
Weston Shore Management Plan 2009-12



2009/10

**Produced by the Neighbourhood
Services Division
& key Weston Shore Stakeholders
Updated January 2010**



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Foreword

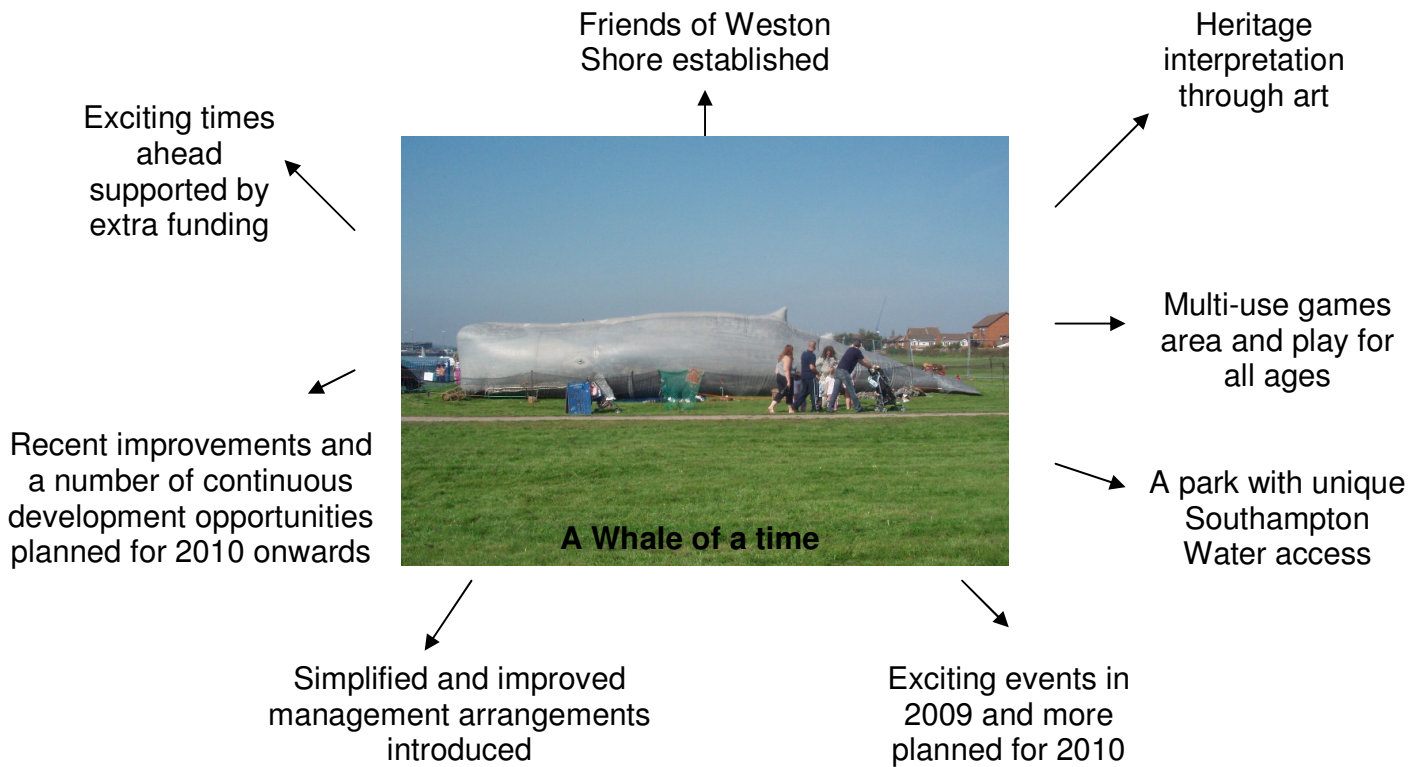


Weston Shore doesn't need any introduction to the residents of Southampton. It is the City's only significant publicly accessible beach and a key place for the people of Woolston and Weston. A substantial amount of money has been used to regenerate the area and Weston Shore has benefited from this.

As Cabinet Member with responsibilities for parks and green spaces I fully support this new application and the development of a Friends group. Weston Shore is a great place to walk, play, sail and fish. It provides a huge amount of facilities that appeal to a great number of people. This management plan outlines our commitment to work with local people to improve the park for everyone by building on the parks unique waterside location, quality green space and wildlife habitats as well as significantly improving the family value of Weston Shore.

**Councillor Phil Williams,
Cabinet Member for Housing and Local Services**

Executive summary



Moving Forward at Weston Shore

Gaining the Green Flag Award in 2009 has encouraged all those involved in Weston Shore to continue improving the area. Close partnership working with Hampshire County Council has culminated in expanding the area we are submitting for a Green Flag this year to include all of Westwood and the associated green space managed by Hampshire Rangers. Much of this area has Local Nature Reserve Status and we will be working with the Rangers to get the Southampton owned parts of Westwood and Weston Shore to the same status in the coming year.

A park with unique sea front access in the city

Weston Shore is a special place and unique within the city boundary, a linear undeveloped piece of shoreline with wide open spaces, West Wood and the intertidal flats which are of international importance for waterfowl. It is part of the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and is connected to the Solent Way Long Distance Footpath and the developing South Coast National Cycle Route (NCN 2).

Heritage Interpretation, Art Works and Shelters

The environmental public artist, Abigail Downer worked on the development of the Weston Shorescapes Heritage Project over a period of three years, leading up to May 2007. As a skilled and experienced artist and arts educator, Abigail devised a series of visual arts workshops and events to engage children, young people and families in the

exploration and discovery of Weston Shore's natural, built and social heritage. Drawings, photographs, constructions, temporary physical interventions or installations in the landscape were all used as a major resource for the design of a range of schemes that help to interpret the site's ecology, archaeology, industrial and social heritage, including the creation of paths, terraces, viewing platforms and gateways that form interpretation points at key points along the heritage trail.

Built in the 1930's, the beach shelters are important landmarks that evoke a sense of the shore's past as a leisure beach and grand day out. Today, restored to their original form, they are weather havens, lookout points, and visual spaces where the history and heritage of the area is captured in artworks created by Abigail and inspired by local people.

Recent improvements and continuous development

An important area of salt marsh, containing reed beds has been re-established at the corner of Weston Parade. This is a rare habitat in Southampton and this year has begun to become inhabited by fish, this in turn has attracted more birds with a white egret seen regularly fishing in this area.

The bank and ditch along the boundary of the meadow has now also become established with grass, wildflowers and in places reeds.

A picnic area has been established in front of the pirate play area, which has had its fence removed on the south side to aid access and improve wildlife. There have also been a number of seats installed along the front to give people a place to rest and look out over the Solent.

Friends of Weston Shore underway

A nucleus group have taken on the challenge of enlarging the Weston Shore Friends Group. They have developed web sites and are keen to work with the Council to put a program of events together. The Friends of West Wood are constituted and have been working on various habitat management tasks within West Wood to improve ground flora and dormouse habitat.

Improved Partnership Working at West Wood

The partnership between Groundwork Solent, SCC and HCC has now delivered the program of improvements to West Wood. There is improved access with a new disabled bay, improved paths and incidental and natural play. A dipping platform has been installed and climbing boulders for the more adventurous. The heritage and biodiversity are promoted through a number of interpretation signs. In all bids of a total of £100k have help to deliver this project.

Exciting events

2009 saw another year of exciting events in the park. . The events included all nine of the Cunard cruise ship fleet coming into Southampton over one weekend and the Big Bike Celebration, organised as part of the Sutrans Street-tread project, which featured an array of displays and activities, including the try-a-bike arena with The Company of Cyclists, mountain bike displays by M.A.D. (Europe's largest stunt/trials display team), a bicycle smoothie-maker, and the Bike Doctor providing a free health check for bikes.



Litter Picking Good

In August the Weston Shore Friends Group organised a beach clean up that was very well attended. It was great to see all the support from other local groups and attendees included, Friends of Mayfield Park, the Rowing Club, members of the Sholing Valleys Study Group and the Friends of West Wood.

Throughout the year there have also been numerous fishing competitions, and sailing regattas. Also local groups and businesses have got involved in organised litter picks and bird watching activities.



Nice day for a spot of fishing

Plan showing key areas of improvement through the regeneration program in the park



Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

The management plan sets out the general principles that should be applied over the next three years and includes an annual action plan for specific developments and improvements.

The management plan is a 'live' document in that the development of the park is guided by the plan but not limited by it. Staff working in the park and the various key stakeholders have assisted in writing the document and have copies to refer to during the year. Much of the background work for this plan has been provided by Southampton City Council (SCC) Regeneration team and some of their plans have been reproduced in this document.

The first chapter gives an overall introduction to Weston Shore including the history, features and characteristics. This is followed by the management strategy, detailing aims and objectives. The third chapter contains recommendations and actions to be applied to the park in the short and longer term.

The future running of Weston Shore will be based upon the Management Plan, the adopted Southampton Green Space Strategy, other relevant City Council Policy, and Legal Requirements as well as being based upon the views and requirements of residents, voluntary groups and local interest groups.

1.2 Description of Weston Shore

Weston Shore is a circa 85 hectare site in the Weston area, on the east side of Southampton. The park runs alongside the Solent from Abbey Hill to Jurds Lake and includes West Wood and the associated green space know as West Wood Woodland Park. Although not included in this management plan the mudflats are an internationally recognised site for wading birds and are part of the European designated Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area. West Wood is an Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland managed in partnership with Hampshire County Council and is the only known area in Southampton that still has dormice.

A cycle path runs through the majority of the park along Weston Parade, this is part of the National Cycle Network route 2.

Weston Shore is also part of the Solent Way, a 60 mile footpath linking Milford on Sea with Emsworth Harbour, much of the path following the Hampshire coast line and passing through the New Forest. For more information on this walk visit:- www.solentway.co.uk

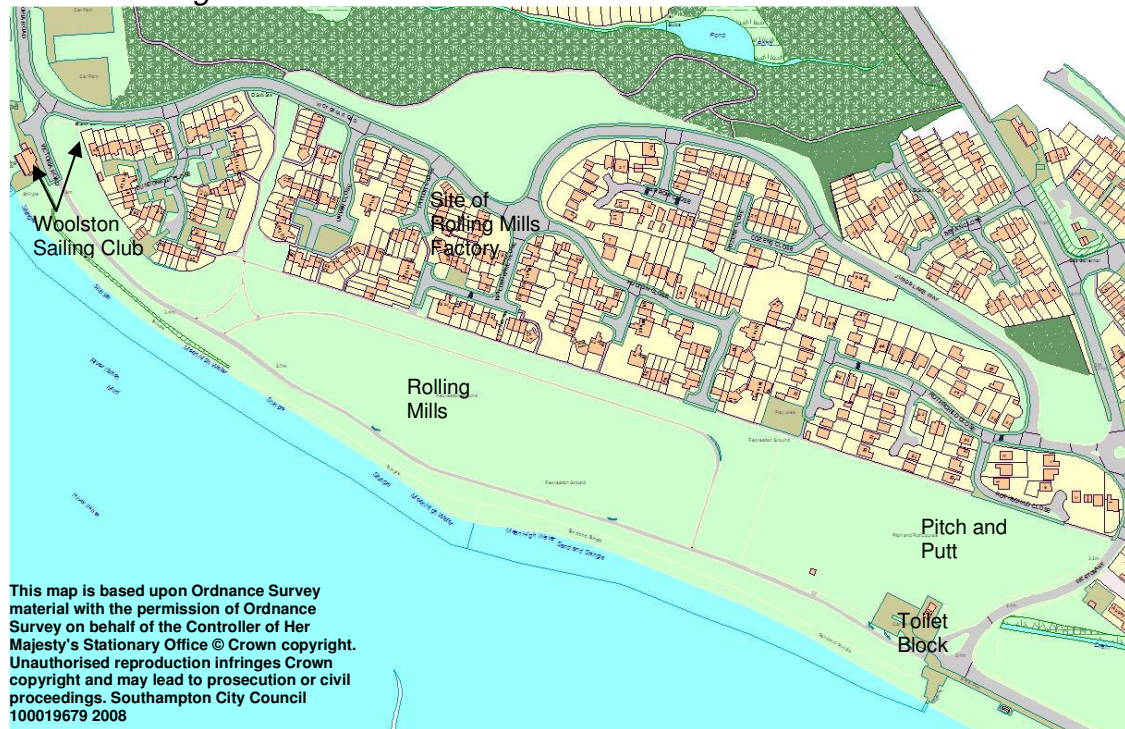
Weston Shore is on the edge of the Weston Priority Neighbourhood. Southampton City Council has eleven priority neighbourhoods which are identified as having high levels of deprivation. As such the area, including Weston Shore, has benefitted from regeneration funding over the last few years to reduce the gap between the Priority Neighbourhoods and the rest of Southampton.

The park has four distinct areas with slightly differing management regimes. These are described separately below, but come together to make a truly unique experience for park users in Southampton.

1.2.1 Rolling Mills and Pitch and Putt Section

This area is also known as the “Kite Flying” field and this refers to the often windy exposure this area gets which is ideal for flying kites. The name “Rolling Mills” comes from the factory which used to be located just to the north of this green space. The rolling mills were used to produce the copper components for Spitfire during the war after the Supermarine factory was destroyed through bombing.

Plan of Rolling Mills and Pitch and Putt Section



The north end of this area houses the Woolston Sailing Club house and a secure dry storage area for the boats, there is also a public hard for launching yachts. The sailing club recently gave back part of the land and there is now an area which needs to be reintegrated back into the park. Next to this the “rolling mills” field provides a flat area for recreation. There is a bound gravel footpath running around the field with a raised viewing/resting platform in the northeast corner.

The main tarmac footpath is part of the NCN2 cycle route and is used by many pedestrians as a parade. Along its length there are land forms and teratso seating that make up part of the heritage trail in this area. Quotes, comments and information can be found in various places etched into the seats or wooden structures which give an insight into the ecology, history and heritage of the site.

