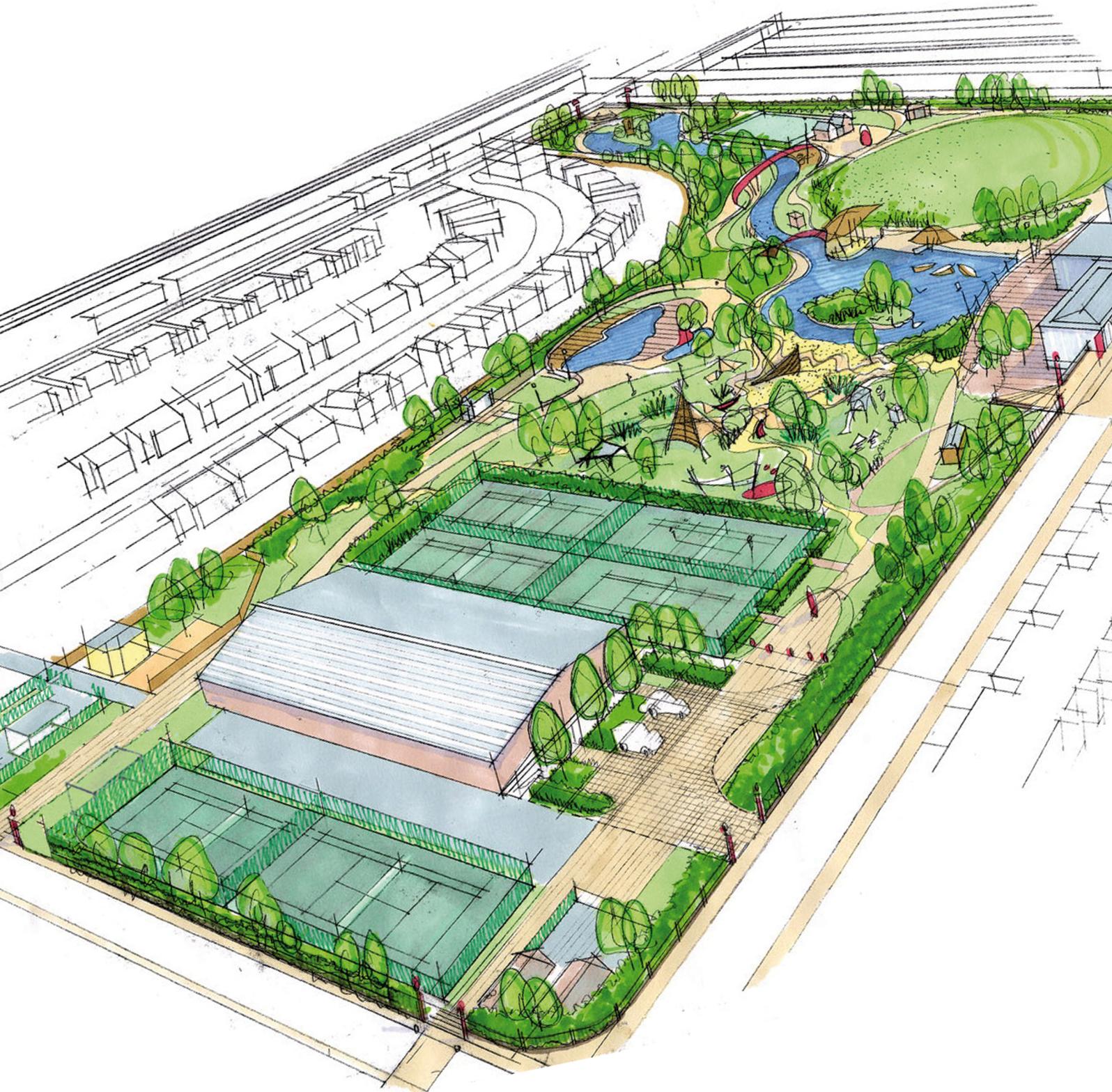


Audience Development & Access Plan

Egerton Park
Bexhill-on-Sea

April 2007



Egerton Park, Bexhill-on-Sea

Audience Development & Access Plan

Final Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 Rother District Council commissioned Atkins Heritage to prepare an Audience Development Plan (ADP) and Access Plan for Egerton Park, which is situated on the western side of Bexhill on Sea town centre. The Egerton Park Innovation and Conservation Project (EPIC) plans to improve the Park as part of wider regeneration initiatives for the town and make it fit for 21st Century needs and uses.
- 1.1.2 Egerton Park is situated in the Central Ward to the west of Bexhill-on-Sea, bounded by Brockley Road and the Polegrove Recreation Ground to the west, and by late 19th and early 20th century Arts & Crafts terrace housing on Woodville Road, Park Road and Egerton Road, the north, east, and south. The Park is less than 200m away from the town's main shopping area and Park Avenue, running south from Egerton Road, links the Park area to the seafront promenade, approximately 75m away. The Park was established as an integral part of the original design of Bexhill-on-Sea in 1888 by John Webb, who was given this land in part payment by the 7th Earl De La Warr for his design of the De La Warr parade. Since this date, the Park has offered a place for relaxation, recreation and enjoyment for its local residents and visitors. However, over the years, many of the Park's original features have been lost and many of the new features have dated and not been subject to regular improvements.
- 1.1.3 Despite this situation, the Park is highly valued and well used throughout the year by local residents. Consultation with the local community and visitors to Bexhill resoundingly showed how important the Park was to people's general enjoyment and well being and although certain concerns were raised in respect of security, Park maintenance and facilities, it is clear that the Park provides the benefits that people need.
- 1.1.4 Rother District Council is keen to regenerate the Park around the requirements and facilities considered essential by the local community. The Council is also keen to improve the Park's presence and image within the town; attempting to attract tourists and linking into the De La Warr parade improvements.
- 1.1.5 This Audience Development Plan (ADP) has evaluated the current audiences that visit the Park; what is of interest to them, what facilities they use and why they come. It has also analysed the non Park users or people who do not visit the Park very frequently. This has attempted to ascertain why they do not visit and what would induce them to go the Park.
- 1.1.6 This Audience Development Plan also refers to soft access issues and a separate Physical Access Audit (presented here as Appendix A), thus providing an integrated approach to Audience development and Access at Egerton Park. This Plan and Audit are intended to inform on the potential of the Park to widen its appeal, enhance the satisfaction of current visitors and

ultimately provide a high quality recreational facility for its residents and visitors in the 21st Century. This Plan and Audit are accompanied by a Conservation Management Plan; these documents are to support Rother District Council in its submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Parks for People programme, for a Stage 1 Heritage Grant.

1.2 THE AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (ADP)

- 1.2.1 Audience Development Plans are produced to establish an understanding of audiences and potential audiences to a particular place of cultural interest. It examines what attracts current audiences and who these audiences are, as well as exploring who the non-audiences are and what barriers exist that might explain their lack of involvement. The process of data gathering and awareness of the market context helps to define target audiences and initiatives to attract current audience and non-audience groups. The Plan should set out aims and aspirations for an organisation and their asset and establish goals and targets from which they can monitor their performance. The Plan should be considered a reference document, which an organisation can continually use to develop new initiatives and audiences. It will require updating as the organisation achieves certain goals and develops further aspirations.
- 1.2.2 This Plan has been produced following guidance established by the Heritage Lottery Fund, particularly *Audience Development Plans – Helping your Application* and *Access Plans – Helping your Application*. A two stage process has been carried out to deliver this plan, which is outlined below:

Stage 1: Audience Audit

- 1.2.3 This provides an understanding of the current baseline; essentially who are the audiences and non audiences and their profiles. This stage details what is known about current audiences, what experiences / facilities are on offer, what observations have been made about current audience needs and any barriers that exist. Past and current research is reviewed, looking at national, regional and local demographics and context.

Stage 2: Analysis and Potential

- 1.2.4 Stage 2 allows for an analysis of audiences / non audiences and addresses what barriers exist that prevent certain people from visiting. It explores what is working and what could work to maintain interest, enjoyment and access. It explores the many forms of soft access: intellectual, social and cultural, sensory, financial and organisational. From this analysis target audiences are identified and audience development objectives defined. This feeds into an action plan that breaks down objectives into specific tasks that can be undertaken.

1.3 SCOPE OF PLAN

- 1.3.1 This ADP has been produced in relation to the Egerton Park Innovation and Conservation Project (EPIC) plan to regenerate the Park, but its findings will help to support integration of the Park into wider regeneration of the town, much of which is happening under the aegis of Hastings and Bexhill Task Force. This is a SEEDA sponsored body with the remit of planning and action for the regeneration of these resorts for the benefit of the community. Wider regeneration initiatives in Bexhill include:
- ◆ The restored and redeveloped De La Warr pavilion (re-opened October, 2005) – this £7 million restoration project is a key element in the regeneration strategy for the local area
 - ◆ Tim Gale’s Seafront Strategy
 - ◆ Bexhill Museum, currently undergoing HLF-funded redevelopment
- 1.3.2 This Plan makes reference to these wider initiatives but does not deal specifically with the development of Park audiences and access in those contexts. However, it is recognised that integration with such wider initiatives is likely to increase opportunities to attract those audience groups identified as likely visitors to the Park.

1.4 KEY STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THE PLAN

- 1.4.1 Rother District Council is the organisation that has a key interest and management role in the Park.
- 1.4.2 Other key stakeholders represented on the Steering Group include the Friends of Egerton Park, Sure Start, John O’Conner Grounds Maintenance, and the Bexhill Museum. As organisations that own and lease buildings in the Park, Egerton Park Tennis Club, and the Spartan, Lakeside and Indoor Bowling Clubs also have an interest in the development of the Park.

1.5 PROJECT TEAM

- 1.5.1 The following team members were responsible for the production of the Plan: Andrew Croft (Project Overview), Ken Sabel (Project Manager and Area Conservation specialist), Katie Rees-Gill (Audience Development, Community & Access), and Angela Poulter (Research & Audience Development) from Atkins Heritage, and Adam Whitehead and Tom Gordon (Access Consultants) from Atkins’ sister company, Faithful and Gould.

2. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 This Audience Development Plan has been prepared to analyse the current audience groups that visit Egerton Park in Bexhill. The plan will explore the potential for catering for these visitors alongside new audiences through regeneration, enhancement and sustainable design of the Park.
- 2.1.2 This chapter establishes the aspirations for the Park and what methodology and research has been undertaken in order to prepare this plan.

2.2 PROJECT ASPIRATIONS

- 2.2.1 In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the Park and the surrounding streets were planned and built, Egerton Park was an important part of the original design of the seaside resort of Bexhill-on-Sea and intimately linked to both the surrounding housing and the seafront promenade. A key aspiration of the project is to re-emphasise this historic integral and focal role of the Park in the town, by linking it in to current wider regeneration plans for the town, seafront and museum, through partnership working with the Bexhill Museum, De La Warr Pavilion and others, and through a clear marketing strategy for the Park
- 2.2.2 The EPIC Project vision is of “a vibrant and inspiring park at the heart of the community with a distinctive cultural identity and unique local heritage”. This encapsulates the overarching aspiration for social inclusion and whole community involvement in a Park with a clear sense of its past, and yet an identity and facilities fit for 21st century. This aspiration is to be pursued through:
- ◆ conservation of heritage elements and innovative design to give the Park design coherency, to allow for a rethink of the use of particular spaces and improvement of key features, and to ensure that it is of real horticultural and landscape interest
 - ◆ improvement of management and maintenance of the Park, particularly through employment of appropriate and specialist staff, increased communication between organisations in the Park, and the involvement of community volunteers
 - ◆ creation of a package of facilities that attracts all age groups in the local community
 - ◆ development of events, educational and volunteer programmes which develop and maintain audiences in the longer term (particularly educational institutions) and sets the Park up as a cultural, social, and educational hub contributing to community well-being and learning

2.3 METHODOLOGY AND CURRENT DATA

- 2.3.1 This Plan has been produced in accordance with a brief produced by Rother District Council. It has consisted of desk-based research, stakeholder consultation, public consultation and site visits. This has included a review of previous data and consultation, of which a complete list of documentation is supplied in the bibliography.
- 2.3.2 New audience data was gathered in the production of this Plan and the interim report detailing this data and analysis of it is provided in Appendix B
- ◆ The park and open space questionnaire, Green Stat, developed by GreenSpace specifically for Parks for People (HLF funded programme), as a visitor evaluation and benchmarking system to provide baseline data for ADPs, was used as part of the public consultation process. The questionnaire was made available to the public by targeted mailings sent out by RDC, supplied in public places in Bexhill, and used at 3 days of consultation events held in Bexhill in October 2006:
 - ◆ A full list of public places where the questionnaire was made available and of those individuals and groups to whom the questionnaire was mailed can be found in interim ADP baseline report provided as Appendix B. 324 fully completed questionnaires were returned (341 were returned in total).
 - ◆ A questionnaire, designed by Atkins to gather qualitative information from key stakeholders and partners, was circulated to members of the EPIC Steering Group, to members of the Friends of Egerton Park (FOEP) Committee, and other relevant RDC officers.
 - ◆ Further qualitative information was gathered from a number of telephone interviews with key political, tourism, crime reduction, and cultural sector representatives in the Rother area and wider region.
- 2.3.3 In addition to the data gathered in the course of producing this Plan, feedback from recent audience research undertaken was also used as a sound basis from which to develop user / non user analysis. This existing research used included:
- ◆ Results of the Egerton Park User Survey – December 2005;
 - ◆ Bexhill Destination Benchmarking Visitor Survey 2005 (Tourism South East)
 - ◆ Visitor information from Bexhill Museum and the De La Warr Pavilion
- 2.3.4 The data from the Egerton Park Visitor Survey (to which there were 163 responses) was gathered by the council in December 2005 at the time of application for HLF project planning funding, to generate awareness and support for regeneration plans for the park and for the establishment of a Friends group. The age profile of audiences, their stated uses of the park, and general comments made in response to this survey have been broadly reinforced by the conclusions about existing audiences coming out of analysis of the Green Stat data gathered as part of the current project. These findings have been used to identify existing audiences, why the use the park, who uses the park less frequently, and possible barriers to their involvement, and to understand local peoples' views on restoration and regeneration of the park and how it can be enhanced to fit community needs.

- 2.3.5 It can often be difficult to identify non users of public spaces. A review of local and regional population demographics, then compared to known visitor groups, can assist in identifying these non-users. They can also be identified through review of other local attractions, such as Bexhill Museum and the De La Warr Pavilion.
- 2.3.6 The data from the Bexhill Destination Benchmarking Visitor Survey 2005 (Tourism South East) was gathered from July to October 2005 through face-to-face interview with visitors to Bexhill (370 interviewed in total), as part of the Regional Tourist Boards survey conducted in 17 destinations (including seaside resorts, historic towns/cities, large towns/cities) throughout England, to obtain visitors' opinions of a wide range of factors or indicators which together comprise the 'visitor experience'. This information provides a useful context for understanding the range of visitors to Bexhill, the factors that influence their decision to visit and their opinions on the attractions and facilities of the town.
- 2.3.7 Audience research data was compiled and assessed alongside a review of published research and wider surveys / tourism analysis. This helped to provide a context for visitors to the area and region. An understanding of tourism/open spaces development was obtained from consulting policy documentation. The sources consulted included:
- ◆ South East England Development Agency publications and information available online
 - ◆ Tourism South East's *Strategy for Tourism in the South East*, 2004
 - ◆ East Sussex, Brighton & Hove sub-regional tourism partnership's *Statement of Sub-Region Tourism Priorities*
 - ◆ East Sussex County Council's *Cultural Strategy* and other information available online
 - ◆ '*Building on Success*': *A Tourism Strategy for 1066 Country 2004-2009* (commissioned by The 1066 Country Partnership), June 2003
 - ◆ Rother Local Strategic Partnership *Your Culture, Your Leisure 2006-2011*
- 2.3.8 The current level of data that exists is more than sufficient to gain an awareness and undertake analysis of audiences and to gauge what potential there is for developing audiences for the restored and regenerated Egerton Park.
- 2.3.9 This desk based study was accompanied by:
- ◆ Three days of public consultation, at a Sure Start event in Bexhill Leisure Centre on 26th October; at the De La Warr Pavilion on Friday 27th October, and at St. Andrews Church Hall on Saturday 28th October, 2006. The Green Stat questionnaire was used to structure consultation, and these events also provided an opportunity to gather qualitative data from discussions with the public (see Appendix A).
 - ◆ Meetings with the Steering Group, and meetings and a site visit to the Park with the Friends Group.
 - ◆ Two site visits by Faithful & Gould's Access Consultant to carry out an access audit and a walkover of the site by Atkins Landscape Architects with the

Parks Officer and Parks Development Officer, which provided important information on access and barriers to involvement.

- 2.3.10 Further public consultation was carried out to test public responses to the draft Audience Development and Conservation Management Plans. An exhibition at the De La Warr Pavilion on 18th December 2006, advertised in the local press, provided an opportunity for the general public to view details of the draft Plans and to complete a comment form on them. These comment forms were also made available by Rother District Council over the subsequent 8 week period both online and in hard copy on request, and the exhibition boards were on display in a range of public places during this period too.
- 2.3.11 A number of schools and youth groups were also directly consulted on the Plans and key issues raised by them. Atkins met with student representative groups at Bexhill College and Bexhill High on 15th December, 2006, and provided a consultation plan and worksheets for Rother District Council to use with Bexhill Youth Club, 9th Bexhill Scout Group, Girl Guides (London Road), Explorers (Wainwright Road), and King Offa Primary School in January and February 2007.
- 2.3.12 The feedback from this consultation between December 2006 and February 2007 has informed the final shaping of the CMP and the ADP and a summary of comments can be found in Appendices C and D.

