

Parks & Greenspaces

*'Better Places Greener Spaces'
The Future of Sefton's Landscape Services*

Delivering Quality in a time of Austerity

Matt Baker – Principal Parks Officer



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These were identified annually, but as it became clear this process was likely to continue, we adopted a more strategic approach.

What are they for.....?

Who uses them?

How do they relate to the people that use them?

What can we realistically expect them to be like in the future?

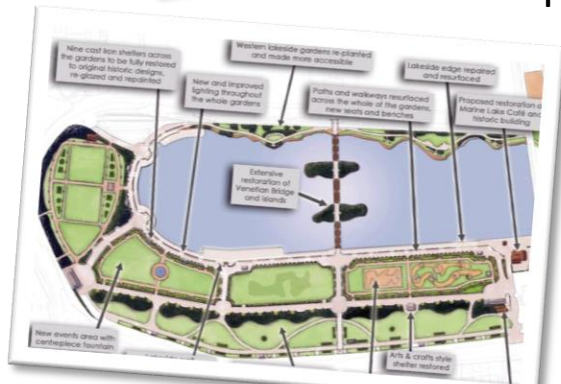
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We had a traditional approach to landscape management, which like most had evolved over time in line with the national trends for the industry.



This traditional approach focused on maintaining quality & standards of service delivery. These were delivered via a combination of Contracts and In-house services. Strategies and Management plans had been developed to underpin our service objectives and to provide a means to direct resources where they were most needed.

We had an ongoing objective to achieve external accreditations and had worked hard to develop and sustain Friends of Groups in support.



But as the cuts continued we knew we couldn't deliver everything.....!

Things were going to have to change and it was clear that 'Quality & Standards' were going to be affected!



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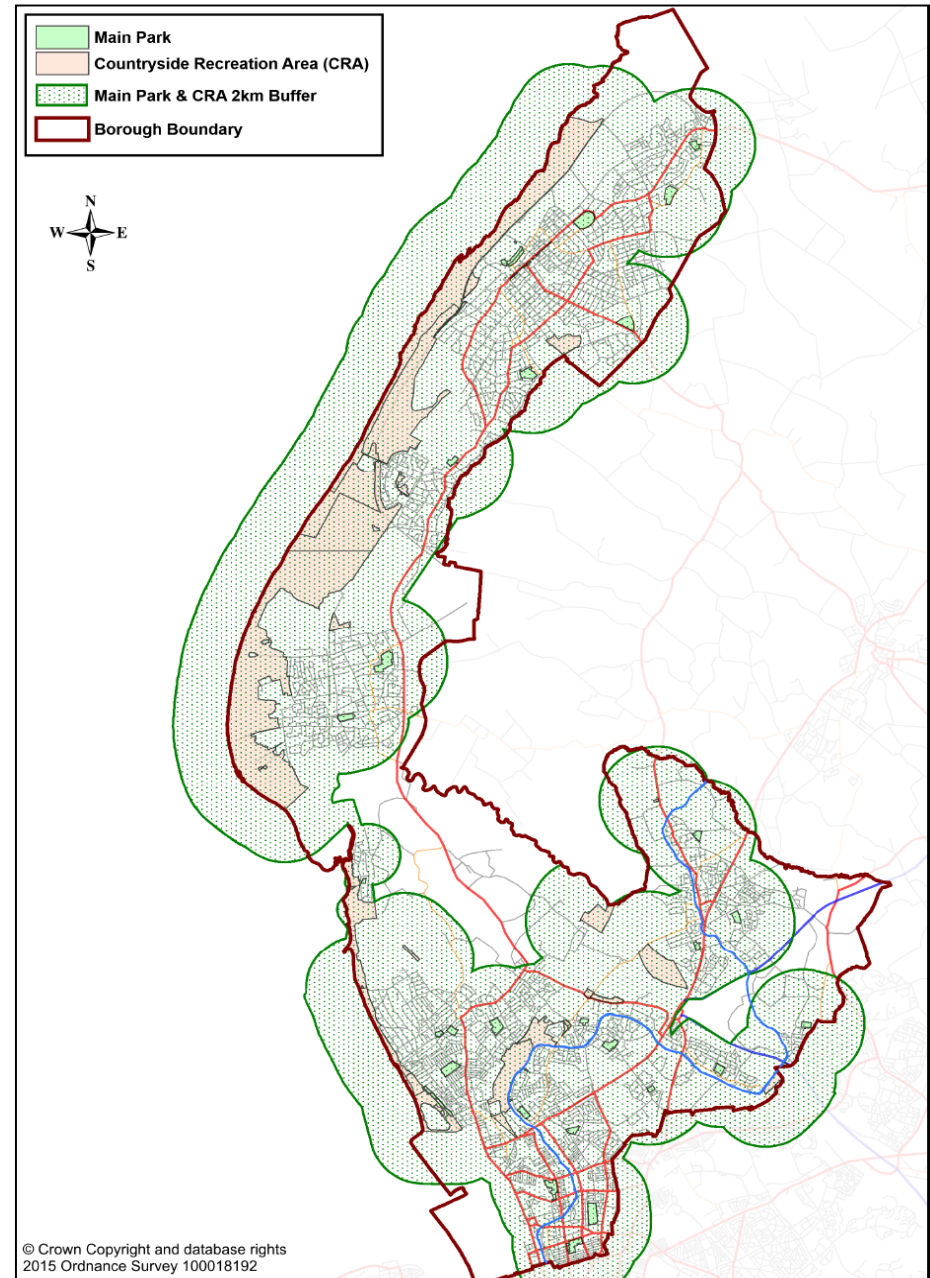
Initially we developed the concept of a sliding scale of quality and service. We wanted to be able to clearly illustrate 'What to expect' and what may change.