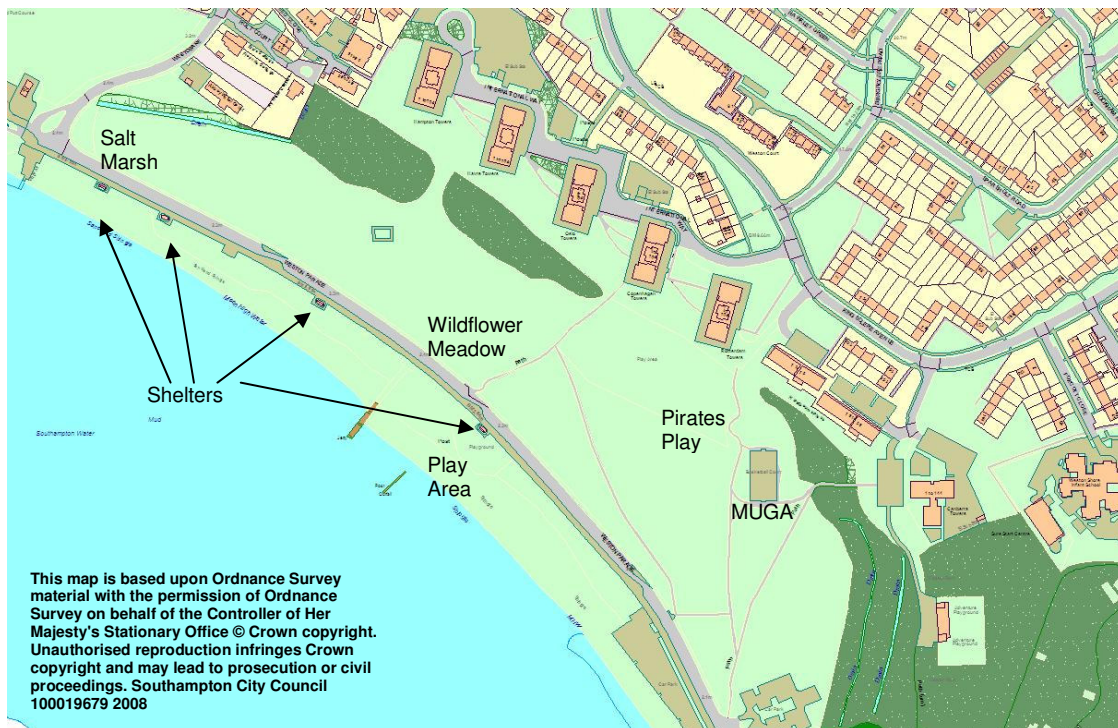
At the east end there is a 9 hole pitch and putt golf course, which is managed by SCC. Next to this is a car park and toilet block which incorporates the golf course attendant's kiosk. This building was opened in December 2005 and includes a green roof to provide sustainable insulation. It also incorporates a robust design to discourage vandalism. One of the two mobile concession pitches is situated next to the toilet block.

1.2.2 Salt Marsh and Wildflower Meadow Section

This was a large area of land fill, which now has the characteristic wavy topography of such an area. At the west end there is an area of salt water marsh which had slowly silted up over the years. In 2008 this was dug out and landscaped to form an area of wet land. The reeds have re-colonised and the area is beginning to look natural again.

The area is dominated by the five Council tower blocks to the north. In front of these the park is bounded by a strip of trees, some of which have been planted and some of which are remnants of West Wood. Work is underway to improve the access from the high density housing onto Weston Shore area as part of the Decent Neighbourhoods capital programme.

Plan showing Salt Marsh and Wildflower Meadow Section



Adjacent to these there is an adventure style play area aimed at a range of ages, called Pirates play area. This was recently improved through grant funding and the installation of new equipment. At the same time a MUGA was constructed which is regularly used by the local community. Both these areas have been developed and realised by working in partnership with Groundwork Solent.

To the east there is a viewing/resting platform constructed from timber and land forming. This ties into the overall concept of land forms, connecting this area to the rolling mills area.

Along the shore front there are four shelters built in the 1930's and renovated in 2006/07. The art work on these depicts the ecology, archaeology, history and heritage of the site. They also have visual links from the tower blocks to landmarks across Southampton Water. The east most shelter sits in front of a second play area in Weston Shore. This fixed play is aimed at younger children and has a general coast theme.



The park is bounded on the south side by a 600m long dwarf wall. This physically defines the edge of the beach and has six 'indents' punctuating its linearity. These form a number of resting places along the shoreline. Four of the indents create an emplacement for each of the shelters. The wall forms an important part of the historic setting for the shelters. Local residents have strong memories of the wall as a symbol of the Shore's history and recall walking along the wall as a positive and vivid childhood memory.

Weston Shore's second mobile concession pitch can be found at the east end of this area situated in the shore front car park.

Dwarf walls and land sculpture



1.2.3 West Wood Woodland Park

This is an area of woodland and grassland that extends beyond the city boundary. It is therefore managed in partnership with Hampshire County Council who owns much of the land beyond the city boundary. The wooded area is predominantly Oak woodland with hazel coppice beneath. This area has a number of footpaths and cycleways through it. It also has significant archaeological features such as medieval culverts and even the remnants of a Victorian boating lake within it.

Plan showing West Wood Woodland Park Section



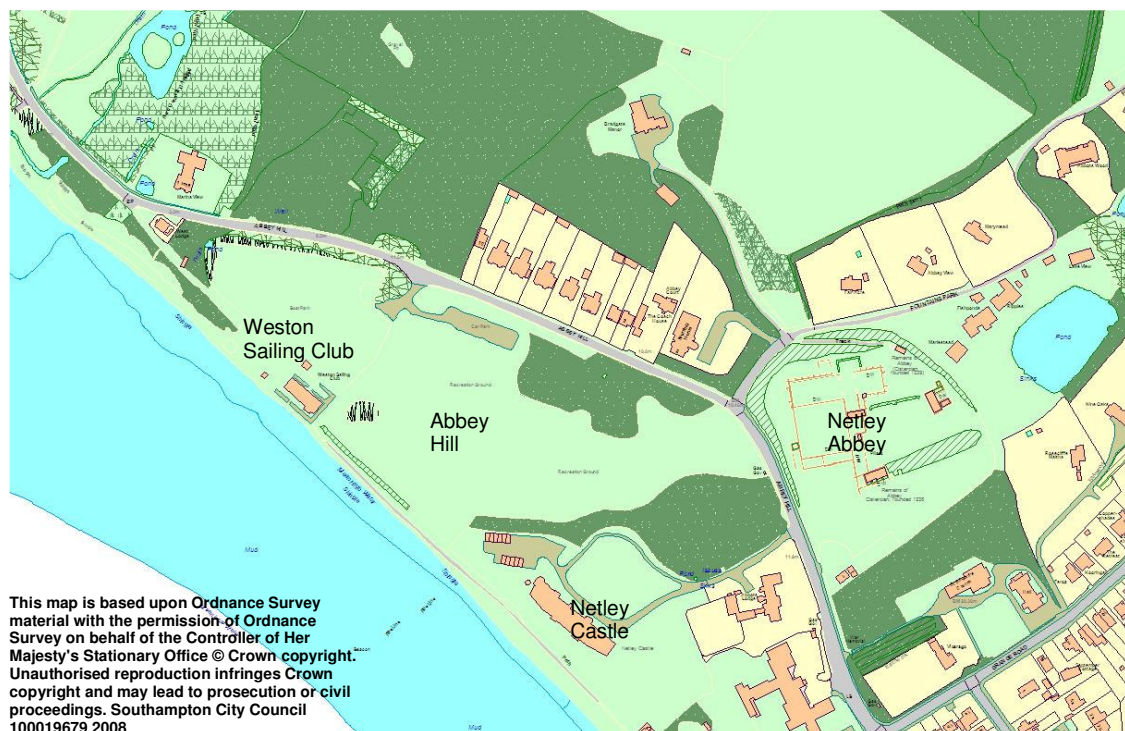
There is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (national monument no. 24325) on the site. This is the remains of a mediaeval aqueduct associated with the remains of Netley Abbey. This is a large area which has its own management plan, the summary management plan is appended to this document as Appendix 2.

The area has recently undergone a number of improvements through a partnership with Groundwork Solent, SCC and HCC. Successful bids to the Forestry Commission and Veolia environmental trust, along with contributions from SCC and HCC have realised £100k which has been spent on improving access and interpretation to the heritage and woodland, whilst protecting the more sensitive dormouse sites. The entrance from Weston Shore has also been improved with a revamped car park and new entrance feature designed by local school children, making the woodland more inviting to visitors.

1.2.4 Abbey Hill (The Conker Field)

This area is at the east most end of Weston Shore, it consists of a large sloped field which is slowly becoming encroached with trees. It is likely that this was once the grounds of Netley Castle, which is adjacent to the site. Evidence of open parkland can be found on site, including large trees with wide open canopies indicating that they did not used to be growing in woodland as they are now. There are a number of large Horse Chestnuts on site and these have given the area the local name of Conker Field.

Plan showing Abbey Hill section



To the west of the area is the Weston Sailing Club and dry storage area. All of this land is owned by SCC and leased under licence to the sailing club.

The east end of the area has generated into a predominantly sycamore woodland over the years. However, as mentioned above there are some very large specimen trees within the woodland that suggest its parkland origin.

SCC are working in partnership with Sustrans to extend the national cycleway through this area. A potential route has been agreed and a work program is being developed. Ecological and tree surveys have been undertaken over the past year and a clear way forward has been reached to ensure the least impact on biodiversity, whilst still providing a path that can be used and enjoyed by both pedestrians and cyclists. The next steps will be to consult with park user groups and then to get planning permission from Eastleigh Borough Council (as the land is in their borough, although it is owned by SCC). Preliminary clearance works could start as soon as February using the Government funded Future Jobs Fund Trainees provided by Groundwork Solent.

1.3 Brief History

Early Prehistory

There is a lot of evidence along Weston Shore to suggest that it has been occupied from prehistoric times. Prehistoric worked flint tools, burnt flints and discoloured (probably burnt) areas of brick earth all lead us to believe that the area was being used by prehistoric settlers.

Later Prehistory

There is considerably less evidence for later prehistoric (Bronze Age and Iron Age) activity in the area. Remains have been identified in the vicinity of Weston Hard and also to the north of the park within the modern housing estates. These remains are primarily Iron Age in date and seemingly indicate the continued occupation and utilisation of the area. It is likely that further remains exist in the general area but the lack of archaeological excavation activity has prevented their identification.

Roman

There is limited evidence for Roman occupation and utilisation of the area. Coin hoards were located in the 19th century in West Wood and at the Netley Hospital (Royal Victoria). More recently roman deposits were identified during archaeological works in the housing estates north of the regeneration scheme. The remains, although limited, do indicate the continued occupation of the area during the Roman period.

Medieval

The majority of the Weston Shore area lay within the Manor of Woolston in the later Middle Ages, and had probably done so since the Late Saxon period. Olvestune (later spelt as Woolston) is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, along with Lateleie (Netley) and Westune (Weston). No evidence of early medieval activity has been found but it is likely that the inhabitants utilised the marshland landscapes of the foreshore for grazing, hunting and fishing. Weston Hard is likely to have been in use throughout this period as a major access point for local fisherman.

The most significant medieval activity started in 1239 when Netley Abbey was established by the Cistercian Monastic Order. The abbey was developed over a period of hundreds of years, eventually culminating in a core of stone buildings focused on the main church surrounded by a precinct ditch, this ditch also seemingly served as a moat. Around this were a series of fishponds and an extensive array of conduits / aqueducts bringing water from the upper reaches of the brook running through West Wood. The many earthwork features (terraces, banks and ditches) in West Wood and the surrounding area may be related to historical woodland management activities, possibly connected with Netley Abbey.

Post-Medieval / Modern

With the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in 1538 the abbey was converted to a private residence. This led to a number of substantial alterations. The landscape around the Abbey was also managed, during the 18th / 19th century, as a 'romanticised' setting for the Abbey. This included the 'borrowed' landscape of Southampton water and William Cobbet asserted, in his Rural Rides, "To them that delight in water scenes this is the prettiest place that I ever saw in my life." The Abbey and its setting are portrayed in numerous historically significant paintings and were also the subject of an opera in 1796.

Netley Castle, in its current form, was developed from a post-dissolution fortification constructed to defend Southampton water by Henry VIII. The site has now been extensively modernised and altered and is in private ownership. The parkland to the north of the Castle was formerly associated with the site. This has now degraded and its original form and structure have declined. The entrance to the sailing club also cuts across the last surviving traces of a possible carriageway.

The post-medieval period is, however, most notable for the increasing urbanisation of the area. Early maps from the 16th and 18th centuries show a predominately rural landscape focused on the three local settlements (Netley / Netley Green, Weston and Woolston). Woolston grew throughout the 19th century to become a suburban district of Southampton, dominated at first, by private villa residences. The later part of the 19th century and the early 20th century saw the gradual development of Netley / Netley Green and the

increasing urbanisation of Weston and Woolston. The foreshore to the north and west of Weston Shore was soon dominated by a number of factories, many of which have now been demolished. This process of increasing urbanisation continued throughout the 20th century, culminating in the sub-urban landscape of today, dominated by a number of late 20th century tower blocks.

There are a number of features of note from this period. These include the Seaweed Hut, which is perhaps one of the most unusual and remarkable lost buildings in Southampton. It formerly consisted of a wooden framed building clad in seaweed that served Weston Hard. The building was demolished in 1967 but remains of it have been found during recent archaeological excavations approximately 300mm below the current hardstanding. The building's origins probably date back to at least the 18th century and it served local fishermen up until at least the early-20th century.

The development of the foreshore in the early 20th century (c. 1920s) involved the construction of a promenade with a number of ovoid concrete shelters. These were originally glazed and would have acted as focal points along the foreshore walk. The shelters are characteristic elements of the local landscape.

Another area of interest from this period is West Wood. As well as containing a complex of banks and ditches and other earthworks that may relate to post-medieval woodland management, there are possibly the remnants of a rare form of missile battery or perhaps a more common Heavy Anti-Aircraft position from World War II.

The mid / late 20th century also saw the development of extensive landfill sites along the Weston foreshore. These were either developed on the site of earlier gravel pits or in areas of marshland. In both cases these landfills would have effectively destroyed or masked any earlier archaeological deposits or historic landscape features.



1.4 Policy Context

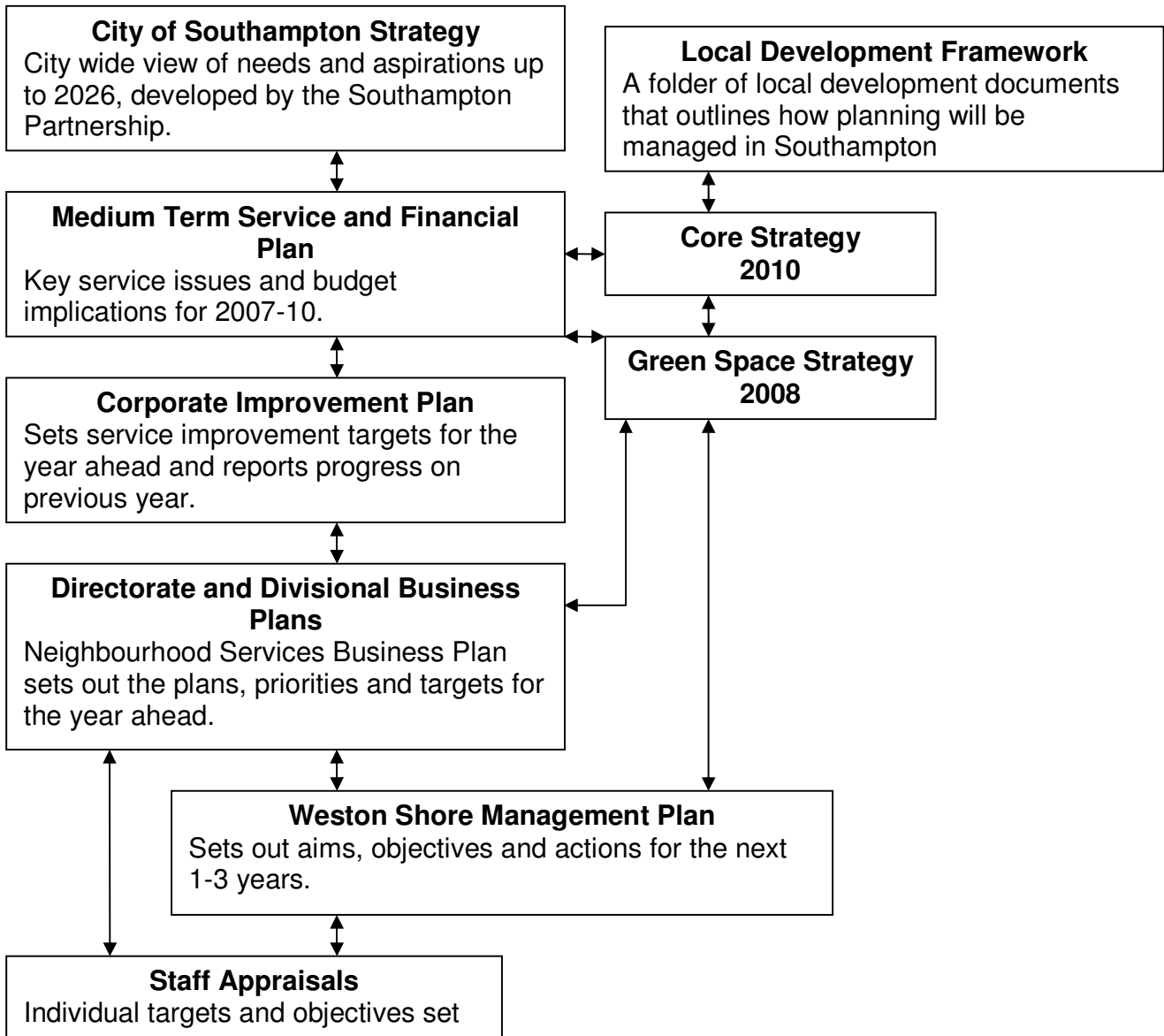


Figure 1 shows the golden thread of plans and strategies for Southampton City Council and shows how the Weston Shore management plan fits into this. Southampton's Green Space Strategy was adopted in October 2008 and can be viewed at:- www.southampton.gov.uk/gss

Southampton City Council has recently amended its priorities and six new key priorities have been identified. Weston Shore supports these priorities in the following ways;

1. Providing good value, high quality services

Weston Shore is freely available to all and areas of the park are fully accessible. The team are working very closely with Hampshire County Council in the West Wood area to ensure that work is joined up and coherent. We are also working closely with the local community to develop a Friends group which will enhance partnership working.