2.4 AUDIENCE AND OPEN SPACES DEVELOPMENT

- 2.4.1 In order to assess what audiences could be reached and why certain audiences are visiting Bexhill, it was necessary to review the current services and facilities on offer for visitors and how these might be incorporated or used to attract other audiences. This is outlined in Chapter 4. This also includes a review of the current management of visitors and how this will be developed as restoration and regeneration of the Park progresses. This review examined:
- ◆ the aims, management & funding of the Park;
 - ◆ connections to other facilities and attractions in Bexhill;
 - ◆ services and facilities provided;
 - ◆ staffing and volunteer activity.
- 2.4.2 This information fed into the identification of target audiences and the analysis of audience requirements. The potential of the regenerated Park was examined through a SWOT analysis summarising the strengths and weaknesses of it, and the opportunities and threats facing it. This highlighted what issues would need to be addressed to ensure the success of an enhanced Egerton Park. A STEEPLE analysis of the social, technological, environmental, educational, political, legal and economic factors influencing audience development activity was also carried out. This is detailed in Chapter 5.
- 2.4.3 In order to understand how to manage issues and barriers to involvement, chapter 6 has outlined actions that should be considered to draw audiences

in and provide them with a fulfilling experience. Key actions have been pulled together into an Action Plan (Chapter 7).

2.5 DELIVERING ADP INITIATIVES

- 2.5.1 This ADP has been produced in order to inform the management, design and regeneration of Egerton Park. It has detailed who the target audiences are, what barriers need to be removed for them to engage with the Park and suggests what initiatives could be undertaken to attract them. The identified target audiences will be catered for in the design of the new Park.

- 2.5.2 This plan has helped to establish the audience development objectives for the Park in its initial phase of regeneration. The stakeholders have been able, through the development of this plan, to define their objectives and which audiences they wish to target. As the EPIC project evolves so its direction and objectives for the Park will alter. It is therefore essential that the Audience Development Plan is reviewed and updated as required. This will identify new target groups and how to enhance the experience for those targeted groups that have already been reached.

3. CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1 This chapter explores the national, regional and local agendas and tourism initiatives for the area and the priorities and initiatives for open spaces across the UK. It sets out the context for the proposed Park restoration and regeneration and gives an indication of the focus that is required to ensure the success of the new facility.

3.2 NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 3.2.1 Britain's open spaces are currently in the spotlight and benefiting from increased attention at a national policy level. This has led to enhancing current open spaces as well as developing new ones. A range of initiatives and programmes have developed in recent years in order to enhance the value of open spaces; realise the wider benefits (such as improvements in health) that these places bring to the local community; the opportunities for wildlife and cultural advantages to the area.
- 3.2.2 Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation sets out the policies local authorities need to consider in developing and improving public open space for their communities. This guidance underpins wider government initiatives such as:
- ◆ Supporting urban renaissance – positive input into making urban areas more attractive, clean and safe, leading to wider appreciation and respect for the local environment;
 - ◆ Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion – open spaces respond to community social requirements providing a facility that encourages social interaction between neighbours and a wider sense of ownership and pride in the open space;
 - ◆ Health and wellbeing – health for all through relaxation, sports, children's play areas and encouraging time spend outdoors in fresh air.
 - ◆ Promoting more sustainable development – connecting urban parks with walking routes, cycleways and paths linked to other facilities and residential areas.
- 3.2.3 *Parks for People*, a funding programme jointly awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund, was launched in 2005 and the first applications accepted in March 2006. This scheme provides grants to local authorities and not for profit organisations to re-invigorate their urban and rural open spaces. This fund recognises the positive role open spaces play in providing an attractive, healthy environment for communities as well as acting as a significant draw to visitors to an area. Parks can transform an area, projecting an attractive image of a place, which allows for relaxation, socialising, enjoyment, sport and activities.

- 3.2.4 *Breathing Spaces* is also new on the agenda and again promotes the health benefits for local communities through caring and experiencing urban and rural spaces. This scheme was launched in June 2006 and is a small grants fund from the Big Lottery Fund. It promotes community involvement and inspires ownership and responsibility for creating open spaces that respond to human and wildlife needs.
- 3.2.5 The five *Parks for People* projects criteria – increase the range of audiences; conserve and improve heritage value; increase the range of volunteers involved; improve skills and knowledge through training; and improve management and maintenance – have informed the development of this Plan. The *Green Flag Award Scheme*, which is managed by The Civic Trust and aims to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country, also provides key criteria against which applications to the scheme are judged. These criteria – A Welcoming Place; Healthy, Safe and Secure; Clean and Well Maintained; Sustainability; Conservation and Heritage; Community Involvement; Marketing; and Management – have also proved useful in shaping the Plan.
- 3.2.6 Green Space was set up in 1999 and gained charity status in 2005. It is an organisation that aims to promote the care and enhancement of urban and rural spaces and to make them inclusive environments. In Spring 2006 it launched the Green Stat pilot project. This provides an on-line questionnaire for people to record how they feel about the management and overall condition of their park. This has allowed local authorities to understand the needs and issues of park users and respond to these comments in their future management. This has encouraged local communities to speak up about what they need in their parks and how they wish to see improvements made. It acknowledges that people wish to take pride in their open spaces and that these spaces provide important facilities.
- 3.2.7 Access to the historic environment and open spaces has also been highly publicised, particularly in line with additions and amendments made in 2005 to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- 3.2.8 There have also been several conference papers and studies produced that have explored the opportunities for inclusiveness in open spaces. These have included:
- ◆ Green Space & Sensory Trust *Public Parks Keep Out* – this explored how parks can be accessible, attractive and welcoming to all;
 - ◆ CABE Space *The Value of Public Space* – researched the planning, design and management of open spaces to provide the wider benefits recognised from parks in terms of physical and mental wellbeing;
 - ◆ English Heritage & HLF *Easy Access to Historic Landscapes* – provides guidance on design solutions and case studies to remove barriers and open up parks for all.
- 3.2.9 The project also needs to be considered in the context of initiatives such as Creative Partnerships, which was established in 2002 to encourage school children to gain more practical experience within the cultural sector. The

outcome of this scheme has seen project partnerships forged between schools and cultural organisations or individuals and recent DCMS reports have praised the work done so far (DCMS, 2006). Parks provide increasing opportunities for young people to get involved with improvements and particular schemes within their local area. Creative Partnerships is one route through which to provide this opportunity and certainly the regeneration of Egerton Park offers the chance to get young people thinking about their local green space and what to do with it, and to forge initiatives through which young people can develop their creative skills.

- 3.2.10 The above national initiatives indicate the increasing value recognised in our open spaces and that there are significant benefits to be gained from ensuring that our parks respond to local community needs and provide the type of environment required for 21st century living.

3.3 REGIONAL CONTEXT

- 3.3.1 In order to place the Park in context, we need to consider the regional population, and economic and cultural profile, as well as the visitor market to the area.
- 3.3.2 The South East has the largest regional population in the UK – over 8 million in some 3 million households – and encompasses 19 county and unitary authorities and 55 districts, stretching around London from Thanet in the east to the New Forest in the west, and Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes in the north. It includes the counties of Kent, Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. The region is without a single dominant urban centre and 80% of it is classified as rural according to recent statistics issued by the Office for National Statistics. It is home to 2 cities with populations of around 250,000 (Medway and Brighton and Hove), and 5 with populations of greater than 100,000.
- 3.3.3 The region has an advanced, high cost, high income, broadly based and service orientated economy, with a higher GDP per head than any other region outside London. The South East compares favourably with other English regions on many indicators too, such as income, but this picture can disguise considerable variation within the region. The ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) Indices of Deprivation 2004 show that the South East has 77 of the 10% most deprived SOAs (Super Output Areas) in England, with Kent and the South Coast faring particularly poorly and with Hastings Brighton & Hove, Thanet and Portsmouth all featuring amongst the more deprived districts in England on a range of measures.
- 3.3.4 Rother District lies within East Sussex, where there is a population of 497, 900 (at mid-2005). While East Sussex has become more ethnically diverse since 2001, in 2004 only 7% of the population was non-White British. The County has the highest percentage of very elderly people (over 85) in England and Wales at 3.6% and the second highest proportion of population over pensionable age at 26.1% (East Sussex in Figures). Population increases in recent years are accounted for by more people

moving in to the area and, while there is an elderly population, the proportion is decreasing locally as it increases nationally and the young population is growing fast, particularly in areas like Eastbourne.

- 3.3.5 In 1998 East Sussex had the fourth lowest GDP in the UK at 63% of the average, so low, that it compares with the most disadvantaged parts of the country, including Cornwall, South Yorkshire and Liverpool. The DTLR's (Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions) Indices of Deprivation 2000 showed that Hastings had the highest percentage of population living on low income within the South East and 5 Hastings wards were among the 10% most deprived wards in England. Six wards in the County had unemployment rates at least twice the national average and 21 wards unemployment rates higher than the national average. The ODPM Indices of Deprivation 2004 confirms that Hastings continues to be ranked amongst the 50 most deprived districts in England (average rank of 39 out of 354 districts).
- 3.3.6 This demographic make-up and economic profile are addressed by East Sussex County Council's Cultural Strategy. East Sussex is an area rich in natural beauty, with a landscape and coastline that have long been the source of inspiration for naturalists and artists. The Strategy states that cultural activities are crucial in regenerating the County's deprived and isolated communities, helping to build self-esteem, community pride and respect, unlocking the latent skills, enhancing employment prospects and encouraging involvement, learning and enterprise. The contribution of older artists, active sports participants, officials, volunteers and audiences is significant and important in creating an area that is culturally and economically vibrant and that continues to see growth of its younger population.
- 3.3.7 Conservation and Participation are two of the key themes of the Cultural Strategy. It stresses the need to strike a balance between conservation and use of resources for recreation and cultural activities, accessible to all. Further, it emphasises that participation in cultural activities promotes relationships between groups and individuals, and that opportunities for enjoying sports and arts should be fostered and made accessible to all.
- 3.3.8 Tourism in the South East provides a £10bn contribution to the regional economy (7% of regional GDP) with 225,000 FTE jobs supported by tourism and 400,000 people employed in tourism related sectors. In 2002, the region attracted 26.5 million overnight stays and 194 million tourism day visits. It attracts more staying visitors than either Scotland or Wales and is the most visited of all the English regions after London, accounting for 1/6 of England's tourism by volume. Domestic visitors dominate the staying visitor market, with two thirds coming from adjoining regions and, while holiday tourism is the single biggest sector, almost half of visitors stay with friends and relatives. For every 10 staying UK visitors, 4 are on a short break, 2 are on a long holiday, 3 are visiting friends and family, and 1 is on a business trip (Tourism South East)
- 3.3.9 The South East benefits from a range, depth and sophistication of attractions and facilities, beautiful countryside and coast, lively cities,

historic towns and villages, and proximity to and good rail connections with London. At the same time, in many places that are not well known outside the region, accommodation can be relatively expensive, the quality of tourism products is variable, and travel across the region can be slow. Tourism South East's *Strategy for Tourism in the South East*, indicates that to develop the tourism market and develop audiences, the region needs to capitalise on the increased demand for leisure activity that UK economic growth fuels and recognise that there is an increase in older customers who are healthy and active. Changing working lives are leading to shorter holidays booked at shorter notice, by customers who are increasingly sophisticated in their demands for quality and service, and new technology is changing the way in which people learn about and buy tourism products.

3.4 LOCAL CONTEXT

- 3.4.1 Egerton Park lies in the west of Bexhill town centre, close to the promenade, within Rother District.
- 3.4.2 Rother District covers an area of some 200 square miles. Beyond the Victorian/Edwardian residential seaside town and administrative centre of Bexhill and the smaller historic towns of Battle and Rye, the area (also known as 1066 country) is predominantly rural, with more than 80% of the District falling into the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 3.4.3 According to the 2001 census the population of Rother was 85,428, with nearly half of the total population being accounted for by Bexhill (42,500). In 2001, 96.9% of this population was White, with only 3.1% of mixed, Asian/Asian British, African/African British, or Chinese or other ethnic group. In mid-2005 the district had the highest percentage of very elderly people in England and Wales, at 4.5%, and the second highest rates of both pensioners (32.6%) and over 75s (15.5%). This demographic profile has social, economic and infrastructure implications, as well as implications for the kinds of cultural and leisure activities desired by the local population (East Sussex in Figures).
- 3.4.4 The 2004 Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranked Rother as 203rd out of 354 districts in the country. This is an above median performance. However, in terms of SOAs, of which there are several to each ward, there were 3 in Rother that are in the worst 20% in the country: Sidley (in the worst 15%), Central and Sackville wards in Bexhill. ONS (Office of National Statistics) figures indicate that in 2002-3 the working-age employment rate in Rother was 75.3%, compared with 79.5% in the South East and 74% in the UK as a whole. The proportion of working-age population who had attained NVQ level 3 or above in Rother was 39.8%, compared with 46.4% in the South East and 41.9% in the UK as a whole. This suggests that Rother has a significant number of low/no skilled residents
- 3.4.5 Low average earnings, a service-orientated industrial structure, low levels of commercial investment, higher than average unemployment, and a small business base mean that there is a real need for investment and creation of employment opportunities in the Rother District. There is a widespread view

that poor transport communications are a significant constraint on improving employment opportunities and a barrier to travel for social, leisure and tourism purposes.

- 3.4.6 Bexhill and Hastings have been recognised as a 'Priority Area for Economic Regeneration' in the south east and the SEEDA sponsored Hastings and Bexhill Task Force established, with the remit of planning and action for the regeneration of these resorts for the benefit of the community.
- 3.4.7 Rother Local Strategic Partnership has drafted a five year strategy for culture and leisure (2006-2011) which recognises the positive and genuine contribution that these sectors can make to economic regeneration and capacity building, as well as to community well-being, safety, pride and self-confidence, lifelong learning, and the environment. The Strategy sets out an Action Plan, which reflects the themes of Rother Community Plan (2004-2009) and identifies the key priorities for these sectors:
- ◆ Access & Transport: aim to improve planning standards, community and rail transport, and physical and general access to amenities
 - ◆ Information & Learning: aim to improve the availability of information about culture and leisure facilities particularly through websites and development of Tourist Information Centres
 - ◆ Community Well-Being: aim to ensure community well-being, sense of pride and place, for example, through multi-agency cultural partnerships, inter-generational projects, and activities for young people (via extra-curricular programmes and informal recreation facilities)
 - ◆ Coast & Countryside: ensure the correct balance between protection and access of these resources, which include green spaces.
 - ◆ Regeneration and Tourism: attract creative industries to the area and attract tourists to enjoy its rich cultural heritage through inter-district collaboration, links with tourism, development of festivals and the Bexhill Museums Renaissance Programme.
- 3.4.8 Bexhill has suffered in recent years from a downturn in domestic tourism, but nonetheless travel and tourism do boost the economy of Rother District with an estimated £120 million spent by tourists and visitors in 1997 (The Economic Impact of Tourism, RDC, 199). Rye, Battle, Bexhill and the historic villages and properties in the area are well-established tourist destinations. Most visits are short-stay, including day trips, but there is also a sizable caravan and camping holiday industry concentrated on the coast. RDC Local Plan suggests that there is scope to develop business and cultural tourism and 'green tourism' particularly in the towns and the High Weald.
- 3.4.9 The 1066 Country Partnerships' *Tourism Strategy 2004-2009* embodies the vision of key local partners (including Rother District Council, Wealden District Council & Hastings Borough Council) to develop the area as a leading UK visitor destination. The strategy recognises that performance of the accommodation sector in the area is generally not that strong (though there are more successful pockets including Bexhill), that demand is largely seasonal (with a sharp peak in July and August) and that attendance figures at attractions are generally in decline. It establishes the Partnerships'

priorities as supporting, developing and enhancing existing accommodation and attractions, rather than investing in new ones, through more integrated and targeted marketing, investment in ICT, enhancement of visitor information, development of the product, improvement of service quality, and co-ordination between delivery agencies. It also sets out visitor markets, target visitor markets and overarching targets for the growth of tourism in the 1066 Country area.

4. EGERTON PARK: CURRENT FACILITIES AND MANAGEMENT & THE E.P.I.C. PROJECT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1 This chapter provides an overview of the current offer to users of Egerton Park. It details what facilities and services are provided, how the park is currently organised and managed, and outlines the aspirations for a regenerated Egerton Park. It also explores the current cultural offer available in the locality in order to appreciate the existing tourism context in which the restored and regenerated Park will be developed.

4.2 CURRENT VISITOR FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- 4.2.1 Egerton Park, which covers some 55,000sq m, currently offers a combination of open spaces, landscaped areas and ornamental planting, lakes and ponds, a play area, outdoor sporting facilities, and a number of additional indoor facilities. The park is recessed below street level and bounded by residential enclosure and planted borders. Thus the park offers a spacious yet sheltered area with a relaxing and peaceful atmosphere. There are seven pedestrian entrances to the Park, which remain open at all times, and some 1750m of tarmac pathways around the park, with branches providing access to the boating lake and main lawn.
- 4.2.2 Of the 9200sq m of amenity grass in the park, the main lawn to the east constitutes the largest open recreation space. There are a number of more intimate seating areas and/or ornamentally planted feature areas (approximately 8578sq m) such as the Sewell Border and Alexander Memorial Garden along the south boundary of the park, and the Sensory Garden along the north boundary. Water bodies (approximately 6354sq m) include the main boating pond, the central feature of the park, and the top lake. The main boating pond is used for pedalos, dinghies and family rowing boats. There is also a model boat pond to the north of the park, which is often used by an informal Bexhill Model Boat Club. The number of tickets sold for boating in Egerton Park in 2006 indicates that activity on the boating pond is steady but not overly busy in the summer months (164 tickets sold in April, 119 in May, 196 in June, 230 in July, 349 in August, 36 in September).
- 4.2.3 Eight tennis courts (in two clusters) dominate the western end of the Park. These provide tennis facilities for the general public and also for the Egerton Park Tennis Club. A Met Office weather station sits within a fenced enclosure to the north of the main cluster of tennis courts and a private indoor bowling club to the west, with an associated parking area. An outdoor bowling green with its own pavilion provides a counterbalance on the eastern side of the Park between the north lake and the Main Lawn.

