclusion on the town map as a point of interest produced by the Chamber of Trade
- Posters put up in the rail station
- Park leaflets and posters distributed and displayed at Berwick Tourist information centre, the Granary Youth Hostel and other locations within the town.
- Friends of Castle Parks website <https://www.friendsofcastleparks.org/>
- Northumberland County Council website/Tourist Information site <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/berwickparks.aspx>
- Visit Berwick website <https://www.visitberwick.com/where-to-go/castle-vale-park/>
- Events leaflets produced and distributed by Northumberland County Council and Berwick upon Tweed Town Council
- Regular press releases for events and newsworthy stories
- Facebook and twitter posts through Northumberland County Council, Friends of the Parks, Berwick Deserves Better and Berwick upon Tweed Town Council.
- YouTube - film about park improvements made by Berwick Youth Project
- Linking with other projects which enhance and promote Berwick upon Tweed

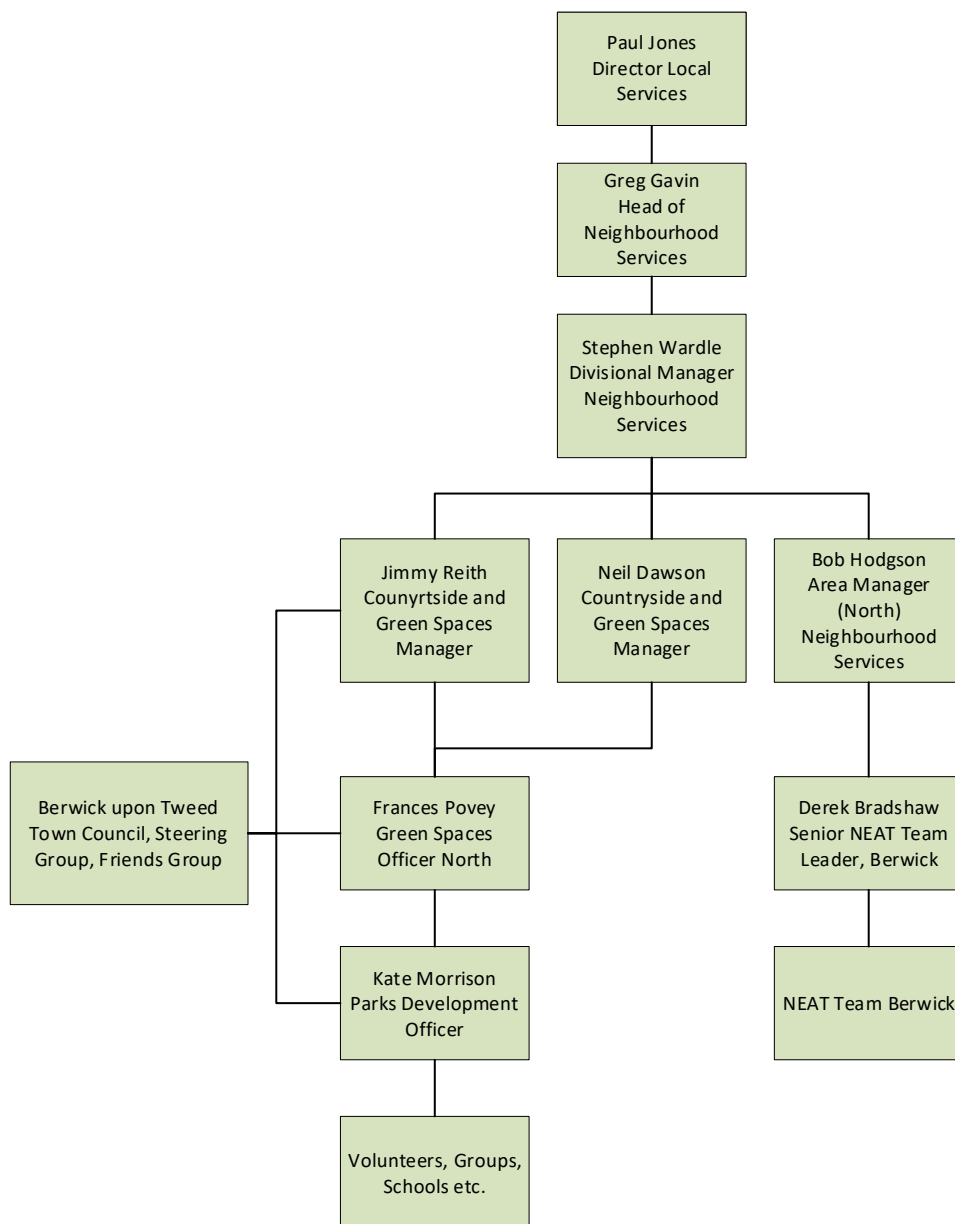
- Any other opportunities as they become available

## 10. Management

*Aim – The park will be valued by those involved in its management, and have a management plan that sets out the balance between all applicable priorities, partners and policies, and identify the contribution the park is making to wider strategic aims. The plan will be actively implemented and reviewed regularly. Sound financial management of the park is also demonstrated.*

### 10.1 Staffing Structure

The current staffing structure shows the management and maintenance roles in relation to the parks. The parks sit within the Local Services Directorate of Northumberland County Council, within the Neighbourhood Services section. The main management and development duties are carried out by the Green Spaces and Countryside Team, with maintenance support from the Neighbourhood Environmental Action Team (NEAT) maintenance teams in the same Neighbourhood Services division.



## 10.2 Local Strategic Context of Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park

Parks, Country Parks and Green Spaces sit within the Neighbourhood Services division of the Local Services Directorate of Northumberland County Council.

Berwick Parks Project and the Parks for People funding has become a catalyst for a much wider programme of park improvements throughout the county, largely as a result of the success of the project and the involvement of key senior officers, including the former Chief Executive of the Council and the current Local Services Director, in the planning and opening day stages of the project.

It is important for parks to be recognised strategically by Northumberland County Council to ensure they remain visible and valued in all sections of the council. Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park contribute to a number of policies including:

## **1. Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2018-2021 (Updated 2022)**

The corporate plan sets out the council's vision, strategic aims and policy priorities for economic growth, places and environment, stronger communities and families, health and wellbeing and developing the organisation. Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park contribute to:

- 'Places and Environment – our aim is to maintain and further improve the quality of our towns, villages and countryside.
- Stronger Communities and Families – our aim is to ensure that all residents genuinely feel safe, belong, and have a say in how the county is run, and to provide a range of quality community and cultural services and facilities which inspire creativity and participation.

The link is '<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/About-the-Council/Corporate-Plan-2020-FINAL.pdf>

## **2. Neighbourhood Services Service Statement 2022**

The importance of well managed and maintained parks, country parks and green spaces are acknowledged in the service delivery plans, and the attainment of the Green Flag Award every year is a Key Performance Indicator. The link is <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Policy/Service-statements.aspx>

## **3. Northumberland Core Strategy Document**

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Policies.aspx>

As public open space, Castle Vale Park and Coronation Park fit into the council's Local Plan Delivery document, specifically in the following areas:

- 'Policy 45, Recreational Open Space - include policies for the protection and enhancement of open space, sport and recreation facilities relevant to the Delivery area.
- Policy 46, Green Infrastructure - identify local green infrastructure assets to be protected and seek opportunities to create new green infrastructure.'

### **Other strategic areas that the parks contribute to include:**

- Northumberland Sustainable Communities Strategy to 2021
- Northumberland Biodiversity Action [https://www.nwt.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/Nland Biodiversity Action Plan.pdf](https://www.nwt.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/Nland_Biodiversity_Action_Plan.pdf)



- Northumberland's Master Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23 was published on Feb 10<sup>th</sup> 2021  
<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Climate-Change/Climate-Change.aspx>
- 

### **10.3 Financial management**

The parks have sound financial management, reinforced by the need to have keep accurate control over budgets for the Berwick Parks Project 'Parks for People' grant. General budget control is maintained by the Green Spaces Officer, with support from the Green Spaces and Countryside Manager, NEAT area manager and Northumberland County Council's finance teams.

For the Parks for People grant, the budgets were split into capital works and revenue items. Capital works cover all items associated with the physical improvements on the ground in the parks. Revenue items include the Parks Development Officer salary and associated staff costs, training, website design monitoring and evaluation. The parks now draw on the budget for the NEAT North teams, through the additional works the NEAT teams carry out in the parks and also the Green Spaces budget if any unforeseen maintenance issues arise.

Some funding is available for events, tools and plants from funds raised by Friends of the Parks whose main funding source is the annual Open Gardens Event.

