

2023



NEWBURY
Town Council

GREEN FLAG AWARD APPLICATION MANAGEMENT PACK

VICTORIA PARK

NEWBURY TOWN COUNCIL

CONTENTS



PAGE 4 - 5

Welcome Introduction

PAGE 6 - 11

Victoria Park

- Overview
- Access
- Staff Presence
- Designation
- Facilities and Infrastructure
- Biodiversity
- Community Involvement
- Events
- Marketing
- History
- Vision and Aims
- Action Plan

PAGE 12 - 20

Green Flag Award Criteria

- A Welcoming Place
- Healthy Safe and Secure
- Well Maintained and Clean
- Sustainability
- Conservation and Heritage
- Horticultural and
Arboricultural Standards
- Conservation and Heritage
- Community Involvement
- Marketing
- Management
- Monitoring and Review





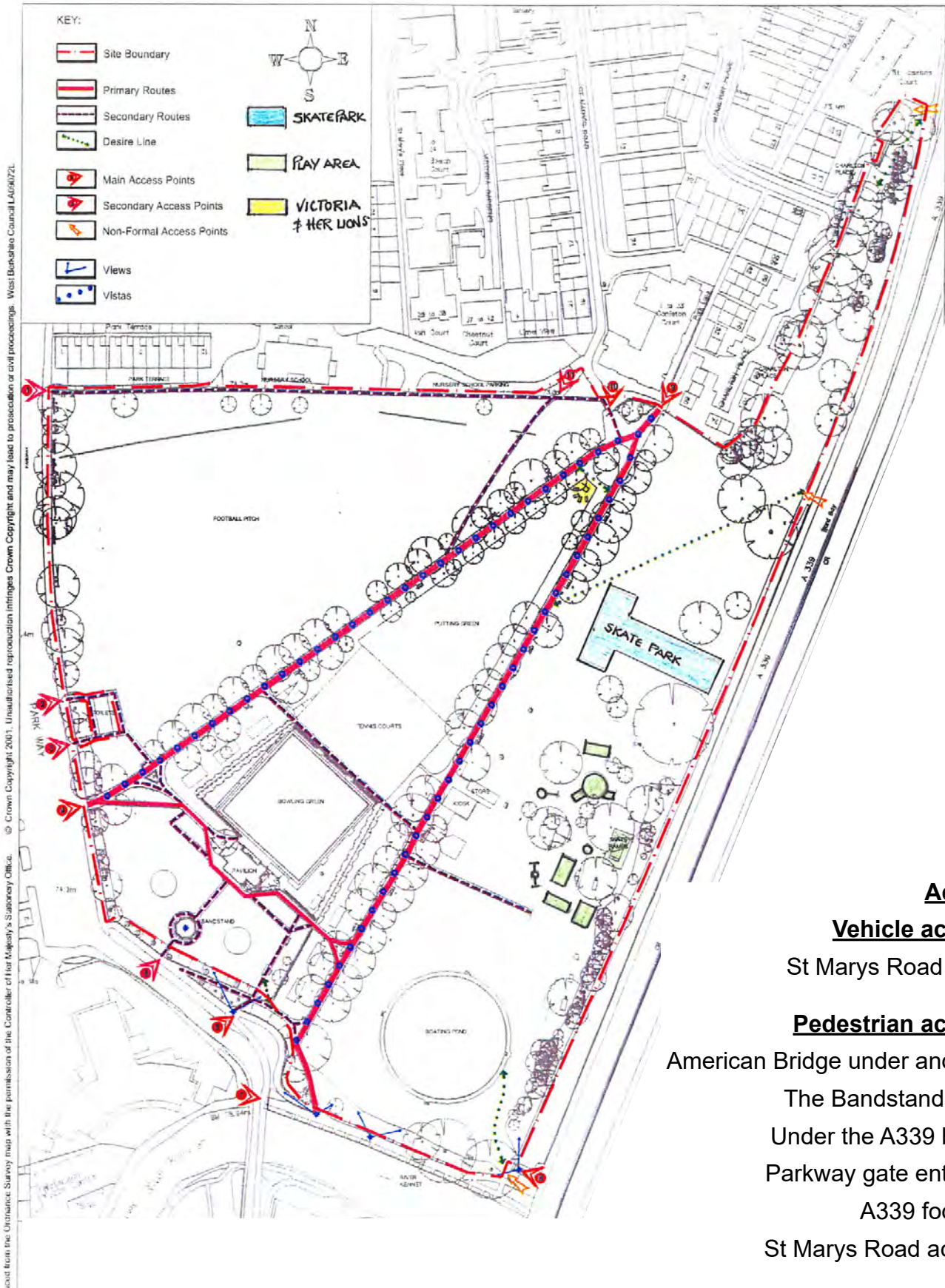
The Jewel in Newbury's Crown, Victoria Park is situated in the centre of the town and is key to Newbury residents' relaxation, exercise and social requirements. Spread across 14 acres it comprises of formal planted gardens, recreation areas, play park, splash park, skate park, gym equipment, three tennis courts, boating pond, a wild flower meadow and is home to Newbury Bowls Club. It houses the statue of 'Queen Victoria and her Lions' and other art installations within its boundaries.