- 4.2.4 There is a large children's play area in the centre of the Park, bounded by painted wooden fencing, and including swings, slides and other basic play equipment. Less obviously, a putting area lies to the west of the play area (which is more often used for informal ball games) and a concrete table tennis table is placed to the south of the Park, close to the museum, where there is also a toilet block. Entrance to the play area, a popular feature of the Park, is now free and people still travel from outside Bexhill to use it despite its deterioration over the years.
- 4.2.5 There are charges for the use of the tennis courts, boats, putting, bowls, and table tennis in the park. Ticket sales indicate that activity on the public tennis courts peaked in July 2006, with much lower numbers using them April through June (80 tickets sold in April, 88 in May, 123 in June, 217 in July). Given this seasonal usage and the size of the area given over to tennis courts, it can be considered a somewhat under-used space in the Park. The park is, however, also home to Egerton Park Tennis Club, who lease 2 of the tennis courts from the Council. There is also an Indoor Bowling Club and the Spartan and Lakeside Outdoor Bowling Clubs, who regularly use the outdoor bowling lawn (for which only 83 tickets were sold to the public, all in the month of May, in 2006).
- 4.2.6 The Park also incorporates two buildings on its south boundary, the Sure Start family and childcare centre, and the Bexhill Museum, although there is no access to the latter from the park side. The Sure Start centre provides a setting for families to meet and to take advantage of education opportunities integrated with childcare. It offers practical help, advice, and information through parental outreach and health services. In addition to this community based service for parents and pre-school children, the Centre also has links with schools, Children's Information Services, Jobcentre Plus and adult education. Bexhill Museum currently houses natural history, archaeology and ethnography collections, as well as a wealth of material telling the story of Bexhill-on-Sea in the 19th and 20th centuries, and an interactive Access Centre where visitors can access documents, explore the collections, view images, and hear famous voices from the past.
- 4.2.7 Egerton Park has a good selection of activities for its size and consultation with the public in the process of producing this Plan has indicated that it is well used all year and all week round, primarily by the local community. 73% of respondents to the Green Stat questionnaire were either satisfied or very satisfied in terms of their overall impression of the Park, 70% felt that its design and appearance was good or very good. Many users value the current balance of relaxation and activity areas in the park, with the circular walk linking these areas together, and do not want any enhancement of the park to upset this balance and existing atmosphere. At the same time, 67% of respondents to the same questionnaire felt that they could think of things that would encourage them to stay in the park for longer or visit more often and in fact the additional comments made in response to all of these questions reveal a range of issues that need to be addressed to enhance the visitor experience, the facilities and environment of the Park.
- 4.2.8 There are some limitations with regard to visitors approaching and physically accessing the Park. Most visitors come on foot from the town or

seafront, and some by car. The Park is not highly visibly from the town, as it is both physically sunken and very poorly signposted as a visitor attraction in the main town. While this is less of an issue for the core local users of the Park, it does impede first time visitors to Bexhill in finding and enjoying the Park.

- 4.2.9 Access for pedestrians in general, and disabled users in particular, is variable. There are no pedestrian priority points approaching the Park (zebra crossings, pedestrian routes etc.) and the suitability of entrances to the Park is mixed, with none of them currently considered to be fully DDA compliant. The lack of pedestrian entrance to the Park on the southern boundary at the museum, means that pedestrians are not naturally directed to the park via the most direct route (Park Avenue) from the seafront promenade. There is some car parking provision, with unrestricted parking around three sides of the Park, but with the busy seafront activity of the peak summer season it may prove difficult to find a space here. Provision for disabled parking around the Park is limited, and there is little or no parking provision on the site itself beyond that to the west of the park used by the indoor bowls club. (See Appendix A).
- 4.2.10 Inside the Park itself, paths and general access around the park is generally very good and 93% of respondents to the Green Stat questionnaire felt that ease of movement around the park was good or very good. Qualitative comments made did highlight issues of flooding, broken and worn paths, the need for better disabled access and facilities, and better signage in the park. Currently, there is no directional signage around the park and, while there are some information boards at entrances to the park, the lack of information and interpretation boards throughout the park mean that intellectual access is rather limited.
- 4.2.11 In recent years the Park has been host to a sculpture trail project, Fun Days as part of the Sure Start programme and the Friends' group formed in 2006 have held a couple of events, including a Green Day. However, no substantial programme of cultural events and educational activities currently exists. This lack of cultural offer may explain the clear indication in the Green Stat survey that users currently tend to value the Park more as an open space for a walk, as a place to relax and enjoy nature and wildlife, rather than as a place to attend organised activities and events, or to spend social time eating outdoors or meeting with friends. However, these preferred activities perhaps also reflect of the current make-up of Park audiences.

4.3 CURRENT MAINTENANCE, MANAGEMENT & MARKETING OF THE PARK

- 4.3.1 Egerton Park is owned by Rother District Council and overseen by the Parks team, which sits within the Amenities Directorate and employs 4 members of staff for Parks – a Parks Officer, a Parks Development Officer, 2 Parks Technical Officers. Maintenance of the park (along with that of other Parks and Gardens owned and managed by the Council) is contracted out to John O'Conner Ltd, from 2003 to 31 March 2009. O'Conner's ground

maintenance contract includes the routine daily, weekly, monthly, seasonal and annual cyclical maintenance of the park, its planting, features, facilities and park games (public bowls, tennis, putting, table tennis and boating). A minimum of 1 gardener and sometimes 2 are on site during opening hours, and in the summer months there are also 2 games attendants – 1 at the boating lake and 1 at the tennis courts.

- 4.3.2 2 Park Rangers covering the whole of Rother are employed through the grounds maintenance contractors. Often, there is only one on duty. Their role is primarily a policing role but, being employed through the contractor rather than directly through the Council, they have limited enforcement power. They do not under-take the wider educational and community centred role that is often included in the remit of Park Rangers today.
- 4.3.3 The role of volunteers/the Friends' Group in the maintenance and management of the Park is currently limited to organisation of a couple of events.
- 4.3.4 The Park Games and Boating 'Huts' and the Contractor's Compound, the Tennis 'Office', and the Outdoor Bowls Pavilion buildings are all owned by the Council, with all but the latter leased out to John O'Conner's Ltd or the Tennis Club (who also lease from the Council and maintain 2 of the tennis courts). There is currently no lease agreement with the Outdoor Bowling Club regarding the Bowls Pavilion and the Council is responsible for maintenance of the interior and exterior of the building. Sure Start own the building that houses their facilities in the Park on land leased from the Council and likewise the building owned by the Indoor Bowling Club and its car park stand on land leased from the Council.
- 4.3.5 The current Bexhill Museum building is owned by Rother District Council who is responsible for the external fabric of the building, but is run by the charitable trust, the Society of Bexhill Museums. It is open all year round, apart from a 4-6 week period between mid-December and the end of January. There are 2 permanent members of staff, with about 50 volunteers regularly helping out. HLF funding is in place to redevelop the Museum, due to start in March 2007. McAslan have prepared the architectural design for an extension on the east side of the existing building, which will comprise an L-shaped structure clad in stainless-steel, with a glass entrance/stairway area. This new building, which will house the assets of the existing Bexhill Costume and Social History Museum, will also be owned by the Council and the Museum will continue to be managed by the Society of Bexhill Museums.
- 4.3.6 Consultation with key stakeholders and the local community in the process of producing this Plan has indicated that there is relative satisfaction with cleanliness, maintenance, and management of the park (for example, with 70% of respondents to the Green Stat questionnaire indicating that cleanliness was good or very good, and 85% indicating that maintenance of flowers, trees and shrubs was good). However, a number of significant issues have been raised, particularly regarding staffing, security, and protection of wildlife, which need to be addressed to improve upon the

services and environment currently provided to Park users and to attract new users to the Park.

- 4.3.7 The Park does not have a high internet profile. Information about Egerton Park, the EPIC project, and the Friend's Group, is provided in the Leisure and Tourism section of the Rother District Council website and the work of the Friends' Group and press coverage of the EPIC project are undoubtedly raising the profile of the park locally. However, the Park has no dedicated, visitor-orientated website. It is only referred to in passing (in the context of explaining the position of Bexhill Museum) in the visitor attraction section of the 1066 Country website (www.1066country.com), although it is featured as an attraction on the independently maintained www.bexhill-on-sea.org. The content of the 1066 Country website will be redeveloped early in 2007 and it is intended that the Park will be promoted more heavily there as a result.
- 4.3.8 There is no Tourist Information Centre in Bexhill-on-Sea and tourism literature promoting the town is disseminated from the TIC in Battle. The Park is not prominent in this literature. The town guide, produced by Bexhill Chamber of Commerce, does not promote Egerton Park as a key attraction or 'package', referring primarily to its sporting facilities – the putting area, bowling and tennis in an 'Unwind at your leisure' section. Beyond the town guide, there is no specific promotion of the Park through information leaflets in hotels/B&Bs or other cultural centres in the town.

4.4 THE E.P.I.C. PROJECT

- 4.4.1 Rother District Council recognises the decline in the profile of the Park, historically important in the town and in the area more broadly, and that the Park has suffered a slow but steady decline in terms of its maintenance regime and a piecemeal approach to maintenance and development. The EPIC project's aspirations, as set out in 2.2 above, seek to restore the Park's unique local heritage, and to give it a distinctive cultural identity and contemporary facilities that equip it to act as a focal cultural, social and educational hub for Bexhill-on-Sea and the Rother District in 21st century. The regenerated Park should not only better serve those members of the local community who currently use the Park, but also appeal to a wider range of people, particularly to more young people in the area, and increase the tourist offer of the town.
- 4.4.2 Consultation carried out to inform the development of this Plan has indicated particular key requirements that stakeholders and the local community recognise as necessary for the improvement and enhancement of this valued community park. The local community tend to be less concerned with design, management and maintenance, and more concerned with the provision of facilities and the practicalities of using the Park on a day to day basis. Stakeholders focus on more strategic issues of identity and profile of the Park, and design and enhancement of the Park as part of the economic and cultural regeneration of the wider town. Analysis of these findings has also helped to shape the Conservation Management

Plan and design proposals for the Park, and to steer the future direction of the regeneration project.

Facilities & Services

- 4.4.3 It is most clear that the Park's facilities need to be improved and that a rethink of the design of the Park, and use of space within it, is necessary to accommodate these requirements. The range and quality of visitor facilities particularly require enhancement, with over 2/3 of respondents to the Green Stat questionnaire indicating that visitor facilities in the Park were not good (47% stating that they were just fair, and 22% that they were poor or very poor). A café/refreshment facility was particularly highlighted as a key community requirement, but better toilets, shelter, seating, and a new performance area were also suggested. The physical Access Audit also highlighted that toilet facilities were not adequate for disabled users of the Park.
- 4.4.4 There are higher levels of satisfaction with the play and sports facilities, with over half of respondents to the Green Stat questionnaire indicating that these were good or very good. However, it is apparent from qualitative comments that the play area needs to be enhanced, both in terms of re-design and new equipment for the existing facility, but also to accommodate older children and children with disabilities. In terms of sports facilities, while the bowling and tennis provision is obviously valued, a greater range of facilities – perhaps a basketball court or a multi-use games area, or a skateboard park or dynamic sculptural play elements – might attract more diverse audiences and cater more appropriately for younger people using the Park.

Physical & Intellectual Access to the Park

- 4.4.5 The visitor experience of the Park also needs to be enhanced by a range of improvements to physical and intellectual access. Key stakeholders in the project have highlighted the importance of making the Park more physically accessible from the town and seafront and within the Park itself. The physical Access Audit has highlighted practical ways in which this might be achieved. There is also obviously considerable further scope to develop the Park's intellectual offer to existing and new audiences, and to fill a gap in Bexhill's cultural and educational offer more broadly. Key project stakeholders are keen to see the park developed as a canvas for a regular and diverse cultural events programme, tied in to the wider emerging cultural offer of the town, and for a range of educational activities, skills and capacity building and volunteer programmes. A modest proportion of the local community reinforced this aspiration, noting the value of guided walks and talks, workshops, events and performances bringing the arts, heritage and nature to life in the Park.

Maintenance, Management & Marketing

- 4.4.6 The Green Stat survey statistics indicate general levels of satisfaction with the current maintenance of flowers, trees, plants and shrubs (85% of

respondents said this was good or very good), and with the cleanliness of the Park (70% thought it good or very good), and many commended the work that the ground staff do in the Park. However, other additional comments on the questionnaire indicate recognition amongst the local community of certain areas of maintenance and landscape design which require improvement to enhance the natural Park environment.

- 4.4.7 The key issues which the project needs to address, in order to make the Park a cleaner, safer and more pleasant environment for all audiences are the quality of the water in the lake, drainage in regularly waterlogged areas of the park, regulation to ensure that dog owners keep their dogs under control adequately and clean up after them, greater protection and more natural habitats for wildlife, and more specialised and diverse planting. The physical Access Audit particularly highlighted the need to define and/or guard open water areas to improve safety in the Park. In addition, taking steps to address the local community's perception of safety in the Park, concerns about crime and vandalism, and fears about using the Park at particularly times, should be an important aim for the project. Central to dealing with all of these issues will be careful consideration of how the Park is staffed and managed.

4.5 EGERTON PARK – PART OF BEXHILL'S CULTURAL OFFER

- 4.5.1 When discussing the tourist offer of the area and product development, the 1066 Country Partnership *Tourism Strategy* particularly noted the need to improve the fabric of towns and resorts, especially the poor quality public realm in Bexhill and Hastings. Regeneration of Egerton Park should aim to work within the priorities set by the 1066 Country Partnership Tourism strategy, and contribute to improvement of this town fabric, visitor infrastructure and attractions, and also to the identified emerging cultural product, which includes the De La Warr, Coastal Currents (Bexhill Street Arts Festival), open air concerts and various other initiatives such as Summertime Arts and Art Café on the Beach, a youth community arts group in Rother.
- 4.5.2 It is clear from Tourism South East's *Bexhill Destination Benchmarking Visitor Survey 2005* that the town primarily attracts day visitors (75% of visitors to Bexhill surveyed) who visit Bexhill from home or holiday bases in the surrounding area. The majority were an older visitor audience of independent travellers (54% of visitors to the town were 55+, with only 7% between 16-34 years, and only 14% under the age of 16; 85% of visitors travelled by car/motorhome/motorcycle, and only 2% came on organised trips). Notably, of those staying overnight in Bexhill, 66% were staying with friends and relatives. 75% said that they were attracted to Bexhill because of its beaches and seafront, 68% it peace and quiet, and 58% its scenic environment. The De La Warr Pavilion was the most popular place to visit with 47.7% of those surveyed (these statistics date from before and immediately at the time of the re-opening of the Pavilion in October 2005) and Bexhill Museum most popular with 29.5% of those surveyed.

- 4.5.3 These statistics indicate the make-up of the current visitor audience to Bexhill and the key factors and attractions drawing them to the town and will prove useful in defining key target visitor audiences (older adult market, early retired couples, day visitors, VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) etc), the tourist offer required (peaceful, cultural), and important working partnerships for Egerton Park (with the De La Warr Pavilion and Bexhill Museum). At the same time they highlight the image of Bexhill as a retirement resort and destination for older visitors, which may present some perception issues in the development of new visitor audiences.
- 4.5.4 However, the success of the De La Warr Pavilion, clearly the most significant attraction in the town, should be noted in this context. The Pavilion draws in up to 50,000 visitors a month since its refurbishment and re-opening. While visitor numbers have been lower for ticketed performances and events, it has successfully reinvented itself as an art gallery, with 70% of its visitors coming to visit them. The new education programme has been successful in developing a younger audience for the Pavilion and, with 70% of visitors coming from outside Bexhill, 40% from outside the Rother area, 8-9% from London and 1-1.5% from outside the UK, it is attracting diverse audiences from beyond the town and the Rother area.
- 4.5.5 Bexhill Museum currently attracts 12,000 visitors a year. It is hoped that its HLF funded redevelopment, due to begin in early 2007, will see an increase of these figures to an estimated 20,000 visitors a year. When the refurbished museum opens (June 2008) the existing and expanded collections (to include the Bexhill Museum of Costume and Social History assets) will be presented in local history, ethnographic, and motor racing galleries. This will further enhance the visitor experience to the town and, like the De La Warr Pavilion, the aim is to attract younger visitors to the museum, particularly those with an interest in design, fashion, and engineering.
- 4.5.6 Thus, there is potential for the Park both to capitalise on the key existing local and tourist audiences in Bexhill, and to follow the approach of other developing cultural foci in the town in appealing to a wider range of audiences, most particularly young people.

5. ANALYSIS OF AUDIENCES AND ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

- 5.1.1 This section provides an analysis of the current visitors to Egerton Park and identifies who the target audiences are and their needs in the newly designed Park. The analysis of current audiences has come from a three day public consultation event carried out in October 2006; returns of GreenSTAT questionnaires both on-line and paper copies; and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders associated with the Park and the development of the town. The GreenSTAT data and interviews allowed for both statistical information and personal comment to be assessed.
- 5.1.2 Target audiences were identified from the consultation phase, where visitor types were established as prominent Park users; non Park users or limited users. As part of the consultation stakeholders were asked who they thought visited the Park and who the Park should aim to attract. This chapter sets out where potential barriers exist for certain groups of people. The barriers to involvement discussed here relate to the softer access issues, such as intellectual, organisational, financial, social and cultural aspects. The physical access audit and recommendations for making the Park DDA compliant is attached in Appendix A. Chapter Six explores how to cater for the target audiences and makes recommendations on initiatives to be put in place to overcome the barriers that have been identified.

5.2 VISITORS TO THE PARK AND TARGET AUDIENCES

- 5.2.1 The data collected from GreenSTAT forms and from the public consultation provided an interesting insight into understanding who visitors to the Park are and why they visit. A Baseline Report is included as Appendix B which details more fully the results from the consultation. This section will highlight the key findings that have directed audience development considerations and what to plan for target audiences.
- 5.2.2 The results indicate that the majority of Park users are aged between 40-59 (32%), closely followed by the 60-74 age bracket (31%). 14% of respondents were aged 30-39, with only 3% between 20 and 29 and only 3% under the age of 19. This is not surprising given the local demographics for the area, which is heavily weighted towards the older generations. While the percentage of respondents in their 20s is notably low, the limited response from children and young people can perhaps be explained by the approach to distribution of questionnaires, and young people will have been represented in part through parents' responses.
- 5.2.3 In respect of visiting the Park alone or as part of a group – the majority of respondents indicated that they visited with a Partner (34%); their children (34%) or other family members (21%). This indicates that the Park is considered quite a social place, where it is pleasant to spend time with

close friends and family. This also reflects that it appeals to different age groups and responds to their levels of interest and enjoyment.

