

# Management of Weymouth's Parks and Gardens to Green Flag Standards



## **Introduction**

This document details the management of parks and gardens within Weymouth with the overall aim of maintaining and improving, where required, the quality of the gardens in terms of both physical features and the psychological benefits people gain from them.

There are currently two Green Flag gardens managed by Weymouth Town Council: Sandsfoot Gardens and Greenhill Gardens. An additional site, Radipole Park Gardens, is undergoing major development works after receiving Heritage Lottery Funding and will be applying for Green Flag Status as the project progresses. These three sites all have individual management plans.

However, Weymouth Town Council also aims to raise and maintain standards across all Weymouth's gardens and open spaces and has chosen to focus on the Green Flag Award as a means of achieving this.

To do this, it is necessary to consider how the gardens fit within the priorities and policies of Weymouth Town Council and to see how they are used and valued by the local and wider communities.

The structure of this document follows Green Flag criteria.

The shared aspects of garden management aims are:

- To promote the application of Green Flag standards across Weymouth Town Council parks and open spaces thereby raising standards overall.
- To streamline the Green Flag Award application process in order to maximise resources available for consultation and the implementation of garden improvements.
- To enable, as a result, an increase in the number of green spaces that Weymouth Town Council can put forward for a Green Flag Award.

## **Supporting Information**

For the purpose of the Green Flag desk top evaluation, an evidence folder containing further background information will be provided on the day of the site visit.

The folder will contain information relating to operations, improvements, events, etc. carried out in the Green Flag gardens. Judges will be advised on the content of the evidence folder in advance of their visit.

## **Local Government Reorganisation**

There has been significant local government reorganisation in Dorset. Weymouth & Portland Borough Council became part of a wider Dorset Unitary Authority and on 1 April 2019 Weymouth Town Council was formed. Sandsfoot Gardens and Greenhill Gardens fall within the Weymouth Town Council boundary area, whereas Easton Gardens now falls under Portland Town Council and is no longer the subject of this management plan. Weymouth Town Council continues to maintain and improve our Green Flag gardens and to strive to achieve Green Flag standards across all our parks and gardens.

The document is intended to be flexible so that as changes occur in policies, resources, maintenance regimes, methodologies, work schedules, standards, etc. the plan can be adapted and developed.



## 1. A Welcoming Place

### Announcing the Garden

Gardens are assessed for initial visual impact to ensure that first impressions are positive and that the park is inviting to users/visitors.

The approach to a garden is also assessed to make sure that entrances are clearly signposted, in good condition and free from vandalism or graffiti.

Information signs at garden entrances provide orientation and detail on the facilities within the garden. Phone and email/internet information for the Council is displayed within noticeboards. We have added a newsletter to communicate the work of the Parks Team and to disseminate information such as changes in Dog Restrictions. Where there is more than one sign in a garden, they are co-ordinated to add to the character of the garden. Vandal-proof materials are typically used.



Information panel



Noticeboard



'Welcome' signs standard within our gardens

## Physical and Social Access

All our gardens are served by local bus routes or are within reasonable walking distance from a bus stop.

Our gardens have good quality pathways that are suitably accessible for wheelchair users. Consultation with volunteers from the Weymouth & Portland Access Group would be sought if there were any major changes that needed to be made.

Inclusion in use of gardens is a priority at the design stage and in the ongoing maintenance. Consultation is essential in identifying barriers to use. Methods of addressing different age groups are used, such as events in gardens or consultation at local Friends Group public meetings to identify areas of improvement that would increase garden use.

## Aspect of Design

All Weymouth parks and gardens have distinct characteristics:

**Greenhill Gardens** are situated on a Victorian sea front, sloping up from the beach and promenade adjacent to the town centre. The gardens provide some of the best views across Weymouth Bay and can be enjoyed for a multitude of reasons be it to sit back and relax, to have fun on the putting green or to get active on the tennis courts.

**Sandsfoot Gardens** are rich in heritage and enjoy some of the most spectacular views across Portland Harbour. These small but beautiful gardens are made up of seasonal flowers, herb beds and herbaceous borders, which surround an ornamental pond in the centre of the grounds. The nationally unique Castle dates back to 1539 and was built during the reign of Henry VIII to prevent an invasion from the French.

**Radipole Park Gardens** is a tree lined linear park which offers a serene setting in spite of its central location. These Gardens have year-round interest from the thousands of early spring bulbs to the extensive herbaceous beds to a variety of trees. It includes tennis courts, basketball, a playground and a community orchard. An HLF funded project is currently underway which will include improvements to the playground, a café, heritage interpretation and toilets as well as landscape and biodiversity improvements.

Encompassing a peninsula jutting into the sea, **The Nothe Gardens** offers panoramic vistas over both Weymouth Harbour and Portland Harbours. It adjoins a well-preserved historic fort built in 1872 to defend both harbours, which is now a popular visitor attraction. The Nothe Gardens include amenity grassland and a wide variety of trees as well as shrub and herbaceous borders. Amenities include toilets, play equipment and picnic tables. It is a popular recreation area for both tourists and local residents.

**Lodmoor Country Park** is a large recreational area created on a disused landfill site. It has an extensive events area with an amenity train ride. The park has a range of trees, amenity grassland, a wildflower meadow and a large playground. It also has Green Gym stations around the park and is a popular location for exercising and dog walking. It is the location of Weymouth's Park run.