The park has undergone extensive improvements between 2014-2017 due to considerable damage caused by dewatering through underground drainage works adjacent to the park. The improvements during this time and those that have been undertaken recently continue to ensure that the facilities are of a very high standard.

VICTORIA PARK



Victoria Park is 14 acres of parkland with various facilities, situated within the centre of Newbury, a short walk from the main high street, canal, shopping areas and places of historical importance such as the market place, Wharf and Town Hall.



Access

Vehicle access:

St Marys Road Gate.

Pedestrian access:

American Bridge under and over

The Bandstand steps

Under the A339 bridge

Parkway gate entrance

A339 footpath

St Marys Road access.

Disabled access:

All areas.

Staff Presence:

Works within the park are closely overseen by the Council's Parks & Open Spaces Supervisor and Facilities Officer. Ground maintenance work is undertaken by John O'Conner Ltd, the Council's contractor.

John O'Conner Ltd duties include:

- Daily litter management
- Grass to be performance cut to be kept within length guidelines
- Relevant cut rotation to sustain wildflower strip along the Parkway boundary
- Weekly visual play inspections (ROSPA trained)
- Shrub and flower bed care
- Cleaning and care of the boating pond

Designation

Designated common land / parkland within a conservation area.

Facilities and Infrastructure

- Bowls Club
- Gym Equipment
- Play Park
- Skate Park
- Boating Pond
- Tennis Courts
- Formal Gardens
- Splash Park
- Art installations
- Bandstand
- Kiosk / Cafe
- Adventure Golf

Biodiversity

A tree planting program is undertaken year after year, monitoring and developing tree stocks typically planting two trees for every tree lost. Works are undertaken each year by qualified tree surgeons where necessary.

The Council is adopting a policy in certain areas of cutting once a year in the autumn around the trees at the St Marys Road end of the park alongside the A339.

There are bat and bird boxes fitted in our trees mainly along the A339 side of the park in a quiet area.

There is a wildflower strip along the bank adjacent to the Parkway Shopping Centre installed to promote an area for pollinators in the town centre.

Community Involvement

The newly relaunched Friends of Victoria Park play an important part in the care and upkeep of the park's assets helping to care for key floral features, running pruning days and assisting with horticultural

expertise and suggestions on the future of the park.

The Victoria Park Working Group help to steer new ideas to develop the park's facilities and user experience.

The Council also run community planting days in the park working with the town's Newbury in Bloom initiative.

We have a hedge laying day planned for autumn / winter 2023. Volunteer days are highly attended through this group with 60-80 volunteers engaging in the park each year. The recent installation of the wildflower meadow was seeded by volunteers and has previously been volunteer cut each year.

Events:

Newbury Town Council runs an annual Family Day to promote the park and encourage visitors. The park is used also for a funfair twice a year, Crafty Raft Race, the annual Waterways Festival and weekly local brass and silver bands playing on the bandstand throughout the summer months.

Marketing

The annual Family Day promotes the park's facilities. The Family Day includes working in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association for the Great British Tennis Weekend, and our coaches from the National Tennis Association who run classes and training groups. The Bowls Club is open to visitors, we have extra entertainment and we have had demonstrations on the competition standard Skate Park.

We regularly promote the new and existing facilities as they are upgraded or opened in the local media, using paid advertising together with press releases, and attaching photographs when we can.

Newbury Town Council promotes the park through its website, www.newbury.gov.uk and has social media pages on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter where the park and its activities are promoted. Events such as The Family Day and Bands in the Park are also promoted on the Town Council's noticeboards and in our bus shelters around the town.

Volunteer days are usually promoted through the Newbury in Bloom initiative via letter drops, social media and also approaching the public directly.