- 5.2.4 The Park is currently predominantly used by local residents as reflected in the 95% return of respondents who live in the Borough. It was also recorded that 87% of people surveyed travel no more than 15 minutes to get to the Park. This very local emphasis may partly result from the cross-section of the public surveyed, but these figures make it very clear that the park is first and foremost a resource utilised by the immediately surrounding local community.
- 5.2.5 The Park is well used throughout both summer and winter months. Of the respondents who provided answers about their seasonal use of the park, 63% use the park once a week or more in winter, and 79% in summer. 8% use it every day in the winter, and 12% in the summer. Unsurprisingly, longer stays in the Park are recorded for the summer months. It is also interesting that the Park is steadily used all week and weekends particularly in the summer months. There appears to be no serious bias towards weekend use. Again, this could be a reflection of the demographics of the town, where older retired people obviously have free time during week days to visit the Park, and as already noted they were the main respondents to the consultation and questionnaire.
- 5.2.6 As described in chapter 4, the Park holds a wealth of facilities, particularly for sports users and clubs. However, the returned questionnaires indicated that use of sports facilities were very low on people's list of priorities or reasons for visiting the Park. Most respondents (47%) indicated that they visited the Park to go for a walk. Other most popular reasons for visiting were 'Get fresh air': 42%; 'See birds and wildlife', 41%; 'Enjoy flowers and trees' 40%; 'Feed the birds/ducks' 34%; 'Enjoy the beauty of the surroundings' 33%. Only 18% said they went to the Park to play sports or games. Thus, while the play and sports facilities are an attraction for some, it appears that people tend to come to the Park to take advantage of the open space for a walk, to relax and enjoy nature.
- 5.2.7 The results of the survey broadly indicate that the Park is valued by the community for its spaciousness, as a place to be and to relax with partners and friends and this needs to be recognised in any future proposals. At the same time, the small percentage of people using the Park to attend events reflects the fact that there is currently a very limited events programme at the Park – building up cultural and educational programmes might well attract current users to the park for new reasons and also draw in quite new audiences. Obviously the Park's role as a quiet, relaxing space, and as a canvas for an events programme needs to be handled sensitively.
- 5.2.8 From consultation and survey work, current audiences to the Park can be defined as:
- ◆ Older Citizens;
 - ◆ Parents and Young Children;
 - ◆ Walkers / Dog Walkers;

- ◆ Sports Users;
 - ◆ Friends of the Park.
- 5.2.9 It will be important as part of the new design proposals to respond to these users needs and maintain their interest and use of the Park. Therefore, these audiences will be considered as part of the target audiences as well as other groups that will need to be developed. This is discussed in the following section.
- 5.2.10 Through the consultation process, other audiences groups were identified as being essential to attract. These are:
- ◆ Young people;
 - ◆ People with disabilities;
 - ◆ Educational institutions;
 - ◆ Volunteers;
 - ◆ Day visitors from within Rother District and surrounding areas;
 - ◆ Visiting Friends and Family.
- 5.2.11 Issues and concerns about the Park that were highlighted at the consultation phase are discussed below. These issues may in some respects be preventing the target audiences identified above from using the Park. These issues are also considered to be detrimental to the continued use to the Park by current visitors and will require careful resolution to ensure the Park meets audience objectives and regeneration requirements.

5.3 BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT

- 5.3.1 The survey and consultation process provided a good indication of who the non users or limited users of the Park were. The audit also explored current initiatives for Parks on a national, regional and local scale. Discussions with stakeholders for their wider aspirations for the Park and future developments for the town generally have all helped to shape the target audience groups for the new facility.
- 5.3.2 As indicated above, current users have been identified and they should be considered prime audience groups to still attract to the Park. Therefore, new initiatives should not be detrimental to their enjoyment and should respond to their wishes and recommendations for improving the Park. This should be considered alongside new initiatives planned to attract other audience groups.
- 5.3.3 There are several barriers that may prevent target audiences from using the Park. These have already begun to emerge from discussion of stakeholder and general public aspirations for the E.P.I.C. project, and the challenges they feel it faces, set out in Chapter 4. It is important to understand these concerns more specifically here to identify any barriers that prevent certain people from visiting the Park. The table below lists the main issues / improvements that were suggested.

Table 1 - Stakeholder and Public Issues/Requirements for regeneration of the Park

Consultation Group	EPIC	FOEP	Additional stakeholders	Public
Particular Issues				
Identity for Park	•	•		
Link Park to e.g. DLWP, seafront – (strategically, physically)	•	•	•	
Ensure Park is financially viable & sustainable			•	
Regeneration contributes to wider local initiatives – economic sustainability, investment in young people			•	
Need new facilities / reasons to draw people into Park (intellectual access)	•			
Appeal to all age groups/good intergenerational mix	•	•		
Better communication between organisations	•	•		
Enhance role of Friends / other support/volunteer groups	•	•		
Ranger / Park attendant/more staff	•	•	•	•
Explore different/new funding streams		•		
Organise activities / Events within Park	•	•	•	•
Keep current space / facility balance		•		•
Retain / enhance history/historical features (e.g folly)	•	•	•	
Improve landscaping/planting schemes	•	•	•	•
Improve habitats for wildlife		•		•
Water quality and drainage	•	•	•	•
General maintenance needs improving				•
Dogs (mess and not on leads)		•		•
Enhance play area (including shelter, seating, indoor area)	•	•		•
Rethink use of the 'putting green' area	•	•		
Rethink use of tennis court area	•	•		
Need different/improved sports facilities				•
Need for performance area/bandstand	•	•		•
Need for a café	•	•		•
Need for improved toilet facilities				•
Access to proposed Museum Cafe		•		
Need facilities & services for young people	•	•	•	•
Need to accommodate for cyclists				•
Security (lighting, CCTV, vandalism)	•	•	•	•
Improve perception of Park as safe			•	
Better views into & out of Park	•		•	
Better quality entrances	•	•		•
Close some entrances		•		
Steps into Park / physical access in	•	•		•
Car Park dominated by sports users		•		
Lack of vehicular access / Parking		•		•
Health & Safety issues				•
Better publicity of Park	•	•	•	
Interpretation	•			
Improve signage	•	•		•

- 5.3.4 As will be apparent from the table there were several issues / desires for improvement that were mentioned by most, if not all, sectors consulted. These were considered the most pressing concerns and are discussed further below.

New and Improved Facilities

- 5.3.5 A desire for improvement of the Park's facilities was clear and addressing this is considered key to attracting more people to visit the Park and to make it more enjoyable for those that currently use it. Many respondents commented on the importance of maintaining the balance between current open space and sports / facility use. This indicates that, while the majority of respondents currently use the Park's open spaces for walking / relaxing more than for the sporting facilities, the sports facilities are still considered necessary and relevant and should be upgraded and diversified. Some members of the public also desired to see improved access for cyclists – for ease of travel through the town as well as encouraging exercise. This reveals that people are prepared to see the Park offer sporting opportunities and that these should improved, without extending over the majority of the Park's space.
- 5.3.6 It is unsurprising that people were keen to see improvements in shelters, seating and indoor areas. This directly links in to the majority of activities undertaken in the Park i.e. relaxing, walking, feeding ducks and watching wildlife. There is a clear need to enhance these aspects in order to appeal to the current users. It is also likely to make the Park more appealing to more of the local community and encourage users to stay for longer periods of time.
- 5.3.7 Meeting the request that was repeatedly made for refreshment facilities, such as a café at the Park, would make the Park a more pleasant and relaxing place and encourage people to stay longer and enjoy refreshments. A café in, or near to the area at the back of, the Museum would afford good views for parents over the play area. An appealing café environment where good quality, but affordable refreshments (fresh, locally sourced) are sold is also likely to draw in people for the primary purpose of taking refreshment. These people may then also become part of the Park's audience. It has been noted that the Friends of the Park specifically mentioned access to the proposed Museum café. At this stage in the E.P.I.C. project it is envisaged that the demand for a refreshment facility will be met in association with the Museum or another partner – such as Sure Start – and thus current design proposals do not include design and funding of a café in the Park. More generally, there is potential for the Park and Museum to establish a more integrated working partnership and to provide a wider cultural offer to visitors. Separate access to the Museum and the Park results in a dislocated cultural offer, with visitors likely to visit one or the other, not both. Ease of access between the two provides a stronger visitor draw (particularly for visitors coming from outside of Bexhill), offering good facilities, connectivity between sites, and pleasant surroundings, which are more likely to bring people into the Park from the seafront. Improving such physical and intellectual connections between the Park and the museum,

and the Park and the wider town, has already been touched on in Chapter 4 and is expanded on further below.

- 5.3.8 Other facilities such as toilets were considered in need of dramatic enhancement. This would appear a natural request and, given the regular use of the Park by the local community and the desire to make the Park appeal to outside visitors, improvement of toilet facilities would probably increase use of the Park and the length of time visitors spend in it. It should be noted that new public toilets, accessible from the Park, are planned as part of the separate Museum extension project.
- 5.3.9 Consultation indicated that currently users do not visit the park often for organised activities with only 8% of respondents to the Green Stat survey stating that they use the park to attend events. However, several members of the public and many stakeholders desired to have some kind of performance area created within the Park, which indicates a wish to make wider use of the Park. As discussed in more detail below, this would allow for an increased cultural offer that would encourage current users to come to the Park for different reasons and for longer periods of time, and attract quite new audiences, including visitors from beyond Bexhill itself.

Security of the Park

- 5.3.10 The local community's perception of safety in the Park urgently needs to be addressed. Concern over levels of security within the Park meant that most of the people consulted, old and young alike, were keen to see more visible security arrangements such as security cameras, lighting, presence of a Ranger or Park Attendant, and/or Park gates being closed at night.
- 5.3.11 Due to the sunken topographical nature of the Park and limited views out at points, there was the feeling that the Park appeared enclosed and therefore unwelcoming at particular times. The level of vandalism within the Park also added to community fears, with the Park almost characterised as a 'no go area' at certain times. This perception was exacerbated at the time of consultation by news stories of attacks within the Park, particularly a violent attack made by a group of youths on a 17 year old Bexhill College student in the Park in late October 2006. The fear of being attacked or subjected to an unpleasant experience was considered likely by users and non-users and is likely to be an on-going concern potentially creating a barrier to use and enjoyment of the facility. Therefore improved security is a real issue that needs to be tackled and the advice of community police and crime reduction officers, consulted to provide further guidance on these issues, have been considered in recommendations made by this plan, as well as those of the accompanying Management Plan and design proposals.
- 5.3.12 The issue was also raised that the management of the Park should ensure the protection of wildlife. The wildlife, particularly the swans, is something

that draws people to the Park and therefore it is not surprising that the protection and safety of animals, is a prime consideration.

Improved Maintenance & Landscaping

- 5.3.13 Not insignificant concerns were raised over the care and on-going maintenance of the Park and particular problems that are now a regular nuisance and hazard noted. The poor drainage systems mean that areas of the Park, particularly the main lawn, are at times under standing water and certain pathways become muddy, slippery and even impassible. The experience of all users of the Park would be improved by tackling these drainage issues and by paths that meet safety requirements and are upgraded to promote circulation within the Park, particularly around its western end. A more concerted effort and co-ordinated approach to ensuring that dog owners clean up after their dogs and control them adequately is also required. This would improve the environment for all users and allow for both dog walkers and other park users to feel welcomed and accommodated for in the Park.
- 5.3.14 The water quality within the ponds is considered very poor and this needs to be improved, to create a more pleasant and safe environment for all Park users – particularly for those with an interest in wildlife, and those using the boating and model boat ponds. Litter in the ponds is a contributing factor to the poor water quality and the provision of more bins in the Park and a more visible Ranger presence could address this.
- 5.3.15 The general landscaping of the Park was seen by some as outdated, uninspiring, and unsympathetic to current requirements for a relaxing and pleasant environment. More diverse and specialised planting would add interest and improve the sensory experience of the Park for all visitors - for example, through expansion and development of the Sensory Garden area, and perhaps through planting and landscaping in the Park that reflects the local maritime environment, the shingle and flora of the coast. The Park environment could also be enhanced by planting to soften the edges of the ponds, and the hard elevations of buildings like the Indoor Bowls club and the rear of the Museum.
- 5.3.16 It was indicated that improved landscaping could also improve feelings of safety for everyone in the Park. For example, refurbishing existing entrances and careful consideration of patterns and heights of planting and trees would enhance surveillance across the Park, views in and out of the Park, and better visual connectivity between the Park and other prominent sites.

Enhanced Play Area

- 5.3.17 Young families were evident as one of the primary users of the Park and ensuring the Park meets their requirements is essential to ensuring the continued vibrancy and feature of the Park as a valued local asset. The main attraction of the Park for young families is that both the Sure Start facility and open play area allows them to get some fresh air and exercise

as well as providing opportunities for play, learning, and socialising. The current play facilities are a well used asset, but improvements to these are now considered essential. The play area is run-down and uninviting, with out-dated and dwindling play equipment. The Access Audit made reference to the fact that no play equipment exists that would meet the needs of children with sensory disabilities (Access Audit Recommendation 37). Members of the public pointed out that, while toddlers and younger children are provided for, more facilities for older children are lacking. New play areas that meet these wider needs would provide an added benefit to the local community, especially as parents and children are a core user group.

Facilities and Activities for Young People

- 5.3.18 There was a clear need to consider the requirements of young adults in their engagement with the Park. It was evident that the Park provided a range of facilities and interests for older citizens and families, but very little for young adults, although it was noted that they did use the Park as a place to meet friends and generally socialise. The lack of response from young people to the Green Stat questionnaire and public events also highlighted the difficulties in engaging with this group to find out their wishes for the Park. Subsequent consultation sessions arranged at Bexhill College and Bexhill High in December 2006 (with approximately 12-15 young people at each session) and consultation with a range of youth groups in January and February 2007 contributed enormously to our understanding of their needs. A summary of the feedback from all of these sessions can be found in Appendix D.
- 5.3.19 The results of the December school sessions showed that young people were particularly concerned with security and the range of facilities in Egerton Park. As with many others consulted, these students voiced concerns about vandalism in the Park and about using the Park, particularly in the evenings, due to fear of intimidation by groups of peers or violent attack. Their general feeling was that the Park should remain open in the evenings, so that people could still take advantage of the open space, to walk their dogs etc., but that new lighting, a rethink of landscaping, and patrol by a Park Ranger was vital.
- 5.3.20 They had a number of ideas about how to make the Park more attractive for young people, but in fact also for the wider community and tourists coming to Bexhill. In terms of the existing sport and leisure facilities, they felt that if these were better maintained, managed and marketed (for example, if the boating ponds were cleaner and equipment up-to-date), young people would be more likely to use them and would be content to pay for the experience. They were also keen to see some diversification and improvement of facilities for children and young people, for example, suggesting multi-use games areas or outdoor trampolining for teenagers, and a paddling pool, more water play features, and toilets and baby changing for younger children and families. These students also felt that a shop selling drinks, chocolate and possibly souvenirs would attract not only young people to come to the Park and stay longer, but also tourists and the local community in general.

- 5.3.21 These young people also suggested that marked routes or trails around the park, and more events – for example arts/sculpture design competitions and festivals - would improve the Park’s image and offer, and provide a way for young people to contribute to and enjoy park life.

Better Physical and Intellectual Access to the Park

- 5.3.22 As discussion of the E.P.I.C. project in Chapter 4 indicates, the disjointed nature of access to the Park and its presence within Bexhill is considered an issue and this could easily be rectified through improved design and linkages. The physical Access Audit (Appendix A) indicated the need for improved wayfinding to the Park from the seafront and town, improved disabled parking around the Park entrances, and repositioned and improved information boards at entrances to the park, and less confusing signage in the Park itself.
- 5.3.23 It was agreed that Bexhill has a growing cultural offer which the Park could become a major part of. Improvements to entrances, walk and cycleways between the Park and the seafront and the De La Warr Pavillion, as well as more connectivity and joint-working with Bexhill Museum would substantially improve the image of Bexhill as well as providing practical and social benefits. Alongside this, the need to improve information about the natural environment and history of the Park, revealing its place in the history of Bexhill and its value to the people of Bexhill today, was also recognised. Considered positioning of interpretation boards throughout the park - providing information about, for example, the weather station compound, and the heritage and wildlife resources there – would open up informal learning opportunities to users of the Park.
- 5.3.24 These improvements were considered of benefit not only to the local community, who would be encouraged to have further pride in and more knowledge of the history of their park, but also visitors outside the area. This would allow visitors to Bexhill to leave with a greater spatial awareness of the town and its features as well as learning something of its history through a pleasant experience of sitting in the Park or walking through on the way to other places of interest.

Cultural and Educational Opportunities within the Park

- 5.3.25 Generally it was felt that the Park was under-utilised and provided a good opportunity to stage events / performances and other cultural features/activities. Members of the public consulted commented on their enjoyment of the previous ‘Park Life’ sculpture project, which provided the community with an interesting and exciting use of the Park, and Friends of the Park noted the success of events organised by the group in 2006. Again, the Park’s open space was viewed as a considerable benefit, advantageous to organising a series of public events, particularly in the summer months. Such an events programme would provide something different and unusual for local people, and attract visitors in from the wider region, offering the opportunity for people to engage in music, art, theatre etc in an informal and relaxed manner. This could be developed through

quite new initiatives or tied in with existing local festivals and programmes, such as the Coastal Currents arts festival or the activities of the community youth arts group, Art Café on the beach.

- 5.3.26 This would add to the informal cultural and social offer of the park, which could be complimented by more formal educational and training opportunities to local educational institutions. These might include, for example, creative arts projects based on local/oral history, theatrical performance and visual arts, workshops on masterplanning and landscape design, or opportunities for practical experience for students on grounds maintenance or environmental management courses.
- 5.3.27 The lack of organised events and interest within the Park was seen as detrimental to encouraging people to make use of the space (particularly if they wanted something more stimulating than walking or watching wildlife). However, again it was stressed that the balance between a peaceful place to relax, and a place offering the opportunity for lively, noisier events has to be carefully balanced.