2. Getting the City working

Recent improvements to Weston Shore have greatly improved the infrastructure of the area. This includes the public toilets, refurbished shelters and signs and seats. These improvements have involved the community in the design and development stages.

3. Investing in education and training

The Park provides a learning resource for the residents of Southampton with interpretation boards, a heritage trail and an interactive landscape design.

4. Keeping people safe

Existing partnerships and close working with the local community, PCSOs and City Patrol helps to combat anti-social behaviour and build community cohesion. The improvement works have given the local community a greater sense of ownership of the park and attracts more people in, thus helping to reduce anti-social behaviour.

5. Keeping the city clean and green

The regeneration of Weston Shore has greatly improved the environment of the local area. The park offers a green resource within the city and is adjacent to a SSSI. It is also part of the Solent Way and has national cycle route NCN2 within it. All green waste within the park is recycled, contributing to achieving this priority.

6. Looking after people

The park is very varied and has something to interest most groups. As it is quite large, the park attracts a wide range of people from the surrounding areas and from outside Southampton. Weston Shore is a key green space for a large area of high density housing and tower blocks, therefore it has a vital role in improving those residents' health and wellbeing.

There are a number of other city wide strategies and plans that directly or indirectly affect the management of parks. The table below lists these with key areas of relevance to the management of Weston Shore.

Council Strategy/ Plan	Key theme for management of Weston Shore
Southampton's Green Space Strategy (GSS)	The Green Space Strategy was adopted by Cabinet in October 2008. The strategy provides a classification of parks based on quality and standards. All park management plans link to the GSS. Key priorities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing community involvement in the management and maintenance of green spaces • Encouraging more events and activities in parks • Increasing the number of Green Flag Awards across the city and using the criteria set out to inform future management plans.
Core Strategy	Has specific planning policy on enhancing and increasing green space provision in Southampton. As well as policies on climate change adaptation and green infrastructure improvement. The GSS acts as an evidence base for this document.
Biodiversity Action Plan	Protect, promote and improve biodiversity across the city, especially in relation to the SPA status of the Solent and Southampton Water.
Street Scene Strategy	To improve the quality of streets, parks and open spaces across the city making Southampton 'smarter, safer, cleaner'
CAA (Comprehensive Area Assessment)	The CAA concluded that overall SCC performs well. Quality green spaces are included in the overall assessment of the area.
LAA (Local Area Agreement)	The Stronger, safer, communities block of Southampton's LAA includes a target for the achievement of Green Flag awards. Weston Shore will be a key park in achieving this target.
Play Policy	Making play provision welcoming and accessible.
Neighbourhood Services Management Plan	A key overarching priority of the business plan is to make Southampton a greener city, specific commitments include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering the GSS action plan by identifying and prioritising further park improvements • Developing a green park code to include dog control orders. • Improving sustainability and climate change adaptations.

1.5 Service Standards

1.5.1 Service Promises

The Neighbourhood Services Division of Southampton City Council is responsible for managing, maintaining and developing Weston Shore. The Park, in common with all of Southampton's parks and green spaces, is managed and maintained in line with a set of 'Service Promises' that define baseline standards of service that customers can expect to see delivered consistently across the city. The 'Service Promises' were developed in consultation with community groups and key stakeholders and are written in clear and non-technical language to enable all customers to easily recognise the standards of service they can expect to see delivered within their neighbourhood. The Green Spaces Service Promises are published on the Parks and Green Spaces page of the city council's website (www.southampton.gov.uk/parks). Compliance is monitored through ongoing monthly on-site inspections, with a target of >95% of sites visited maintained in line with the services published standards. Performance results form part of the Divisional performance scorecard and are reported in the Neighbourhood Services Business Plan. Service Promises are included within staff's individual and team appraisal targets, with local performance reported and reviewed at regular team meetings.

1.5.2 Quality Audit

Park development needs and priorities are informed by user consultation and standards set out in Southampton's Green Space Strategy. This promotes audits to be undertaken to assess their current status and to give a baseline for future improvement and required investment. A quality audit of all of Southampton's Parks was undertaken by an independent consultant in Autumn 2009. The data collected was based on green flag criteria and gives a good idea of the areas where quality needs to be improved. The Audit also gives an idea of numbers and quality of seating and bins. Weston Shore scored 70% in the audit cementing its eligibility for Green Flag status and giving a good basis for continued improvements.

1.6 Resources

1.6.1 Staff

Staff involved in looking after Weston Shore have collective experience of well over 150 years working in the park. This experience is invaluable in the day to day maintenance and management of the park. The team are dedicated and proud of their park.

Neighbourhood Services has recently been reorganised and this has meant that Weston Shore now falls under one manager, Martin Willcox (East District

Manager). Martin has overall responsibility for the East side of the city including Weston Shore and he is supported by the Area Coordinator Mike McSorley and Team Leader Martin Wright from the area based parks and cleansing team. Martin Wright also manages the pitch and putt course.

Although there are no on site staff, with the exception of the pitch and putt attendant throughout the summer, the park is attended daily by parks and cleansing staff to carry out maintenance. Maintenance works in the park include grass cutting, general cleansing and litter bin emptying, play ground inspection, inspection of the shelters and fine turf maintenance on the pitch and putt. In addition, the large areas of grass are maintained via the citywide tractor team and support on ecology and natural environment work is given by Andy Welch from the Hawthorns Urban Wildlife Centre.

Martin and the area team are supported by John Horton, (Parks and Cleansing Manager) and Adrian Crook (Project Officer). Nick Yeats (Trees, Allotments and Parks Improvements Manager) also assists with policy and strategic development of the Park. Jon Dyer-Slade is the overall Head of Neighbourhood Services.

West Wood is managed in partnership with Hampshire County Council Countryside Service and the day to day running of the area is carried out by Carly Fretwell (Countryside Ranger HCC). She is supported by Deb Beeson who is the park manager for the Royal Victoria Country Park and Westwood Woodland Park and by Phil Helliwell who is the overall Area Manager for the Southern Region. There are 2 other rangers, an administration officer and an operations officer who form part of the team, although the 2 rangers main area of operation is within Royal Victoria Country Park.

Neighbourhood Services has recently been awarded a grant to provide placements for Future Jobs Fund Trainees. This entails providing six month placements for people who have had difficulty finding work, giving them practical experience and skills to enable them to apply for jobs in the future. It is anticipated that 10 people will be taken on through this scheme across the Neighbourhood Services Division, with one employed in and around the East Team.

1.6.2 Finance and Budget

At the time of writing, the net budget expenditure forecast for the SCC maintained part of Weston Shore for 2009/10 is as detailed below.

Activity	Forecast Expenditure 09/10(£)
Amenity grass maintenance	4,500
Shrub, hedge, rose and flower bed maintenance	8,200
Net Pitch and Putt maintenance	31,000
Play area maintenance	1,200
Development, events and community activities	3,000
Maintenance of trees in West Wood	2,000
Sweeping and litter collection	12,100
Infrastructure repairs and maintenance	9,000
TOTAL	71,000

The expectation is for spending to continue at proportionately similar levels during 2010/11, but this is contingent on an as yet incomplete corporate budget setting process. The Parks team will be provided with the 2010/11 budget information in March to enable them to plan in detail the expenditure over the period April 2010 to March 2011.

In addition to the above, approximately £25K of the parks capital budget was allocated to Weston Shore to fund improvements during 2009/10. This included installing new benches and bins, Picnic benches and a sign cabinet, as well as improvement to the pitch and putt through the removal of an old tarmac area and the renovation of returned yacht storage space back to a wildlife area. There was also £100k of grant funding for improvements to West Wood, mentioned elsewhere in this document.

1.7 Community Involvement

Weston Shore is predominantly used by the local communities of Woolston, Weston, Sholing, Thornhill and Bitterne, but as a City park it also attracts visitors from other parts of Southampton and beyond. Survey data suggests that the majority of users enjoy the Shore as a resource for active and passive recreation.

There are many different types of user groups that enjoy Weston Shore. These include; dog walking, water sports, wildlife watching in particular bird watching, fishing, play, cycling, walking, pitch and putt, caravanning, boat watching

All of the most recent improvements have been undertaken following extensive consultation with local residents and parks users. An example of this is where Abigail's work with the community led people to discover and recreate the microscopic world of the mudflats, unearth some exciting treasures from the past and explore the diversity of wildlife habitats. Older residents shared memories through the Down Memory Lane oral history project. While the Bird's Eye View project recorded the ever changing landscape and produced a touring exhibition of drawing, photography, creative writing and poetry. A 'Tracks & Trails' arts workshop and the finds from a community archaeology dig inform the 'Sands of Time' shelter. All design ideas were exhibited at a 'Grand Day Out' held on the shore and attended by over 1,000 people.



A themed play area based on pirates and islands was improved through design and installation of new equipment, in partnership with Groundwork Solent, following consultation with residents from the tower blocks in International Way and the Venny adventure play ground. Three pieces of equipment were installed using funding of around £45k from CEMEX and SITA.

At West Wood a partnership with Groundwork Solent, Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council has raised capital funding of around £100k. Major grants came from the Forestry Commission and Veolia. Designs were developed following consultation in the form of a questionnaire sent out to local community groups and individuals using the wood in March 2007. In August 2007 the resulting designs were made available for comment at the Weston Grand Day Out event. Further consultation has been ongoing through the end of 2007 and 2008 which included residents living in the Tower Blocks and Weston Shore Infant School, who will be involved in designing the entrance feature to the wood.



HCC West Wood Rangers have also been working towards a Friends of West Wood Group. The group was set up in July 2008 and has been working towards having a committee and constitution. They achieved this in January 2009. There are 80 members currently and they carry out one task a month, alternating between West Wood and the Royal Victoria Country Park. Many of the members are committed to making West Wood a better place to visit.

The recent improvements and consultation have created a lot of interest in the park from local residents who are keen to contribute to improving the park for all the community to enjoy. The area already has a high level of community spirit and the park is an area that people feel strongly about. SCC Officers have been working with these keen people to help them to form a friends group. A Nucleus has been formed and we are working with this group to help them to enlarge their membership and work on a program of events throughout 2010.

One of the early challenges for the friends group will be to work out how other groups in the area, such as the Friends of West Wood, interconnect and how they can all work together to improve the park.

1.8 User Feedback

Southampton's parks are frequently identified as one of the most important factors in making the city a good place to live. The most recent Place survey conducted by MORI in late 2008 indicated that overall satisfaction with parks and green spaces was 76%. This places Southampton in the top 25% of all local authorities.

Southampton actively promotes the national GreenSTAT online survey hosted by Greenspace, however, to date there have been no entries relating to Weston Shore. We will be working with the Friends group to promote this survey further and hope to get some good feedback through it.



Getting crafty at the Rolling Mills field

Chapter 2 - Management Strategy

2.1 Vision

For Weston Shore to continue to be a unique seafront destination park in Southampton with a distinct and varied wildlife. With a range of facilities including pitch and putt, play spaces, wide open spaces and sporting facilities, enjoyed by the local community and people from further afield.

2.2 Aims

Weston Shore has a unique character as one of the few public areas in Southampton with access to a beach and the shoreline of Southampton Water. It serves a wide range of functions for the local community and draws people in from further afield. The overall character of the park should be recognised and enhanced whilst maintaining and improving the individual components that make it unique. There are five broad aims for the management, in partnership, of Weston Shore identified in accordance with the City of Southampton Strategy, the adopted Green Space Strategy and other key city plans;

- Retain and enhance the distinctive quality of the Park
- Provide a service that meets and continues to meet user need, both locally and strategically through the objectives of the City Council
- Interpret and promote the park to ensure the benefits it offers are maximised
- Ensure the park is accessible to all elements of the community.
- Enhance biodiversity and ensure the SPA is not compromised.

2.3 Specific Objectives for 2009/12

The following key objectives have been derived from the Green Space Strategy, the draft Neighbourhood Services business plan¹ and customer feedback. They provide a focus for management in 2010/12. Specific actions to address these objectives are identified in the action plan in section 3.4.

¹ Business Plans are finalised in March after the budget setting process.

- *Increase community involvement in the management and maintenance of the park by developing and working closely with the Weston Shore Friends Group and the other local residents associations.* Whilst developing the Weston Shore Friends Group the Neighbourhood Services team will work with them to identify improvements and opportunities for joint working.
- *To maintain and improve the unique character of Weston Shore and enhance and interpret the varied biodiversity.* A site specific biodiversity management plan, in line with the city's Biodiversity Action Plan, will be integrated into this management plan.
- *To increase customer satisfaction in Weston Shore.* A generic priority in the GSS is to increase customer satisfaction with parks and open spaces, this is of relevance to Weston Shore.
- *To provide and promote an exciting and expanded range of events in the park, raising environmental awareness and increasing community involvement.* This is also an aim contained within the GSS for open spaces across the city, which has particular relevance to the park.

2.4 Management Structures

The management and maintenance of Weston Shore is the responsibility of the East area team within Parks and Street Cleansing. The Parks and Street Cleansing Team is within the Neighbourhood Services Division of the Neighbourhood Directorate. The division includes Active Communities, Stronger Communities, Safer Communities, Major Projects and Trees, Allotments and Park Improvements. A structure chart of the teams directly involved with the management of the park can be found in appendix 3.