History

The area now known as Victoria Park is an area of common land which originally included an area for grazing cattle and sheep for the townspeople of Newbury and known as 'the marsh'. The marsh is referred to in various documents dating back to the 1370s. The park was formerly renamed Victoria Park in 1897 to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. In 1937 the bandstand, park way walls and distinct lime tree avenue were all added creating the first formal set-up of the park.

In the 1960s the parks shape was changed to accommodate the A339 bridge and link road down its west side.

Since 1937 the park has been developed adding all its features over this period, the most recent being the newly renovated tennis courts and splash park installed in 2017 and the new accessible wheelchair seesaw in 2022.

Vision and Aims

The delivery of all services and functions by Newbury Town Council is governed by the Council's Strategy. This is driven by the Council's Mission Statement:

Newbury Town Council making Newbury a town we can all be proud of.

The Strategy sets out that:

We will continue to provide and improve well-managed services to the town, using direct labour or contractors as appropriate, and always ensure value for money while using local labour and suppliers where possible.

We will strive to ensure that our policies and actions do not exclude any sections of the community, and that our services are accessible by all citizens of the town.

Many of the service delivery objectives in the Strategy include our vision and aims for Victoria Park, including the following:

- Maintain a budget explicitly for local environmental improvement capital projects such as footway lighting, public benches, litter/dog bins, salt/grit bins and tree planting.
- Maintain and run high quality parks, playgrounds and leisure spaces/facilities
- Provide and maintain benches and other street furniture in appropriate locations.
- Provide and maintain trees, flower beds, hanging baskets and other plantings in appropriate locations.
- Provide brochures, maps, signage and other information for the benefit of visitors to Newbury.
- Support Community safety, including Town Centre CCTV, through working with partners in this area and, where required, expanding the provision of CCTV.

- Support and promote community events through financial assistance and/or provision of venues and facilities.
- Lobby and work with West Berkshire Council to devolve appropriate assets and services to us.
- Encourage and facilitate residents' participation in social, recreational and sporting activities.
- Hold an Annual Family day (early summer) in Victoria Park, to promote the park and the wide range of facilities it offers.

The short to longer term vision and aims within Victoria Park set out in the Strategy are as follows:

- Construct new café facilities in Victoria Park and provide a suitable venue in the rejuvenated park.
- Maintain Victoria Park as a first class amenity and recreational area for the benefit of all the citizens of Newbury and retain the Green Flag Award for Victoria Park.

Action/Service Plan

Newbury Town Council also uses park user feedback, consultations, policy frameworks and the Council's own Town Design Statement to help to plan for the future of the park. This information is translated into an action/service plan which lists required tasks and time frames for park development and improvement.

Information applicable to all NTC sites: All NTC sites are covered by the NTC Byelaws stating the laws by which users and visitors to the park should abide.

GREEN FLAG AWARD CRITERIA

A Welcoming Place

Signage

Victoria Park has attractive signage welcoming you to the facility, signage declaring the bylaws and relevant signage for playground, skate park and boating pond users stating relevant safety advice.

Good and Safe Access

Newbury Town Council has a positive approach to ensuring compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act, with provision for everyone to access the park's facilities. We have incorporated inclusive play equipment in the play parks such as a newly installed wheelchair accessible seesaw and roundabout.



Healthy, Safe and Secure

Patrolling Presence

Contractor's daily presence for litter clearance, identifying issues to be dealt with and daily visual walk around by NTC Staff. Regular police patrols within the park.

Playground Inspections

Weekly visual inspection – John O'Conner Ltd staff

Monthly detailed inspections - Newbury Town Council's Parks & Open Spaces Supervisor / Facilities Officer

Yearly external inspection – play inspection company

Built Environment

Victoria Park is overlooked by residents who take an active role in reporting any incidents that happen in the park outside of working hours of NTC and John O'Conner Ltd staff. A number of members of the Victoria Park Working Group are local residents with an active interest in the park.

The park is in a conservation area as designated by the planning authority, West Berkshire District Council. A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, with a distinctive character or appearance that is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Staff Training and Welfare

All work is undertaken within the park by members of staff that have the required qualifications. Contractors and NTC staff are DBS checked. We have a designated Welfare Officer specifically for the tennis courts coaching, together with a safeguarding policy, in accordance with the LTA.

Well Maintained and Clean

Litter Management

The park's litter bins are emptied every morning and the park is litter picked every day to ensure the site is clean and smart for the coming day.