5.4 SWOT, STEEPLE AND ANALYSIS OF ISSUES

- 5.4.1 A SWOT and STEEPLE analysis has been undertaken to explore the issues and benefits of Egerton Park. The results are given below, which is followed by an analysis of the findings. These findings help to direct audience development proposals and define what issues need to be considered in planning developments for the Park.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well used and valued facility ▪ All age groups wish to engage in the Park ▪ Green and open space within the town that provides a valuable outdoor facility ▪ A space suitable for range of activities and events ▪ Vibrant and key feature of the town ▪ Friends of Egerton Park provide a voice for the community and help to safeguard the asset ▪ Place for wildlife and nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aspects of maintenance and security on site ▪ Outdated facilities ▪ Uninspiring landscaping ▪ Deterioration of historic features ▪ Isolated place – no link into museum, town ▪ Physical access ▪ Enjoyment of the space by people with sensory disabilities
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attract more visitors into town as will add to cultural offer through events etc ▪ Improved design, more suitable for people’s needs today ▪ Events to be held in the Park – supports cultural and social needs & attract more people into the Park ▪ Improved interpretation and understanding of historic importance ▪ Improved facilities – café/refreshment facilities, play area, link to museum, toilets ▪ Links with other places within the town – De La Warr Pavillion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Security may not improve ▪ May attract large numbers of visitors and loose sense of community space and ownership ▪ Too many events may detract from community usage as a place of relaxation and general everyday use ▪ Costs of new maintenance schemes ▪ Designs and improvements may be vandalised and undervalued

STEEPLE Analysis

<p>SOCIAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Friends Group ▪ Actively used by residents for relaxation, entertainments and sport ▪ Asset for town and place for socialising / meeting neighbours ▪ Enhance pride in history of town ▪ Appeal to tourists / day visitors 	<p>TECHNOLOGICAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use technology to provide different types of interpretation (i.e. podcasts on history of Park) ▪ Use of technology to provide learning opportunities ▪ Technology to provide forms of improved security / feeling of safety
<p>EDUCATIONAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage young people's involvement in regeneration of the Park and re-design of particular features ▪ Play areas / activities areas to enhance learning skills of young children ▪ Interpretation boards to open up informal learning opportunities to Park users ▪ Promote use of Park as a learning environment by educational institutions 	<p>ENVIRONMENTAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved access into and around the Park ▪ Improved landscaping within Park and association with other town buildings / features ▪ Better habitats for wildlife ▪ Better maintenance and care of new Park
<p>POLITICAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet national priorities to improve local liveability and the quality of local environments, creating cleaner, safer, greener communities ▪ Meet HLF Parks for People and Green Flag Award Scheme criteria ▪ Promote social inclusion to contribute to building strong, safer communities, in line with broad objectives of RDC Corporate Plan ▪ Contribute to community well-being and intergenerational projects prioritised by the local Community Plan and culture and leisure strategies ▪ Link in to improving health and informal learning opportunities for local population ▪ Enhance image of Bexhill to attract day visitors and tourists ▪ Respond to regional tourism, cultural and social strategies ▪ Provide a space that attracts / offers activities for young people 	<p>LEGAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disability Discrimination Act ▪ Health & Safety (particularly in terms of play areas, possible events)

ECONOMIC

- Funding of regeneration of the Park (landscaping, making DDA compliant etc)
- Availability of funding for audience development activities
- Funding for events
- Availability of funding Ranger / Park attendants / extra staff
- Cost of maintenance regime, particularly in the early stages of regeneration
- Improved Park could help to increase numbers of day visitors and thereby increase spend in the town
- Potential income generation through audiences for a café/refreshment facility
- Potential increase in revenue for sports clubs, tennis & bowls

Analysis of Issues

- 5.4.2 The SWOT and STEEPLE analysis have provided an interesting breakdown of what issues need to be resolved and what benefits are evident. The overriding points are highlighted here.
- ◆ Despite its current state, the Park is a well used and valued facility, particularly by older citizens and young families;
 - ◆ The Park offers opportunities to see wildlife, enjoy sports, relax and could also host events and entertainment. The park therefore provides opportunities for physical and psychological well being.
 - ◆ A better Park has great potential to make Bexhill more attractive to visitors, particularly day visitors and people visiting Friends and Family. It also adds to Bexhill's growing cultural offer and fits into regeneration aspirations.
 - ◆ There were clear issues to using the Park, which included security, poor condition of Park overall, drainage, isolation of the Park from other buildings / features.
 - ◆ Clear opportunities for improving the design of the Park, interpretation, and facilities were welcomed as long as they still acknowledge the needs of current users.
 - ◆ Other issues to consider include: the new Park design may not meet requirements, or be too expensive to maintain; the local community may not end up with a Park they can enjoy; the balance needs to be right between new facilities and management of Park, alongside ensuring current user needs are maintained; requirements need to be balanced so that conflicts between user needs do not arise.

6. TARGET AUDIENCES & THEIR DEVELOPMENT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

- 6.1.1 This chapter outlines what facilities and services could be provided to suit the needs of target audiences within the improved Egerton Park. The target audiences are discussed with an understanding of what could cause them not to visit and how this could be overcome in the regenerated Park.

6.2 OLDER CITIZENS

- 6.2.1 The older generation of Bexhill currently make good use of the facilities on offer at the Park, particular at the bowling greens, and they clearly value the Park as an open space to walk and relax in. They are a prominent user group that should also be considered important to attract in the new improved Park. They would wish to see the continued provision of facilities but in general agree that improvements are necessary to make the Park more attractive and to appeal to wider groups of people. Key to maintaining the use and support of this audience is to ensure that the facilities continue to meet their needs and that the environment is improved.

Reason for Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and current audience that value the Park; • Older citizens engaging in safe and healthy free exercise; • Opportunities to socialise with friends and neighbours leading to closer community links. 	
Barriers/Issues	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities do not meet their needs • Character of Park may change with increase of other users (especially young people / day visitors) • Events / exhibitions etc may cause disruption to accessing their facilities • Perception of violent / unsafe place • Lack of facilities such as clean toilets and refreshments area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure close consultation over alterations to facilities or improvements around them • Ensure new Park designs consider balance of requirements • Careful organisation and management of Park facilities and events • Designs to include clear entrance / exit points, and address security needs (CCTV, Help-points, possibility of locking of gates, or lighting of paths and key areas) • Liaison with crime prevention officer over schemes to manage crime and encourage safety • Improvement of toilets / consider opening of café / refreshment facility

6.3 YOUNG FAMILIES

- 6.3.1 Families are a priority group as they form part of an already established user group for the Park. The open space and play areas provide physical activity, stimulation and fresh air for children and relaxation for parents, while the Sure Start centre provides childcare and educational opportunities. Although the facilities for families are in need of improvement, this has not deterred them from visiting. However, there is greater potential to draw more families in to enjoy the Park, with the introduction of play equipment and spaces within a clean and pleasant environment. There is also the opportunity to offer a wider range of facilities such as play equipment that offer touch, sound and other sensory

stimulation which is particularly important for children with sensory disabilities, and a more diverse play landscape that caters for older children too.

Reason for Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park provides a valuable space for children to learn and take exercise; • Park provides a valuable space for different generations to share and benefit from enjoying together • A free, stimulating environment for families in the fresh air; • Provides quality family time 	
Barriers/Issues	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play equipment does not meet needs • Increase in other users / too many other activities • Perception of violent / unsafe place • Lack of facilities such as clean toilets and refreshments area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure play equipment is suitable, appropriate and appeals to a wider range of children’s abilities and interests. • Careful design of Park to designate family areas. • Designs to include clear entrance / exit points, and address security needs (CCTV, Help-points, possibility of locking of gates, or lighting of paths and key areas) • Liaison with crime prevention officer over schemes to manage crime and encourage safety • Improvement of toilets / consider opening of café / refreshment facility

6.4 SPORTS USERS / WALKERS

6.4.1 This group already forms part of the current users of the Park and the space is considered an important opportunity for them to engage in recreational activities. Although sports facilities were not identified as being the most important element of the Park for many users, it is clear that these facilities have a purpose, are the focal point of the Park for keen tennis players and bowlers, and their continued existence is vital to the general health and well being of the local population. In order to maintain this group as users of the Park, it will be essential that the sporting facilities are rationalised and improved, and possibly diversified to attract new kinds of sports users. The Park also needs to be considered as a healthy place to be simply in terms of walking, which was something that was raised as an important element

during public consultation. Therefore, in order to ensure people use the Park as a pleasant place for gentle exercise, paths within the Park but also connected to routes around the town need to be improved.

Reason for Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current audience that enjoys the space; • Encourages healthy exercise for all local people. 	
Barriers/Issues	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paths poor in places, circulation could be improved • Lack of connectivity to other parts of the town • Park facility closing times • Sports facilities not diverse enough or reduced too much or not improved to required standard • Clubs may not feel included in new plans for the Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful consideration of material used for paths and sensitively designed planting. • Introduce measured health walks to encourage exercise for all local people • Improved signage and routes • Organise park facility closing times in close consultation with local community needs. • Careful consolidation, re-design / improvement of sporting facilities such as tennis courts and pavilion • All facilities and initiatives to meet national sports standards • Maintain communication and consultation throughout proposals for design and new management

6.5 VOLUNTEERS/FRIENDS OF EGERTON PARK

- 6.5.1 The Friends of Egerton Park group consists of approximately 70 members. They have been in existence since early 2006, organised two events in the Park in their inaugural year (including a Green Day), and have more events planned for 2007. They are keen to see their group grow in numbers. Greater numbers of young people joining the Friends group would ensure their increased representation and involvement in the Park. FOEP are a core support network that should have a substantial role in ensuring that the changes to the Park meet user needs and in co-ordinating future events and

volunteer activities. The Friends should have a growing and active involvement in the future management of the Park.

- 6.5.2 More broadly, there is an opportunity to develop an as yet untapped audience of volunteers, whether members of the public who would like to participate in opportunities on a one-off or a regular basis. Such volunteer programmes might be co-ordinated by the Friends or by a Park Ranger, and could involve activities such as contribution to the maintenance of the Park (weeding, litter control etc.), to monitoring of nesting boxes and other wildlife activity, or heritage projects such as recording oral memories of the history of Egerton Park, possibly in conjunction with volunteer activities at Bexhill Museum.

Reason for Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOEP are an established and growing support network for the Park; • FOEP have a good knowledge of Park and user needs; • FOEP could support wider audience initiatives and planned events for the Park. • Encourage current users/non-users to spend more time in the Park • Promote outdoor activities, skills development, and understanding of cultural and natural heritage in the Park • Park provides a valuable space for different generations of volunteers to share and benefit from enjoying together 	
Barriers/Issues	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends may not feel part of new management regime for Park • Friends may feel that the shape of their role is not yet full formed • Relationship between the E.P.I.C. project and development of Bexhill Museum • Lack of volunteer activities and programmes in the Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain communication and consultation throughout proposals for design and new management • Help to direct aspirations and roles for the Friends groups • Encourage increased communication between these two regeneration projects, between Park and Museum Friends groups and management • Develop volunteer activities directed by the FOEP, by a Park Ranger, and/or by other park management staff/stakeholders; this may require staff training (to be detailed in future Training Plan)

6.6 YOUNG PEOPLE

- 6.6.1 Young people have been identified as a target audience in that, although they do use the Park as a place to meet up with friends, it is acknowledged that facilities and features of interest for them are limited. It is considered important to re-affirm the role of young adults in contributing to and benefiting from public resources and to ensure that different generations of the community are mixing in the Park and using the facilities there. There may have been an element of exclusion from the Park, not only due to lack of facilities, but also because older citizens and young families have become such a dominant user group. Re-affirming the connection of young people with the Park is considered an important opportunity that can be addressed through this regeneration project by, for example, establishing new facilities, cultural events, and opportunities for young people to contribute to the re-development of the Park.

Reason for Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow young people to acquire some sense of ownership over the Park; • Encourage social interaction with, and enjoyment of the Park alongside, other generations in the local community; • Give young people a place within the town to meet with friends and enjoy the space. 	
Barriers/Issues	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park perceived as place only for older people / young families • Perception of Park as boring • May feel they will be blamed for vandalism / any violent incident or may be a victim of it • Lack of connection to other parts of the town / ease to get to • Lack of facilities such as clean toilets and refreshments area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include facilities to attract young adults in consultation with them • Ensure events programme provides interest for younger people • Designs to include clear entrance / exit points, and address security needs (CCTV, Help-points, possibility of locking of gates, or lighting of paths and key areas) • Liaison with crime prevention officer over schemes to manage crime and encourage safety • Route to Park and public transport upgraded to allow for greater access • Improve toilets / consider opening of café / refreshment facility

6.7 PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- 6.7.1 This broad group is seen as a priority as new facilities need to show they have considered the needs of these groups and to attempt, as far as possible, to provide a service and facility that responds to these needs. This is being achieved through the recommendations contained within the physical Access Audit. The key draw for this sector will be that they can visit the Park with ease (getting to the Park, into the Park and around it); and that they can enjoy the space and facilities on offer. It has to be clear that proposals for the regenerated park have considered the needs of people with disabilities and offered the best facilities possible to meet their requirements.

Reason for Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to meet current legislation; • Moral obligation to consider widest access to all; • Will visit with family / friends who are not disabled. 	
Barriers/Issues	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical access to Park • Physical access within the Park • Intellectual & sensory access to interpretation / play areas • Ease of Parking within close proximity to Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure access complies with DDA. • Follow recommendations outlined in Access Report and ensure that any new facilities proposed are DDA compliant • Ensure interpretation addresses potential needs. Special play equipment could be introduced. • Ensure disabled parking bays are available at Park

6.8 EDUCATIONAL GROUPS

- 6.8.1 Educational groups can cover formal education - from school groups, to lifelong learners and students on vocational training programmes - and informal education from children's clubs, to specialist interest societies. These will all have a variety of areas of interest and requirements. The key draw for formal education is to have a space that provides some points of interest that relate to current formal educational needs or particular skills training requirements (e.g. park management, grounds maintenance). The informal education market will be looking for similar elements, but with a greater emphasis on wider skills than just academic – exploring team working, communicating and socialising. Additionally, or alternatively, they may have an interest in a wider general understanding of the Park's natural and historic environment, or in a special interest area that is the particular

focus for their group. There is huge potential in the Park to provide opportunities for education.

Reason for Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to offer safe environment to learn / engage in open space; • Offers practical and stimulating place that is free and local; • Potential to enhance wider cultural / environmental appreciation; • Provides opportunities for learning through different means 	
Barriers/Issues	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of space to accommodate school parties / children’s clubs • Lack of facilities (toilets / refreshments / First Aid) • Health and safety risks • Interesting as well as educational • Providing facts and information on the park • Lack of staff/capacity/expertise to support skills training programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of open spaces to consider school groups & pursue opportunities to use the Museum’s education room • Improvement of toilets / consider opening of café / refreshment facility • Park management to consider health and safety statement / policy • Design of Park to appeal to children’s sense of learning and discovery and entertainment as well as educational • Interpretation of cultural heritage, ecology and the weather station designed to reflect both children’s and adult learners’ interests and educational objectives • Park management to explore partnerships with local colleges and to consider skills capacity and possible staff training (to be detailed in future Training Plan)

6.9 DAY VISITORS / VISITING FRIENDS AND FAMILY

6.9.1 Day visitors and those visiting friends and family are the most significant tourism market for Bexhill-on-Sea at present. The Park could offer these groups a considerable amount of extra value – providing a pleasant, enjoyable space in which to relax. Older day visitors were highlighted as a key market sector. They will be attracted by good quality design and landscaping, by the fact that it is another element of interest in the town,

that it provides a relaxing, open space, that it holds events, is free and has facilities to cater for their needs.

Reason for Development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracted by growing cultural offer in Bexhill; • Fits with Council's aspirations to develop tourist market; • Large market sector that will reach a wide range of audiences; • Helps to define the town as lively and vibrant; • Supports economic and social regeneration aims 	
Barriers/Issues	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of facilities • Not enough to do • Poorly designed/limited Interpretation • Lack of connectivity between town / seafront and park • Lack of access to the Park from the Museum, and external appearance of the Museum from the Park may be off-putting to visiting the Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-design and maintenance of toilets; pursue opportunities to introduce a refreshment facility • Events programme particularly in summer months to attract repeat visitors • Designed to meet multi-visitor level of interest • Signage and routes well defined. • Improved working between Museum and Park, and better physical connectivity between the two.

7. NEXT STEPS AND ACTION PLAN

7.1 INTRODUCTION

- 7.1.1 This section provides a series of objectives that encompass the overriding audience development aspirations. The action plan provides a breakdown of key actions to be implemented, which should be instigated with reference to design proposals and conservation and access policies. These action points have been developed to respond to the conclusions reached in chapters 5 and 6.
- 7.1.2 It is clear that careful consideration of the management framework and staffing in the Park is vital to ensure that community requirements are effectively met, target audiences reached, audience development objectives achieved, and action points implemented. This might involve employment of more specialist staff (for example to focus on community learning/liaison, marketing of the park as a tourist attraction), more formal channels of communication between all the organisations in the Park, and a greater role for volunteers and the Friends' Group. This is dealt with in more detail by the Conservation Management Plan which accompanies this document.

7.2 OVERARCHING AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

- 7.2.1 The analysis in chapters 5 and 6 outlined the current audiences, potential barriers to new and current audiences and ideas for attracting target audience groups. Within this analysis certain themes recur and these can be seen as key areas for Stakeholders to work to in order to address barriers and develop audiences.

Objective 1: Accommodate a Wide Range of Users

- 7.2.2 The Local community has specified different requirements for the Park to meet their social needs. It is essential that the Park provides opportunities for all age groups to enjoy it and have a sense of ownership of the Park. Creating a Park that accommodates a wide range of users, providing facilities for older citizens, families and young people was considered an essential component of making the Park a valuable resource for current and future residents.
- 7.2.3 Resolution – Design proposals for the Park to acknowledge this and propose ideas to incorporate these wishes.

Objective 2: Restore Connectivity between Park other Places of Interest

- 7.2.4 The connectivity between the Park, Museum, seafront and town should be restored. This will help the Park to regain its position as a focal point within the town and add to the cultural offer of Bexhill. It will allow for ease of joint

working for events and celebrations between different venues and places. It encourages more open and physical interlinkages within the town, helping to create a more enjoyable environment and allowing for ease of exploration.

- 7.2.5 Resolution – Design proposals should explore opportunities for opening up the Park perimeters, particularly on the southern boundary of the Park at the Museum; explore opportunities for improving surrounding streetscapes and re-establish routes (cycling and walking) between key points of interest.