Since the end of the Parks for People Project in June 2018 the Parks Officer post was secured on a permanent basis by funding from the County Council and part funding by the Town Council. This allows security for the parks development and means that NCC and the Town Council can draw on the expertise of the Parks Officer for other projects/area of the town. A monthly meeting is held with NEAT/Town Council to discuss projects. The Town Council initially funded the post until April 2021, and a successful bid for the following 2021 has followed. This will be looked at in April 2022 for future funding.

Full budget records are held by the Green Spaces Officer. A breakdown of costs for the parks is given in Appendix 2. At present, no specific budget from the Neighbourhood Services team is allotted to the park's management. Money is instead allocated from the general maintenance pot on demand by request from the Green Spaces Officer; this is under review for 2021/22.

## **11 Action & Activity Plans**

### **11.1 The Activity Plan**

The following programme of activities was drawn up focussing on increasing the range of activities offered and number of visitors to the parks. The table is updated annually as activities are achieved. This forms a template for producing any activity plans.

	Activity	Lead	To be done	Complete					
				20	21	22	23	24	
1	Maintain a system for volunteering by individuals	PO	From 2020	y	Y	Y			
2	Promote volunteering to organisations and groups	PO	From 2020	Y	Y	Y			
3	Conduct Wildlife surveys	PO	From 2020	Y	Y	Y			
4	Complete repairs to Willow edges	PO	From 2020	Y		Y			
5	Increase the capacity of Friends of Group	PO	Ongoing	y		Y			
6	Improve signage to and on arrival at parks where needed	GSO, PO	From 2021			Y			
7	Prepare new dog fouling posters	PO, GSO	From 2014		Y				
8	Deliver a programme of events	PO	From 2020		Y	Y			
9	Produce films on wildlife	PO, FOBP	From 2020		Y				
10	Address anti-social behaviour	PO, GSO, Police	From 2020	Y	Y	Y			
11	Monitor Visitor use of parks, bi-annually	PO, GSO	From 2021		Y				
12	Develop nature trail with U3A	PO	From 2021		Y				
13	Add to the wildlife sculptures	PO	From 2022			Y			
14	Develop biodiversity	GSO, PO	From 2020	y		Y			
15	Develop more opportunities for apprentices	GSO, GSCM, PO	From 2022						

PO – Parks Officer      GSO – Green Spaces Officer      GSCM – Green Spaces and Countryside Manager  
FOBP – Friends of Berwick Parks

## 11.2 The Action Plan

	Action	Lead	To be done	Complete					
				20	21	22	23	24	
1	<b>Welcoming Place Safe Access</b> – Improve the main gates to Coronation Park, storm damage, possible Capital Investment Programme money (NCC)	GSO, Contractors	From 2022			Y			
	Keep notices for events up to date on boards and leaflets in dispensers	PO	From 2020	Y	Y	Y			
2	<b>Healthy Safe &amp; Secure</b> - New Posters for dog fouling from Brownie Group to be drawn up and put out on site	PO	From 2023						
	Police liaison officer to attend Friends Meeting to discuss ongoing Anti – social behaviour	PO	From 2020		Y	Y			

<b>3</b>	<b>Well Maintained &amp; Clean</b> – to improve access to slopes where possible with terracing	GSO	From 2022			Y			
	Replace willow edging around Lily Pond	PO, FOBP	From 2022			Y			
	Repair pond liner under the Capital Investment Programme from NCC	GSO, Contractors	From 2022			Y			
	Varnish wooden bins, benches & sculptures	PO, FOBP	From 2020	Y	Y	Y			
	Monitor the ash on entrance to Castle Vale for die back, consider a tree sculpture. Monitor all ash trees	GSO, PO, Tree Officer	From 2021		Y	Y			
<b>4</b>	<b>Environmental Management</b> – the climate action plan is relatively new and information starting to cascade down. Liase with Climate Champions in area and co-ordinate with FOBP	GSO, PO, FOBP	From 2021		Y				
<b>5</b>	<b>Biodiversity, Landscape &amp; Heritage</b> – plant new native hedge in Coronation Park with FOBP for Queens Platinum Celebrations	PO, FOBP	From 2021		Y	Y			
	Install another wildlife wooden sculpture	Po, Contractor	From 2022			Y			
	Continue Wildlife surveys	PO, FOBP	From 2020	Y	Y	Y			
	Create new composting facility on site	PO,	From 2023						
	Put up new Kestrel/Owl boxes	PO, FOBP	From 2022			Y			
	Liase with Tweed Pollinators Group on improving existing wildflower meadow and planting schemes	PO, GSO	From 2023						
<b>6</b>	<b>Community Involvement</b> - create a events programme for all year ran by FOBP	PO, FOBP	From 2021		Y	Y			
	Hold Litter events with the Mini Police & other outside organisations	PO	From 2021		Y	Y			
	Increase capacity for winter talks programme	PO	From 2021		Y	Y			
	Maintain a presence in Heritage Open Days in Berwick	PO	From 2020	Y	Y				
	Create more training days for FOBP	GSO, PO	From 2022			Y			
<b>7</b>	<b>Marketing &amp; Communications</b> - create new YOU Tube video for the Friends Website for 2023	PO, FOBP	From 2021		Y				
	Create opportunities for press releases – ie upcoming Queens Platinum celebrations	GSO	From 2020	Y	Y	Y			

	Maintain high profile on NCC & FOBP website, social media	GSP, PO, FOBP	From 2020	Y	Y	Y			
<b>8</b>	<b>Management</b> -Develop more opportunities for apprentices	GSO, GSCM, PO	From 2022						
	Maintain funding opportunities, sponsorship	GSO, GSCM	From 2021		Y	Y			
		GSCM, GSO	From 2020	Y	Y				

## 12. Annual Updates

This chapter will be added to annually to include each year's achievements, events and monitoring and evaluation in the relevant years. Responses to each year's Green Flag Award Judges' recommendations is included in Appendix 8

### 12.1 2022 Achievements

#### 2022 Review –

##### January 2022

- Woodland Trust Fund for a native Hedge planted in Coronation park successful
- Clear up following Storm Arwen by Tree Team and staff
- Holy Trinity School fruit tree planting at Flagstaff to create a 'Queen Beth' Avenue
- Freeman's Trust £2500 contribution toward NCC's Capital Works Programme secured for the re-lining of the Lily Pond at Castle Vale
- RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch -

##### Feb – April 2022

- Winter Talks programme completed – a total of 4
- Gates at Coronation Park repaired – NCC Capital Park Programme
- Privet hedges underplanted
- Owl box erected in Castle Vale Park made by volunteer
- EIIR bulbs visible – planted in the Autumn by Brownies, Guides & Rainbows funded by NCC local councillor
- Willow weaving replaced at pergola by volunteers

##### April – May 2022

- Funding bid successful from McCreath Simpson & Prentice by the Friends Group approved for storage container at Castle Vale
- Instagram account set up by Friend of Castle Parks
- Easter Bunny Hunt – 63 children attended with families- ran by staff & volunteers
- Dawn Chorus Walk – 21 people attended
- "Ukraine" flowerbed planted – cornflowers and corn marigolds

##### May – July 2022

- Plant Sale undertaken by Friends Of Castle Parks to fund raise
- Open Gardens – 300 tickets sold raised £
- Flagstaff sculptures school competition – ‘Hedgehog’ and ‘Honey Bee’ chosen as winners
- New wooden fence erected at Shambles
- Ukraine bed and sunflowers in full bloom

## July – September 2022

- Lily Pond re-lined - bid to the Capital Parks Programme NCC
- Friends Group visit to David Warden’s Garden containing the national collection of Helenium’s
- Beastie Hunt very successful – estimated 250 visitors
- ‘Grasshopper’ bench installed – private donation
- Tool storage container installed at Castle Vale
- Wildflower meadow cut and raked at Coronation Park

## September – November 2022

- All parks awarded “Outstanding” in RHS In Your Neighbourhood Awards. Overall score 99/100
- Castle Vale & Coronation Parks awarded Green Flag status
- Hedges cut – NEAT team
- Start of Winter Talks programme
- Application made to RHS Sustainable futures fund for Composting Facility
- “Ukraine bed” replanted with butterfly and bee-friendly perennials
- Brachyglottis in Coronation park removed and replanted with bee-friendly broom

Volunteers averaging 25 hours a week – 1250 a year approx. This does not include time commitment by committee at meetings and events.