Dog faeces are removed and dog bins are emptied every other day.

Benches and Bins

Benches are audited every two years and oiled once a year.

Bins are given a thorough clean four times a year and are emptied daily each morning.

Horticultural Maintenance

All works within the park are undertaken to the highest horticultural standards. The following are key horticultural features:

- The rose beds are sponsored by local businesses and tended to by the Friends of Victoria Park who run volunteer days caring for the roses.
- Areas of bulbs planted on volunteer days help to give all round bloom within the park.
- Formal summer and winter bedding areas cared for by John O'Conner Ltd.
- Shrub beds cared for and maintained by John O'Conner Ltd.
- Bowls Club gardens cared for by Newbury Bowls Club.
- Hanging baskets fitted to the band stand and new lower level troughs along the canal side give a welcoming aspect to the park.
- Wildflower strip running along the fence line of the A339.





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Arboricultural Maintenance

Trees are visually monitored by the Grounds Maintenance Officer (BTI qualified) and by John O'Conner Ltd, to assess for issues on a weekly basis. The trees are also independently surveyed by a PTI accredited surveyor once every five years unless flagged as needing more frequent visits.

We have been undertaking tree planting within the park and aim to add at least ten trees to the current stock each year.

Environmental Management

Managing Environmental Impact

We manage the environmental impact of our service delivery as set out in the Council's strategy:
When delivering these services we will:

- Use local suppliers wherever possible.
- Work to safeguard the vitality of the local economy, ensuring that any adverse impact on the environment and the quality of life in Newbury and its surrounding area is minimised.
- Minimise waste created by the Council and the services we provide.
- Maximise opportunities to recycle waste created by the Council and the services we provide wherever possible.
- Work with other partners and stakeholders to achieve efficiency savings in service delivery and, where appropriate, expand the range of services provided by the Town Council.

The new cafe has been designed to be carbon neutral in build and BREEAM Excellent Environmental Standard to comply with the Council's Climate Emergency Resolution to become carbon neutral by carbon reduction offset before 2035. This also includes plans for a rain garden and additional planting to compensate for the 1:100 year flood area by not discharging into the wastewater system by runoff via soakaways and planting.

Waste Minimisation

Waste minimisation is important for Newbury Town Council as set out above in the Council's Strategy. Our contractor's, John O'Conner Ltd, mulch green waste to be reused on the sites and it is used across shrub beds within the park. The new cafe will be built with a carbon neutral footprint, a rain garden, solar panels, eco-friendly building materials and water recycling.

Environmental Management continued...

Chemical Use

Chemical use such as Glyphosates are not used in the park. For weed removal on hard surfaces we jet wash or use a road sweeper to clear the weeds.

Peat Use

Newbury Town Council does not use peat for the development of any of our sites. We use natural compost, recycled leaf mulch and green waste through our contractors as well as natural additives such as fish blood and bone to add nutrients to our soil.

Climate change adaptation strategy

The Council's environmental strategies are set out above. We are now more mindful of the need to reduce our carbon footprint by minimising emissions and the careful use of natural resources. It is an objective in the Town Council's Strategy to "increase the biodiversity of the town, through drought and pest resistant planting, reduced use of pesticides, herbicides and peat, replacing diseased trees with native trees and extending tree planting." A good example of recycling valuable natural resources is the way in which we take the run-off from the splash park to water flowers and the park. The boating pond is also carbon neutral as it uses water from the nearby canal.

The Council is currently also looking to undertake a reduction in summer and winter bedding, reducing this by 20% year on year for the next four years and replacing them with perennial planting that will in turn increase biodiversity as part of the Council's carbon reduction policy.

Recently we have undertaken the process of overhauling our new GM Contract allowing us to enforce new measures in which we are limiting our carbon footprint such as:

- The predominant use of electric tools.
- The use of electric vehicles where practical.
- The recycling of our waste with reporting on where it goes after it leaves our parks.



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Conservation and Heritage

Management of natural features, wild fauna and flora

Victoria Park has wild flora and fauna features within the park and we now have a large wildflower strip along the whole length of the Parkway fence line. We are looking to also incorporate traditional hedge laying techniques on some hedging planted in 2019 at the St Mary Road end of the park. There are trees of significance such as the lime tree avenues, a large horse chestnut by the canal and a large beech tree near the skate park. We do appropriate maintenance to care for these trees to prolong their lives, but none that are known to pre-date the last 100 years in which the park has been developed.