Objective 3- Develop the Park's Cultural Offer

- 7.2.6 Respondents value the facilities available in the Park and would not wish these to disappear. However, there is a need to increase the use of the park for different people (i.e. young people and visitors) and to incorporate more facilities and spaces suitable for performance to attract visitors and local residents throughout the year. This will encourage those people that do not tend to visit to come into the Park.
- 7.2.7 Resolution – Design the Park to include arts spots/plinths, and services/spaces to allow for performance, entertainment, and special celebratory events to take place.

Objective 4: Promote Park Security

- 7.2.8 Ensuring that the image and impression of the Park is of a safe and enjoyable place to visit is a key objective.
- 7.2.9 Local residents raised concerns regarding crime, vandalism and there is a general perception of fear about using the Park at particular times. This results in people not using the Park and it not being fully accessible to them unless security issues are resolved.
- 7.2.10 Resolution – Design to ensure the possibility of physically locking the Park, and at the same time to allow for aspirations to manage night time activity –I services to allow for lighting and security cameras, a full time Park Ranger on-site, enforcement of regulations on anti-social behaviour; take opportunities to increase natural surveillance whether through design or more events in the Park etc.

Objective 5: Ensure Regular Maintenance of the Park

- 7.2.11 Several comments were made during consultation regarding general tidiness and maintenance of the Park, and particularly the standards of maintenance when it comes to the protection of wildlife. This in some respects gives the Park a negative image and will deter people from visiting.
- 7.2.12 Resolution – Improvements to Park through improved maintenance regimes; solve particular problem areas such as drainage and water quality; put in place facilities to deal with dog related issues, such as dog bins to

encourage dog walkers to clean up after their dog; improve natural habitats for wildlife.

Objective 6: Preserve and Enhance Heritage of Park

- 7.2.13 The history and conservation of historic features within the Park should be preserved and enhanced.
- 7.2.14 The historic significance of the Park, as discussed in the Conservation Management Plan, provides an opportunity to engender pride in the town and greater awareness of historical importance and links to the past.
- 7.2.15 Resolution – enhancement or suitable reference to/interpretation of the heritage of the Park in new designed elements; consider links with Museum; interpretation boards within the Park. This should cater for people on different intellectual levels.

Objective 7: Ensure Access in its Widest Sense

- 7.2.16 There is a real need to ensure physical access provisions are in place and this is discussed in the physical Access Audit. However, wider access issues need to be considered in terms of appealing to people and children with sensory disabilities.
- 7.2.17 Resolution – Park design and maintenance to ensure DDA requirements are met; Park designs to include areas / facilities that provide interest for those with hearing and visual impairments – this can be incorporated into play areas / planting schemes etc.

Objective 8: Develop the Park as a Learning Environment

- 7.2.18 A Park that hosts a range of informal and formal learning opportunities will enhance the user experience in general and attract specific new audiences from educational institutions into the park.
- 7.2.19 Resolution – explore opportunities to develop extra-curricular participative programmes for local schools which encourage creativity and practical skills; formal vocational training programmes in partnership with local colleges (environmental management, grounds maintenance etc.); volunteer activities promoting community involvement in the management and maintenance of the park; informal guided walks and talks on the historic and natural environment; consider links with the Museum.

Objective 9: Promote the Park as a Visitor Destination

- 7.2.20 The Park should be promoted as a visitor destination in order to reach much wider audiences from outside Bexhill and the Rother District.
- 7.2.21 The Park needs to be positioned as part of the wider emerging cultural product in the town, and working partnerships with other key cultural

attractions, tourism and regeneration agencies in the region should be developed. This will help to provide a cultural hub that will attract visitors from within the region to visit the town. It will also be key to attracting the VFR (visiting friends and relatives) market, as there will be more opportunities for enjoyable experiences and trips out – contributing to making their stay as pleasurable and relaxing as possible. This will encourage repeat visits and thereby a livelier, more vibrant town environment.

- 7.2.22 Resolution – explore opportunities to promote the park within the wider campaigns, websites, and publications co-ordinated by the 1066 Country Partnership, and other local and regional agencies and authorities

7.3 ACTION PLAN

- 7.3.1 Action points are set out below with suggested priority and timescales for implementation. The aims and objectives of the ADP will be dependent on project decisions to be made regarding management and funding etc., and it must be noted that these action points may require further development.

High Priority	Action step is core to meeting the aims of the Audience Development Plan and other essential actions may not be able to be carried out if this is not addressed.
Medium Priority	Action requires implementing as part of the Audience Development Plan strategy but is not essential to achieving the core aims.
Low Priority	Action is desirable and would enhance the Park’s offer, but is not essential to overall audience development aims.

Short term	These actions can be implemented immediately & some will be necessary to inform decisions on future aspirations.
Medium term	Implement within 3-4 years, depending on decisions regarding future aspirations.
Long term	Actions reliant on decisions having been made regarding future aspirations.

Target Audience	Action	Comments	Priority	Timescale
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Target Audience	Action	Comments	Priority	Timescale
General	Target for consultation on proposals	Consult at events 2007/8; perhaps organise consultative committee of stakeholders	High	Short
General, including Day visitors	Improve connectivity: ensure there is directional signage to the Park and establish links with public transport systems	Ensure local bus routes stop at the park, and sign from other major attractions, such as the Seafront, Museum, De La Warr Pavilion and Polegrove Recreation Ground.	High	Medium
General	Develop and improve safety arrangements	Design clear entrances/exits, including options to lock the Park fully; increase patrols and activity; design out threatening spaces; consider provision of services for lighting/CCTV; implement policies to control dogs	High	Short (design)
General	Improve Park environment: enhance natural and cultural heritage	Design planting to enhance the sensory experience, soften hard surfaces and improve wildlife habitats in the Park; implement a regular maintenance regime to keep water bodies and open spaces clean; enhance or make appropriate reference to the heritage of the Park in new design proposals	High	Medium (design)
General	Develop better and safer general/low level exercise facilities	Consider the need for a 'trim trail'; ensure safer, well drained surfaces for running and walking. These should conform to H&S regulations, be even,	Medium	Medium

Target Audience	Action	Comments	Priority	Timescale
		free of dog dirt and dry.		
Disabled Users	Ensure new design for the Park meets DDA requirements	All new features to be DDA compliant- in particular entrances and interconnecting spaces/corridors	High	Short (design)
General, including Day Visitors	Improve toilet facilities and provide refreshment opportunities	Organise in conjunction with the Museum refurbishment if possible, or identify other potential partners to house facilities (e.g. Sure Start)	High	Short-Medium
Young Families	Improve play facilities	Design bespoke play areas, ensuring these are attractive/innovative and contribute to overall design quality	High	Short (design)
Sports users	Ensure new or improved facilities meet national standards	National standards for sports surfaces (especially for jogging and tennis) should be adhered to. Incorporate a new tennis pavilion building in design proposals	High	Short-Medium (design)
Young people and educational groups	Create spaces for young people and educational groups that are attractive and modern	Design areas that can be used variously for play, sports and educational activities, including for disabled users.	High	Short (design)
General, including Day Visitors	Create spaces and programmes for performance, entertainment and special events	Put services in place and improve hard standing areas around the main lawn to allow for performance; include arts spots/plinths in the Park design; develop an events programme	High	Medium (design)

Target Audience	Action	Comments	Priority	Timescale
		possibly in conjunction with other cultural programmes in Bexhill		
General	Provide intellectual and sensory stimuli (interpretation, improvements to the sensory garden, informal guided walks/talks)	Liaise with the museum to organise – in particular make sure that these activities include those for the hearing, sight and mobility impaired.	High	Long
Older citizens	Ensure events are designed not to be disruptive	It will be important to include this group in event management, perhaps enlisting volunteers from the group to help organise	High	Long
Volunteers and Educational groups	Develop a programme of regular volunteer led activities (educational projects such as oral histories, as well as ecological monitoring, weeding, litter picking)	Include the Friends of Egerton Park, park management staff and the Bexhill Museum in organising the programme.	High	Long
Educational Groups and Volunteers	Train staff and volunteers to manage events and activities	This will be organised through a Training Plan, to be organised by the Council and other educational partners	High	Long
Day visitors and VFR	Develop links with other attractions and regional tourism initiatives	Market the Park's games and general cultural offer as well as events, promoting the Park alongside the Museum, through wider tourism campaigns and media	High	Long

7.4 NEXT STEPS

- 7.4.1 It will be the task of the Project team to organise and undertaken these action points. They will require a dedicated person to oversee and carry out actions, report on progress and initiative monitoring programmes to gauge the success / failure of audience development initiatives in drawing in target audiences. This will also help with future planning and continued management of the Park to meet the needs of the Bexhill-on-Sea and Rother District.

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APPENDIX A: ACCESS AUDIT FOR EGERTON PARK, BEXHILL-ON-SEA (DECEMBER 2006)



ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL

Egerton Park, Bexhill on Sea

ACCESS AUDIT

March 2007

Rother District Council

*Access Audit
Egerton Park, Bexhill-on-Sea*

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APPENDIX 1 - SCHEDULE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Atkins Heritage are appointed to undertake an Access Plan for Egerton Park, Bexhill on Sea. As part of that appointment an Access Audit is required. This document is the Access Audit.

This document has been produced in conjunction with the results of the Audience Development baseline report. This Audit addresses the existing environment and makes recommendation to improve the accessibility of the existing facilities. It is beyond the scope of this report to comment on future proposals, since these have not yet been developed.

Egerton Park is a mature park in the heart of Bexhill with a wide range of attractions considering its size. The park is liked by the residents and visitors and is a great asset to the town.

The park is sunken in terms of the topography which means there is a significant gradient change to negotiate especially to the East. However once inside, there is very good level access around the park with wide flat paths.

The key issues identified in the report are as follows.

- Way finding to the park from the sea front and the town could be improved.
- Parking for disabled users around the park at entrance locations is very limited and obscured by parked cars.
- Signage at the park entrances is low impact and does not convey clear to read messages.
- Some signage around the park contains confused messages.
- Due to the sunken nature of the park, access in and out is a significant challenge. Currently access for those with mobility disabilities and visual impairment is under provided for.
- The paths and general access around the park are very good, making the park an attractive and inviting space for disabled visitors and residents to use.
- Areas of open water are not adequately identified or guarded.
- The provision of disabled toilet facilities is wholly inadequate.
- Refurbishment and the provision of sensory play equipment would increase the usage of the play area.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to identify issues which may present a barrier to equal access and use of the project by all visitors to the park and in particular those registered as disabled, as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

The survey covers the whole of Egerton Park's external areas and the various access routes into the park. It is understood that the bowls club building is leased and managed separately and is not therefore included within this report.

The scope of disabilities that have been considered is very wide and includes visual, hearing and ambulant mobility impairments as well as wheelchair use.

It should also be noted that the improvements recommended in this report will benefit all visitors to the park regardless of disability. Improvement of the access arrangements in and out of the park, improved way finding and consideration of the interface between the grounds and water features will be of great benefit to all visitors to the park.

This report is not intended to point out the particular failings of the park pertaining to one particular code or standard. It is intended as an overall observation of the building and to outline barriers that the disabled may face.

The report is based upon a site survey undertaken on 24th November 2006 and without details of the future alterations or refurbishment to the site.

THE PARK

Egerton Park is a public park a short walk to the west of the centre of Bexhill-on-Sea. The park is 75m away from the sea front, but is sheltered by terrace houses between Egerton Road and the West Parade and Promenade.

The park is sunken in relation to the surrounding topography and is therefore not particularly visible from any direction.

The park consists of grassed open spaces, tennis courts, lakes and a model boat pond, an external bowling green, playground pathways, herbaceous borders and a bowls club with internal bowling facilities. The park has a number of access and egress points around its perimeter.

The park has a number of structures on site including the bowls club, Sure-start nursery, museum and bowling pavilion. These buildings have not been specifically considered within this report and where any improvements are planned for them, independent access audits will be required. The main recommendations of this report have nonetheless been made on the basis of a full understanding of the park and all its assets.

METHODOLOGY

A general survey has been undertaken of the park,

Observations and recommendations detailed in this report have been referenced to the attached schedule of recommendations which can be found in Appendix 1 of this report. Each recommendation has been given a unique reference number to link it to the schedule of recommendations. Photographs can be found through the report where relevant.

In usual circumstances Faithful+Gould would not recommend that an attempt is made to implement all recommendations within this report in a single comprehensive programme. However where significant investment in the form of a one off programme is proposed, then it is prudent to undertake as much work as possible within the proposed budget. In order to prioritise this work the following priorities have been given to the recommendations.

- **Priority 1** – Items where remedial action is required to improve the accessibility of the facilities and environment in question and may have real and immediate benefits.
- **Priority 2** – Items considered relevant but should be attended to only where the opportunity presents itself.
- **Priority 3** – Items considered being required only in the event that a disabled user or member of staff is experiencing difficulties using the specific area.

We would note that as designs develop careful attention to good practice design in relation to disability will be required to develop an inclusive experience. Specific design experience should be drawn on to ensure that new facilities cater for the widest possible cross section of users.

MAIN AREAS OF RECOMMENDATION

Five specific areas are identified within this section. Each recommendation is prioritised and referenced to the Schedule of Recommendations in Appendix 1 of this report. The five areas of recommendation are:

- Approaches and parking provision
- Access and Egress for the park
- Signage and Route finding
- Accessibility around the park and physical barriers
- Provision of amenities for all visitors

Approaches and Parking Provision

Approaches to the park are likely to be on foot from the centre of Bexhill, on foot from the Promenade or by car from any direction. As the survey team entered Bexhill, it was noted that whilst a number of local visitor attractions were sign posted, the park was found by navigation by the passenger alone. There was no signage to our benefit in finding the park.

It was noted that whilst a number of dropped kerb stones were fitted to kerbs approaching the park, these almost without exception were misaligned and did not provide a smooth transition between road and pavement. Where dropped kerbs are present there is not clear parking restriction in that location to prevent the dropped kerb from being obstructed.

There are no pedestrian priority points approaching the park in the form of a zebra crossing, pelican crossing or pedestrian route. Whilst at the time of the inspection there was low vehicle movement around the park it is likely that vehicle movement could peak during summer months and when events are taking place on the adjacent sports ground facility. During these times pedestrian safety and ease of access to the park would be increased through the provision of defined crossing points.

There is little or no parking provision on the site itself. There may be parking available at the entrance to the bowling club, however this was not clear. It is unlikely that, without prior knowledge, you would consider driving into the bowls club car park with the intention of using the park.

There is unrestricted parking around three sides of the park and this provides the most likely locations for vehicles parking to use the park. It was noted that at the North East corner of the site there is a disabled parking bay positioned close to the park entrance. However this was on the opposite side of the road. Provision of parking on the park side of the road would avoid the need for the user to cross the road.

On the East of the site in Brockley Road there is a significant amount of road side parking. However none of this is allocated to disabled drivers or park users. Access to the park in these locations is a little restricted and less obvious than in other locations. A combination of allocating disabled parking with dropped kerbs in the locations of the entrance/egresses and improving the entrances on Brockley Road would improve the access to the park for visitors arriving by car.

Recommendations

1. Traffic signage and wayfinding through the town.
2. Provision of zebra crossings with tactile paving and dropped kerbs on main pedestrian desire lines to the park.
3. Allocated disabled parking bays in close proximity to the main entrances to the site, with dropped kerbs adjacent to the allocated parking bays.
4. Installation of appropriate tactile paving on all existing dropped kerb locations approaching the park.
5. Install short sections of double yellow lines where parked cars obscure crossing locations in close proximity to the park accesses.



Location of dropped kerb and suggested zebra crossing location adjacent to North West access.

Provision of Cycle and Bus Access

Cycle parking is available around Bexhill. The closest bicycle parking to the park is located at the De La Warr Pavillion car park. Two Sheffield stands are provided in this area. Further cycle parking could be provided at one of the entrances to the park, with a notice about the rules on cycling in the park adjacent to the parking.

Further consultation with the Bexhill Cycle Forum and with the Cycle Strategy Officer for East Sussex County Council, is recommended, to consider improvement of cycle parking and cycle routes that would promote connectivity between Egerton Park, the seafront and the rest of the town.

The general bus routes and the volunteer Bexhill community bus routes run along West Parade and Terminus Road. The volunteer bus routes all terminate in Devonshire Road, approximately 400m from the park. Direction signage at the local bus drop off points would aid way finding to the park from nearby bus stops. Reference to the park could also be added to bus route information on buses and timetables, indicating appropriate bus stops for access to the park.

Access and Egress for the Park

Currently there are eight possible routes in and out of the park. The suitability of these routes can be described at best as mixed. Whilst some routes are better than others, there are none that can be considered to be fully DDA compliant in terms of best practice guidance found in BS8300 or the Building Regulations. A number of recommendations have been made to improve access for wheelchair users and the visually impaired, and to provide more open, welcoming access for all members of the community.

Due to the sunken nature of the park there is a natural topographic barrier to overcome when entering or leaving the park. Once in the park levels do not change significantly. In terms of removing barriers the most significant challenge is to enable all visitors to the park to pass through the level change with the greatest of ease.

Each access to the site has been considered and has been given a specific reference number. Please refer to the attached plan in appendix 2 for the locations of the these.

1. South East Corner

This access is the closest access to the park likely to be encountered by foot from the sea front. As such is a significant point of access.

The park is not visually striking until you are very close to the park itself. In order to identify the park, striking signage with good colour contrasting should be introduced.

The signage currently used has a significant amount of information relating to general descriptions, way finding and bylaws etc. The location of the signage might restrict those with visual impairment or in a wheel chair reading the sign. Relocating the sign to the opposite side of the entrance opening would enable a reader to stand much closer to the sign to read it.

The paving to the top of the access has become uneven and starting to break up. This could present a trip hazard in the future if not attended to.

It is not possible to alter the existing stepped access arrangement in accordance with best practice without significant work. This is because it is recommended that a landing is installed in a flight of steps greater than 12 treads in height. There are however a number of improvements that can be made to improve the existing steps.

There is poor colour contrast to indicate the edge of the treads and there is no tactile paving to inform visually impaired visitors of the approaching hazard.

The handrail is located at the correct height. It is however cold to the touch and would be far better if coated with a less conductive material. The hand rail does not extend sufficiently beyond the base of the steps. Hand rails can also contain dimples to the underside to advise visually impaired users of the approaching end of the steps.