### Summary table of volunteer hours and events attendees

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Volunteer Hours</b>	1576	1562	1699	325	2000	2200
<b>Event Attendees</b>	320	506	436	10	39	650

## Appendix 1

# Work Programmes

Appendix 1: Berwick parks work programmes and project programme													
TASK	RESPONSIBILITY	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
<b>GENERAL</b>													
Top up leaflet dispensers	Park staff	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
<b>GROUNDS MAINTENANCE</b>													
Cut grassed areas	NEAT Team			1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1		
Edge paths and remove weeds	Park staff						1		1			1	
Cut back overhanging vegetation	Park Staff				1					1			
Empty bins around park	NEAT Team	12	6	12	12	31	30	31	31	30	12	6	6
Park checks and litter pick, glass removal etc	Park staff	30	28/9	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	30
Litter pick woodland banks	Park staff	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maintain obelisks, benches and sculptures	Park staff					1							
Clean signage and interpretation	Park staff				1				1				
Annual footpath inspection	Area Manager			1									
Clean Lily Pond - excess weed and litter	Park staff	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Woodland footpath maintenance	Park staff											1	1
Grill footpaths	Park staff	As required										As Required	
Repair tarmac paths	Park staff						As required						
Repairs to steps fences and revetment	Park staff						As required						
<b>HORTICULTURAL FEATURES AND TREES</b>													
Prune shrubs	Park staff/volunteers			1								1	
Edge beds and borders	Park staff/volunteers				1	2	5	4	5	5	4	2	
Apply mulch to herbaceous and shrub beds	Park staff/volunteers		1										
Prepare flower beds with compost	Park staff/volunteers											1	
Plant Spring bulbs	Park staff/volunteers											1	
Weed flower beds	Park staff/volunteers						2	2	4	4	4		
Hedge pruning works	Park staff/volunteers												1
Prune roses	Park staff/volunteers				1								
Annual tree inspection	Tree Team											1	
Tree works	Tree Team	Occ.										Occ	Occ
Cut and Rake Wildflower Meadow	Park staff/volunteers				1				1				
Prune fruit trees												1	

## Appendix 2

## Budget





<b>Activity:</b> <i>Use of hand tools</i>	<b>Site:</b> <i>Various countryside sites throughout the county</i>	
<b>People at Risk:</b> <i>Field Teams, staff, trainees and volunteers</i>	<b>Additional Information:</b>	
<b>Contact Person:</b> <i>Mike Jeffrey</i> <b>Job Title:</b> <i>Countryside and Green Spaces Manager</i> <b>Date:</b> <i>July 2019</i>		<b>Review Date:</b> <i>July 2024</i>

## Risk Evaluation

Hazard	Risk	Initial Rating (L, M, H,)	Existing Control Measures	Final Rating (L, M, H,)	Additional Action Required (action by whom and completion date)
Use and handling of hand tools	Injury from blows, cuts, worn and damaged tools	L	Tools stored safely and correctly.  Site staff are experienced and are cascade trained in tool use, care and maintenance.  Volunteers are given demonstration of correct usage and supervised as required.  First aid training and first aid kits provided	L	
Loose hammer heads	Eye & limb injuries	M	Tools are inspected before use by competent user, faulty tools are repaired or replaced.	L	
Chisels with mushroom	General cuts & bruises	M	As above	L	
Screwdrivers with split handles or damaged/worn blades Files with loose or missing handles	Hand/arm injuries from damaged tools	M	As above	L	
Blunt cutting tools	Hand/arm injuries from damaged tools. Cuts Muscular skeletal injuries	M	Tools are inspected before use by competent user.  Only use tools that are sufficiently sharp.	L	

			Cascade training in storage, use, sharpening of general care of hand tools.		
Sparks	Fire if flammable materials are present.	M	Remove flammable materials.	L	
Tools used for wrong purposes	General cuts & bruises	M	Staff training.	L	

## Appendix 5

### Volunteer Good Practice Guide



# Northumberland County Council

## Northumberland County Council

### Parks, Countryside Sites and Local Nature Reserves

## Volunteer Good Practice Guide

October 2018



Northumberland  
County Council

[www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)

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## 1. Introduction

Northumberland County Council greatly values and encourages the contribution that volunteers make to the management of parks and countryside sites across the county. This document outlines the Council's approach to working with volunteers and is a summary of the procedures in place for volunteers and voluntary groups working on Northumberland County Council's parks, countryside sites and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). It is designed to guide both staff and volunteers and to ensure the safe operation of a site for volunteers and visitors.

## 2. Volunteer Agreement

All volunteers will be supplied with a copy of this document.

A Volunteer Agreement Form (Appendix A) must be completed by all volunteers, which confirms that the volunteer agrees to adhere to the guidance contained in this document.

Completed and signed forms for all registered volunteers should be returned to the relevant Council officer and will be kept on file and in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

## 3. Definition

A volunteer is a person who carries out voluntary work and does so by choice and is unpaid. The Council must be satisfied that all volunteers are appropriately trained, organized and managed on site.

Volunteers may be under the direct supervision of a council officer, or alternatively “Friends of” and other independently constituted community groups may have their own “Volunteer Coordinator/supervisor” for their volunteer activities. They will be the point of contact for the Council’s site officer/manager for work related issues.

#### **4. Role Descriptions**

Tasks to be undertaken by volunteers will be clearly defined and the volunteer given a role description for each of the sites and individual tasks that may be undertaken.

Independently constituted groups must have an agreed work program in place before commencement of any tasks on site. Any tasks or projects undertaken that are not on this agreed program must be identified and agreed with the Council’s site manager/officer before commencement.

#### **5. Code of Conduct**

The conduct of persons on the site falls under the Council’s jurisdiction and where relevant, Standard Site Operating Procedures (SOP’s), codes of conduct, and safe working practice must be followed at all times.

The public are entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all volunteers and staff of any organisations operating from any park, countryside site or LNR.

- Volunteers should be polite and courteous at all times.
- The use of strong or discriminatory language is not acceptable
- Volunteers should aim to assist the members of the public wherever possible, or if they cannot, to take details and to aim to follow up after consultation with staff or other volunteers.
- Volunteers will be subject to NCC respect policies in relation to other volunteers and staff.
- Violent behaviour, or the threat of violent behaviour will result in immediate exclusion from the volunteer activity.

Members of independently constituted groups will be expected to adhere to their groups own code of conduct and policies, with disputes between members settled by their group.

#### **6. Capability and Disciplinary Procedures**

Northumberland County Council expects the highest standards of performance and conduct from all employees and volunteers delivering its services.

Standards of performance and conduct should be established from the onset with each volunteer. Normal day to day supervision should be enough to determine whether standards are being



maintained. Any fall in standards needs to be communicated to the volunteer and a solution agreed between the supervising officer and the volunteer, clearly communicated and recorded. Should performance issues continue, then the Council's site officer/manager will investigate and advise the volunteer of any action required. If evidence of misconduct or capability is evident, a warning and/or coaching may be the appropriate outcome. In the worst cases, the services of the volunteer may be terminated.

If the volunteer is part of an independently constituted group working on a site, the group will be advised of the situation and asked to investigate. The supervising volunteer of any group working party is expected to monitor the standards of work and conduct of the members of their working group. Their group may have their own procedures to deal with any issues that may arise; the Council accepts this and will support the group's findings and conclusions, unless their resolution falls below what would be expected from the Council's procedures.

## **7. Volunteers Grievance Procedure**

If a volunteer feels aggrieved with a situation at work, they should bring it to the attention of their supervising officer. The majority of situations can be resolved through an informal discussion. If the issue is with the Council's supervising officer, then the issue should be raised with their line manager. The person hearing the grievance should provide a response to the volunteer within one week of the discussion.

Grievances between members of independently constituted groups should be dealt with by their respective group committees. Grievances regarding Council staff should be brought by Group members or committee to the Countryside and Green Spaces Manager.

## **8. Health and Safety**

Parks and countryside sites can be difficult to manage, and all volunteers should be aware of the potential hazards presented by the site's physical attributes and the potential risks involved in the tasks they will be performing. The site manager/supervisor is responsible for ensuring that volunteers are appropriately briefed in respect of the potential hazards and risks involved in undertaking an activity and the control measures in place to manage these.

In the case of an independently constituted group, the group's activity coordinator should provide this briefing (unless otherwise agreed with the site manager/supervisor.)

### Controlling risks

Generic risk assessments for most day to day tasks will be provided by the Council, and specific risk assessments should always be carried out for tasks falling outside of normal procedures.

Independently constituted groups should have their own generic risk assessments in place.

### Safe Working Procedures

A safe working procedure will be put in place for any activity that presents a risk of harm. The SWP must be followed, and if training is required to ensure compliance with the SWP it will be provided by the Council.