Conservation of landscape features

Victoria Park's landscape has developed over the years to make it into the area it is today. Due to the dewatering caused by the building of Parkway, Victoria Park is no longer a marshy area so therefore the planting and the way we use the area has had to adapt. A lot of the landscape features are man-made including the canal adjoining the park and the boating pond which dominates the landscape. The pond is maintained and cleaned by the Council and repaired periodically to make sure it is water tight.

The park is within a conservation area and we adhere to the planning and tree implications that affect this. The area also has sites of archaeological interest that have been excavated in the past.

Conservation of buildings and structures

Victoria Park houses many important and historical structures which the Council provides care and upkeep including:

- Terracotta statue of Queen Victoria and three lions
- The bandstand
- Concrete boating pond

The care for these monuments will be continued for future generations to enjoy due to their importance within the park. With the bandstand undertaking a £22,000 roof renovation in 2023.

Community Involvement

Community involvement in management and development

Victoria Park has an active Friends of Victoria Park group that hold 'working days' throughout the year. In addition, the Council has organised well attended planting days to help local residents come and be involved as part of the park's development.

The Council consults local residents through Council Committee meetings or letter drops to make local residents aware of major developments within the park.

The Victoria Park Working Group passes suggestions to the Council's Community Services Committee in regards to user needs and wants within the park boundary.

Community involvement in the park

As well as promoting the park through special events and marketing (see below) we make the park available for community events organised by other bodies and charities, such as the annual Waterways Festival, the Crafty Raft Race and the Newbury Carnival (every second year).

Marketing

Marketing and Promotions

Victoria Park covers a wide demographic of users due to its facilities.

It is a requirement from the Council's Strategy that we hold an Annual Family Day in early summer to promote the park and the wide range of facilities it offers. The Family Day includes working in partnership with the Lawn Tennis Association for the Great British Tennis Weekend, and our coaches, the National Tennis Association, who run classes and training groups.

The bowls club is open to visitors, we have extra entertainment and we have had demonstrations on the competition standard skate park.

We regularly promote the new and existing facilities as they are upgraded or opened in the local media, using paid advertising together with press releases, and attaching photographs when we can.

Throughout the summer brass bands play on the bandstand helping to bring people in to enjoy the park's gardens and formal flower displays.

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Appropriate information channels

The park is promoted through the Town Council website with pages linking to its facilities and a direct link to the tennis court online booking system, Clubspark.

Events held within the park are posted through social media and a timetable is put on the kiosk to make people aware whilst visiting.

Noticeboards at the tennis courts, Wharf toilets and at the Town Hall publicise upcoming events within the park, and appropriate banners and notices are put up to promote any larger events within the park and promote tennis membership.

Any new development or event within the park is distributed through local press via press releases covering all the local newspapers, publications, television and radio outlets.

All of our park events are promoted on our noticeboards, in our bus shelters and on our website and social media.

Appropriate educational and interpretational information

This is an area in which the Council is planning to improve with educational experiences. We currently have youth groups assisting with the planting days.

The park as a whole is wheelchair accessible with play specific items such as the wheelchair seesaw and wheelchair accessible roundabout which is advertised on our website, and on the equipment as being features making the park inclusive play friendly.

We plan to look into providing information panels to help educate the public on the park's historical features, biodiversity improvements and facilities.

Management

Client /Contractor relationship

The Town Council works closely with all contractors regarding any developments on the site whether they are full-time contractors based on the site or temporary contractors undertaking a specific purpose. The Parks & Open Spaces Supervisor holds site meetings daily when specific tasks are being undertaken to monitor the standard of work and processes being used.

Monthly meetings regarding development

Meetings are held monthly between the Parks & Open Spaces Supervisor and John O'Conner Ltd, incorporating any other contractor who is working on-site, to discuss logistics and the coming month's developments on the site. These meetings include problem solving and identifying future issues.

Annual report

The development of the park has been included in the Council's Annual Report and from 2021/22 we implemented our first annual report on the development on the park to gauge the success of the projects and the newly identified needs going forward.

Monitoring and Review

This Management Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Town Council, the Grounds Maintenance Contractor and other key committees and working groups to ensure that the plan is meeting its management aims and objectives and responding to the developing needs of the site.

The review will include both the management of the site and the uses and activities promoted and undertaken on the site. In addition this review will take into account and update any changes in legislation or policy.