Westwood Woodland Park is the responsibility of the South Region Ranger Service as part of the Hampshire Countryside Service, which sits within Hampshire County Council. A structure chart of the teams directly involved with the management of West Wood can be found in appendix 3

Managers within Neighbourhood Services undertake MBWA (management by walking about) which includes visits to Weston Shore. The District Manager is the main link between staff on the ground and senior management. Quarterly meetings are held with Neighbourhood Services management and the District Manager to monitor progress on the action plan.

The strategic management of play areas within Weston Shore is lead by Play Services, through the Play Area Steering group, which is in the Children's Services Directorate. However, the play areas are built, managed and maintained by the Landscape and Schools Grounds Maintenance team (within Neighbourhood Services), who have recently incorporated the Play Ranger service. The health and safety inspections are carried out by the area team.

2.5 Green Space Policies Relating to Weston Shore

There are a number of operational and management policies covering open spaces and the whole city that have particular relevance to the park as detailed below.

2.5.1 Health and Safety

All activities undertaken by the City Council in Weston Shore are subject to risk assessment. The Neighbourhood Services Division has over 300 risk assessments in place covering the range of the teams work. Generic Risk Assessments are in the process of being put on the SCC intranet pages and are also held in the staff room at the stable block, in Mayfield Park as hard copies. The potential Friends of Weston Shore and any volunteer groups will be trained to carry out risk assessments before undertaking any work.

The play areas are inspected on a daily basis to ensure that equipment is safe and that the immediate area is suitably clean. Any faults are immediately reported to the city play area maintenance team. Neighbourhood Services Division are currently undertaking an appraisal of “mobile working” procedures, with a view to improve our working practices and make them more efficient. We are currently looking at software and hand held hardware that will enable us to carry out play area inspections and record the results without having to return to the office. It is anticipated that this project should be complete during 2010/11.

Damage or maintenance issues regarding bins, seats and signs are reported during the daily check of the park by the on site staff. Any health and safety issues are dealt with immediately and other repairs are undertaken by staff as needed.

The public hards are checked daily for build up of shingle. The shingle is removed monthly or more often if required, and the hards are jet washed when they become slippery through algae build up.

In addition to parks staff, City Patrol and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) carry out patrols within the park to improve the perception of safety and provide a visible presence to deter anti-social behaviour.

The Toilet block is covered by an agreement with the Property Services section of the Council who are responsible for maintenance of all park buildings. The Area Manager directly reports any repairs that are required to Property Services and this is then prioritised according to the nature of the repair and timescale agreed. Annual inspections are carried out for both electrical and fire safety equipment and the results recorded in the parks central office.

The four shelters are a special case and were returned to management and maintenance of Neighbourhood Services after their refurbishment. They are

checked daily for vandalism, graffiti and cleanliness. They are cleaned once a week and graffiti is removed as necessary.

2.5.2 Enviro-crime and cleanliness

The Council has a proactive approach to the removal of graffiti and fly posters on land it manages. There are two reactive teams ready to respond to graffiti problems, prioritising offensive material. Additionally protective coatings are applied to features regularly targeted facilitating rapid removal, and training and equipment is issued to key partners to enable them to tackle small incidents. Any offensive material is removed within 24 hours of being reported.

Litter bins are emptied three times a week or more often as inspections dictate.

A team of City Patrol Officers cover the whole of Southampton patrolling the streets, parks and open spaces seven days a week. During the day they deal with enviro-crime and issue fixed penalty fines for dog fouling, flytipping, graffiti and littering. This helps to reduce the negative impact of litter and dog fouling in particular. In the evening the role of City Patrol officers is geared towards dealing with anti-social behaviour, which can involve them patrolling parks and green spaces. Any occasions of vandalism are reported to the District Manager and repairs are carried out as soon as possible.

2.5.3 Horses

Policy adopted by SCC on 21st January 2007 states that there are delegated powers, to the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods, to commence impoundment procedures at his / her discretion when a horse is deemed to pose an unacceptable risk to public safety, to private property, is adversely affecting public rights to recreation, or is significantly damaging the environment. This procedure is enacted following due notice, and as a final resort when all other means to secure the removal of the animal have been exhausted.

Weston Shore is often targeted by horse owners to tether their animals, particularly on the meadow site. Where the horses are well away from footpaths and other parks facilities and are of sufficiently low numbers to not cause a nuisance (1 or 2) a lenient approach to the policy has been taken. However, if horses are tethered adjacent to footpaths etc or where numbers increase beyond 1 or 2 then we do enact the policy and we have found it to be effective. It should be noted that we have not had to have a horse impounded throughout the life of this policy.

2.5.4 Sustainability

The P&SC team recycles all green waste produced and this applies to the green waste generated by Weston Shore. Green waste from the park and surrounding areas is collected on site and shredded for use as mulch where possible. This mulch is used in the park to suppress weeds, condition the topsoil, and retain moisture and nutrients.

This approach reflects the parks team's general policy in terms of waste disposal, which is to ensure waste is collected, processed and disposed of in as sustainable a way as possible, with minimum carbon emissions. In practice this means that where feasible green waste is directly recycled at the point of origin. Where this approach is not viable, as next best option green waste is taken to the council's nearest recycling bay for composting and future re-use within the city's green spaces. All green waste generated within Weston Shore is disposed of through these methods, either through chipping directly back onto the site of origin or composting within the park's on-site recycling bay. Within West Wood all timber arisings are either left stacked in ecology piles, or used for products such as bean sticks or blanks for wood turners.

Unfortunately the council's current overall recycling capacity means that not all green waste produced from the city's thousand plus hectares of green space can be processed in-house, so as the final option the council works with out of city contractors to collect our excess green waste and compost off-site. To minimise unnecessary travel, the delivery of recycled compost is coincided with the collection of fresh green waste taken off-site for processing.

Presently litter bin waste from Weston Shore is taken to a local energy recovery facility which recovers heat energy from waste. This heat energy is used to generate electricity for the National Grid. The methane gas from the landfill is also piped from site to a collection unit and used to generate electricity. Therefore, of the hundreds of tons of green, inert and mixed waste collected and produced by Weston Shore all gets recycled in some way.

A pilot to trial dual use recyclable/general waste bins commenced in late 2009 in the city's Central Parks. The success of this pilot and future roll-out across the city will depend on the degree to which contamination of recyclable waste can be avoided. This consideration is particularly pertinent as currently our general waste parks bins are used to dispose of both litter and bagged dog faeces, a policy that has helped significantly reduce the amount of dog fouling found on site over the past five years.

The City Council operates safe working practices to ensure that all pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers are properly applied. The purpose of these procedures is to ensure that all relevant legislation is followed and that records are properly kept and maintained. The Council aims to minimise the use of chemical products and actively seeks alternative approaches where possible. Should there be no

alternative to chemical usage then products are selected from an approved list, preventing the use of environmentally unfriendly products.

In Weston Shore, the use of Casoron G has stopped and wherever possible the use of other pesticides is being reduced to a minimum. Glyphosate based herbicide is used for Japanese Knotweed control and on rare occasions for control of weeds under features, such as benches, where manual weeding is not possible. Wherever possible new features are designed in such a way that either it is acceptable to have weeds/grass adjacent to them or they are constructed in a way with a base that will stay weed free. We will also be working towards reducing the amount of chemical use on the pitch and putt by the use of improved cultural methods over the next year. However, current industry practice seems to be moving towards using growth retardants and we will be investigating the feasibility of using these in the future.

Any timber used within the park is either from trees cut down in Southampton, as part of the tree surgery contract or woodland management works, or from sustainable FSC certified sources.

2.5.5 Conservation and heritage

It is important that the unique characteristics of Weston Shore are maintained and that the local history is preserved where possible.

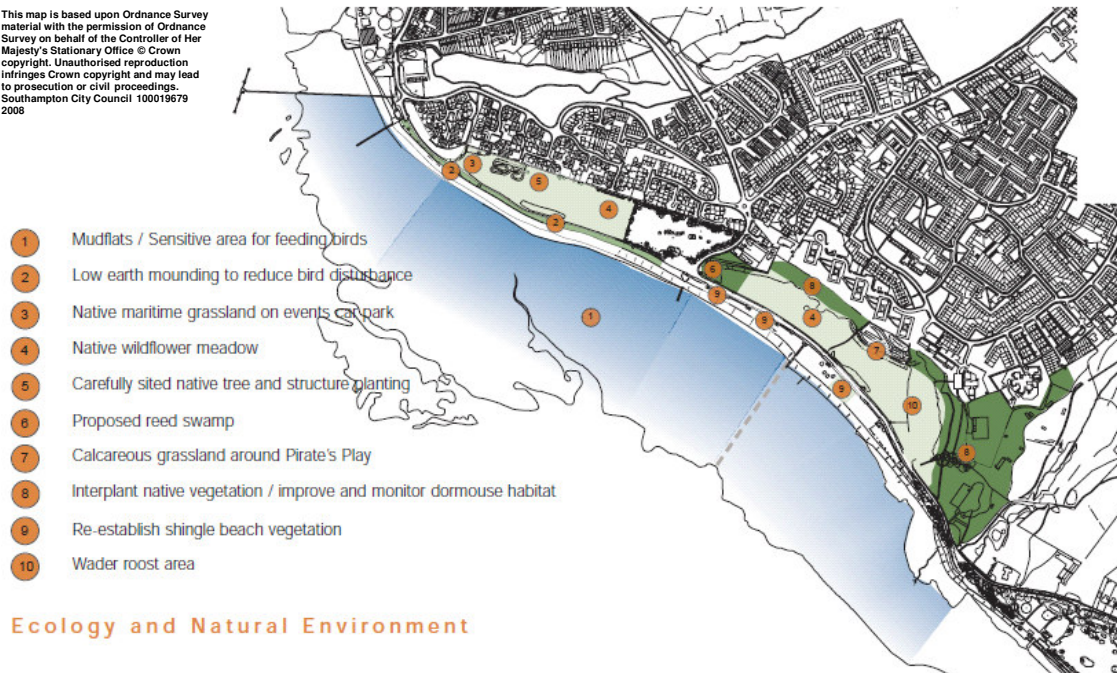
Conservation

Every autumn thousands of wildfowl make the long trek from their breeding grounds in the Arctic to spend the winter along the Solent coast. Many of these birds feed on the mudflats at Weston Shore. The exceptional biodiversity value of the shoreline at Weston has been recognised by national and international nature conservation designations. The beach and foreshore were first designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, part of the Lee-on-the-Solent to Itchen Estuary (SSSI), in 1992. They were subsequently included in the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar Site as a consequence of the large numbers of wetland birds that feed on the inter-tidal mudflats.

The grassland and woodland areas behind the beach are also of value having been designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). In particular, Westwood contains oak and alder woodland, some of which is ancient in origin, and has been known to support Dormouse, a BAP priority species. The habitats in these areas are more robust than the foreshore and provide an ideal location for people to enjoy access to the natural environment.

Plan showing the key ecology and natural environment

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Site meetings with the Council's ecologist have been undertaken in 2009 and will continue. A biodiversity action plan has been drawn up and will be built on in 2010 to maximise the potential of both the formal and natural environments within Weston Shore;

Potential Improvements for Biodiversity in 2010

Site description

The site forms an important link between the Shoreburs and Weston Greenways. It consists of internationally important mudlands, gravel beach, brackish pool and wetland, acid scrub, nutrient deficient grassland and recreational areas. Most of the area is designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (S.I.N.C.), in addition to this the mudland has national designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (S.S.S.I.) and forms part of the internationally designated RAMSAR and Special Protection Area. The mudland supports an impressive variety of wading birds, including Dunlin, Grey plover and Turnstone. The coastal location means the site provides important stop over areas for migrating birds and insects as well as locally scarce coastal flora.

Management concerns.

Recent works have resulted in the loss of some wildlife habitat and the potential of introduced plants affecting the adjacent natural areas. Increased public activity has resulted in further disturbance and pressure on the remaining natural areas. This being particularly important in the area either side of the toilet block slip, up to the green marker post, where the majority of wading birds congregate. The

use of limestone for path repairs is also potentially damaging in a naturally acid area.

The closure of a nearby rubbish tip has resulted in large numbers of Carrion crows moving into the area and these are now badly affecting the birds using the mudlands. Feeding these crows by public using the car parks is further increasing their numbers and the number of feral pigeons.

Mowing and landscape works have significantly reduced the native shore plants. The nutrient deficient grassland between the shore and the tower blocks is being nutrient enriched and over grazed by horses. Increasing public access to the area is also disturbing ground feeding and roosting birds, there is no alternative high tide roost in the local heavily developed area.

Opportunities for improvement

Disturbance to the wading birds using the shore between the green triangle marker and the toilet block slipway is of particular concern. Investigate the possibility of not keeping the slip clear during main bird usage period (September to March inclusive). Also potentially constructing a bund along the top of the bank parallel to the shoreline to screen dogs running along the path and discourage access to the beach along this section.

In the short term the following actions have been identified (west to east):

Plant Sea buckthorn hedge along edge of boat store fence – this will provide a screen and potential food/shelter for migrant birds (buckthorn is a better option than gorse due to the combustibility of the latter).

Coppice sections of gorse and buddleia on adjacent gravel area to allow more sunlight onto floor to encourage ground flora and fauna and prevent area scrubbing over.

Clear burnt gorse area near shore, allow gorse to regenerate.

Introduce early spring cut to nearby soil mound “feather”.

Stop mowing adjacent old gravel area to encourage butterflies that used to use the area, in particular Common blues.

Clear sections through main vegetation clump along edge of main path to rejuvenate gorse and prevent bramble from taking over. This area is often used by wintering Stonechats.

Introduce similar coppice regime along back brick wall; when Bramble gets to top of wall clear that area to floor level, then leave until it gets to top of wall again.

Plant a mixture of wildlife friendly ornamental bulbs and native plants such as Teasel, Evening primrose and Lemon balm along the boundary of the Pitch and Putt adjacent to Weston Lane.

Increase size of newly created scrape on the corner of Weston lane by decreasing the size and height of the island. The spoil to be spread on the side of the adjacent landfill bank to provide substrate for wild flowers to colonise.

Ensure slipway is only cleared at high tide when disturbance to birds minimised and not at all during cold weather. Extend groin along western side to prevent 4x4 vehicle access along beach.

Stop cutting shore vegetation except for a strip immediately adjacent to the parameter of the Play area. Remove paving stop access way to old jetty and leave to recolonise with natural shore flora.

Remove fence from boundary of inland play area leaving the walkway as the boundary. Allow chalkland vegetation to flourish as originally planned.

Cut a 1m strip monthly along the top of the viewing mound wooden edging, leaving rest as rough grassland.