## Training and safe use of equipment

Groups or individuals should ensure that they have received appropriate training to allow them to undertake the tasks they are delivering and in the use of any hand tools they are using. If volunteers consider any activity may put their health and safety at risk, they should not undertake the activity, but should first consult with and seek advice from the Council's site manager.

Should a group or individual wish to operate any mechanical hand tools or plant on site it is essential that appropriate training has taken place and recognised accreditation is in place for all those operating the machinery. No mechanical tools should be used by any volunteer on a council site until such training and accreditation has been completed, evidence provided to the site manager, and suitable risk assessments are in place.

Any necessary protective clothing will be provided for the volunteer.

## Lone working

There may be instances where staff or volunteers are on site alone. Where possible, especially in the case of volunteers, this should be avoided through careful planning of activities. Most countryside sites are exposed sites, and persons working at them should be mindful of their own personal safety. If, through unavoidable circumstances, lone working occurs, then the following steps should be taken:

- The volunteer should nominate an appointed person before working on site alone. This may be the site officer/manager, another volunteer, or a family member.
- The volunteer should notify the appointed person that they will be on site alone in advance and should arrange to "check in" once safely off site.
- If the volunteer has not "checked in" by within 30 minutes of the specified time, then the nominated person should first aim to contact the volunteer, and then contact the police.

## Reporting accidents and incidents

An accident/incident report log will be maintained by the Council's site manager and any instances of injury to staff or volunteers should be logged immediately. Also any incident involving members of the public should be logged, including any action taken, notes on any incident involving the police or emergency services should be written up as soon as possible to avoid inaccuracies on the log sheets and signed and dated by the volunteer and site manager. If more than one volunteer or member of staff were involved, every person should complete a log sheet.

Independently constituted groups should also maintain an incident log for their own volunteers, as well as reporting incidents to the site manager.

## Insurance

Volunteers working on behalf of, and under the direct supervision of a Council officer on sites are covered by the Council's public liability insurance.

Independently constituted “Friends of” groups working on sites would be similarly covered by the Council’s public liability insurance when working under the direct supervision of a council officer but would be required to take out their own public liability insurance cover when working on a site independently, and not under the direct supervision of a council officer. Such groups may also wish to consider employers liability insurance.

### Ten Steps to Grounds Maintenance Safety

The ‘Ten Steps’ Guide (see Appendix B) is a summary of the Council’s Neighbourhood Services ‘Health and Safety at Work Codes of Practice’.

## **9. Safeguarding and Child Protection**

Safeguarding is a term used to describe measures to protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of individuals, which allow people – especially children, young people and vulnerable adults – to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.

Safeguarding is everybody’s business. We all need to know what to do if we are worried that someone may be at risk of harm.

If you believe an individual is at immediate risk of harm, you must contact the police then inform the site manager/supervisor. If your concern is non-urgent, you must inform the site manager/supervisor at the earliest possible opportunity and your concern will be dealt with in line with the Council’s safeguarding policy

All staff, volunteers and people undertaking either paid or unpaid work at a park, countryside site or LNR should adhere to following guidelines. Failure to do so may result in action being taken under the disciplinary procedures.

You should:

- Treat all children, young people and vulnerable adults with respect
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow
- Approach any child who is in apparent distress and ask if you can help
- Be aware of the possibility of dangers from others, and question any situations that you find suspicious
- Avoid any situations which might appear compromising
- Be aware that any physical contact with a child can be misinterpreted
- Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues with children
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations or suspicions of abuse
- Report any suspicious adult, especially if you are aware of them photographing children without their knowledge.

You should never

- Allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate behaviour or make any suggestive or derogatory remarks to or in front of children

- Engage in any “rough and tumble” or horseplay
- Use foul or abusive language
- Physically restrain a child, except in exceptional circumstances, e.g. to prevent injury to themselves or others or to prevent theft.
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind
- Do things of a personal nature for a child that they can do for themselves or that a parent/leader can do for them, including taking a child to the toilet
- Avoid working alone with a child wherever possible, make sure you can be clearly seen and observed by others.
- Travel in a vehicle with an unaccompanied child
- Invite a child to contact you off site or when you are not working for the site.

Any volunteers working with children as part of an Education or Events Programme may be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service check

## **10. Use of Photographs**

Photographs and film footage of activities at Parks, Countryside sites and LNRs may be taken for recording and promotional purposes, and may be reproduced in print, in displays, or digitally.

Permission to store and use such images must be sought from any individual who is identifiable in a still or moving image. Permission does not need to be sought when individuals are not identifiable, for example images of the back of an individual’s head. If images include children or young people, permission must be sought from the parent/guardian or person responsible for the child. Permission should be recorded on a Consent Form, preferably prior to any event or activity where photography or filming is likely to take place. Completed Consent Forms will be stored securely by the site manager. No volunteer should take photographs or make moving images without the prior permission of those in the pictures/film, and the prior consent of the site manager. Noncompliance with this could result in serious action being taken, and police involvement.

## **11. Site Security and Security of Buildings**

As site volunteers you may be entrusted with keys for buildings and gate/barriers. As a key holder you will be responsible for the buildings and site security when you are lone working or acting as key holder on site.

Volunteers must ensure that all procedures for site and building security and safety are correctly followed.

## **12. If you do not want to continue Volunteering**

If you no longer want to volunteer it is important you let your site manager know. We wouldn’t want you to go without showing our appreciation for your contribution and would be interested in your views and any opinions you can offer on your experience.

The completion of Feedback and Equal Opportunities Forms is optional, but your answers will help in the future management of volunteers. All data will be used in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

**Appendix A.**

**Volunteer Agreement**

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Postcode.....

Date of Birth.....

Contact telephone numbers

Home: ..... Mobile:.....

Email address.....

Preferred method of contact      Email / Postal

Organisation/Friends of Group (if applicable): .....

Interest in the site and its activities:

Do you have any health problems that may affect you volunteering on site?

Training required (to be completed in conjunction with the Site Manager):

DBS Check in place    Yes/No    Date.....

I have read the Council's Volunteer Policy, and agree to adhere to the procedures outlined in the Northumberland County Council 'Parks, Countryside Sites and Local Nature Reserves Volunteer Good Practice Guide'.

Signed..... Date.....

Print.....

Date Received.....signed.....

Site Manager/Officer

## Appendix B

### TEN STEPS TO GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SAFETY

It is the responsibility of every NCC employee and volunteer to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others.

- Always ensure you are working safely and that you feel safe.
- Always ensure that co-workers and members of the public who may be affected by your work are protected.
- Always ensure that you and your colleagues are aware of site hazards and their controls. Report any unsafe operations or methods to the site Manager. (You have a duty in law to do so).
- Always follow the risk control procedure. Read all appropriate risk assessments and comply with all recommended precautions.
- Always read and adhere to the NCC Safe Working Procedures relevant to your work
- Always wear the appropriate or required Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment.
- Always be aware of the location of the First-Aid box and know your First-Aider.
- Always use the correct tools and equipment and have received appropriate training for the job.
- Always report any accident or near miss to your site Manager who will complete the accident form ACC1. Remember: you have a duty in law to do so.
- Be safe not sorry. When in doubt ask.

The 'Ten Steps Guide' is a summary of Northumberland County Council Neighbourhood Services 'Health And Safety at Work Codes of Practice'. The guide does not replace or supersede any certificated training which may be required as a prerequisite of carrying out an operation.

## **Appendix 6 Wildlife Management Notes 2022**

### **Wildflower Meadow Species Composition - Coronation Park**

Grassland 5 (*Cynosurus cristatus* - *Centaurea* grassland) which would be “typical” northern lowland meadow. Last sown in 2015 with MG5 Meadow Mix based on British Plant Communities Mesotrophic There were 21 wildflower and grasses in the mix.

Wildflowers – Yarrow, Agrimony, Common Knapweed, Common Mouse-ear, Lady’s Bedstraw, Meadow Vetchling, Ox-eye Daisy, Birds-foot Trefoil, Burnet Saxifrage, Ribwort Plantain, Cowslip, Self-heal, Meadow buttercup, Yellow rattle, Common Sorrel, Autumn Hawkbit, Lesser stitchwort, Devil’s-bit Scabious, Red clover, Germander Speedwell, Tufted Vetch, wild carrot, corn cockle

Grasses – Common Bent, Meadow Foxtail, Sweet Vernal Grass, Crested Dog’s Tail, Sheep’s Fescue, Red Fescue, Yellow Oat Grass

Although no formal surveys have been carried out to date it is possible to make some general observations:

Most species have established with the notable exceptions of Agrimony, Devils-bit Scabious and Yellow Oat Grass.