It would be ideal to introduce a ramp to this entrance, however with a drop in level of 2.02m the ramp would have to be in the region of 30m long, this may not be practical in this location.

Recommendations

6. In order for the access to be regarded as fully compliant and in accordance with best practice new steps should be installed.
7. Introduce new signage to indicate the park location from the sea front.
8. Relocate the signage to the other side of the entrance as close to the wall as possible.
9. Introduce colour contrasting to the treads of the steps and add tactile paving at the top and bottom of the steps.
10. Modify existing, or install a new handrail to extend a minimum of 300mm beyond the base and top of the steps, have a softer grip feel and have indicator dimples to notify users of the approaching end of the steps.



General view of the South East Entrance. Recommendation to move the signage to the other side of the entrance and introduce tactile paving at the top of the steps.



South East Access - Inadequate hand rail and lack of colour contrasting to treads

2. North West Corner

This access is the closest to the town centre and likely to be used by visitors to the park who have walked from the town centre. The access has a pedestrian gate which was broken at the time of the visit.

There is a disabled parking bay in close proximity to the entrance however this is on the opposing side of the road. The location of a disabled parking bay could be improved, to avoid the need to cross the road to reach the park.

The give way sign on the pavement is an obstruction that might not be anticipated by those suffering from a visual impairment.

It was not obvious what function the gates are serving. Those wishing to access the park after the official opening hours would have little problem striding over the gates to gain access. Whilst the park is open the gates could be regarded as an obstruction.

The recently installed steps from this access are unfortunately not what would be regarded as best practice for a number of reasons. The intermittent nature of the steps is not helpful for those with visual impairment. The nosing to the steps lack contrast, The handrail is too low and does not provide an assisting and supportive function.

The ramp down to the park is very steep with an average gradient of approximately 1 in 8.5 and does not provide any interim platform to offer rest part way down the ramp. Further more with the pond at the bottom of the ramp, there is a potential risk of landing in the water should a wheel chair user lose control.

Considering the number of visitors who would approach the park on foot to either the North East or South East entrance it is advisable that one or the other entrance has a ramped access that is built in accordance with best practice. The North West corner lends itself most naturally to achieving this.

The following recommendations have been produced in a number of options offering alternative solutions the first option would be most desirable and the following options listed in order of desirability. The fourth would be most cost effective but least compliant and should be considered as an absolute minimum.

Recommendations

Option 1

11. Remove the existing steps and ramp and install new steps and ramp in accordance with best practice guidance. This would be achieved by following the general recommendations contained within BS8300:2001

Option 2

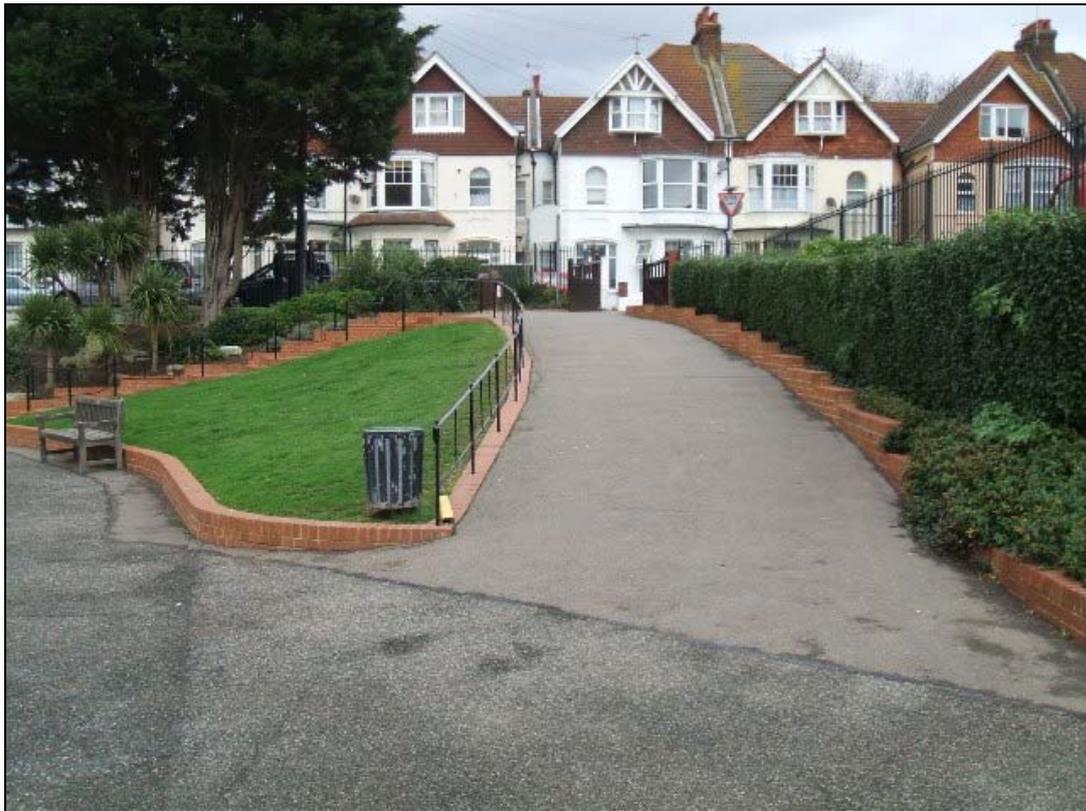
12. Retain the existing stepped arrangement and introduce a new ramp installed in accordance with best practice.

Option 3

13. Retain the existing ramp in its current form and introduce new stepped access in accordance with best practice.

Option 4

14. Carry out modifications to the existing steps and ramp to improve the usage. Works should include
 - Remove all existing hand rails to steps and installing new hand rails.
 - Installing hand rails to both sides of the ramped access.
 - Provide tactile paving to inform visually impaired of the approaching hazard.
 - Install railings around the pond at the base of the ramp to avoid the potential to land in the pond.



View of the ramp leading down from the North East Access.



View of stepped access with inappropriate hand rail and irregular stepped access.



View down the ramp and water hazard at the bottom.

3. North West Corner (Off Brockley Road)

The upper access into the park from Brockley Road is not obvious but is a very accessible route into the park. The access is a little narrow, the path is 1,240mm wide. Whilst this would not allow two wheel chairs to pass one another, the sight lines are such that it is unlikely that two wheel chairs would find themselves facing each other at the same time. The width of the ramp is acceptable on this basis.

The average angle of the change of level is approximately 1 in 16, which is acceptable. However the gradient does change, becoming steeper towards the top of the slope. In addition there is no interim platform to provide a rest point part way down the ramp.

There is good provision for parking adjacent to this access as discussed in the access and egress section of this report. Usage of this access may increase if the parking provision is promoted in this location.

The entrance is not obvious and would benefit from being opened up and new clear well contrasting signage being installed.

Recommendations

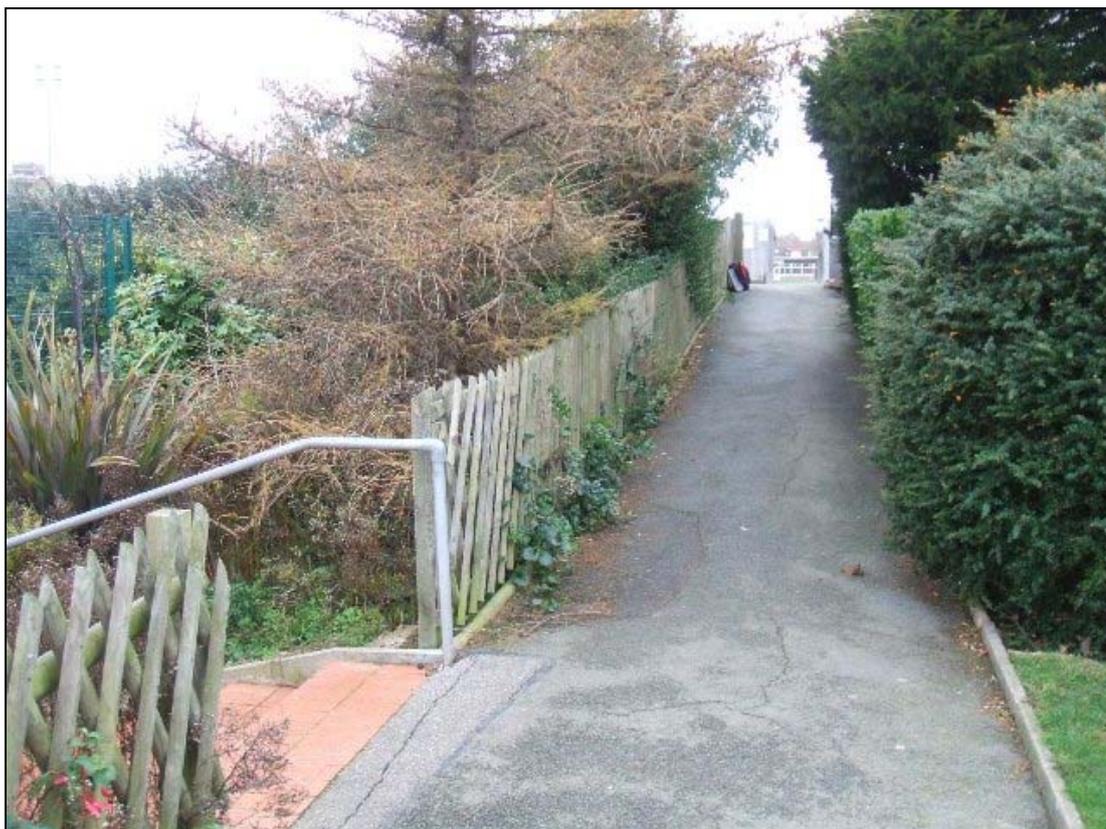
15. Improve the visual impact of the entrance to the park through removal of foliage and introduction of new signage
16. Re-grade the slope of the ramp to create a consistent ramp angle.
17. Install new hand rails on both sides of the ramp.
18. Install signage indicating the near-by stepped access (refer to note in next section).



Access into park from Brockley Road. This is poorly identified but access is otherwise good.



Good on road parking facility with ideal disabled parking bay location.



The slope is narrow but adequate

4. South West Corner (Off Brockley Road)

This access is stepped only and work is required to ensure that the steps are appropriate for public use. It is recommended that this access is considered in conjunction with access provision as described in item 3 above. The combination of these two accesses will provide a good selection of access options in close proximity to one other. For the two entrances to work together, suitable signage and information will need to be provided, directing visitors to the alternatives so that they can choose the most appropriate access for them.

Having accessed this park the public would then have to pass through the car park of the bowls club in order to access the main areas of the park. A clear pedestrian route through the bowls club car park should be identified with the use of floor paint demarcation.

It was noted that the existing handrails are positioned too low to be effective.

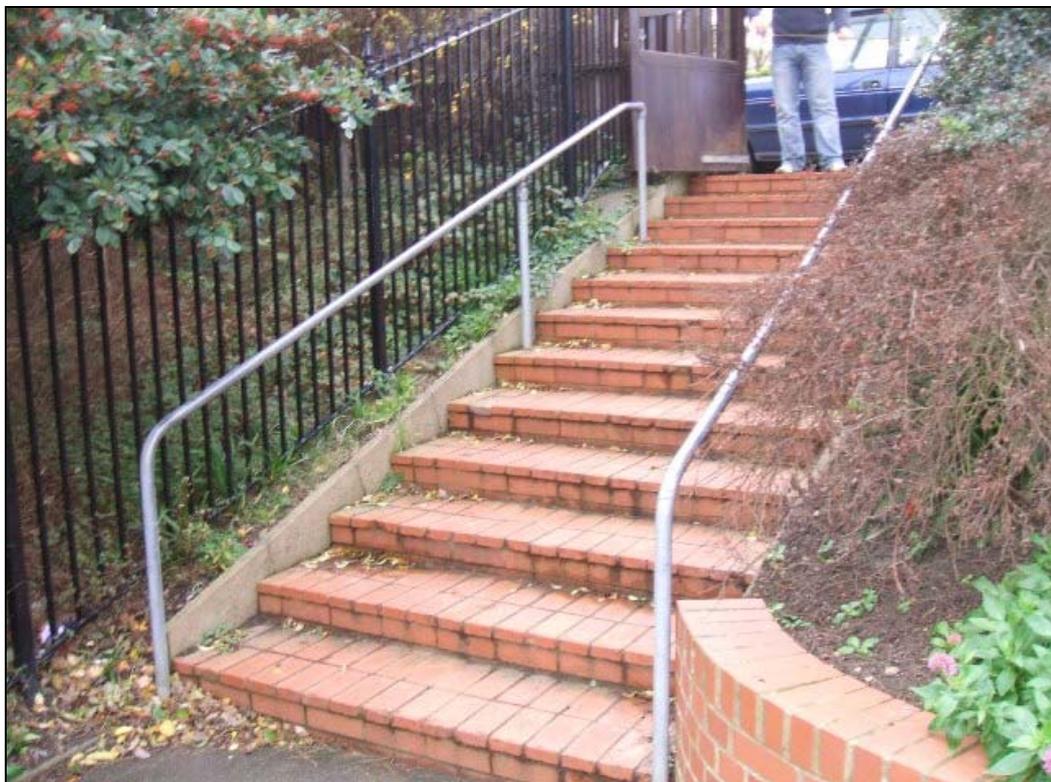
The following recommendations are required to improve the arrangement of the existing steps.

Recommendations

19. Install new handrails in accordance with best practice (BS 8300)
20. Provide colour contrast to the treads.
21. Install tactile paving to indicate a potential hazard (Creates potential hazard, refer to schedule of recommendations).
22. Install good signage to indicate the park entrance and to refer to the near by ramped access.



Poor visual identity to park



Handrail not adequate for the steps

5. Bowles Club Entrance

Please note that the provision of service in connection with the bowling club has not been considered as part of this report.

The bowls club entrance does not give the impression that there is parking for the park available to the public.

Due to the nature of this access it is not recommended that the public are encouraged to use this as a pedestrian access. There is adequate pedestrian access elsewhere around the site. Separating pedestrians from vehicles is a sensible approach to avoiding potential injury.

If parking is available for the park use then this needs to be made more apparent and marking or signage provided to indicate where parking is permitted. If public parking is not available in this area then signage to that effect needs to be installed to state this.

It was noted that there is no warning that you are walking into an area of the park that has a higher concentration of vehicular traffic.

Recommendations

23. Provide clear signage to indicate who has use of the parking facilities.
24. Keep pedestrians away from using the access through signage.
25. consider installing red tarmac warning zone to indicate that you are walking into an area with higher vehicular movement.



View of Bowls club access and transition into the pedestrian area of the park.

6. South entrance adjacent to family learning centre

This access is very steep and is not ideal for general access. During the inspection of the site there where people using this entrance, however it is considered acceptable to consider one of the other accesses as general public access. Subject to visitors being aware of the entrances there are very few approaches where the public would find this to be their closes access.

This can be managed through a change in gate arrangement and the introduction of clear signage to indicate the various alternative access options.

Recommendation

26. Eliminate this access for general pedestrian use.



General view of the steep access adjacent to the family learning centre.

Signage and Route Finding

The provision of signage for the park has been highlighted in the previous two sections. A consistent clear signage policy needs to be adopted that will provide information to everyone who visits the site.

Route finding around the park has not been defined and this may be intentional in order to provide an informal feel to the park. This is fine, however if there are proposals for general route finding signage then this needs to be clearly visible and have good colour contrast. The location needs to be carefully considered to ensure that it is readable by those seated and the visually impaired. The location of new signage must not in itself cause an obstruction.

All signage needs to be clear in the message that it is giving. The existing sign in this photograph is a good example of confused messages.

The general recommendations for signage are as follows.

Recommendations

27. Install clear contrasting signage at each entrance close to the pavement to allow readers to stand close to the sign they are reading.
28. Introduce clear signage around the park to direct people once in the park.
29. Link access options together through clear signage. Make sure that the signage does not contain confused messages.



An example of confused signage.

Accessibility around the Park and Physical Barriers

Once visitors have entered the park, access around the park is considered to be good and the recent stakeholder survey work reinforces this opinion. There is very little change in level across the entire site. The most significant slope being on the footbridge over the sluice as you approach the pavilion.

The paths around the site are generally a good width and contrast with the adjacent surface treatment to aid visually impaired visitors to stay on the hard standing. There is however some concern regarding the open nature of the water in a number of areas. This is a difficult issue to address since there is a conflict of desires in terms of keeping the water features open and accessible without creating a potential risk of visitors falling into the water if they are not aware of it.

Low level barriers can present greater hazard than nothing at all in terms of causing a trip hazard. Whereas higher protective barriers such as the herringbone palisade fencing such as that used in some areas of the park currently, may be considered prohibitive in terms of general access to the water.

One solution may be to increase the visual and textural contrast approaching the edges of the open water. This will keep the area open but increase the warning signs as you approach the water. This could be achieved through the introduction of a coloured tiled strip around the water such as that used for tactile paving. The boarder must not be anything that could present a trip or slip hazard.

Generally the condition of the path surface treatment can be described as fare, however the paths are starting to wear or break up in a number of locations. The condition of the paths in some locations can be described as poor. This is not significant from an access perspective unless the paths start to present trip hazards or reduced slip resistance.

Access to the Bowls green is good as is the access to the tennis courts. One benefit to all users of the tennis courts would be to colour contrast the gates so that these can be identified easily. Painting the gate accesses yellow would achieve this.

Generally the paths and routes around the park were free of physical barriers once within the park itself. One notable exception was the concrete bollards either side of the foot bridge over the sluice. If these are required at all then they should be colour contrasted so that they are more apparent.

Recommendations

30. Introduce visual and textural contrast to the perimeter of the open water where this is not protected by railings or palisade fencing.
31. Where desired introduce clear way finding.
32. Paint the gates to the tennis courts in a contrasting colour.
33. Remove or colour contrast the two concrete bollards on either side of the foot bridge over the sluice.



Example of open water with limited visual contrast.



Poorly contrasting bollard over the sluice

Provision of Amenities for Visitors

The park has a good selection of activities for its size. The stakeholder consultation does however make reference to the need to introduce new reasons to visit the park. Suggestions include the introduction of a café and an open air performance area. Consideration of the disabled population needs to be made for such proposals.