Weymouth Town Council own a number of other smaller sites and recreational areas including a 'pocket park' at St. John's Gardens and various open recreation areas, each well supported by local communities.

## 2. Healthy, Safe and Secure

### Health and Well-being

Weymouth Town Council recognises the improvement role that parks and gardens play in the health and well-being of residents.

Our aim is to maximise scarce resources to ensure that residents and visitors within parks, gardens and open spaces feel safe and can enjoy the many benefits that an attractive and secure environment brings to their health and well-being.

Within our parks, gardens and open spaces we provide a wide range of outdoor recreational leisure, sporting pursuits and facilities that promote equality of opportunity, social inclusion, cultural experiences and healthy lifestyles, including allotments, sports pitches, tennis courts, pitch and putt course, bowling green, recreational facilities for young families and older children, bandstand, green gym, healthy walking, cycle routes and cycling.

We are responsible for the development and management of children's play areas and outdoor facilities for young people ensuring they are well maintained, safe and secure for people to use.

We offer advice and support for community projects aimed at improving the local environment.

We promote and facilitate a programme of special events aimed at encouraging the maximum use of parks, gardens and open spaces for the whole community.

There is a year round programme of events in Weymouth's parks and gardens.





## Equipment and Facilities

The Parks & Open Spaces team are responsible for ensuring that parks, gardens and open spaces are well maintained, accessible, safe and secure for people to use.

In order to promote safe use of parks, gardens and open spaces, all infrastructure, facilities and equipment are inspected on a monthly basis. An assessment of the condition of paths, fencing, gates, seating, information boards, hard surfacing, etc. on a schedule, reflects the usage of the open space.

Play area equipment and surfacing all conform to the relevant British/EN standards and are visually inspected by one of three play area inspectors every week. A playground inspector undertakes a detailed inspection of all play areas at the start of each month. Repairs are identified on a risk basis as high (repair immediately), medium (schedule for repair) or low (monitor).

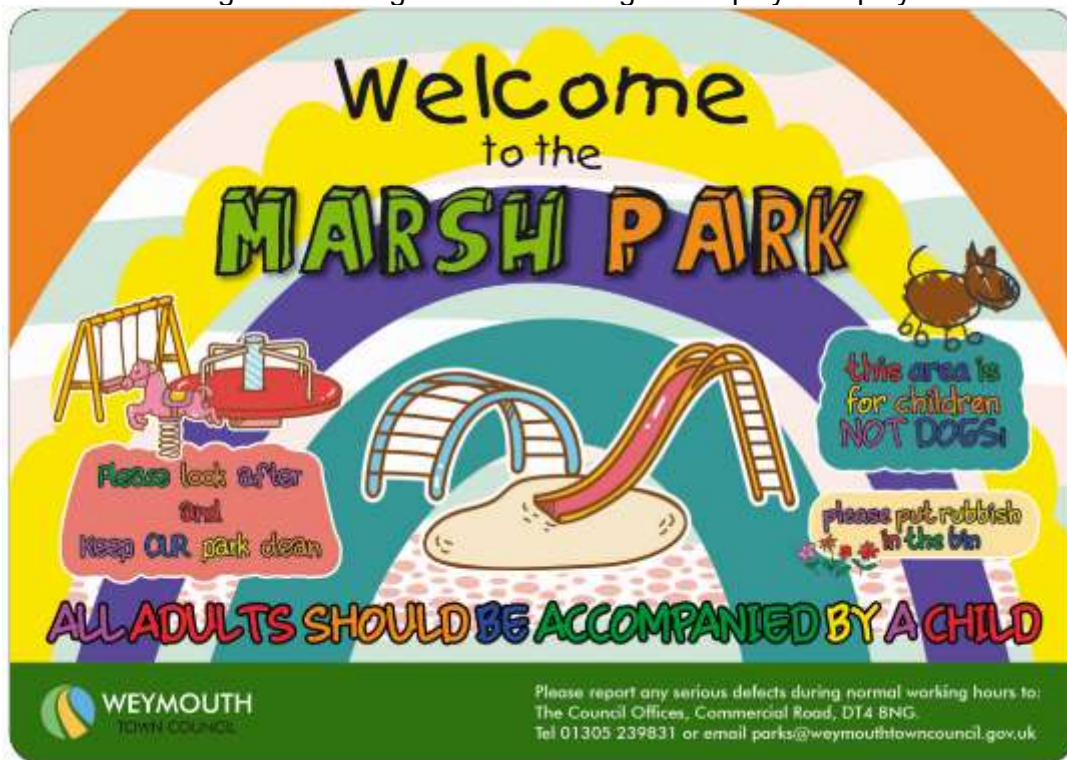


Each play area is also inspected on an annual basis by an independent specialist company, which subsequently sends a detailed report to the council.

All works are prioritised and supervised by a play area inspector and are carried out by them. All inspections are recorded, as are all details of major and minor works undertaken.

In terms of on-site security, toddler areas are fenced, with areas for older children assessed on an individual basis.

Pictorial signs for no dogs and no smoking are displayed in play areas.



In terms of additional reporting and response, the public are able to notify the Council of health, safety and other concerns via several mechanisms:

- The feedback facility on the Council's website.
- Telephone calls, emails and letters directly to the Parks team.
- Call and emails received via police community support officers.
- Call and emails received via Friends and other park user groups.

Site noticeboards display police contact details and, where appropriate, specific emergency contact information.