We reviewed our site plans, schedules and specifications; and set about 'trimming' away tasks and features in order to implement the cost savings whilst minimising the affect to quality.

We informed our Friends and User groups of the proposed changes in service delivery to ensure they were aware of the potential impact.

It was evident this loss of quality would lead to complaints, could potentially damage our partnerships and may hinder our ability to retain external accreditations.

But then something happened



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Our Community Groups started taking greater Ownership!

- » This didn't happen overnight, gradually our Friends of Groups, Community Groups and Park Users increased their level of involvement to prevent further losses.
- » Initially we supported this in a traditional way, providing resources and practical assistance to lead groups and develop them as volunteers, however, as time passed and the cuts continued, even this became difficult to support.
- » At this stage we developed the concept of 'Link Officers', who are existing members of staff who are appointed to guide and assist wherever possible. The aim being to promote 'self management'.
- » We underpinned this new approach with training and support on general landscape maintenance works via revised management plans which promoted a new partnership way of working.
- » By utilising replacement value from our Contract provision, we are able to provide practical support for combined operations, which has strengthened relationships and given a sense of pride.
- » We guide and encourage Groups to consider grant applications, events and fund raising in order to generate income for future 'Park Improvement Projects'.
- » So where are we now.....

Community Resilience



All groups have their own Link Officer designated to them and the park they represent, offering additional support, assistance and engagement. Link officers all attend the groups' own meetings which are held throughout the year.

We have 40+ established user & Friends groups actively engaged in caring for our sites.

Parks & Greenspaces are essential for health & wellbeing. Many of our groups and partners regularly volunteer their time to assist with park events, gardening and other maintenance works.



Community Resilience

Our 'Parks & Greenspaces' are at the heart of our communities and are valued by users of all ages.

Our Friends and Community volunteers have been successful in obtaining Regional & National Awards for their work. We are very proud their achievements and continue to learn from working in partnership with them.



Working collaboratively with the Community provides an excellent opportunity to work in new ways, promote further Community Resilience and helps us reshape the parks in the new ways we are discussing.

It is anticipated that the proposed changes to parks will energize people to volunteer even more time and proactive efforts will be made to encourage this. Taking ownership of their parks will make the community stronger by learning new skills, meeting and working with their 'neighbours' and friends.



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Play Areas

Play is essential for development, keeping us healthy, providing opportunities for free and fun family time!

A play area roughly costs £75,000 to build, and lasts about 20 years.

We currently have over large 50 play areas featuring a good variety of play.



The day to day maintenance of these sites cost in the region of £200,000 per year.



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Play Areas



Smaller, local play areas are provided in other sites, but some may need to be removed as they come to the end of their life if investment isn't available.

We aim to keep as many play areas as possible, with a good standard of equipment within easy reach of all communities.

It is our intention to continue developing more 'Natural Play' areas, and to encourage our partners to promote other forms of play via organised activities and events.



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Hard Infrastructure



Our parks include many features, which we generally describe as 'Hard' or 'Soft' landscape features.