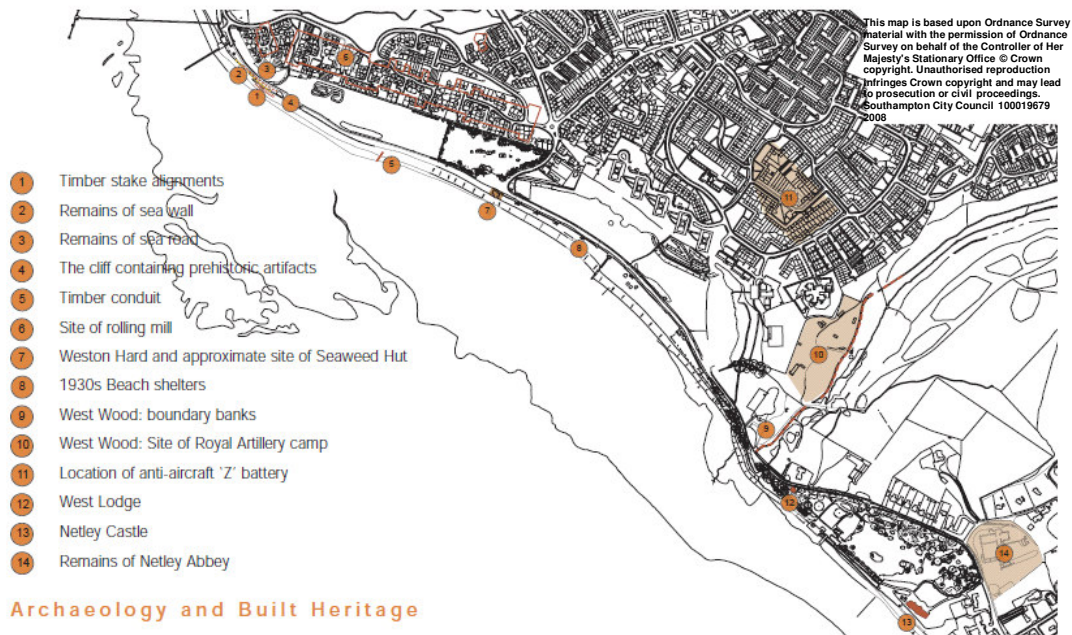
Check if work to Westwood car park has been completed. Need some form of barrier to prevent vehicular access onto field from the corner of the car park.

Heritage

The heritage value of this park is well established and recent improvements have highlighted and given interpretation for this in the form of a heritage trail developed with the thoughts and sound bites of local residents. Weston Shore is fondly remembered by elderly local residents as a popular seaside destination between the 1930s and 1950s. Weston Shore uniquely combines a wide range of heritage interests, including:

- Four concrete beach shelters constructed in the modernist style between 1934 and 1937 during the 'heyday' of Weston Shore as a recreational beach. Now restored and designed with local heritage themes incorporated
- A number of visible and hidden features of archaeological significance and remains dating back to prehistoric times
- Strong links to Southampton's industrial, wartime and maritime heritage, and evidence of the area's history as a thriving fishing community dating back to the 16th century.
- A wide range of recognised natural and ecological heritage, including internationally significant SSSI and SPA designations for over-wintering birds; a number of species protected by the UK Biodiversity Action Plan; and ancient semi-natural oak woodland designated as a SINC within West Wood.

Plan showing the key heritage and archaeology



2.5.6 Marketing

The council has adopted a 'campaign' method of managing communications to focus and prioritise marketing and to ensure consistent messages are given to the public. Several key campaigns have been identified which will include opportunities to promote Southampton's parks. In particular the **City Pride campaign** - promoting park events, positive messages about our parks, improving perception; **Volunteering campaign** – promoting opportunities to get more involved in your local park and volunteer to help make improvements; and **Highlight green credentials campaign** – the value of parks and green spaces in climate change adaptation and improving biodiversity. These campaigns will be high profile and will be used to deliver a number of key messages about all our Green Flag parks and will hopefully encourage more community involvement.

As indicated in the Green Space Strategy and Neighbourhood Services Business Plan, a key objective for the year ahead is to promote parks as a vital resource for enhancing the health and well-being of their visitors. Weston Shore serves a large area and is appreciated by a wide range of users.

New signs at key entrances display maps and information about the park and immediate area. There is space for regularly updated 'what's new in the park' section that the Neighbourhood Services team and the Friends can utilise.

Weston Shore is publicised in a number of ways including through the Southampton City Council website and Hampshire website. Many fishing enthusiast web sites include Weston Shore within their places to visit. It can also be found on Ideasforthekids.com (www.ideasforthekids.co.uk). The Friends also have a Blog and Web site (the addresses can be found in the Action Plan).

Events are advertised on the “What’s On” pages of the Council’s website, as well as through the local press and popular magazines such as Tenants Link and The Scene Magazine. A specific park events poster is developed each year and will be displayed at prominent points within the park. This has the added benefit of also advertising other park events. Events in Weston Shore will be used to market the park more widely and will also promote the potential Friends of Weston Shore.

2.5.7 Trees

A system of tree management known as Southampton’s Tree Risk Operational Management System (STORMS) is underway across the city. This ensures that council owned trees are inspected on a frequency determined by the potential usage of the area in which they are situated, and their own potential to cause a hazard. Trees in Weston Shore are subject to an inspection at least every four years, with some high risk trees inspected every two years.

The majority of the trees in Weston Shore are within West Wood and these are managed following the woodland park management plan written by Hampshire County Council in partnership with Southampton City Council. Southampton provides tree surgery expertise when needed to ensure key areas are maintained in a safe condition.



Chapter 3 - Actions and Recommendations

3.1 Measuring Success

Recent progress over the last year set within the Green Flag criteria provides a good means of measuring how successful we are. The list below highlights the most significant achievements made in the park and also includes key achievements made by the Friends groups.

Welcoming place

- A new sign cabinet has been installed at the Victoria Road end of Weston Shore and displays information about the park including maps of the area.
- New interpretation signs have been developed and will be installed in spring 2010 for West Wood. They give information on wildlife and the heritage of the site. There is also a Disabled Bay being developed within the car park of the Venny for use by those wanting to assess West Wood.
- The Hampshire County Council owned area of West Wood has been included in this years application in recognition of the fact that there is no physical barriers to the differently owned sites and that the public expectation is that the two sites are managed to a similar standard.
- A picnic area has been established on the meadow area of the park. It was decided to put this in front of the existing play area and to remove some of the fencing to remove the barrier for people accessing the play area and picnicking.
- We have also removed a large area of overgrown shrubbery along the boundary of the pitch and putt course to give better views into the area and improve its visibility to passers by.

Healthy, safe and secure

- Some trees and much of the undergrowth around the car park at Abbey Hill has been removed or thinned to allow greater views into the area and discourage anti-social behaviour. There is now some natural surveillance of the area from neighbouring properties.
- Improvements to boundary fencing for West Wood have almost been completed, with one section left to go. This has greatly reduced the



Friends & staff collecting the Flag in Bournemouth 2009

occurrence of motorcycling in the wood and reduced the amount of wheelie bin fires.

- Improvements throughout West Wood through grant funding have seen improved natural play with such things as climbing rocks being introduced to give more interest.
- In 2008 Council adopted a policy on the management of horses in open spaces. This will be applied as appropriate to the site.

Clean and well maintained

- Very successful clean up events, organised by the West Shore Friends Group, were undertaken this year. They were well attended with members of other local groups getting involved, such as the Rowing club, Friends of Mayfield Park, Sholing Valleys Study Group and Friends of West Wood.
- The West Wood Rangers have been working with their Wildlife Watch Group (6-14 year olds) to develop child friendly dog waste signage. This is to be installed into West Wood and if successful could be rolled out across the park.
- The Wildlife Watch Group have also been helping to maintain West Wood through tree planting and other tasks.
- New Seating has been placed along the "Parade" at the request of local residents and park users.
- Ongoing work with the Community Payback scheme lead by the Hampshire Probationary Services to undertake clean up days within the park.

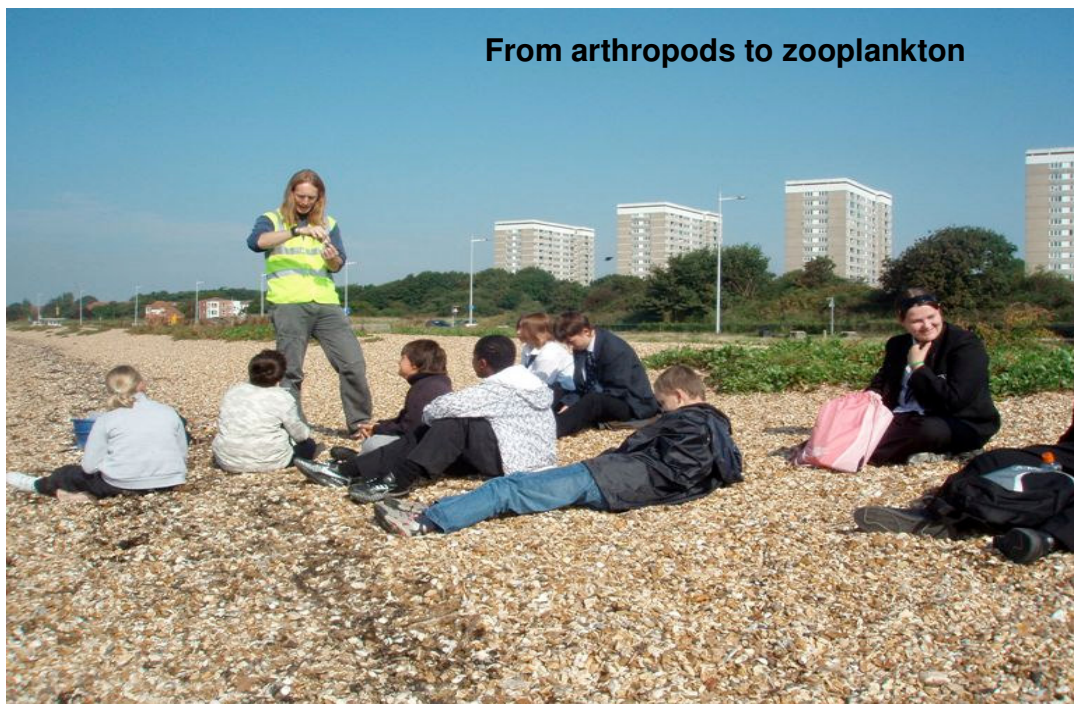
Sustainability

- Hampshire Rangers have carried out a number of woodland management tasks in West Wood this year, including coppicing and replanting areas as part of a 20 year rotation, removing Turkey Oak, carrying out habitat management to encourage bluebells by cutting scallops into the side of the woodland, improving dormouse habitat through coppicing.
- Mulching of shrub beds has continued this year, but in addition to this Hampshire Rangers have also been using arisings from coppicing and tree work for ecology piles and other sustainable wood products such as logs, bean sticks and as blanks to supply local wood turners.
- We have developed picnic areas and enhanced areas away from the shore line, such as on the meadow and in Abbey Hill to encourage more use of these areas and therefore to reduce the impact on the more sensitive SSSI and SPA.

Conservation and heritage

- The salt water marsh area has gone from strength to strength with fish and other invertebrates now living there. This in turn has enticed a white egret to frequent the area. The surround reed beds have also now established.
- Biodiversity action plan identifying key areas of the park for different habitats and agreeing appropriate management regimes has been written and incorporated into this management plan. This will be expanded upon in the future.

- Hampshire have successfully attained Local Nature Reserve status on their area of West Wood. They will be working with SCC to ensure the rest of West Wood and Weston Shore attains the same status.
- The area of land returned to the Council from Southampton Sailing Club has been successfully reintegrated into the park, with native shrub and wildflower planting to augment what is already there.
- The fence from boundary of the Pirate play area was removed leaving the walkway as the boundary allowing chalkland vegetation to flourish.



Community Involvement

- From meetings with potential Weston Shore friends a nucleus group has been established and they are working to enlarge their membership.
- The Friends of West Wood have become a fully constituted group.
- Continued to develop and expand links with the local sailing and fishing clubs and residents associations.

Marketing

- Information about Weston Shore has been updated and can be found on Southampton City Council web pages at www.southampton.gov.uk/living/regen/westonshore.aspx and at www.southampton.gov.uk/s-leisure/parksgreenspaces/westonshore.aspx
- Information about West Wood in particular can be found on the HCC web site here. www3.hants.gov.uk/hampshire-countryside/westwood-woodland-park.htm

- The friends also have web sites which give a good idea of the events going on and those already undertaken. The links can be found in the Action Plan below.
- Other events are more widely advertised on the SCC What's on web pages.
- Weston Shore was the site of some major events for the city this year. All of which were widely advertised by our events team. The events included all nine of the Cunard cruise ship fleet coming into Southampton over one weekend and the Big Bike Celebration, organised as part of the Sutrans Street-tread project, which featured an array of displays and activities, including the try-a-bike arena with The Company of Cyclists, mountain bike displays by M.A.D. (Europe's largest stunt/trials display team), a bicycle smoothie-maker, and the Bike Doctor providing a free health check for bikes.

Management

- A feasibility study has been undertaken as to whether the kiosk can be expanded to include community use, unfortunately the design of the building prevents this. Further work was also undertaken to establish if the kiosk could be let as part of a concession, early indications are that it is not in the right location for this, but we are continuing to discuss this with our current concession holder.
- A targeted road show aimed at reducing the occurrence of dog fouling was held at the Rolling Mills site during Poop Scoop week, raising awareness of this issue on site
- Continued to work closely with HCC Rangers to manage the West Wood site, culminating in including the HCC owned part of the area into this green flag management plan.

3.2 Programme of events for 2009/12



Having such a varied user base, Weston Shore has to meet the needs of many groups. Over the next three years the park will host a number of events. Many of these will be planned and delivered by other stakeholders in partnership with the Council. We will also be hosting some events of our own with help from the Weston Shore Friends group.

Typical events over the next three years will include:

- The sailing clubs regattas.
- The annual angling events.
- Biking events are in the early phase of planning, linked to Sustrans.
- Community fun days will be organised.
- Walks, talks and activities to educate and inform people of the biodiversity and heritage will be provided.
- Kite flying events to be developed

For 2010, the year of Biodiversity, the Friends Group are putting together a program of wildlife themed events, to include wildlife walks and talks and biodiversity based fun days.

3.3 Maintenance schedule

A typical day for the area team in Weston Shore involves a number of daily routine tasks;

- Early morning litter pick
- Emptying litter bins
- Play area inspection
- MUGA inspection
- Shelters inspection
- General check of the park – including inspections of seats, bins and signs. Any damage identified and reported for follow up inspections / repair / maintenance as required
- Responding to queries from members of the public

In addition other maintenance tasks are;

- Mowing (at various frequencies as per maintenance map in appendix 2 and according to performance standards)
- Fine turf maintenance on pitch and putt course
- Seat and bin maintenance
- Flower and shrub bed maintenance.
- Green roof on toilet block is maintained yearly which includes a clean up and general fertiliser application.

During the winter when the amount of general maintenance is reduced the team are able to work on alterations and improvements to the park and surrounding woodland.

The Weston Shore team work to Neighbourhood Services Promises that set performance standards for maintenance of the park. Generally maintenance of

Weston Shore is based on performance standards rather than frequency measures. Details of these service promises and standards will be available to the judges during the field assessment.

Equipment is maintained by the councils fleet transport team – there is a dedicated mower service section looking after the larger grass cutting equipment and minor maintenance is undertaken by the Weston Shore staff as part of the daily equipment checking routines.

Appendix 4 shows a map of Weston Shore identifying the various maintenance standards and regimes. The areas are colour coded and the key explains the frequency of visits.