### Security and Safety in Parks and Gardens

As well as an inspection and maintenance programme, there are other aspects of site security that are addressed by Weymouth Town Council.

All Weymouth Town Council staff working in parks and gardens (gardeners, arborists, cleansing crew) are clearly identifiable by their Council uniform and this helps establish the sense of a 'presence' in the gardens and helps members of the public to identify people who can assist them. Some of the Parks and Open Spaces team have undergone training to enable them to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for offences such as out of control dogs and vandalism.

### Child Protection

In terms of child protection, all personnel likely to come into contact with children and vulnerable adults as a key part of their role are DBS checked.

## **On-site Security**

There are several initiatives which have been set up to improve safety and security within parks and open spaces. Council staff and Friends work closely with the Police Community Support Officers.

The noticeboards display information about how to contact the local police and how to contact the council by telephone, email or via the website to report damage and incidents.

## **CCTV**

Closed circuit television cameras operate in some of the gardens, which give real time high quality evidentially acceptable film that is monitored by the Authority's control room.

## **Council Enforcement Team**

A pioneering pilot enforcement scheme to target dog fouling and littering was launched by Weymouth & Portland Borough Council in March 2017 to help clean-up the borough.

A dedicated team of officers are patrolling and have the power to issue fixed penalty notices to anyone caught dropping litter, spraying graffiti or allowing their dogs to foul.

The patrol officers are employed by a specialist environmental enforcement company, 3G. If approached by a patrol officer, offenders are asked to provide their name, address and proof of identity. Failure to comply can result in a criminal prosecution, which carries a fine of up to £1,000, together with a criminal conviction. The officers will wear body cameras.

## **3. Community Involvement**

### **Friends Groups**

The council has worked with local residents and open space users to create Friends Groups.

The level and type of contact with these groups varies and there is a tailored approach depending on the needs of the garden and the group. The Friends groups are well established and, in the main, operate fairly independently, organising events and litter picks, raising funds and liaising on garden development.

FOGG – Friends of Greenhill Gardens - focus their attention on events and fund raising to invest in improvement projects. In 2014, the funds they raised financed the opening of a bandstand for the array of artists who perform in the gardens throughout the summertime. In 2019 they funded and installed an impressive archway at the main entrance into the Gardens from the Esplanade. The group is in regular contact with the Parks team.





Arch installed by Friends of Greenhill Gardens



FOGG opening event for the new bandstand 2014

Friends of Rodwell Trail & Sandsfoot Gardens (FORT) split their time between promoting the gardens by way of events and organising litter picks and vegetation clearance projects along the Rodwell Trail, national cycle network 26, adjacent to the gardens. The Friends are the eyes and ears of the gardens, quick to report any incidents of antisocial behaviour to both the Parks team and the Police.



Friends of Rodwell Trail & Sandsfoot Gardens host a Tudor Picnic

The Friends of Radipole Park Gardens have been instrumental in putting together the HLF bid that will see installation of a new playground, café and toilets, heritage interpretation and landscape and biodiversity improvements. They have an active social media feed and are well supported.

Friends of Lodmoor Country Park assist with practical work and fundraising in the gardens, such as creating a wildflower area and obtaining funding for a play area and green gym. They also organise events including the popular 'Sparkle in the Park' and Park Yoga.

## Health & Safety Policies

Weymouth Town Council takes a proactive and comprehensive risk assessment approach to the management of health and safety in gardens:

- All Parks & Open Space staff has a personal copy of the section's Health & Safety Codes of Practice and a Health and Safety section in their employee file. Training needs are identified via the induction and appraisal systems and copies of certificates are kept in the file.
- All Parks' staff undertake a health check covering hand arm vibration and hearing tests.
- Monitoring and managing hand arm vibration using HAV meters and HAV wear, with a cloud based reporting platform, to assess HAVs risk to tool exposure by employees.
- There are known procedures for all activities regularly carried out by staff in the Parks team and for reporting incidents and accidents to the general public.
- There is a lone worker policy and a mobile phone is provided to all Parks staff.

- The Property Services team has undertaken an extensive audit of water safety within the borough's open spaces.
- Site risk assessment are regularly carried out on parks and gardens allowing us to identify scope for safety improvements.
- Accidents and incidents affecting the public are recorded and investigated and any learnings from these are implemented.

## **Control of Dogs**

The Dorset Council Dog Warden service provides advice, educates and may take formal action, including the serving of fixed penalty notices and prosecution in appropriate cases. Dog fouling, stray and lost dogs can be reported online.

Land to which dogs are excluded at all times that the Parks team is responsible for, include:

All land within the administrative areas of the Council which comprises any fenced (and/or hedged and/or walled) children's play area, children's pool and/or sand pit, skate board park, tennis courts, basketball court, bowling green or putting green or any other fence (and/or hedge and/or walled) park, sporting or recreational facility signed at its entrances) as a 'dog exclusion area' (where the sign uses those particular words or uses a word and/or symbols having a like effect).

Land to which dogs shall be kept on a lead at all times, which the Parks & Open Spaces team are responsible for, include:

All land in municipal cemeteries, allotments and formal public gardens. The latter includes all of our gardens except Lodmoor Country Park, which is an off lead area.

## **Police Community Support Officers**

Through site specific consultation and work with Friends Groups, we have found that there is little fear of actual crime in the gardens but there is a wariness of anti-social behaviour, which causes a nuisance to other users and engenders fear in older aged users.