Some unwelcome species have come into the sward most notably Creeping thistle, Dock, Spear thistle, Nettles, Cocksfoot and Yorkshire Fog.

### **Management**

The meadow is strimmed once or twice a year, usually around Spring and late Summer Bank Holidays. All cuttings are raked off and removed by volunteers. Creeping thistle and dock have become more of a problem over recent years. Creeping thistle, dock, spear thistle, nettles have been removed by hand-pulling and strimming with some limited success.

Moles are constant visitors to the meadow. Molehills are flattened and sown with cornfield annual mix which gives a random distribution through the meadow of poppies, corn marigolds and cornflowers to add some colour.

The meadow has been successful in providing habitat for some meadow specialist species recorded in weekly BTO survey and not commonly seen in the area i.e. Common Blue, Small Skipper, Small Copper, Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Common Green Grasshopper, Red-tailed Bumblebee, Leaf Cutter Bee, Red Mason bee and Wool Carder Bees.

### **Bulb mix**

50 Alliums, mixture of Butterfly and bee friendly perennials as succession for the ‘Ukraine ‘Bed

### **BTO Garden Watch Survey**

This survey is carried out weekly throughout the year in Castle vale and Coronation Parks by the Parks Officer and volunteers. Results are submitted to BTO as part of a national survey. These results are from 2019.



### **Castle Vale Park**

Birds – 37 species in 2019 and 40 in 2022. Top 5 – Wood Pigeon, Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Blue Tit

Butterflies – 15 species in 2019 and 16 in 2022. Top 5 – Red Admiral, Speckled Wood, Green-veined White, Peacock, Large/Small White

Bumblebees – 7 species – Common Carder, Buff/white-tailed, early, Red-tailed, Tree

Dragonflies – 6 species – Common Darter, Common Hawker, Southern Hawker, one unidentified, Azure damselfly and Common Blue Damselfly

Mammals – 10 species – Dog, mole, grey squirrel, brown rat, cat, hedgehog, bank vole, weasel, common shrew and American mink

Amphibians – 2 species – Common frog, Common Toad

Highlights: Great-spotted woodpecker, Grey wagtail, Treecreeper, Bee flies, Holly Blue, Comma

### **Coronation Park**

Birds – 31 species. Top 5 – Crow, Blackbird, Robin, House Sparrow, Wood Pigeon

Butterflies – 16 species – Top 5 – Large/Small White, Red Admiral, Green-veined White, Meadow Brown, Painted Lady

Bumblebees – 7 species – Common Carder, Buff/White-tailed, Red-tailed, early, Tree one unidentified

Dragonflies – 3 species Brown Hawker, Southern & Common Hawker

Mammals – 6 species – dog, rabbit, badger, grey squirrel, mole and cat

Amphibians – 1 species - Common toad

Highlights: Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Leaf-cutter Bees, Meadow Butterflies – Common Blue, Small Skipper, Small Copper, Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Common Green Grasshopper

## **Appendix 7 Dog Fouling Control Posters**

Overall winner



DON'T



Foul!



## Appendix 8 Response to Judges Feedback 2019. 2021 & 2022



### Green Flag Award 2019

**Name of Site: Castle Vale and Coronation Parks**

**Managing Organisation: Northumberland County Council**

#### Desk Assessment Feedback (Management Plan and supporting documentation)

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	Response
<b>Presentation</b>	<p>Well presented and described with useful introductory section on both the history and context of the parks within the town.</p> <p>The format of the Plan is based round Green Flag Award criteria and has been updated, taking on board many of the judges recommendations from the last site visit in 2017.</p> <p>There is an Assessment (presumably required by HLF) that covers the very notable achievements of the past five years.</p>	<p>Whilst the current plan focuses very much on the Lottery funded improvements of the past, the 2020-25 plan needs to focus on aims and objectives for the future.</p> <p>Look at improving the site plans which are still difficult to understand, particularly when being looked at online. Photos are useful to illustrate the site - in the new Plan concentrate on the existing situation.</p> <p>Ensure the format is simple and</p>	<p>Rectified in the Plan</p> <p>The site plans were modified last year according to a judges feedback. We will not be changing the format again</p> <p>Addressed in the Management Plan</p>

		<p>straightforward so that it is easy to update</p> <p>Appendices should back up the information provided in the main document – ensure they are headed and dated and kept up to date.</p> <p>Digital links within the text can be a useful way of providing information on council policy and strategy documents.</p>	<p>These have been included in plan</p>
<b>Health, Safety &amp; Security</b>	<p>Inspection and reporting procedures, accident and incident reporting all reduce the risk of personal harm as does the training, supervision and equipment provided to volunteers. In addition, lone working is minimised.</p> <p>There is an example of Risk Assessment in the Appendices and a Volunteers Code.</p> <p>A fixed penalty notice for dog owners will come into place in 2019 with local Brownies and Guides involved in producing posters about responsible dog ownership.</p> <p>There is good provision for visitors to enjoy healthy activities in a safe and secure environment.</p>	<p>Identify the role of police and/or community support officers.</p> <p>Describe any further initiatives to promote responsible dog ownership and how this is communicated on site. Include posters in the Appendices.</p>	<p>The role is identified as much as possible</p> <p>A poster is included in the Appendix</p>
<b>Maintenance of equipment, buildings &amp; landscape</b>	<p>The Plan outlines how different aspects of site maintenance are managed - NEAT team cuts grass, annual tree inspection and tree works are carried out by NCC tree team under direction of tree officer and maintenance of building and structures by a number of NCC services. Volunteers and Parks Officer carry out other tasks including some inspections.</p> <p>Roles and responsibilities are shown in a new table in the Appendices (App 1).</p> <p>Equipment is maintained by NCC.</p>	<p>The work programme should cover task frequencies per year and look forward, rather than acting as record for previous years, which is what Appendix 1 appears to be. Proposed projects should be included in an Action Plan.</p> <p>Include also the specification/ quality standards for maintenance operations.</p>	<p>Addressed in the plan</p>

<b>Litter, cleanliness, vandalism</b>	<p>Bins emptied by NEAT team, litter by Parks Officer and Volunteers.</p> <p>Little vandalism but there is sometimes a problem with drinkers – a PSPO for the whole town covers this</p>	Ensure any anti-social behaviour is monitored and managed.	
<b>Environmental Management</b>	<p>This area is well addressed, with green waste composting, chippings from tree works left on site for wildlife habitats, and minimal use of peat. Sustainable practices in place such as wildlife friendly plants grown by volunteers, and manual weeding by volunteers.</p> <p>Some battery-operated equipment used</p> <p>All timber used is FSC certified</p>	<p>Set out base data for peat and chemicals use so that reduction can be monitored, same for water and energy use. Consider other measures planned in terms of purchasing choices that reduce environmental impact. Include climate change adaptation strategies that mitigate the impact of heavy rain or conversely drought and indicate how the site stores carbon.</p>	<p>As there is very little or none use of plants using the medium we are already operating at a low to nil level therefore base data would not prove useful. All measures are already used ie use of battery equipment and others listed in plan that reduce environmental impact. A link to NCC's Climate Change Strategy included</p>
<b>Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage</b>	<p>All aspects have been comprehensively addressed in the restoration of the Park and the current management. The Parks' biodiversity has been greatly increased, and the historical landscape and heritage sympathetically restored.</p> <p>Small scale nature conservation projects carried out – log piles, bat boxes, tawny owl and kestrel boxes.</p> <p>A new meadow has been created in Coronation Park.</p>	<p>Set out a biodiversity strategy for the site with the actions required to fulfil it. Ensure a 'snapshot' of the flora and fauna survey information that is included in the Appendices. Include species composition of spring bulb and summer meadow and describe the maintenance required.</p>	<p>NCC has its own biodiversity strategy overall which we use.</p> <p>Included in the Appendix</p>
<b>Community Involvement</b>	<p>An important aspect of the parks' success has been the support of the local community, user groups, stakeholders and partners.</p> <p>Friends of Castle Parks Group has been formed from the original team of volunteers. An Activity Plan spreadsheet shows the past 5 years programme of activities</p>	<p>Set out in the 2020-2025 plan how this support will be sustained. Determine whether an Activity Plan is required for the next five years - ensure aspirations include those of the community and user groups. Keep the Plan up to date by recording the</p>	<p>Addressed in Plan</p> <p>Unfortunately, due to Covid in 2020 when plan written at this stage we consider this cannot be undertaken but will be reviewed when restrictions allow</p>