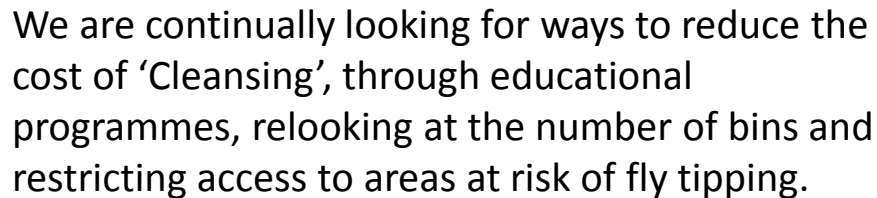
'Hard' Infrastructure is all the things that don't grow, such as paths, gates, railings, fences, benches, bins, buildings and monuments.

Parks are well used and the more people use our parks, the more maintenance they require, as not everyone behaves responsibly.

All suffer wear & tear and are sadly, occasionally, misused or vandalised. All have a lifespan.

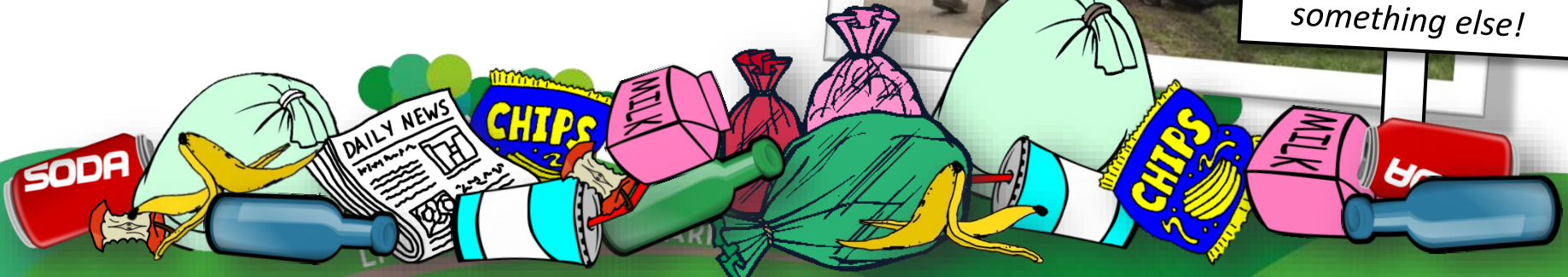
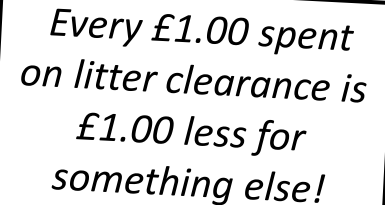
Where our resources are limited we will look to encourage improvements through Community engagement. We will sometimes use creative community projects to lengthen the lifespan of or improve features where we can.





'Cleansing and litter picking is essential to keep our parks safe and beautiful.

It costs us £120,000 per year to clean our parks. Every £1 spent on litter clearance is £1 less for something else!



Cleansing

We have many 'User groups' that enjoy a whole host of activities.

'Cleansing' is recharged for all organised activities, such as football and special events held in parks.

'Littering' is an offence and where necessary the Council will use enforcement powers to prosecute offenders.



We are indebted to our community volunteers, who take great pride and ownership of their sites, helping to promote clean sites through regular litter picking sessions.



Soft Infrastructure



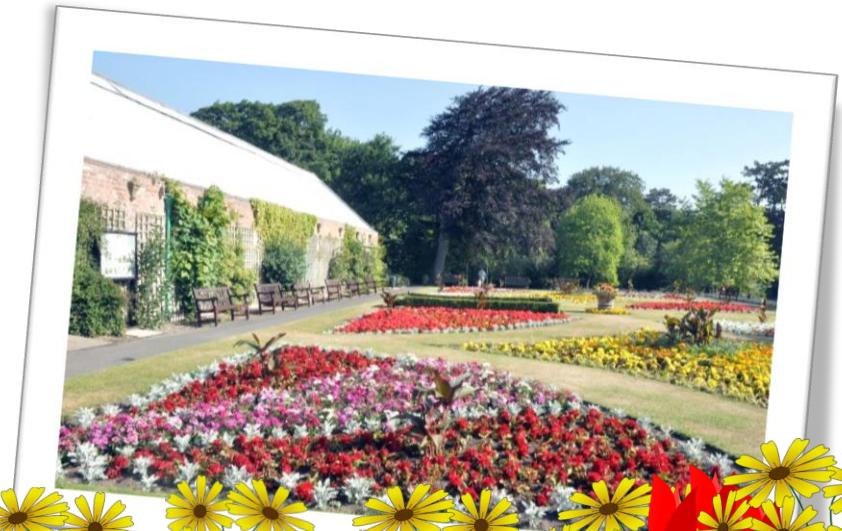
Some plant species require excessive maintenance and could be replaced with ones that require less care. Where possible new stock will be planted where it can grow more naturally with minimal maintenance.