Anti-social and nuisance behaviour tends to be associated with rough sleepers/vagrants and youths/children causing damage to or climbing on structures.

PCSO's patrol within the gardens as part of a patch approach; the frequency and timing are based on information received about specific nuisances or incidents. The policy is one of education and persuasion in the initial stages.

The PCSO officers actively work with the Parks staff and attend Friends Group meetings to obtain information and listen to users' concerns.

## **Disability Discrimination Act/Accessibility**

A disability discrimination act audit was carried out on the gardens in December 2005 by Martin Affleck RIBA, NRAC, a Disability Access Consultant, on behalf of the Authority. His audit was wide reaching and produced many findings which were then prioritised for improvements to be carried out.



As a result of the audit, seats and bins have been re-positioned to facilitate correct use or prevent accidents. Accessible noticeboards have been installed. New hand railings on steps have been introduced. Contrast nosing strips on steps, etc. are re-painted annually.

This audit has been adopted as a minimum standard to be used whenever improvements and/or re-developments are carried out.

### **Garden Byelaw Revisions**

The byelaws covering the gardens were revised in 2005/6, the revision allows for action to be taken against more modern activities that can cause nuisance to other users of the gardens.

## **4. Well Maintained and Clean**

All gardens in Weymouth are litter picked and the bins are emptied 3 days a week in the winter and up to 7 days a week in the summer. The only exception is Christmas when no operations take place on bank holidays but will occur every other day between 27<sup>th</sup> to 31st December.

Recycling bins enable the streaming of recyclables into paper, glass, plastic bottles and cans/tins, which are then collected and recycled in line with country wide domestic recycling.



Fly tipping, graffiti and broken glass are dealt with immediately, as this has been found to be the most effective way of preventing an escalation or recurrence of the problem.

Friends Groups are actively involved in assisting with litter picking across our sites.

Parks staff make a point of picking up litter when they are in a garden as this helps to set an example. Litter bins are located throughout the gardens.

All relevant Parks' cleansing and grounds maintenance staff have up to date training on the safe handling of discarded hypodermic needles.

In terms of the recycling of horticultural waste, all green waste is taken to the local Civic Amenity site and composted for use as green waste compost.



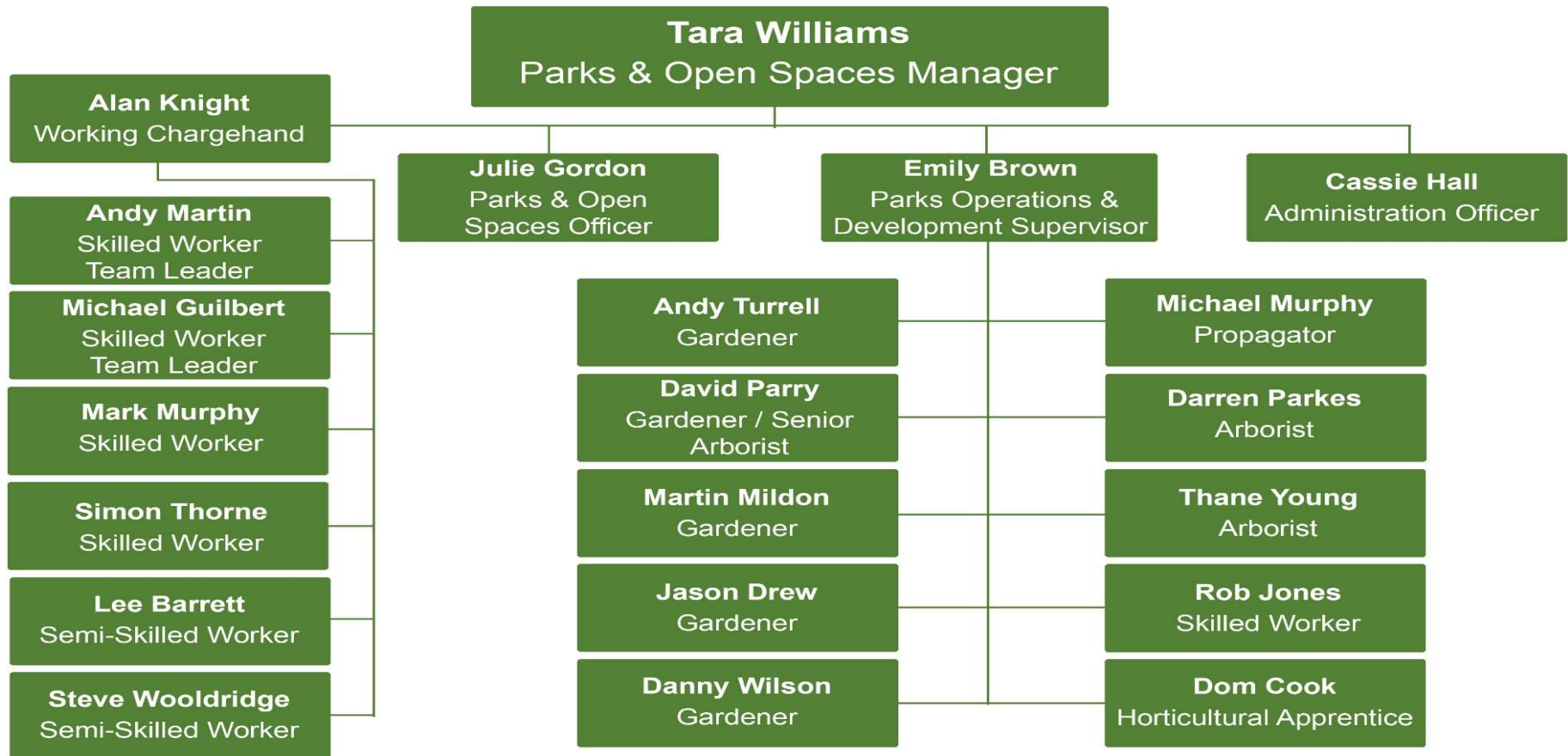
Community Litter Picks

## **Personnel**

There are 19 full time, 2 part time and 1 seasonal member of staff.