3.4 Action plan for 2009/12²

This action plan is a dynamic working document that is reviewed and updated annually. Some proposed actions are aspirational and will depend upon sourcing adequate funding, in collaboration with the newly formed Friends of Weston Shore. Although the plan has been ordered according to Green Flag criteria, several of the actions fall under more than one heading. WSFG = Weston Shore Friends Group, FoWW = Friends of West Wood

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
<i>Welcoming Place</i>					
Refurbish existing and/ or install new signs at main entrances welcoming people into the park.	Martin Willcox	HCC Rangers, WSFG	Officer Time £15K	March 2011	New cabinet for Victoria Road, new interpretation for West Wood, Sea front interpretation in development seeking funding from Cunard or Carnival
Create picnic area in Abbey Hill.	Martin Willcox	WSFG	Officer Time £10k	May 2010	Picnic benches ordered, work to tidy up the area underway before installation.
Explore possibility of installing Solent Way signs.	Adrian Crook	Hampshire County Council	Officer time £500	August 2010	We are working with Hampshire County Council who are able to supply the signs. They are going to provide five signs in the first instance which we will install this year.

² This action plan is for the period 01.01.09 onwards therefore some actions may be complete prior to the judges' field assessment. However the action plan contains some actions that will be completed after the life of the plan.

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
Improve the appearance of the pitch and putt by removing the old site hut base and moving the existing store also include better information signage.	Adrian Crook	WSFG	Officer time £5k	May 2010	The old base has now been removed but we are still awaiting moving the store.
Investigate potential funding to make the pirate play area more inclusive	Nick Yeats	Groundwork Solent, Tony Hill	Est 15k Officer Time	Dec 2010	
<i>Healthy, safe and secure</i>					
Re-establish healthy walks in the park and surrounding areas	Adrian Crook	Alison Baker (Active Southampton) PCSOs, West Wood Rangers, FoWW, WSFG, Groundwork Solent, Sustrans	Officer time £500 signage / leaflet	Pilot Spring 2010	The Southampton City Council healthy walks leaflet and maps have been brought up to date and can be provided to the public. We are also working with Alison Baker (Sport and Strategy Manager) to develop new healthy walks in the area and to make them part of the Active Southampton Partnership campaign. We are also going to contact the Eastleigh Healthy Walks Officer for advice.
Develop a Mizmaze in the West Wood area built with turf banks.	Carly Fretwell	Nick Yeats, FoWW, WSFG	£1000, Officer/Volunteer Time	March 2011	
Explore the feasibility for a “trim trail” to the rear of the Rolling Mills site, along the new circular path.	Cliff Brown	WSFG	Est £25k, Officer Time	Jan 2012	

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
Improve Security adjacent to West Wood car park to prevent four wheel drive vehicles from getting onto the Meadow area.	Martin Willcox	Groundwork Solent, HCC	Est £5k, Officer Time	Dec 2010	
New signage for play areas to be developed and installed, giving up to date contact details.	Graham Pugh/ Tony Hill	Nick Yeats	£5k	April 2010	
Install additional fencing between the school and the Venny along the boundary of West Wood to discourage motorbikes	Carly Fretwell	Adrian Crook	Est £5k	Jan 2010	
<i>Clean and well maintained</i>					
Weston Shore Big Tidy Up further events to be organised for 2010.	John Martin	Hilary Bradley, FoWW, WSFG, Area team	Officer time £1k	Dec2010	Following on from the success of 2008 and 2009 further events will be organised to continue to help keep this area clean and to highlight the issues of dog fouling and fly tipping to park users.

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
Consult on plan for new seating and bins.	Martin Willcox	WSFG, Regeneration Team,	Officer Time Est £25k	July Aug 2010	Following on from last years action a plan has been drawn up with potential seat and bin locations, this will be consulted on and wherever possible new seats and bins will be installed. Several new seats, picnic benches and bins have already been installed along the “parade” and meadow area.
Improve the appearance of the Pirate Play area by removing old dilapidated fence and replacing wooden retaining structures	Adrian Crook	Nick Yeats	£5k	Feb 2010	
Explore feasibility of providing recycling bins.	Nick Yeats	Adrian Crook, John Horton	Officer Time	Jan 2010	Under current collection regimes we are unable to provide this service as budgets do not allow for collection from this park. However, if a similar scheme in Central Parks is successful then it may become more cost effective to provide collection at which time we will roll out the dual recycling bins to other parks (See sustainability Section above).

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
<i>Sustainability</i>					
Implement a changed mowing regime along the shore line or the Rolling Mills site to encourage longer grass and to screen people using the footpath from the more sensitive SSSI and SPA.	Martin Willcox	Natural Environment Team.	Officer Time	Implement from March 2010	
Carry out woodland management tasks for the year	HCC West Wood Rangers	Nick Yeats, Groundwork Solent, FoWW	Officer time £2k	Ongoing	HCC West Wood Rangers carry out day to day woodland management following the woodland management plan.
Mulch all shrub beds with green waste produced on site	Martin Willcox	Area team	Officer time	Ongoing	Expand current programme to include all shrub beds within the park.
Completely eliminate use of chemical treatments within the park	Martin Willcox	Area team	Officer time	May 2010	Although this would be an aspiration it is impractical in real terms as there are areas where use of chemicals is necessary, such as in some of the maintenance of pitch and putt or in the control of Japanese Knotweed. However, we are attempting to reduce the use of pesticides to a minimum wherever possible. New actions below show how we intend to reduce the usage on the pitch and putt, in particular.

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
By logging current spraying and mechanical cultivation, get an understanding of where we can reduce chemical use on the Pitch and Putt course and implement the findings.	Martin Wilcox	Martin Wright	Officer Time	Jan 2011	We also need to look at industry best practice for green keeping and potential use of growth retardants to reduce the amount of mowing and increase sward which may in turn reduce weed ingress.
<i>Conservation and heritage</i>					
Plant Sea buckthorn hedge along edge of boat store fence – this will provide a screen and potential food/shelter for migrant birds (buckthorn is a better option than gorse due to the combustibility of the latter).	Adrian Crook	Andy Welch, Cliff Brown	£2k Officer Time	March 2010	
Coppice sections of gorse and buddleia on adjacent gravel area to allow more sunlight onto floor to encourage ground flora and fauna and prevent area scrubbing over.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch	Officer Time	Dec 2010	
Clear burnt gorse area near shore, allow gorse to regenerate.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch	Officer Time	March 2010	
Introduce early spring cut to nearby soil mound “feather”.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch	Officer Time	May 2010	

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
Stop mowing adjacent old gravel area to encourage butterflies that used to use the area, in particular Common blues.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch	Potential very small saving on time.	Immediate	
Clear sections through main vegetation clump along edge of main path to rejuvenate gorse and prevent bramble from taking over. This area is often used by wintering Stonechats.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch	Officer Time	Dec 2010	
Introduce similar coppice regime along back brick wall; when Bramble gets to top of wall clear that area to floor level, then leave until it gets to top of wall again.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch	Officer Time	Dec 2010	
Plant a mixture of wildlife friendly ornamental bulbs and native plants such as Teasel, Evening primrose and Lemon balm along the boundary of the Pitch and Putt adjacent to Weston Lane.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch	Officer Time	March 2010	

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
Increase size of newly created scrape on the corner of Weston lane by decreasing the size and height of the island. The spoil to be spread on the side of the adjacent landfill bank to provide substrate for wild flowers to colonise.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch, Richard Cross	£3k Officer Time	Dec 2010	
Ensure slipway is only cleared at high tide when disturbance to birds minimised and not at all during cold weather. Extend groin along western side to prevent 4x4 vehicle access along beach.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch	£5k Officer Time	Dec 2010	
Stop cutting shore vegetation except for a strip immediately adjacent to the parameter of the Play area. Remove paving stop access way to old jetty and leave to recolonise with natural shore flora.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch	Potential very small saving on officer time	Immediately	
Cut a 1m strip monthly along the top of the viewing mound wooden edging, leaving rest as rough grassland.	Martin Wilcox	Andy Welch	Officer Time	Dec 2010	

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
Work with HCC to draw up a public notice and gain Local Nature Reserve Status for the SCC owned part of West Wood and the rest of Weston Shore.	Nick Yeats	Phil Helliwell.	Officer Time £500	Aug 2010	HCC are about to make their half of West Wood into an LNR. Early meetings with them have been undertaken to get advice on the procedure and the project will be progressed through the summer of 2009, working with the Friends group.
<i>Community involvement</i>					
Establish fully constituted Friends of Weston Shore Group	John Martin/ Louise Fagan	WSFG, Southampton Voluntary Services, Friends of Mayfield Park	Officer time £1k	Dec 2010	This time scale has slipped from 2009. There have been meetings held and although not well attended a nucleus of a group has started. Two key very keen people are putting their best efforts into expanding this group and as part of this they have set up a blog and a web site. www.friendsofwestonshore.blogspot.com/ www.westonshore.blogspot.com They have applied for a domain name and the web site is soon to become a .org site.
Provide training for the Friends to conduct their own risk assessments before carrying out works or holding events	Hilary Bradley	WSFG Hampshire Rangers	Officer time	August 2012	Hampshire Rangers have carried out training with the Friends of West Wood. Training will also be open to the Friends of Weston Shore when they become more established

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
Create stronger links with the local sailing clubs and angling societies, by setting up a stakeholder group meeting to discuss how they can benefit from the Green Flag and what they can add to it.	John Martin	WSFG, Weston Sailing Club, Woolston sailing Club, Neighbourhood Involvement.	Officer time	April 2010	First steps have been taken, but more needs to be done to include these assets into the development of the park and its events.
<i>Marketing</i>					
Promotion of Weston Shore and all its facilities through continually improving SCC web pages, signage and local publicity	John Martin / Keith Woodhouse	SCC staff, WSFG	Officer time	March 2011	Ongoing maintenance and updating of the website is required. NB council website was refreshed in late 2009 and unfortunately some information removed
Provide a major event and help the friends group to establish a programme of smaller events which they can take ownership of and provide for the local community, giving support wherever needed.	Hilary Bradley	WSFG, NS team, Events team	Officer time £2K event prep.	Dec 2010	Promotion of events is seen as a key way of getting more interest and involvement in the management and maintenance of the park. By the friends group taking over the development, funding and management of their events it will help provide greater feeling of pride and ownership of the area.

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
Choose a range of publications such as Tenants Link, City View and The Scene Magazine to advertise events in the park.	Louise Fagan/ Martin Willcox	Hilary Bradley, Corporate Communications Team	Est £500 Officer Time	Dec 2010	
Use the City Council's "What's On" pages to advertise events going on in Weston Shore.	Martin Willcox	Hilary Bradley, Events Team	Officer Time	Dec 2010	
Better promote the pitch and putt course to increase its use	Martin Willcox	Leisure, Sport Development, Hilary Bradley	Officer time £500	Spring 2010	
<i>Management</i>					
Explore feasibility of potential expansion of the kiosk in the toilet block as a community facility, possibly as meeting room and/or for basic refreshments.	Nick Yeats	WSFG, NS team, Property Services, Planning, Valuers, Capita	Officer time to explore options	Autumn 2009	Although not feasible to use for community use there may be some use as a concession, who would double up to sell tickets for the pitch and putt and reduce attendant overheads (see Action below).
Explore opportunities for concession holder to run the kiosk to sell refreshments and tickets for the pitch and putt.	Martin Willcox	Nick Yeats	Officer Time, could be a saving	May 2010	

Action	Lead officer	Key partners and consultees	Estimated resource required and source of funding	Target Completion date	Comments
Link high density housing areas to Weston Shore through reinstating formal paths.	Adrian Crook	WSFG, Decent Neighbourhoods	Officer Time £4k	March 2010	The works for this have been assessed, but as yet no funding has been identified. As soon as funding becomes available the works will start. There is potential for either Community Pay Back or Future Jobs Funding Trainees to carry out the works.
Identify projects for Community Payback, Volunteers and Future Jobs Fund Trainees.	Martin Willcox	Nick Yeats, Adrian Crook	Officer Time	Dec 2010	This could identify areas where long established litter has accrued and get these areas deep cleaned. Also areas where more skilled manual labour is required can be identified, such as path building and restoration.

“Friends Wanted” poster



For further information please contact...

Neighbourhood Services
Parks and Street Cleansing
Civic Centre
Southampton SO14 7NG

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Appendix 1

Plan showing the whole of the Weston Shore park



Westwood Woodland Park Summary Management Plan 2009-2014

**Written by
Carly Fretwell,
Hampshire County Council Countryside Service
in consultation with Southampton City Council**

Introduction

This document has been prepared for consultation purposes. This is a summary of the park's full management plan. There is a detailed and technical document which is held in the Westwood Team office and is used to guide the day to day work.

The management plan contains information about the people who use the park, the wildlife, archaeology and the landscape of the park. This information is then used along with the funding and resources available to make decisions about how to look after the park.

This management plan is one of a number of plans which have been prepared by Hampshire County Council's Countryside Service in consultation with Southampton City Council officers. They are used to guide the management of key countryside sites and to support County and District Council policies. It takes full account of the statutory designations which apply to the site and which place certain obligations on the County and City Councils as landowners.

The County Council's Countryside Service is responsible for the management of more than 80 countryside sites, totalling 4,400 hectares. These sites cover a wide range of habitats and landscapes and include 24 nature reserves and 7 major country parks. In addition, the Countryside Service has a statutory responsibility for the recording and maintenance of public rights of way in Hampshire.

Brief Description

Hampshire County Council own 80% of Westwood. Southampton City Council own the remaining 20%. In addition to these areas there are several areas of woodland adjacent to council owned land that are privately owned. The total area in council ownership is 66 hectares.

Southampton City Council owned areas are managed by the City Council's Open Spaces Department in consultation with the County Council's Countryside Service. Specific projects are undertaken by various departments in the City Council, such as the Planning Department considering the Westwood's interests when handling planning applications on adjacent land.

Specialist help can be sought from other staff within the County or City Councils.

Many volunteers who are part of the friends of Royal Victoria and Westwood group help the rangers in all aspects of countryside work, including practical management and survey work.

Westwood lies on Weston Shore on the eastern edge of Southampton Water. It forms part of the green belt around Southampton and crosses the boundary between Southampton City Council and Eastleigh Borough Council.

The Weston Greenway (a Southampton City Council designation) runs through the park. Weston Shore an internationally important area of mudflat is adjacent to the park. Netley Abbey, the extensive remains of a twelfth century monastery is close to the park. All of these areas and Westwood together combine to create a large and important ecological and recreational unit.

Westwood is an important local area both in terms of nature conservation and as a community resource. It supports populations of species identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Hampshire as well as other species recognised as nationally scarce. It is enjoyed by a large number of local people who use it for a range of recreational activities. In the past some recreational pressure has been damaging to the site and requires careful control. This involves regular maintenance of all fencing, paths and entrances and also a staff presence at busy times.

How important is Westwood?

The importance of the park for nature conservation is recognised through a number of official designations.

- The area of ancient semi-natural woodland within Westwood is recorded as a SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) within the Eastleigh Borough Council local plan.
- Westwood is noted on Southampton City Council's 'site alert map' which identifies particularly valuable sites for nature conservation within the city.

Westwood's importance as an area of green space is recognised as part of the strategic gap surrounding Southampton. This is agreed in the Eastleigh Local Plan, City of Southampton Local Plan and Hampshire County Plan.

There is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (national monument no. 24325) on the site. This is the remains of a mediaeval aqueduct associated with the remains of Netley Abbey.