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## Field Assessment Feedback

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	Responses
<b>A Welcoming Place</b>	<p>The steep slopes of the parks limits views in but new directional signs near the railway station show their location and main entrances have large sign boards. Other entrances have welcome signs, name plaques or finger posts. The consistency of bespoke gates, handrails and site furniture enhance the welcome and draw visitors in. The wonderful views out over the river Tweed also encourage visitors to explore further.</p> <p>Very good, informative notice boards give an indication of where steps and steep slopes are located. A leaflet dispenser on Castle Terrace provides free, good quality leaflets on the Castle Parks Trail.</p>	Where notice boards are to be viewed on both sides, ensure that hard standing is provided on both sides too.	This has been addressed
<b>Healthy, Safe and Secure</b>	<p>The site provides a feeling of personal safety due to its open aspect, well-cared for appearance and by the presence of volunteers, staff and the many visitors.</p> <p>Ramped paths to viewpoints and a shelter are provided for visitors with reduced mobility. Path surfaces are good and railings are provided on steeper slopes.</p> <p>Support for the park from the police was demonstrated by 2 police constables joining the judges' site visit. They reported that anti-social behaviour in the town and parks,</p>	If dogs are running over shrub beds it might be prudent to move some of those beds or at least provide a more attractive way of deterring them.	At this stage the problem is not of a concern that we would move whole beds but steps have been taken to reduce the problem by planting

	<p>including alcohol consumption, is lessening, which is good news.</p> <p>No dog fouling seen on site visit but there does seem to be an issue regarding dogs running over specific shrub beds however.</p> <p>Volunteers are provided with uniforms and safe equipment. Battery operated tools are being introduced, which are lighter and therefore easier to use.</p>		
<b>Well Maintained and Clean</b>	<p>As the parks have only recently been improved by Lottery funding, buildings and infrastructure are in very good condition.</p> <p>An unusual, complex partnership between council NEAT team and Volunteers under supervision of Parks Officer provides a flexible, efficient and appropriate means of maintenance.</p>	<p>Whilst little maintenance is currently required for buildings and infrastructure this will change as time goes by. This could change the balance between volunteer and council staff and needs to be anticipated. Also monitor weeding and other works on steep slopes where access is difficult. At the time of the visit beds here were in a rather weedy state. As new planting matures weed infestation should lessen but if this doesn't happen consider under planting or mulching.</p> <p>Seats and bins require sanding and re-varnishing.</p>	<p>Weeding is monitored by the Parks Officer and addressed where needed either with volunteers or staff when it is safe to do so. This will be looked at as the time passes and whether we need to mulch</p> <p>All park furniture has been sanded &amp; re-varnished</p>
<b>Environmental Management</b>	<p>Drought resistant plants have been planted on steep slopes and moisture loving species in wet flushes.</p> <p>Tree cover of shrubs and young trees on the valley sides store</p>	<p>Peat is likely to be included in the compost in which donated plants are growing and so a decision needs to be made as to what is the acceptable level for the</p>	<p>All volunteers are aware of the use of peat and do not use</p>

	carbon and provide some slope stabilisation, along with a thick growth of ivy.	parks. Encourage volunteers to explore alternative composts/materials in which to grow their plants.	where possible, again do we refuse plants on the basis that volunteers have donated them due to the growing medium
<b>Biodiversity Landscape and Heritage</b>	<p>Weekly surveys of flora and fauna are carried out which will provide useful base data when determining whether biodiversity is increasing in the parks over the years.</p> <p>The lily pond appears to be self-sustaining and has a small population of fish (which unfortunately have eaten all the tadpoles).</p> <p>Attractive new carved wooden sculptures in Castle Vale park reflect the wildlife found in the local area. As parks are too small to provide formal educational projects with local schools this is a good alternative way of providing information.</p> <p>Excellent views are provided, and are being maintained, of the River Tweed, the Royal Border Bridge and Berwick Castle.</p> <p>Small interpretation panels are located in Castle Vale Park and along Castle Terrace.</p>	None	
<b>Community Involvement</b>	<p>The Parks Officer has done a terrific job in pulling together local people, private, public and voluntary sector bodies and neighbouring landowners to create a community that values the parks and is either directly or indirectly involved in its management.</p> <p>The members of the Friends Group work hard to keep the parks clean and attractive and are now getting involved in project initiation and funding. Recent projects include the creation of wildlife sculpture and the Open Parks and Gardens scheme, held in June.</p>	If new project ideas are coming in thick and fast look at creating a Project Proposal form that is scrutinised and approved at all levels.	Due to Covid in 2020 this has meant all projects ideas are not coming forward but this can be reviewed moving forward
<b>Marketing and Communication</b>	Excellent marketing – a really good understanding of the need to be	Keep providing good news stories for local press, radio and television.	

	<p>recognised County-wide to ensure future support.</p> <p>A visitor survey was carried out in 2018 and will inform decision making. Feedback is asked for after individual events.</p>	<p>Keep on with asking for feedback but not so much that visitors get tired of it.</p>	
<b>Management</b>	<p>Good communications and the pro-active role of the Parks Officer ensure that shared management and maintenance of the site works very well. The PO post has been secured on a permanent basis with funding from the Town Council and NCC, which is very good news indeed. It provides a stable future for the parks and benefits the town and local community as a whole, through shared networking and knowledge.</p>	<p>Could this type of shared management be rolled out to other NCC parks?</p> <p>Monitor the arrangement to ensure it continues to work well as planting schemes mature and features/infrastructure start to require greater maintenance.</p>	<p>Reports are undertaken to assess the role of the funding but the funding reflects across the whole town and not just the park</p>
<p><b>Additional Comments</b></p> <p>Thanks to Frances and Kate for organising such an enjoyable site visit and allowing the judges to meet so many people involved in the welfare of Castle Vale and Coronation Parks. It was really inspiring to witness such enthusiasm and support for a green space and see the results of all the hard work – two stunning parks that are a very worthy Green Flag winner. Well done, everyone.</p> <p>Response to Mystery Shop 2020 was not undertaken due to Covid restrictions</p> <p><b>Response to Judges Feedback 2021</b></p> <div data-bbox="479 1346 878 1564" data-label="Image"> </div> <p><b>Green Flag Award 2021</b></p> <p><b>Name of Site: Castle Vale Park &amp; Coronation Park</b>  <b>Managing Organisation: Northumberland C Council</b></p>			

## Desk Assessment Feedback (Management Plan and supporting documentation)

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations	Response/Actions
<b>Presentation</b>	<p>A well written and very well set out document based on Green Flag criteria.</p> <p>Although there are two parks, the text clearly identifies when management applies to both or each of the parks.</p> <p>The plan is completely up to date, including restrictions caused by the pandemic.. What few events and activities have taken place are listed. Very good work.</p>	<p>The location plan is pretty blurred – can it be sharpened up so that it does actually show the 2 parks' location other than being adjacent to the railway station?</p> <p>Page numbers on the Contents page are wrong after page 9.</p> <p>Including a list of past achievements is a good idea but you might want to restrict it to just the previous year to avoid a build-up of pages.</p> <p>Photos are a good way of providing additional information – ensure they are kept up to date, of good quality and captioned as appropriate.</p>	Addressed in MP
<b>Health, Safety &amp; Security</b>	<p>All aspects covered including the contribution of partners, the day-to-day presence of volunteers, inspection and monitoring procedures and security aspects.</p>	None	

	Also sets out health and safety measures pertaining to volunteer working.				
<b>Maintenance of equipment, buildings &amp; landscape</b>	<p>Roles and responsibilities of council staff are described – volunteer work currently restricted.</p> <p>Work programme sets out task frequencies for grounds maintenance.</p>	If volunteer working has been curtailed during Covid 19 restrictions how has this impacted on park maintenance?	As expected, less hours means less weeding/general maintenance. Areas were prioritised when staff/volunteers available		
<b>Litter, cleanliness, vandalism</b>	Demonstrates a good understanding of the link between standards of cleanliness and safety perceptions. Everything covered.	Keep section on anti-social behaviour up to date – is it increasing, decreasing or about the same?	A spreadsheet has been included in the plan		
<b>Environmental Management</b>	<p>A very good section that covers recycling, carbon sequestration, use of energy and water, noise and air pollution. Peat and pesticides kept to a minimum.</p> <p>NCC's Climate Action Plan published in February 2021 will inform future actions for the park.</p>	Update actions as required	Still waiting for actions to come from the Climate Action Plan		
<b>Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage</b>	All aspects comprehensively addressed including historical interpretation.	Continue to plan innovative projects with local schools and young people and set these out as actions.	Addressed in plan		