The staff are located at Crookhill Depot. Daily meetings and discussions ensure the practicalities of landscape maintenance are taken into consideration in Parks' development work.

# Parks and Open Spaces





## **Staff Development**

There is a staff development process which is based around an annual staff appraisal interview. All staff in the team has a part to play in service delivery but they are also considered as individuals in terms of training and any other issues that are personal to them rather than the team.

## **Training**

Training needs are established and a specific budget allocation used to support them. All gardeners are to be trained to at least NVQ level 3. Please note, some staff will have older qualifications but they are still required to be “of equivalence” to the aforementioned.

Each year there are also specific section wide training directives which apply equally to all staff and usually cover corporate priorities and health and safety updating.

### 2019/2020 staff training

Chainsaw

First Aid

Operational inspections of children’s playgrounds (renewal)

Brushcutters/trimmers

### 2021 staff training

Chainsaw maintenance & cross cutting

Grass cutters/mowers ride on machine/rotary

Operational inspections of children’s playgrounds

## **Grounds Maintenance**

Maintenance teams have responsibility for all maintenance operations within all our gardens. The level of staffing varies according to the specific site’s needs and comprises of skilled gardeners, skilled and unskilled workers. As well as site-based gardeners, there are teams which work across all sites carrying out specific activities such as mowing, scrub clearance and tree works.

## **Maintenance Team Responsibilities**

At the formal garden sites, the gardener has responsibility for arranging works to be carried out and the teams to do them. In addition, they design and quantify all the bedding displays where relevant. The gardener at Greenhill also produces the carpet bedding display from artwork supplied by the Parks Manager.

The skilled worker is capable of working alone or with temporary employees in the absence of the gardener.

Seasonal temporary labourers are usually accompanied by a full time member of staff and are selected at the start of the season; an essential requirement being previous experience and/or training in horticulture.

Any one-off or ad hoc minor works of a grounds maintenance nature are also attended to by the on-site staff. Any serious vandalism or damage that cannot be repaired by the on-site staff is reported back to the Parks Manager.

The specific work programmes for the Green Flag gardens are located in the site documents.

### **Infrastructure and Other Facilities**

All Weymouth Town Council gardens and recreational areas are inspected on a monthly basis for infrastructure and facilities.

Reports of problems via the web, Friends, staff, the public and PCSO's ensure that issues are quickly identified and remedied.

The Parks team undertakes minor repairs immediately to maximise availability of facilities. This applies to removal of graffiti and making safe broken glass.

Hard surfaces, paths and so on are included in the inspection and maintenance regimes.

Any fault/hazard is clearly identified or cordoned off so that members of the public are kept clear of the area until the repair can be carried out.

The paths, including steps, are also inspected annually by one of Weymouth Town Council's inspectors. A report is prepared and any minor work attended to. If major works are identified, these are put forward as capital funding items to Full Council for inclusion in the next year's budget or, if works are an immediate safety risk, for immediate remedial funding. A copy of a path inspection report is included in the evidence folder.

### **Equipment Maintenance**

The inspection regime to ensure the cleanliness, maintenance and safety of equipment used by the public has already been described. Please refer to the section on Equipment and Facilities in the Healthy, Safe and Secure section.

### **Cleanliness**

A clean garden is often perceived as a safe garden. All efforts are made to maintain to excellent standards, specifically:

- Instances of graffiti, flyposting and fly-tipping are removed as soon as possible. The use of fixed penalty notices is used to deter future occurrences.
- Enforcement of dog fouling by fixed penalty notices and patrolling.
- Prompt repairs to any vandalised equipment.

## **5. Environmental Management**

### **Managing Environmental Impact**

An electric powered vehicle has been added to the Fleet and is used across the gardens. Bio–diesel at the highest acceptable organic ratio is used in all diesel powered service vehicles. The use of two stroke engine powered machines is kept to a minimum where possible.

### **Watering**

Whilst artificial irrigation is essential for bedding plants at our Green Flag gardens, our water consumption has fallen due to the significant reduction of numbers of bedding plants used, consumption continues to be monitored and controlled. The remainder of our gardens don't contain annual bedding and therefore irrigation needs are limited to establishment of new plants.

To enable a reduction in the amount of water applied, a deep digging and organic matter incorporation programme was commenced in 2006. It is anticipated that this has improved water retention capacity in the soil and, by removal of former cultivation pans that were present, allowing for deeper water and root penetration in the soil profile.

### **Electricity**

Electricity use is monitored and controlled and use is maintained at a practical minimum. Use is low and is limited to mess facilities and lighting. Time switches apply to the decorative lighting. Energy saving light bulbs in buildings have been phased in since 2008.

### **Materials**

Materials purchased for use on site are, whenever possible, sourced locally to reduce carbon emissions due to transport and, where available, products are used from sustainable sources, ie. all new seats are recycled plastic.