Management Partnerships

Management Policies are set by the County Council on its own land. City Council management is informed by the policies of the Nature Conservation Strategy for Southampton (1992) and is dependent on resources. A steering committee of staff from the County and City councils ensures that these policies are well integrated to benefit the site as a whole.

The Forestry Commission has been involved at Westwood since 1989 through Woodland Grant Schemes. Westwood also receives an annual management grant from the Forestry Commission.

Hampshire County Council's Waste Management have their own plan for pollution control for the former landfill areas and are consulted over many aspects of work undertaken here.

Wildlife Interest

There are many different habitats within Westwood. Ancient semi-natural woodland, standing open water, unimproved neutral grassland and alder carr are all present in Westwood and are all 'Key Habitats of Nature Conservation Concern in Hampshire' - as listed in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Hampshire, Volume 1.

Westwood has been greatly affected by human impact from the medieval period until the present day and little of the site retains a truly natural character. The grasslands have been completely re-landscaped and the woodlands have all been managed to some degree in the past. The area that is probably most "natural" is the wet woodland valley due, no doubt, to its inaccessibility.

The grassland areas cover over half of Westwood. Given the fact that there is almost no extensively managed farmland locally it is important as a large area of rough grassland and scrub. It is particularly important for two species of ground nesting birds, skylark and meadow pipit and as a hunting ground for Barn Owls.

Westwood lies next to Weston Shore. Weston Shore is within an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and SPA (Special Protection Area). It is particularly valuable for its internationally important numbers of many wildfowl, waders and gulls.

Plants

There are a number of interesting or uncommon native plants known to be present at Westwood. These are all associated with the ancient semi-natural woodland habitats. These include bluebells, wood anemones, primroses, violets, Solomon's seal and wild strawberry. The grassland is home to cowslips and bee orchids amongst other wildflowers.

Birds

Westwood is locally important for birds and for certain species is regionally important. The following species which breed at Westwood are listed in the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan as being particularly important to conserve: skylarks, linnet, meadow pipits, bullfinch, song thrush, nightingale, Dartford warbler, lesser spotted woodpecker, yellowhammer.

Barn owls and hobbies are sighted regularly hunting over the Grange Fields. Grasshopper warbler was seen in the spring of 2000.

Mammals

The most significant mammal known to occur within Westwood is the dormouse. This animal is listed as a priority species for Hampshire in the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Nuts characteristic of dormouse feeding were found most recently in 2008.

The dormouse population is thought to be fragile due to the small area of ideal coppice habitat that is available to them and the isolated nature of this habitat in Westwood. Although dormice can live in other types of woodland they appear to only be present in the coppice at Westwood.

Pipistrelles and Yellow necked mice have been found in Westwood. Both of these are listed as priority species for Hampshire in the Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

Invertebrates

An invertebrate survey was undertaken in 1987 and again in 1998. In the most recent survey three nationally rare insects and two insects listed in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Hampshire were found. The wet woodland, undisturbed over a long period of time and Bluebell Wood with its large amounts of dead wood are particularly important in helping to provide suitable habitat for these insects.

Historical and present land use

There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument (schedule no. 24324) on the site, consisting of a large embanked ditch, believed to be a conduit built by the Cistercian monks of Netley Abbey to channel water from the head of Tickleford Gully to the monastery.

There are other ditches and banks both on and off the site which are not covered by the schedule. These are still of archaeological importance and should be preserved.

Part of the woodland on the western side of Tickleford Gully was used during the Second World War as an experimental rocket emplacement. The concrete remains are a fascinating feature and should be preserved.

Small scale gravel extraction appears to have taken place from the late 19th century. Large scale gravel extraction and landfill between 1949 and 1990 radically changed the character of about two thirds of the site area. The artificial landscaping of the landfilled areas creates hills rising to 20m above sea level. Subsequent landscape restoration has been aimed at providing informal open space with a mixture of grassland and new woodland planting. Westwood has been managed for conservation and recreation since landfill operations ceased.

Access

There is unrestricted permissive access to the site via a large number of pedestrian entrances and paths. The path system helps route people away from the more ecologically sensitive areas.

All entrances are fenced with tight kissing gates and the boundary with Weston Shore estate to the east of the site is fenced with metal fencing to prevent illegal access by motorcyclists.

Most of the site is not suitable for disabled access although staff are gradually upgrading the footpath system throughout the site as there is increasing demand for access for all. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1998, there are also certain legal requirements on landowners to upgrade access for all.

Footpath 16 in the parish of Hound (Eastleigh) runs through the site. The Weston Greenway runs through Westwood from the Shore to Newtown Road.

Recreation at Westwood

Miller and Associates undertook research into the profile of the park in the local area and opinions of local residents in 1994. This information has been used to help make management decisions.

A recent visitor survey at Westwood showed that it is used primarily by local people for quiet, informal recreation including dog walking. Some people use it as a pedestrian or cycle cut-through between Weston and Netley.

Horse riding along certain routes is allowed on the site through a permit scheme. There are no official bridle routes. Cycling is allowed everywhere on the site.

The site still suffers from problems with people riding motorbikes, although this problem is much reduced from past levels. Activities that involve deliberate abuse of the site include litter at entrances, arson, vandalism, burning wheelie bins or stolen motorbikes and fly-tipping. We deal with these problems through a combination of patrolling, practical improvements, help from the users of the site and by working with community groups.

Overall the site is used peacefully with low levels of harmful recreation.

The benches and picnic tables are prone to vandalism but metal designs have proved to be robust, interpretive boards, if installed would have to be of the same robust design. The site draws visitors due to its position close to an urban area, its pleasant countryside atmosphere, its views, its wildlife and its historical interest.

From visitor surveys we have carried out, it is significant that the majority of people value Westwood for its peace and quiet. The infrastructure of Westwood is kept intentionally informal to retain its rural character.

There is demand for facilities such as toilets and shelter. However given the threat of vandalism and Westwood's role as a site principally for local people, this is not seen to be a priority.

All activities are measured against the dual purposes for the park: to provide an area for quiet informal recreation and to protect nature conservation interests.

The South Hampshire Structure Plan acknowledges the importance of Westwood for recreation. There are three other country parks near Westwood; Royal Victoria Country Park, manor Farm Country Park and Itchen Valley Country Park. These all serve the residents of Southampton and Eastleigh. However Westwood is particularly important to residents of the nearby densely populated areas. It is much more 'local' in character.

School Visits

Local school groups use the site accompanied by Rangers. Close links have been established with the regular schools and their staff.

The free education programme run at Westwood is an integral part of the management of Westwood as a whole. Regular contact with the children (who frequently visit the park unsupervised) is essential in order to encourage sensitive use of the site.

The site is suitable for education due to its diversity of natural habitats, historical features and human impact on the environment. However the absence of toilets or shelter means that it most appropriate for local schools only.

The education programme, which is now available for teachers to look through on line, along with the interpretation programme, at Westwood is central to the aim of site management and protection. Over the last ten years, the reduction in site abuse justifies this approach.

Explaining the site

There is a well attended public guided walks and events programme. This covers a range of interesting topics and is designed to appeal to as wide a range of people as possible. We produce an events leaflet that is distributed across the county and to our own mailing list of more than 300 people.

Walks are regularly led for private groups. In the past these have included Cubs, Brownies, Beavers, Rainbows, Southampton Local History Society, Southampton Natural History Society, Fareham Society, Rotary Clubs and church groups. Slide shows and talks are undertaken for many other private groups. Our private walks and events are geared to the requests of individual groups but also are designed to promote affection for the site and a greater understanding of countryside management. Judging by the constant demand for activities, this approach is successful.

There is very little on-site interpretation due to the problem of vandalism. There are two way-marked routes, one long (1 ½ miles) and one short (½ mile), on sturdy oak posts.

The ethos of the Westwood team is to willingly speak to members of the public whenever we are working or patrolling on site in order to put across the importance of protecting wildlife and the environment. In the past the site's reputation has suffered due to its former uses (i.e. use as a landfill site and unlawful motorcycling activities). This has resulted in the need for community involvement and awareness of the site in order to protect it. The off-site interpretation that we undertake is very important to counter this false image of the site.

Community Involvement

The Westwood team has always worked with the aim of encouraging local involvement in the site.

The Westwood team seeks to involve volunteers in its work for a number of reasons:

- A Friends of group has been set up in 2008 which runs in conjunction with Royal Victoria Country Park and aims to get local people involved in Westwood, the Park and other outlying sites. It runs regular conservation work days and social events for anyone who is interested in the sites. The group now has over 80 members and has secured funding for new railings at Westwood.
- In addition to the Friends Group, we also have volunteers who work with the team on a full-time basis, often in order to gain experience of countryside management.
- One-off groups such as Southampton University Conservation Volunteers, the youth reparation scheme and community service also undertake work on the site.

All the work undertaken by volunteers supplements the work done by the ranger staff and expands the scope of what we are able to do.

Westwood sees somewhere in the region of 250 days of recorded volunteer time a year. It cannot be stressed enough, though, how important the phone calls from regular users are in alerting the Rangers to possible site problems. It could be easy to overlook the time that people put in who do not undertake tasks on a formal basis.

Westwood has strong links with the community. These include the local schools, Weston Adventure Playground, youth clubs and local clubs and societies. The Rangers also maintain contact with local Parish Councils and Community Action Forums in Southampton.

Current funding

Both Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council allocate resources for managing Westwood. A steering committee meets once a year to agree priorities and then regular meetings take place between officers to adjust priorities as the year goes by.

Westwood's important features

As a result of all the background work and gathering of information the following 'features' have been identified as important in Westwood.

Ecological features

1. Wet woodland, stream and pond
2. Coppice and secondary woodland
3. Pasture woodland
4. Grassland

Recreational features

5. Infrastructure important to provide access
6. Interpretation important to protect site

Archaeological

7. Historical remains of interest

Landscape

8. Important as a landscape feature

Corporate

9. Obligations important for the management of the site

For each of the features, there is an aim. These along with the main proposed actions are summarised below. Some background for each of the features is also included.

There is also the intention to investigate designation of Westwood as a Local Nature Reserve, which would increase its protection and would make it possible to apply for extra grants to manage the site.

The full management plan should be consulted for more information regarding any of these features or the proposed actions.

Aim 1: To maintain the wet woodland, stream and pond in a favourable condition

Background

The wet woodland has been relatively undisturbed compared to the rest of the site. This has led to stable conditions which have resulted in it being the most ecologically diverse area in Westwood.

Proposed Action

- Some small scale tree felling to keep woodland glades open. Very little management is planned in the area of wet woodland.
- Invasive species such as bamboo, laurel, and Himalayan balsam will be controlled.
- The Water gardens will be managed to prevent them silting up and turning into marsh.
- Monitor the woodland plant species. This will give warning if the area is drying out.
- Monitor the water quality in Tickleford Stream.

Aim 2: To maintain the coppice and other dry woodland in a favourable condition.

Background

The coppice woodland supports a number of ancient woodland indicator species and a population of dormice. The coppice rotation is designed to sustain the dormice although coppicing also helps to support a number of different plant and animal species.

If dormice are found to be no longer present the coppicing regime could be modified to manage for other notable species. For example nightingales call regularly, most years, on the site and management could be geared towards encouraging this bird.

Development of land adjacent to the site will increase the visitor pressure on the woodland. Particular interest should be taken in the site of two former houses on the Abbey Hill road. The sites of Hilton House and Lake House have had proposals for residential building put forward before. These have always been strongly objected to by County and District Councils.

Proposed Action

- Continue coppicing according to the rotation map.
- Monitor for signs of dormice.
- Keep an interest in neighbouring land developments to help protect the site.

Aim 3: To maintain the pasture woodland in a favourable condition.

Background

The former pasture woodland in Westwood known as Bluebell Wood is an interesting historical remnant. It contains a number of ancient woodland indicator species as well as plants more common in heathland. It also contains some rare insects specialising in dead wood conditions.

Since grazing stopped, probably some time early this century, the character of the area has been gradually changing. Bramble and bracken predominate in patches and out compete ancient woodland indicator species.

Proposed Action

- Clearance and removal of bracken and bramble will continue as it has been very successful in encouraging wildflower growth. Ideal management of the area would be through grazing with the county grazing herd.
- Some tree thinning to let light down to the woodland floor.
- Monitor the amount of scrub and the location and species of wildflowers.

Aim 4: To maintain the grassland with planted woodland blocks in favourable condition.

Background

The grassland, all of which overlies former landfill, is locally important as a large area of unimproved meadow with planted woodland blocks and scrub in places. It supports a number of ground nesting birds such as skylarks. The areas of landfill have a number of legal issues associated with them. Hampshire County Council's Waste Management department are responsible for the underground management of the site. This can sometimes lead to conflicts between methane management and wildlife considerations.

Proposed Action

- The grassland needs to be managed in order to prevent succession to scrub. The ideal management would be grazing with cattle or other livestock in order to produce a diverse sward over the whole grassland.
- Cut the grass for hay for the benefit of wildlife and to prevent fires.
- Due to the fragility of the soils, erosion occurs very quickly in exposed areas. The open nature of the site makes it difficult to control access away from vulnerable spots. We will restrict inappropriate access to prevent excessive erosion.
- Undesirable species should be controlled for nature conservation reasons and to ensure good quality hay. Ragwort is the main problem as it is poisonous to wildlife.
- Work with waste management to ensure the areas of landfill are managed effectively.
- Monitor skylark populations.
- Monitor tree survival in Woodland planting blocks and thin as necessary.
- Liaise with local authorities regarding Weston Shore and the land managed by Leigh Environmental. The aim is to protect wildlife habitats adjacent to Westwood.
- Keep grass land area open by removing invasive scrub and treating to prevent re growth.

Aim 5: To encourage quiet informal recreation for all by providing a safe infrastructure for visitors.

Background

Westwood has an extensive visitor infrastructure which should be managed by both Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council. It is well used and needs constant work in order to be maintained at a satisfactory level.

Southampton City Council owns the part of the site with the greatest visitor pressure and most visitors are from Weston. In this area there is a greater need for formal paths, sign posting and secure entrances than elsewhere on the site.

Proposed action

- Patrolling the site to deal with problems and to inform the public about our work.
- A right of way exists on the site. This must be maintained appropriately.
- Maintain everything satisfactorily. This includes paths, steps, bridges, boardwalks, fences and signs.

- Ensure the safety of visitors through maintenance and monitoring of structures and trees near paths.
- Survey visitor satisfaction through face to face visitor surveys and recording visitor comments.

Aim 6: To carry out interpretation with the aim of protecting the site and raising environmental awareness.

Background

Westwood's interpretation programme has been established for a number of years. It has so far been a successful approach in dealing with a number of site issues as well as giving a lot of enjoyment to many people. The Westwood team has always used community involvement and interpretation as an integral part of site management. The City and County Council's are committed to Agenda 21 which encourages local involvement in environmental issues. The Westwood team has been following this approach since its inception in 1987.

Proposed action

- Patrolling the site to deal with problems and to inform the public about our work.
- Continue the varied guided walks and events programme.
- Continue to provide walks for local groups.
- Continue to provide slide shows/talks for local groups.
- Continue providing free environmental education to local schools.
- Keep records of feedback from visitors.
- Involve volunteers and ensure they are well informed.

Aim 7: To preserve the archaeological interest of the site in a favourable condition.