	<p>Biodiversity enhancement of both parks is described in detail with further information in the Appendices. Great to read that involvement of local groups and schools is central to this work.</p>	<p>Please provide captions beneath the 2 small black and white photos</p>			
<b>Community Involvement</b>	<p>Community involvement is very obviously at the heart of the ongoing success of the park although much has been restricted in 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>Friends Group works both in practical maintenance and wider management roles, including fundraising.</p> <p>There is now a NCC Volunteer Co-Ordinator who has produced job descriptions for volunteers and risk assessments.</p>	<p>Hopefully an Activities Plan can be formulated for coming years.</p>	<p>Included in plan</p>		
<b>Marketing &amp; Communication</b>	<p>The plan provides a marketing strategy that is clear in its aims and objectives and the means to achieve them. Good recognition of the need for the park to continue to be valued by the council and the community. Impressive to see not only an informative website and lively, up-to-date</p>	<p>Really excellent work – keep going with the positive PR, promotion and, once restrictions allow, gathering feedback</p>			



	Facebook page but also a great You Tube channel.				
<b>Overall management</b>	All aspects of management very well described in full. Good to see a staffing structure, inclusion of financial management and a summary of relevant NCC policies and plans. Appendices provide further additional information including response to GFA Judges' Feedback.	<p>The vision for the parks should lead to aims and objectives that realise/maintain that vision. These could be set out for each criteria section which would then generate a list a list of targets set out in an Action Plan.</p> <p>Decide how relevant the information on the Parks for People project continues to be in terms of current management.</p>	Now removed		
<b>Additional comments</b> An excellent, well thought-through management plan and the only one I have read this year where all aspects are completely up to date. Heartening to see that positive information about the parks is being communicated through on-line means, enabling the local community to stay interested and involved. Well done!					



# Green Flag Award Mystery Shop

## Assessment

<b>Name of Site</b>	<b>Castle Vale Park &amp; Coronation Park</b>	<b>Managing organisation</b>	<b>Northumberland County Council</b>	
<b>Weather Conditions</b>	Fine and sunny with chilly breeze			
<b>Date of assessment</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2021	<b>Time (from – to)</b>	11am – 1.30pm	
<b>Result:</b> (✓)	<b>Is the site of Green Flag Award Standard?</b> <b>Green</b> 			
<b>Grading</b>		<b>Comments and Recommendations</b>		
Please mark each section as Green, Amber or Red  If there is no evidence or the section is not applicable mark as NG (not graded) and provide an explanation		Comments should be provided to support each grading  *Please include photographs to support your grading where applicable  **Please refer to Raising the Standard manual if necessary		
<b>A Welcoming Place</b>				
1. Is the site welcoming?	NG	<b>G</b>	<b>A</b>	Sites welcome visitors with good, informative signs at the top end and views over the parks and the River Tweed beyond. Finger posts at the riverside end direct visitors upwards. The beautiful bespoke metalwork identifies the park very well and forms part of the welcome.
		x		
	NG	<b>G</b>	<b>A</b>	

2. Is the site easy to find?		X			The parks' location adjacent to the railway station make them very easy to find and every entrance is identified.
3. Is signage in good condition?	NG	G	A	R	Signboards are pretty new so in good condition. The many birds on site does mean regular cleaning is required, however. I noticed condensation forming inside a few of the new butterfly shaped boards – please check these.
		X		S	Response –signboards are cleaned & the new Butterfly boards are maintained by the U3A which had them installed, they are aware of the issue with some of the boards and the trim is being repaired
4. Is the site accessible to all users?	NG	G	A	R	Both parks are located on steeply sloping sites. An accessible route to a viewing point has been created in Castle Vale Park. Coronation Park has a rather tricky gate to open and close.
			X		
<b>Healthy, Safe and Secure</b>					
5. Are facilities on site in good and safe condition?	NG	G	A	R	
	X				There are no facilities
6. Did you feel safe during the visit?	NG	G	A	R	Both parks feel very safe. They have a mainly open aspect and their well-cared for appearance reassures the many visitors.
		X			
7. Are dogs being controlled and the site free of dog fouling?	NG	G	A	R	I saw no dogs in either park and there was no dog fouling. Quite a bit of bird mess, though.
		X			
<b>Well Maintained and Clean</b>					
8. Is litter, waste and recycling managed?	NG	G	A	R	No litter, all bins appear to have been emptied. Both sites have a very clean
		X			


					<p>and tidy appearance. Saw no recycling bins.</p> <p>Response – the Town Council are responsible for the provision of bins and at this stage they are not considering recycling bins for the parks</p>	
9. Is there a good standard of horticulture maintenance?	NG	G	A	R	<p>Very good indeed. There is a wonderful variety of plants – herbaceous plants, shrubs, alpine, ferns, annuals, climbers, herbs etc. All in excellent condition and providing an exceptional display of colour and form.</p>	
		x				
10. Is there a good standard of arboriculture maintenance?	NG	G	A	R	<p>On the whole yes. I am concerned, however, at the amount of ivy covering trees and shrubs on the bank down to the river – young trees are struggling to grow under such growth and older trees are starting to be engulfed. There needs to be a good clear out at some point. Also, ash trees with die-back need to be removed on the bank.</p> <p>A large ash tree has been partially cut down at the Castle Vale entrance and the trunk and branch stumps left standing. I am not sure if it is supposed to be a sculpture or if regeneration is hoped for. There are a couple of tiny new branches emerging. It's a rather odd feature to have at an entrance to a park - perhaps some information could be provided?</p>	
		x				

					<p>Response – where safe to tackle some ivy in the park is addressed by the volunteers and staff, however the wider problem down banks would not be considered safe for staff and volunteers to tackle due to dangerous slopes, uncovering hazards such as needles, glass etc. Berwick itself has a widespread issue with ivy. Ash die back is under the control of the tree officer who is aware of this and will remove any trees dangerous to the public on a priority basis. The tree at the entrance is not a feature and had only just been addressed as this was found to be diseased but not due to Ash Die Back, it is being monitored as to re growth</p>	
<p><b>11.</b> Are buildings and infrastructure such as walls, paths, steps and structures in good condition?</p>	NG	G	A		<p>Tarmac paths and paving are all in good condition. There are a couple of trip hazards that need addressing:</p> <p>1 The treads on steps down to the river walkway have worn away so that they are now below the level of the risers. This makes descending and ascending difficult and somewhat hazardous.</p> <p>2. Soil has worn away at entrance to Coronation Park so that path edging now forms trip hazard. This was pointed out by judges in 2019 so disappointing to see it has not been remedied.</p> <p>Structures and walls all in good condition.</p> <p>Metal railings are in good condition but the ornamental metalwork is starting to lose its</p>	

					<p>Painted surface in places. Ensure colour match is exact.</p> <p>Response – work was allocated to a contractor for the steps in May 2021, however due to Covid restrictions they were unable to complete, they are hoping to do this in Dec 2021. The area around the entrance to Coronation Park has been addressed. A quote has been gathered for all paint work in the park, but at present the cost of £21,000 is difficult to find funding for as this is considered a revenue stream which outside bodies rarely grant aid works for</p>	
12. Is equipment used by the public and staff in good condition?	NG	G	A	R		
	x				No equipment and no staff on site during my visit.	
<b>Environmental Management</b>						
13. Is there evidence that the site is managed to have a positive impact on the environment?	NG	G	A	R		
		x			<p>Biodiversity is encouraged by the many different habitats on site, including a pond, wildflower meadows, scrub thickets and ornamental planting that attracts pollinators. The parks are full of birds and I hope surveys are still being carried out.</p> <p>The ivy covering the banks down to the river is itself a valuable provider of pollen but there is now so much ivy that it is preventing other plants such as wild roses and elder from flowering and ground flora can't exist at all. A good project for autumn/winter</p>	

					would be to clear much of the ivy away so that a variety of trees, shrubs and plants can flourish on the bank.	
					Response – addressed above	
<b>Landscape and Heritage</b>						
14. Are heritage and/or landscape features in good condition?	NG	G	A	R	Interesting features and good interpretation on signboards. More information is available on the website.	
		x				
<b>Community Involvement</b>						
15. Is there evidence of community involvement and engagement?	NG	G	A	R	Volunteers not yet back in the park it would seem. Signboard at entrance has information on Friends Group and its good to see they have some upcoming events.	
		x				
16. Is user feedback positive?	NG	G	A	R	Most visitors I spoke to were one their way to somewhere else and were too busy concentrating on where they had to go rather than on the park! Although everyone stops at the great view of the river! This seems a great shame as there is so much to enjoy in both parks, including tranquil seating areas.	
		x				
<b>Marketing and Communication</b>						
17. Is there evidence of marketing and	NG	G	A	R	Very good. - lots of information on signboards, free leaflets from dispenser. Website and Facebook	
		x				



promotion, including events? e.g. notice boards, in buildings, website & social media.					page provide additional information and promote events.
18. Is the correct year flag flying and certificate on display?	NG	G	A	R	No flag and no certificate. There is a plaque fixed to a low wall in Castle Vale Park but it has no date.  Response – the sites have no flagpole therefore no flag and the certificates are put into the noticeboards
			X		
<b>Overall Result</b>  (✓)	<div>  <b>Is the site of Green Flag Award Standard?</b>  <b>Green</b> </div>				
Additional comments:  Really beautiful parks and a joy to visit. Everyone involved in their management and maintenance should be very proud.  Some repair work needs doing but I imagine that this will have to wait until volunteers are back in the parks at full strength.					