Any soil excavated during digging operations is reused within our gardens or as near as possible to the site.

Bedding plants are sourced from the Town Council's own nursery within Weymouth to reduce carbon emissions due to transport, as much as possible. The nursery has climatic zones so that energy use is reduced significantly in the winter and a grant was secured for a biomass boiler to heat the facility using waste wood and woodchip.

The nursery has significantly reduced its production of bedding plants and they are now used in Green Flag gardens only but even here the amount of bedding being used has been reduced. All bedding plants are grown in peat free compost.



Selected beds, previously planted with annuals, were changed over to perennial planting in Green Flag gardens during 2016 to provide year round interest. The driver for this change was to achieve a reduction in the cost of energy/water relating to the production process and also a reduction in the cost of transportation in bedding plants, it has also reduced carbon emissions even further. The deep root systems of most perennial plants reduce the need for artificial watering throughout the growing season and, as perennial plants require less care than annuals, our gardeners can now concentrate on other grounds maintenance operations within the gardens.

### **Green Waste**

All green waste is taken to the Dorset Council composting facility at Lodmoor, Weymouth. The material is processed and returned for use on the site as both a soil conditioner and mulch. The soil is also improved by the use of well-rotted farmyard manure.

### **Wood Chippings/Eco Piles**

Where possible materials generated from work within the gardens, such as tree works, are left on site for use in the vicinity either chipped or eco habitat.

### **Pesticides and Herbicide Use**

Pesticide use has been reduced year on year and no residual herbicides are used in soft landscape applications. Path edge applications are limited to one application per year, using the least harmful chemical available having carried out a COSHH assessment. This is only applied by trained staff.

Herbicide application to annual beds has been limited to the use of non-hazard rated Glyphosate products. Due to infestations of both Celandine and Oxalis, Glyphosate is used on annual beds at the end of the bedding season and through the winter (where possible within application guidelines) on beds that are not planted out or only have bulbs planted in them. This is in conjunction with the programme of deep hand digging and organic matter incorporation. A residual herbicide treatment to shrub beds has been discontinued.

### **Horticultural and Arboricultural Management**

Weymouth Town Council's tree stock is inspected, maintained and managed by the Parks & Open Spaces arborists.

Detailed inspections of trees are undertaken using, EzyTreez, a software package that facilitates easy management of all tree related enquiries. It enables a comprehensive on-site tree data collection, surveying and re-inspection to be transferred onto a Desktop PC, making it readily accessible for interrogation and analysis. Information relating to Tree Preservation Orders is also registered.

Any maintenance work required to the Council's tree stock is prioritised and work is carried out by the Council's arborists.

Trees are sourced locally and from within the UK, depending on requirements. Some gardens have fruit orchards as part of community led projects. The majority of trees planted are native and all come from licensed and approved sources. The team have recently set up a native tree nursery, where they grow on saplings until needed.

Where hedgerows are planted or gapped up, native species such as hawthorn and blackthorn are used to provide a food source for wildlife.

All new trees are furnished with watering systems, cages and rabbit or strimmer guards.

Standing dead wood is a rare commodity and the council has adopted a policy of assessing, on a case by case basis, the suitability for tree turns to be left in situ, either standing or prone.

### **Pollution Reduction**

The following precautions for minimising pollution have been adopted:

- Fuel stores are bunded to contain spillage.
- All chemicals are stored in a weatherproof, secure facility away from surface water drain.
- Waste clearly marked and properly disposed of.
- Bonfires avoided.
- Noise kept to a minimum on vehicles and machinery and mufflers used.
- Records kept of pollution incidents.

### **Water and Energy Efficiency**

The mains water consumed in all parks buildings is metered and the Property Services team monitors the bills for unaccountable increases and possible leaks are then investigated.

There is a focus on naturalistic planting that requires no irrigation long term. Irrigation is limited to the establishment of recent plantings and the use of mulch aids the reduction in water loss.

Electricity use is monitored and controlled and use is maintained at a practical minimum. Time switches apply to the decorative lighting of the castle.

Low energy lighting is used in all parks buildings.

## **6. Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage**

### **Biodiversity**

A Parks and Open Spaces biodiversity strategy is being developed. This guides how we will manage our parks and open spaces to benefit wildlife and to seek opportunities for habitat enhancement and creation. Site management to promote wildlife already includes late cutting in wildflower rich areas, leaving standing deadwood where safe to do so and managing hedge works in accordance with the bird nesting season. There are currently two small but thriving wildflower areas managed as meadows at Lodmoor Country Park and Radipole, and a further wildflower area being created at Greenhill Gardens. The Council's arborists are also planting native trees (including a children's community woodland) and installing bird and bat boxes. Weymouth Town Council is part of the Local Nature Partnership and many of our sites lie within Weymouth's Ecological Network, providing important corridors and stepping stones between areas of high biodiversity value.

### **Woodland and Trees**

Weymouth Town Council's tree management regime is to leave trees to take their natural shape and minimise pruning unless there is a safety issue. Tree management is undertaken by an in-house team of professionals who carry out maintenance work required for health and safety reasons with the ultimate aim of preserving and enhancing the existing landscape.

Examples of tree inspections and species lists are found in the site specific evidence folders.

The Council's arborists periodically undertake educational tree walks. The events usually attract 20-30 people.