We will evaluate the Biodiversity with partners and where possible promote more natural habitats.

‘Soft Infrastructure’ relates to things that grow.

From open grass areas, to woodland walks, beautiful seasonal displays of flowering plants and shrubs and wild flower meadows that connect us to our natural heritage.

Parks are essential for our health & wellbeing, but also provide a valuable habitat for many species of small mammals, birds and invertebrates



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Income & Sponsorship

Our 'Parks & Greenspaces' provide an excellent venue for hosting special outdoor events.

We have developed good working relationships with local businesses both in Sefton and wider afield, who sponsor Community events and activities or provide direct support as volunteers.

We will continue to seek new grant funding opportunities to support larger scale development and restoration projects.

Working collaboratively with the Business Community provides an excellent opportunity to work in new ways, promote further Community Resilience and helps us Reshape the Council and Sefton so it will continue to be a great place to live.



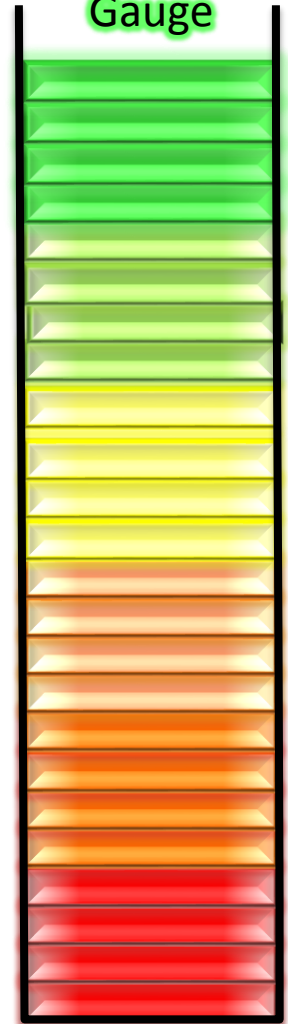
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How will we know we've got it right.....?

- We aim to achieve 'Green Flag' status at all of our main sites. We currently have 8 Green Flags and 2 Community Flags.
- We will continue to work with and develop our Community groups and hope that we will be able to increase the number of groups and Partner organisations.
- We will reintroduce an annual satisfaction survey to increase our awareness of our users feelings, aspirations and needs.
- We will regularly consult with all partners on what has been achieved so far and what to expect in the future.
- We aim to develop the Sefton website to provide a more interactive visitor experience, providing up to date information on 'What's going on' in your Local park and access to our 'Community volunteering events calendar'.
- We aim to continue working collaboratively with the Business Community to promote further 'Partnership working' opportunities.

Satisfaction
Gauge



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2009 North West In Bloom			2016 North West In Bloom		
SOUTHPORT IN BLOOM	Large Coastal Resort	Gold and Overall Winner	SOUTHPORT IN BLOOM	Large Coastal Resort	Gold and Overall Winner
CROSBY AND WATERLOO IN BLOOM	Small Coastal Resort	Silver Gilt	CROSBY AND WATERLOO IN BLOOM	Small Coastal Resort	Silver Gilt
				Bio-Diversity Award	Crosby Nature Trail
			MAGHULL IN BLOOM	Large Town	Gold
			MELLING IN BLOOM	Large Village	Silver Gilt
			AINSDALE IN BLOOM	Town	Silver Gilt
12 entries	1 at level 3 Developing 9 at level 4 Thriving 2 at level 5 Outstanding		31 entries:	20 at level 4 Thriving 11 at level 5 Outstanding	
2009 In Bloom			2016 Britain In Bloom		
Not put forward			Gold and Overall Winner for Large Coastal Resort (out of 8)		
2009 Green Flag			2016 Green Flag		
Green Flag Award	Botanic Hesketh Derby Coronation		Green Flag Award	Botanic Hesketh Derby Coronation	North Park Lord Street Kings Gardens Hatton Hill
Green Flag Community Award			Green Flag Community Award	Friends of Rotten Row North Park Community Garden - YKids	

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Thank you

The End



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