## SITE QUALITY EVALUATION

### (Mystery Shop) 2022

<b>Name of Site</b>	Castle Vale & Coronation Parks
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<b>Managing Organisation</b>	Northumberland Council
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> October 2022
<b>Time (from – to)</b>	10.30 – 12.00
<b>Weather conditions</b>	High Cloud, some sun, chilly wind

<b>OVERALL RESULT</b>	<b>Green</b> – Meets the standard with no concerns raised <b>Amber</b> – Meets the standard but with some minor areas of concern <b>Red</b> – Does not meet the requirement with major issues identified
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Green	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Amber	<input type="checkbox"/>	Red	<input type="checkbox"/>
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NOTES ABOUT THIS REPORT	
<b>Grading</b>	Each question is graded Green, Amber or Red NG (not graded) is used when the question can't be answered or is not applicable – for which an explanation is provided.
<b>Strengths and recommendations</b>	Strengths and recommendation are provided to support each grading. Photographs are also included throughout, or at the end of the report to support the feedback from the judge(s) in relation to both strengths and recommendations. Please refer to the Raising the Standard guidance manual <a href="#">here</a> for further information on the criteria.

A Welcoming Place				
1. Is the site welcoming?	NG	G	A	R
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Both sites are very welcoming with attractive entrances and views down or up to the well-maintained parks. Castle Vale's bespoke metal gates and rails are particularly attractive – ensure worn areas are repainted – see photo. Large signboards at the entrances provide all the required information.

Response – as per the response to the judge's feedback in 2021 where a quote was gathered for the painting works, we are not able to fund this cost at present. (At the time in 2021- £21,000) The original contractor is no longer in business for the correct match, and we feel there would be a degree of fading so not appropriate to patch up. There is no safety issue here, so this is mainly

for aesthetic reasons. As ever capital projects are funded more than revenue costs, sponsorship is always difficult for this type of spending.

2. Is the site easy to find?

NG

G

A

R

☐
☒
☐
☐

Comments: Comments: Castle Vale Park is located next to the railway station which is signposted from the A1. Coronation Park location is shown on Castle Vale's large entrance map.

3. Is signage in good condition?

NG

G

A

R

☐
☒
☐
☐

Comments: In good condition.

4. Is the site accessible to all users?

NG

G

A

R

☐
☒
☐
☐

Comments: Both parks are located on the very steep bank that runs down to the River Tweed with steps and steep paths. However in Castle Vale park an accessible route has been constructed that leads from Railway Street to a seating area/view point whilst at Coronation Park there is a relatively short, ramped path to a viewing point. Good surfacing to both these viewing/seating areas.

### Healthy, Safe and Secure

5. Are facilities on site in good and safe condition?

NG

G

A

R

☒
☐
☐
☐

Comments: No facilities

6. Did you feel safe during the visit?

NG

G

A

R

☐
☒
☐
☐

Comments: Open aspect of the parks and their well-maintained appearance fosters a sense of security. Ensure paths are kept free of leaves, they can be very slippery in the current wet weather.

NG

G

A

R

7. Are dogs being controlled and the site free of dog fouling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Saw two dog walkers in Coronation Park, both dogs were on leads. No fouling seen in either park.				
<b>Well Maintained and Clean</b>				
8. Is litter, waste and recycling managed?	NG	G	A	R
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Both parks were free of litter and bins had been emptied. In line with most authorities now there are no recycling bins.				
9. Is there a good standard of horticulture maintenance?	NG	G	A	R
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments: Really interesting range of plants well maintained in the formal areas. Keep on top of bramble, which seems to be taking hold in one area. Try to avoid maintaining shrubs with a hedge trimmer, resulting in unnatural squared outlines.</p> <p>Response – The bramble areas are tackled annually; this area will be done this year. The comment re maintaining shrubs with a hedge trimmer is puzzling as the park staff and volunteers do not undertake this type of work. A photograph of the shrubs in question in the report would have been helpful to help us identify this</p>				
10. Is there a good standard of arboriculture maintenance?	NG	G	A	R
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments: Trees in the formal areas of the parks looked well looked after. However, the scrub woodland on the bank below these areas is almost completely covered by a thick blanket of ivy. This was raised in the 2021 Mystery Shop and it is far worse now. I would think many trees and shrubs on the bank are now dead whilst those that are not struggling to grow. In addition, the weight of ivy on branches that overhang the river walk is a safety concern, as is the den carved out of the ivy – possibly by a vagrant? See photos.</p>				

Response – As per the response to the judge's feedback in 2021, the same applies we would not consider this area safe for any staff or volunteers to tackle this work, due to dangerous slopes, uncovering hazards such as needles and glass. Unlike the formal part of the park, an area like this would come under the remit of the Tree Team to make the area safe of dead trees, for which work has been undertaken in previous years to make safe. This is still being monitored however due to Storm Arwen the team are still working on massive destruction to trees a year later and will continue to clear the backlog. This has meant that routine works are now being held up

11. Are buildings and infrastructure such as walls, paths, steps and structures in good condition?	NG	G	A	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: Everything in good order apart from a few of the wooden risers on the bank that are starting to disintegrate. These could be sanded back or replaced.

Response – this is on a programme of repair for 2023

12. Is equipment used by the public and staff in good condition?	NG	G	A	R
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: No equipment seen

### Environmental Management

13. Is there evidence that the site is managed to have a positive impact on the environment and biodiversity.	NG	G	A	R
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: Many birds can be seen and heard in both sites and there is a good variety of tree, shrub and plant species, a pond woodland and meadow that make a really positive impact. However the failure to cut back/remove the huge blanket of ivy is having a wholly negative effect on the bank woodland and the species of birds and insects that would normally inhabit it. It is difficult to understand why this situation has been allowed to develop to such an extent.

Response – see comments in No 10

### Landscape and Heritage

<b>14. Are heritage and/or landscape features in good condition?</b>	NG	G	A	R
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comments: Good historical information on notice boards. Particularly good nature interpretation in Coronation Park with numerous charming sculptures. Good to see the artist credited in the small pavilion. Both historic and nature trails run through the parks and along the river.				
<b>Community Involvement</b>				
<b>15. Is there evidence of community involvement and engagement?</b>	NG	G	A	R
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comments: Information about the Friends Group and contact details on notice boards in both parks.				
<b>16. Is user feedback positive?</b>	NG	G	A	R
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comments: No-one in Castle Vale park on a chilly morning and the dog walkers in Coronation park were moving too fast to catch. (Both humans and dogs looked as though they were enjoying the site).				
<b>Marketing and Communication</b>				
<b>17. Is there evidence of marketing and promotion, including events? e.g. notice boards, in buildings, website &amp; social media.</b>	NG	G	A	R
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comments: Friends' Programme of Events shown on the Castle Vale notice board and on the Friends' excellent website and Facebook page. Information about the park also available on the council's website.				
<b>18. Is the correct year flag flying and certificate on display?</b>	NG	G	A	R
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

<p>Comments: 25 years Commemoration Plaque fixed to entrance wall of Castle Vale park plus GFA Winner Plaque with no date. Why not insert the most recent Certificate into the locked notice board?</p> <p>Response – The 2022 certificate is in the notice boards</p>	
<p><b>Final comments:</b> A real asset to the town, these two very attractive parks are well maintained apart from the very detrimental lack of control of ivy on the lower slopes. Please explain in your Feedback to this report why control has not been carried out – judges will be looking for improvements in 2023.</p>	