### **Conservation of Landscape**

Weymouth parks and gardens each have their own character, landscape and historical features and there is an emphasis on the conservation of natural, landscape and structural features.

In Sandsfoot Gardens a Heritage Lottery grant supported the renovation of the castle, adding an internal walkway with floodlighting in order to give free, inclusive public access and conserve the castle for future generations.

On the orders of Henry VIII, Sandsfoot Castle was built in 1539 on a cliff overlooking Portland Roads. Bought by the local authority in 1902, it remained ever popular for visitors to explore until about 1930 when it was permanently fenced off to the public for safety reasons due to its crumbling walls.

Greenhill Gardens offers active and quiet areas with some interesting historical features, including a floral clock that was built in 1936 by Richie and Sons of Edinburgh at a cost of £200.



The clock has a “cuckoo” type chime which is two-tone and powered by leather bellows. This is believed to be one of only two mechanically driven floral clocks still working in the country and is of national interest as a result.

A carpet bedding display is still provided. It takes over 5000 plants to make up the carpet bedding design each year and these are all grown in the Council’s nursery.

Nothe Gardens is a mosaic of trees, shrub borders, herbaceous beds, scrub and grassland which slopes down to a SSSI coastline. The pockets of scrub provide shelter and food for birds and small mammals, and the sloping grassland above includes some more species rich grasslands. It is dominated by the Nothe Fort, an historic sea fort built in 1872 to protect Weymouth and Portland Harbours. It is now a tourist attraction with an active events programme run predominantly by volunteers. There are historic features in the garden remaining from this, such as ammunition steps leading from the harbour to the top of the gardens.

Lodmoor Country Park buffers the RSPB’s Lodmoor Nature Reserve and together they form part of the 187 ha Lorton Valley Nature park, providing a huge green corridor through Weymouth for both people and wildlife. Created on a landfill site, Lodmoor Country Park has a wilder feel than the other parks, and areas of scrubland are left adjacent to the nature reserve to encourage biodiversity.

Radipole Park and Gardens is an important park in the centre of Weymouth, which has provided services to the local community for nearly a hundred years. The current facilities include ornamental gardens, tennis and basketball courts, a play area, a multi-use games area (MUGA), a small skate park and a playing field together with expanses of green space used for recreation.

Whilst the park and gardens are one of the youngest in Weymouth formed from reclaimed land from the lake in the 1920’s and 30’s, it has a hidden heritage stretching from invading Romans, punting Victorians to D Day storage supplies.

The park and gardens were once part of a wide tidal estuary at the mouth of the River Wey, known as The Backwater, where invading Romans once sailed through the river in their galleys, forming a settlement and port in Radipole Village.

In more ‘recent’ times, Victorian gentry could be seen rowing upstream to visit the old teahouse in Radipole village, the extensive reed beds provided thatching material for many of Dorset’s traditional cottages and it has connection to the build up to the D Day invasion that departed from Weymouth & Portland. During WWII the play park was requisitioned for the US army to store supplies and some of our older residents recollect rummaging for tins of food dumped by departing American troops.

## **7. Marketing**

Weymouth Town Council ensures that any improvements made are advertised widely and that the public are aware of other events and activities designed to make the best use of the parks for health and well-being, sports development, play development and educational opportunities and more. Social media is used to publicise events and activities in the park, and to highlight seasonal changes within the gardens. A recent initiative has been interviewing members of the park’s team about their work, which is released on social media and in

our newsletter. Our quarterly newsletter keeps the public updated on our activities and disseminates information.

### **Information Provision and Interpretation**

Weymouth Town Council, the Friends Groups and the local media work together to ensure that the gardens and the events taking place within them are well advertised and that people are informed about developments.

Event details are provided to the public and staff via publicity posters, through local media and via web pages (Friends and the Councils).

Friends Group newsletters and 'word of mouth' also work well to disseminate relevant information.

The noticeboards in our gardens are used to advertise the facilities available in the park and highlight the forthcoming events and activities. They also provide information on the parks team, contact details and other site specific information.

Green Flag gardens have interpretation panels giving historic information.

The Town Council maintains pages on its website about Weymouth's parks and gardens ([www.weymouthtowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.weymouthtowncouncil.gov.uk)). The Friends Groups also have websites, which includes information about the gardens and the activities that take place there. ([www.greenhill-gardens.co.uk](http://www.greenhill-gardens.co.uk) [www.sandsfootcastle.org.uk](http://www.sandsfootcastle.org.uk) [www.radipoleparkandgardensfriends.org.uk](http://www.radipoleparkandgardensfriends.org.uk))

The Friends Groups have active social media feeds, particularly Friends of Radipole Park Gardens and Friends of Sandsfoot Gardens & the Rodwell Trail. There is also a very active Weymouth & Portland Parks, Gardens Trails and Community Spaces Facebook page, which is very supportive and a good source of information for us about public opinion and feedback.

Press releases are sent to the local media.

### **Events and Special Events**

Many events and activities are organised by the Friends Groups and external organisations wishing to use council open space as an event venue. Parks and open spaces are actively promoted as event venues and there are guidelines that cover all elements, such as insurance, risk assessments, setting up, clearing up, etc.



Bird box building



Building a bug hotel



Planting a community orchard



## Promotion

Informative interpretation panels and notice boards furnish our gardens. Events are promoted using site notice boards, additional poster, butterfly walks and children's play events.

The Green Flag logo is used for marketing material relating to Green Flag gardens, as it is emblematic of the quality and standard of the garden.