Background

Westwood has one scheduled medieval conduit on site. There are also non-scheduled ditches which are presumed to form part of the same system. There are the remains of a Second World War Gun Battery which are not scheduled but are of historical interest. There are certain remains from Victorian and early twentieth century occupation of the site which are of local interest.

Proposed Action

- We have a legal obligation not to damage the scheduled monument. Any works on or close to the monument must gain consent from English Heritage. Allowing damage through tree growth is against our statutory duty.
- It is the policy of the Westwood team to protect the non-scheduled ditches in the same way as the scheduled one.
- The wartime remains are suffering from vandalism and general deterioration of the bricks and mortar. They present a problem in terms of safety because of the entrances to underground bunkers. Work towards making all the structures safe.

Aim 8: To protect Westwood as a landscape feature.

Background

Westwood is an important landscape feature forming part of the green belt around Southampton. It is also prominent when viewed from Southampton Water. It has visually enclosed spaces within the site which are secluded from the nearby built environment. Continued nearby development affects the site, reducing the landscape appeal. This applies to the boundaries with both Weston and Netley.

Proposed Action

- There are aspects of the site that are beyond the control of site staff. Landfill issues can mean site work has to take place which may damage the landscape. Work with Waste Management to reduce the impact of work on the site.
- Sympathetic management of other areas of landfill outside Westwood would greatly increase the landscape value of the greenbelt of which Westwood is part. These areas are currently managed by Leigh Environmental. Work with Leigh Environmental.
- The management of the woodland planting blocks on the restored landfill should be considered when the landscape of the site is considered. They can screen both desirable and undesirable views.
- Protect the site through commenting on neighbouring planning applications when they arise.
- Key viewpoints particularly towards open countryside and Southampton Water need to be protected and less desirable views screened where possible.
- Liaise with local authorities regarding Weston Shore. This area is an integral part of the natural landscape.

Aim 9: To meet all organisational obligations.

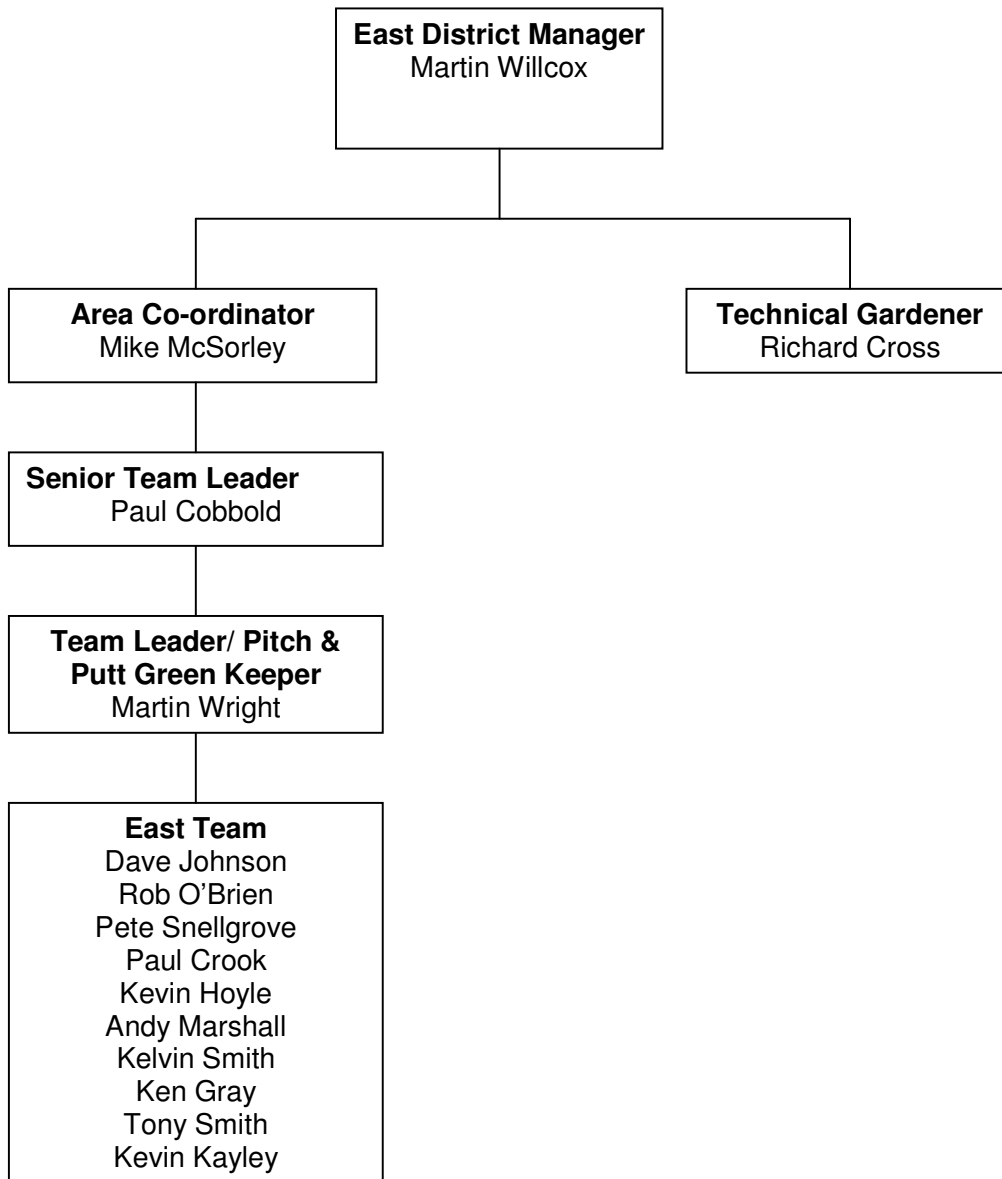
Background

Westwood Woodland Park is one of the sites managed by the Countryside Service of the County Council. Staff working for the team must comply with all legal and organisational obligations. Some of these apply to specific projects but some are broader and affect the whole site and our management of resources.

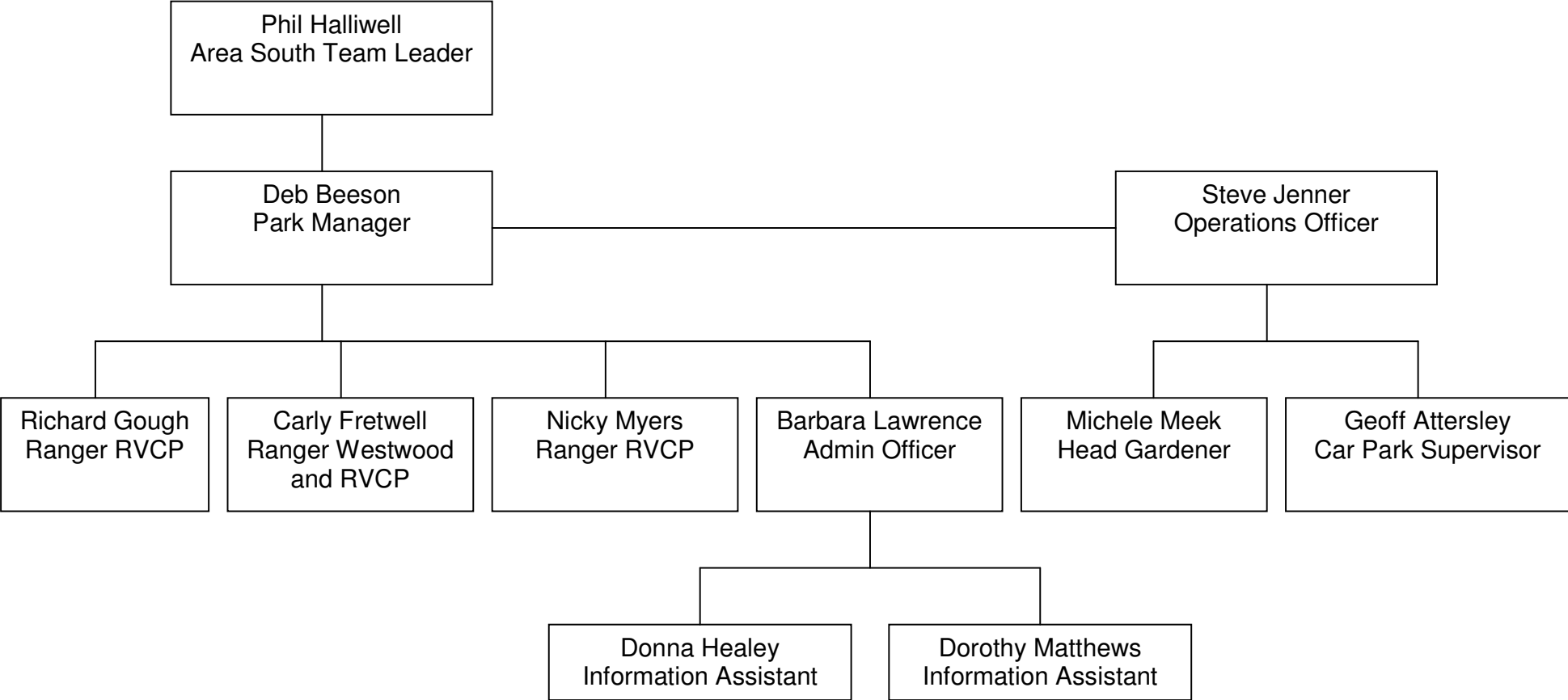
Proposed Action

- Hampshire County Council must comply with legal Health and Safety requirements for staff and for visitors.
- Hampshire County Council is committed to “Investors in People” and therefore supports the training and appraisal of staff.
- The Westwood team and Hampshire County Council has a policy of encouraging and supporting volunteering and will continue to do so.
- Efficient administration of staff, budget, tools and vehicles.

Appendix 3 – SCC Staff Structure as of January 2010 for Weston Shore.



HCC Staff Structure as of January 2010 for Weston Shore.

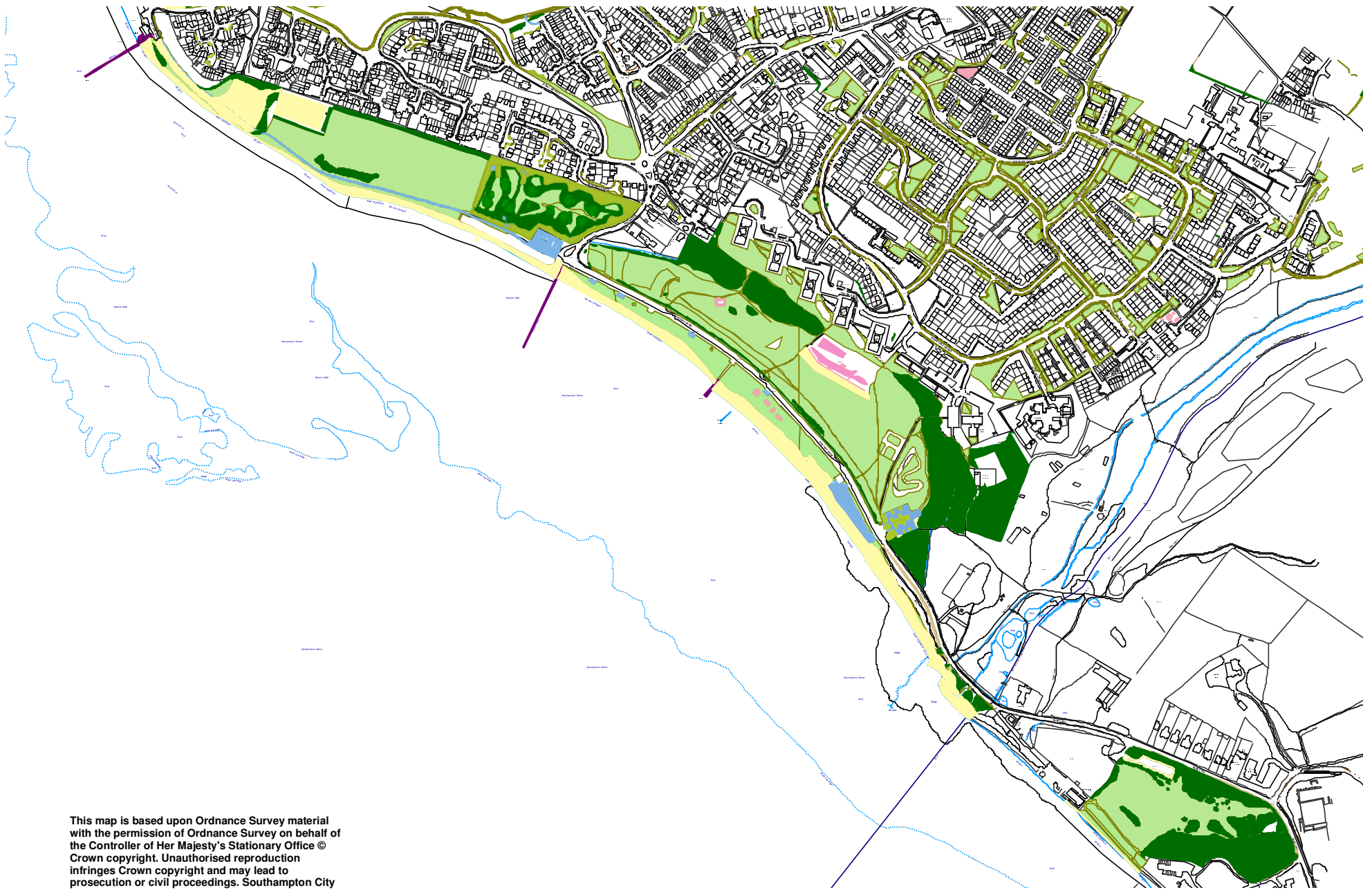


Appendix 4

Maintenance map showing maintenance regime for Weston Shore

Legend

	GCB0 - Cut Grass (Flat) Ride On or Tractor Drawn Mower
	GCC0 - Cut Grass Tractor Mounted Rear or Side Arm flail
	GCE0 - Cut Grass Wild Flower Meadow
	SHB1 - Shrub Maintenance Mulched Remove Weeds and Prune
	SHC1 - Shrub Maintenance Chemical Control Remove Weeds and Pruning
	PAL4 - Play Area Rake/Tidy Loose Fill 3 x Week
	PAS4 - Play Area Sweep Play Areas Mon, Thu, Sat
	PHM2 - Public Hard Concrete Type, Scavenge and Shingle Clearance
	PP02 - Pitch and Putt Mow General Lawn Area
	PP05 - Pitch and Putt Rake Bunkers/Remove Arisings
	PP13 - Pitch and Putt Cut Green Winter
	PPC3 - Pitch and Putt Mow Bunkers Surrounds and Banks
	PPC7 - Pitch and Putt Mow Aprons
	SP02 - Sweep Path Twice Each Week
	SP03 - Sweep Path Once Each Four Weeks
	SP04 - Sweep Path Once Each Two Weeks
	HE10 - Roadside Hedge Maintenance
	Woodland
	Unknown



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Green Flag Feedback

If you would like to make any comments about this park or green space or would like to make specific suggestions and recommendations for the management plan, please complete this form.

Name of park: _____

Comments:

If you would like to be involved in the development of this management plan and the park please provide your contact details.

Your name: _____

Your contact details:







Please return this form to Helen Seward, Neighbourhood Services, Town Depot, Albert Road North, Southampton SO14 5AT or email your comments to parks@southampton.gov.uk.