## Parks Photo Competition

In 2017 a Parks Photo Competition was introduced to promote parks and gardens.

### Campaign Objective

- Promote Weymouth and Portland's parks and gardens by holding a photography competition.
- Encourage people to go to the park to boost their mental and physical health (in line with the objectives set by Weymouth and Portland's Health and Wellbeing Board, who were consulted).

### Communications Objectives

- Publish beautiful photos on social media to promote Weymouth and Portland's parks and gardens.
- Build up a photo library to promote Weymouth and Portland's parks and gardens.
- Build good relations with volunteers from the parks friends groups (who were involved and invited to judge).

### Target Audience

Weymouth & Portland residents and visitors, especially younger people who may traditionally engage less readily with the council.

### Preparation (input activities)

- Drew-up a communications plan.
- Produced posters and graphics for social media promotion.
- Agreed competition terms and conditions.

### Outputs

- Promoted on social media, mainly Twitter and Instagram, entries liked and reissued through different channels.
- Posters put up in parks and gardens across Weymouth and Portland.
- News releases published.
- Featured in enewsletters.
- Online, featured in Newsroom on dorsetforyou.com.
- Cllrs, parks friends groups and photography clubs involved and asked to share details.
- Held a judging event for the parks friends groups.
- Made a film of the entries: ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nq\\_N9CkQkuM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nq_N9CkQkuM))

### Outtakes

A total of 114 photographs were entered into the #loveweyportparks2018 photography competition, mostly via Instagram and email, but also through Twitter.



## Outcomes

- We exceeded our target of achieving 100 entries and exceeded the 80 entries received in 2017.
- These photographs can be used for promotional purposes (eg/ Visit Dorset have already asked to share them).
- On Twitter we achieved 335 clicks and a reach of 119, 282. We don't have access to these analytics from Instagram, but the top post achieved 50 likes.
- A total of 31 clicks achieved from enewsletters.
- Campaign achieved positive media coverage locally and was also included in the regional newsletter from 'Visit South West England'
- Film of entries (link above) has so far achieved 443 views.

## What we've learned (Evaluation Insight)

We have learned that this is an effective and low-cost way of promoting Weymouth and Portland and its parks and gardens.



## 8. Management

### Corporate Plan 2021-2025

The Corporate Plan summarises the Council's vision for the future of Weymouth. The priorities take account of the needs of Weymouth and Portland and its communities, as well as what the council needs to do internally to make sure our services are delivered.

Our Parks and Gardens directly contribute to the following priorities:

1. Improve the Well-Being of the People of Weymouth

Accumulating research is proving the link between use of parks and green spaces and enhanced physical health, mental wellbeing and life satisfaction. Our network of Parks, Gardens and Open Spaces ensure that Weymouth's residents are able to access high quality greenspace for recreation, exercise and relaxation. The team also manage 18 play areas and 350 allotments which further contribute to this priority. Parks also contribute to social integration and provide opportunities for community engagement.

2. Work to Address the Climate & Ecological Emergency and support the Community to do the same

The Parks team is continually working to minimise its carbon footprint as previously described, for example by investing in an electric vehicle and electric tools.

We seek to enhance habitats for wildlife in our parks and gardens, in line with our biodiversity strategy and within Dorset's Local Nature Partnership Ecological Network. We are addressing the ecological emergency by managing our habitats with wildlife in mind and seeking opportunity to create new habitats.

3. Promote Opportunities for Economic Success in the Area

Enhancing our green environment supports the tourism industry, attracting new visitor markets and encourage the relocation of businesses to the town. There is also an element of uplift in house prices near parks and gardens.

### **Review, Quality and Audit Systems**

- Green Flag Award provides a method for self-assessment and determines the action plan for each garden, which is monitored on an on-going basis and reviewed annually.
- On-going feedback from garden users feed into decisions and actions for the gardens. This includes a public survey which is currently underway and will be undertaken annually as well as feedback on our social media feeds.
- Complaints, comments and compliments: listening to customer's views to constantly review and improve services.
- Working with and listening with the Friends Groups.
- KMC performance management system assesses the quality of service provision, the value of the open space to the community, resource allocation and customer satisfaction. It enables the Parks & Open Spaces team to measure improvements and introduce the concept of community involvement in the management of open spaces.

## Financial Management

Weymouth's Parks and Gardens are now managed and maintained by Weymouth Town Council, which was formed in 2019.

The majority of major works have been completed in our Green Flag gardens so there will be little or no major capital investment in the near future. The emphasis is now on maintaining the facilities installed and ensuring the standards reached are in those gardens, whilst aiming to improve standards across the remainder of our sites. Radipole Park Gardens has received significant Heritage Lottery Funding for a development project, which will enable it to achieve Green Flag status.

With current financial circumstances, the team need to consider carefully and to bear in mind the requirement to find alternative funding, where possible, and to secure stakeholder participation in any projects that are appropriate.

The Council can secure funding through the planning process via section 106 payments, whereby legal agreements with developers to obtain contributions towards the improvement of facilities, e.g. play areas, and other projects within the borough's gardens. For example, the creation of a major skate park and pump track on one of our recreation sites is being funded in this way.

## Annual Work Plan

An annual work plan review combined with a review of the management plan and Green Flag feedback will be used to inform action plans for each of the Green Flag sites as well as day to day management of all parks and open spaces. The review will also evidence progress each year and set priorities for the coming year.