It was noted that the toilet provision for disabled users was greatly lacking in the park. Provision of clearly identified disabled toilet facilities need to be introduced to the park.

In the consultation, reference was made to the play area that, whilst a valued asset to the park, was recognised as being old and dilapidated. In addition to this it is noted that there was little in the way of play equipment to stimulate children with a range of disabilities. The introduction of sound, light and textural play equipment would be a valuable asset to the park. There are now play equipment suppliers that can offer this kind of equipment.

Park benches are installed around the park however, considering all the community requirements these should be more frequent. Bench seats should be a minimum of 450mm off the floor and should have back support and arms to enable the user to sit and stand easily.

Recommendations

34. Upgrade the provision of disabled toilet accommodation
35. Introduce a range of play equipment to meet the needs of children with a range of sensory disabilities.
36. Introduce bench seating at 50m intervals around the park.



Tired rubber matting now presenting trip hazard and poor surface for ambulant disabled.

APPENDIX 1 -
SCHEDULE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Egerton Park, Bexhill on Sea - Disability Access Audit November 2006

Schedule of Recommendations with Approximate Costs

Item No	Location	Issue	Disabilities affected	Recommendation	Basic Estimated Cost	Comment	Priority
1	Approach	Difficulty finding the park by vehicle or on foot from the town centre	All	Install way finding from the town centre	£8,000.00	Will benefit all users	2
2	Approach	A number of road crossings required to reach the park from most directions.	All	Install 2 zebra crossings on the approaches to the South East and North East entrances.	£6,000.00	Will benefit all users	2
3	Adjacent to park entrances	Little or no parking on site or adjacent to entrances	All	Designate disabled parking adjacent to entrances	£3,000.00	will benefit all disabled badge holders	1
4	Approach	No tactile indication of dropped kerbs and crossing points to the park	visually impaired	install tactile paving to dropped kerb locations	£5,000.00		2
5	Approaches and adjacent to park entrances	Dropped kerbs obstructed by parked cars.	All	Reduce parking on double yellow lines through parking monitoring	unknown	General indifference to double yellow lines suggests that parking control is not being enforced.	1
6	South East access	Stepped access not in accordance with best practice	All	Remove existing steps and introduce new stepped access with mid point landing.	£15,000.00	This would be excellent in terms of best practice but might be regarded as beyond reasonable in terms of compliance with DDA requirements	3
7	South East access	park entrance not obvious	all	Install notice to identify park from the sea front.	Inc in item 1	will benefit all visitors	2
8	South east access	Information on the park notice board difficult to read	all	relocate the sign so that people can get close to it. And change the sign to be more readable	£1,000.00		2
9	South East access	Steps do not contrast	visually impaired	Install colour contrast to the nosings	£1,500.00		1
10	South East access	handrail is not adequate	visually impaired and ambulant disabled	Install new hand rails to either side of steps	£3,000.00		1
11	North East access	Access to the park from this location has many access problems	all	Install new stepped and ramped access to give 1 fully compliant access in accordance with industry best practice	£30,000.00	This is the best location to provide a complete access solution for all users and is the most expensive item. Only this price is included in the cost total.	1
12	See item 11	See item 11	See item 11	Retain existing steps and install new ramped access		optional cost	1
13	See item 11	See item 11	See item 11	Retain existing ramp and install new stepped access		optional cost	1
14	See item 11	See item 11	See item 11	Adapt existing arrangement to improve both steps and ramp.		optional cost	1
15	North West corner						
16	North West corner						
17	North access of Brockley Road	Entrance is not obvious or inviting.	all	open up the entrance to create stronger park identity through signage or arched structure	£2,500.00	will benefit all visitors	2
18	North access of Brockley Road	ramp gradient is not consistent	wheel chair users	re grade the ramp to give even gradient	£2,500.00		3
19	North access of Brockley Road	Existing handrail not fitted in accordance with best practice	visually impaired and ambulant disabled	install new hand rail to either side of the ramp	£3,000.00		2
20	North access of Brockley Road	No alternative to a ramp in this location	all	use clear directional signage to indicate location and distance to alternative stepped access	£500.00		1
21	South Access of Brockley Road	Current handrails not suitable	All	install new handrails on both sides of the steps	£3,000.00		1
22	South Access of Brockley Road	Steps do not contrast	visually impaired	Install colour contrast to the nosings	£1,000.00		1
23	South Access of Brockley Road	No tactile indication of stepped hazard	visually impaired	Install tactile paving at top of steps	£500.00	Not recommended since tactile paving at 90 degrees to thoroughfare may represent a trip hazard.	

Egerton Park, Bexhill on Sea - Disability Access Audit November 2006

Schedule of Recommendations with Approximate Costs

Item No	Location	Issue	Disabilities affected	Recommendation	Basic Estimated Cost	Comment	Priority
24	South Access of Brockley Road	Visual identity poor and alternative ramped access not available in same location	all	use clear directional signage to indicate location and distance to alternative ramped access and improve the visual identity of the entrance	£2,500.00		1
25	Bowls club entrance	usage for parking facilities not obvious	All	introduce clear signage	£500.00		2
26	Bowls club entrance	conflict of pedestrians and vehicles	All	minimise the use of pedestrian usage of this area through signage	£500.00	Will reduce the risk of accidents for all visitors	2
27	Bowls club entrance	conflict of pedestrians and vehicles	All	Introduce red surface treatment to indicate area of danger	£1,000.00	Will reduce the risk of accidents for all visitors	2
28	Family learning centre entrance	Very steep access due to nature of general landscape	All	Offer alternative access using clear signage	£500.00	visitors could still use this access but encourage alternative entrances	3
29	General	upgrade signage	All	generally referred to on individual items above	included above		1
28	General	upgrade signage	All	generally referred to on individual items above	included above		1
29	General	upgrade signage	All	generally referred to on individual items above	included above		1

APPENDIX B: AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT BASELINE REPORT (DECEMBER 2006)

E.P.I.C.

Audience Development Baseline Report

Revision	Description	Author	Approved	Date
01		ACP	AB	19/12/06
00		ACP	KRG	04/12/06

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5. Conclusions	27
6. Addendum	30

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Atkins, on behalf of Rother District Council, are currently developing an Audience Development Plan, an Access Plan, a Conservation Management Plan, and outline design proposals, to support RDC's Heritage Lottery Fund, Parks for People bid.
- 1.1.2 It is vital that stakeholder and public consultation informs the formulation of all of these plans and proposals, in order to ensure that local community concerns and aspirations for the future regeneration of Egerton Park are reflected in development of the EPIC project. The consultation process to date, set out in section 2 below, has been designed with the aim of engaging with as wide an audience as possible.
- 1.1.3 This report summarises the key information gleaned from this audience audit and stakeholder and public consultation, particularly highlighting:
- ◆ Stakeholder and public **aspirations** for the future of the park
 - ◆ current **audiences** & their patterns of use of the park
 - ◆ under-represented audiences
 - ◆ Stakeholder and public views on the park, its current design, maintenance, management, and facilities
 - ◆ key **issues** and requirements highlighted by stakeholders and the public regarding the future regeneration and management of the park

2. CONSULTATION TO DATE

2.1 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

2.1.1 The following stakeholders have been consulted, by means of face-to-face meeting, questionnaire, site walkover, or telephone interview.

- ◆ **EPIC Steering Group:** consulted through the Inception Meeting, on-going Steering Group Meetings, and stakeholder questionnaire (see Appendix 1). 4 questionnaires were returned providing views representative of RDC Parks Service, RDC Tourism and Regeneration, J. O'Conner's ground maintenance contractors, and the FOEP.
- ◆ **FOEP Committee:** consulted through meetings (with Atkins team, 11th October, 2006; Atkins observation of FOEP Committee meeting, 26th October, 2006), walkover of the park with Atkins team (11th October, 2006), and stakeholder questionnaire. 4 questionnaires were returned, elaborating on the views of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and representatives of the Bowling Clubs in the park.
- ◆ **Ian Rushforth, Parks Officer, and Rebecca Owen, Parks Development Officer:** consulted by means of a walkover of the Park with Atkins' landscape team, Friday 27th October, 2006. Another member of the Parks Service team also returned a stakeholder questionnaire.
- ◆ **Tony Leonard, Director of Services, RDC:** returned a stakeholder questionnaire
- ◆ **Additional Stakeholders,** including key political, tourism, and crime prevention representatives in the Rother area and the wider region were consulted by telephone interview. These consultees include:
 - **Cllr Graham Gubby:** Leader of RDC, Chairman of the Local Strategic Partnership & SE England Regional Assembly member
 - **Julian Porter:** curator Bexhill Museum
 - **James Kimber:** proprietor of Cooden Beach Hotel & accommodation representative on the Chamber of Commerce executive committee
 - **Thelma Blankley:** RDC Crime Reduction Officer
 - **Alex Sim,** Rother Community Police Officer
 - **Peter Hardy,** Crime Prevention Design Adviser, Sussex Policy Authority
 - **Sonia Rasperry,** East Sussex Museums Development Officer
 - **Sally Ann Lycett,** Head of Communications at the DLWP

2.2 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Public Exhibition Events

2.2.1 In association with RDC, Atkins held two days of consultation in Bexhill - at the **De La Warr Pavilion** on 27th October 2006 and at **St. Andrews Church**

Hall on 28th October 2006 - which were advertised in the local press and by posters in Egerton Park. Display panels explaining the project aims and calling for members of the public to share their views on, and aspiration for, the future of the park were produced for these events. On these days members of the public were encouraged to fill in Green Stat questionnaires (see 2.4 below), so that quantitative analysis could be carried out, but members of the Atkins' team also recorded comments made to them by the public about the park, its history, and its future regeneration.

2.2.2 In addition to these two days of consultation, the display was also set up on the afternoon of 26th October at **Bexhill Leisure Centre**, to coincide with a Sure Start special event there. While the display and TV footage of Bexhill in times past were set up in the foyer, an Atkins and RDC representative circulated in the play areas, discussed views on the park and its future, and circulated Green Stat questionnaires.

2.2.3 The consultation display boards were also displayed in Bexhill Leisure Centre throughout November 2006.

Green Stat Questionnaire

2.2.4 GreenSpace, officially registered as a charity in 2005, is the nation's leading network of information and assistance for the improvement of all parks and green spaces, with a membership of more than half of the local authorities in the country, a network of over 3,000 community groups involved with green space, and a website that attracted more than 200,000 visits last year.

2.2.5 The park and open space questionnaire, Green Stat, was developed by Green Space specifically for Parks for People (HLF funding programme), as a visitor evaluation and benchmarking system. It is integrated into the new criteria for the HLF programme to provide both the baseline data for Audience Development Plans and the monitoring data for the "measuring success" elements of the HLF delivery.

2.2.6 These Green Stat questionnaires have been used as part of the public consultation process on this project, and have been made available to the public by targeted mailings sent out by RDC, supplied in public places in Bexhill, and used at the 3 days of consultation events in October 2006, discussed above. Public awareness of the questionnaire has been raised through press releases and the public exhibition display boards (which have remained on display in Bexhill Leisure Centre throughout November 2006) and through promotion of it by RDC Park Services staff and the FOEP.

2.2.7 The questionnaire has been made available in the following public places:

- ◆ Bexhill Library
- ◆ Bexhill Leisure Centre
- ◆ Council Help Point
- ◆ Indoor Bowling Club
- ◆ Local doctor's surgery
- ◆ Sure Start centre at Egerton Park

- ◆ Bexhill Museum
- ◆ Sidley Community Association

2.2.8 The questionnaire was sent as hard copy or email to:

- ◆ Individuals & organisations on RDC database specifically asked to be consulted
- ◆ Those who stated they would like to be consulted on the Egerton Park Visitor Survey list 2005
- ◆ All RDC staff and Councillors
- ◆ Bexhill Town Forum
- ◆ Friends of Egerton Park
- ◆ A range of organisations on RDC consultants database:
 - ESCC Youth Development Service
 - Rother District Commander of Sussex Police Authority
 - Action in Rural Sussex
 - St. Richard's Catholic College
 - Churches Together in Bexhill
 - Sure Start Bexhill and Sidley
 - Rother Voluntary Action
 - Bexhill High School
 - St Peter and St Paul CE Primary School
 - Bexhill College
 - Bexhill Youth Council Adult Support Group
 - Bexhill and Rother Citizens Advice Bureau
 - Bexhill Community Partnership
 - Hastings and Rother PCT
 - Age Concern East Sussex
 - Society of Bexhill Museums
 - Bangladeshi Women's Group
 - Bexhill Islamic Association
- ◆ Miscellaneous local groups:
 - Bexhill Senior Citizens Club
 - East Sussex Disability Association - Bexhill Branch
 - Hastings and Rother Voluntary Association for the Blind
 - Bexhill Mental Health Aftercare Association
 - Hastings and Rother Women's Network

- Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme
- Bexhill Gateway Club - Bexhill Youth and Community Centre
- East Sussex Association for the Blind and Partially Sighted
- Bexhill Horticultural Society
- Hastings and Rother Disability Forum
- Police
- Sidley Community Association
- Senlac District Scouts Association
- Age Concern East Sussex
- SEEDA
- Bexhill Community Partnership
- PCT
- Bexhill and District Gardens and Allotment Society
- Bexhill in Bloom
- Bexhill Youth and Community Centre
- Rother Race Action Forum
- Rother Environmental Group

2.2.9 This report analyses the final Green Stat report, issued to RDC on Monday 27th November 2006, and forms the final audience audit to inform the Audience Development Plan which Atkins is currently producing for the Council. The statistics and conclusions of this report will not only be fed into the draft Audience Development Plan, but also into the Access and Conservation Management Plans and design options for the park.

2.2.10 A total of 324 completed questionnaire responses have been received and 341 responses in total. For the purposes of this report, only the statistics provided by the 324 complete questionnaires will be used, although additional comments on all of the questionnaires have been considered.

2.2.11 77% of these questionnaires have been completed as the result of postal questionnaires (many returned in response to the targeted mailing, deposit of questionnaires in public places carried out in association with this project, and questionnaires distributed during the October consultation days), 13% completed as 'off-site interview' (during the public consultation days. 2% as 'on-site interview' (carried out by members of the parks service staff), and 8% online.

3. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION: ANALYSIS

3.1 EPIC STEERING GROUP

- 3.1.1 From our Inception Meeting (3rd October), initial Steering Group meeting (11th October), and feedback from questionnaires from the Steering Group, the following broad aspirations, specific aspirations, views on key issues and on audiences emerged.

Broad Aspirations

- 3.1.2 The EPIC Steering Group's overarching aspirations for the park can perhaps best be summed up as a desire for *whole community* involvement in a vibrant 21st century park that has its own clear 'identity'. Their broad aspirations are for the park to be:
- ◆ **a cultural, social and education hub**, contributing to community well-being and learning (arts events, educational programmes). The park should be an interesting place to visit that hosts diverse activities.
 - ◆ **strategically linked to the town** and the De La Warr Pavilion, and into the regeneration plans for the museum and the sea front promenade.
 - ◆ **increasingly used and developed by the local community**, both through day to day use of the park, and through community involvement in the management of the park and organisation of activities there (particularly through FOEP).
 - ◆ **appealing to a wider range of people**. The aim is to increase usage of the park, which should be a place that welcomes all age groups in the community and a place where there is a good intergenerational mix

Specific Aspirations

- 3.1.3 More specifically, the following EPIC Steering Group aspirations for the development and enhancement of the park have come out of consultation with them:
- ◆ **Make the most of the park's spaciousness and variety of areas** - the formal play area, sports areas, quiet green spaces, open spaces, lakes and boating, with a good walking route around all. Currently, the sum of these parts results in a rather piecemeal feel, and much of the park's features and facilities are tired and worn – this is a patchwork that requires cohesion

- ◆ **Enhance particular key features** – for example the lakes, where the water quality requires attention and the island and folly enhancement, and the play area which, through improved equipment and new design, could be a flagship play area for the district and wider area.
- ◆ **Ensure higher quality landscaping & more diverse planting.** The park should be a place of real horticultural and landscape interest. This could be achieved, for example, through improvement of the sensory garden & rose garden to the north, updating of the model boat lake & garden area, and new design ideas for the concrete 'bridge' across the lake to north and the focal bridge in the centre of the park
- ◆ **Rethink use of particular spaces**, particularly the area between the tennis courts and play area (the 'putting green') and the tennis courts themselves (perhaps substituting some of the for a multi-use games area?)
- ◆ **Improve facilities and services**, creating a package of facilities for users, for example including a performance area, a café and giving consideration to the introduction of lighting
- ◆ **Implement an events programme.** This is seen as key to bringing new audiences in and filling a gap in Bexhill's cultural offer. Inspiration could be taken from the wealth of musical, sporting, cultural, arts events that the park is historically renowned for. The programme could be linked in to what is going on in the Old Town, Museum, DLWP etc. and could consist of both annual and 'unexpected' events.

Audiences

- 3.1.4 The following were identified by the EPIC Steering Group as the main **current users** of the Park:
- ◆ Parents & young children
 - ◆ Older park users, particularly senior citizens living in the ward
 - ◆ Sports club users
 - ◆ Dog walkers
- 3.1.5 The Steering Group felt that the following were probably the **key groups under-represented** in the park:
- ◆ Young People
 - ◆ BME
 - ◆ Tourists – visitors from beyond Bexhill often do not know where the park is.
- 3.1.6 In terms of **target audiences** for the park, the Steering Group felt that key current user groups:
- ◆ Local people
 - ◆ Parents and young children
 - ◆ Older user groups

should be expanded, particularly encouraging these groups to come to the park from beyond the immediate ward. In addition, key under-represented groups:

- ◆ Young people
- ◆ BME
- ◆ Tourists

should be actively targeted and plans developed to attract them to the park.

Key Issues

3.1.7 A range of issues that should be addressed to improve the **management and maintenance** of the park were highlighted by the Steering Group. For example,

- ◆ Employment of a full time gardener, a games attendant, and part time ranger focused on education/community liaison to ensure that community requirements from the park are met
- ◆ A greater role for community volunteers – rangers, attendants, working parties, running apprenticeship schemes; strong role for Friends
- ◆ More communication between all organisations in park, perhaps by means of a representative committee which would take a more active role in management of the park
- ◆ Steering Group members representing grounds maintenance, FOEP, and RDC Tourism & Regeneration all suggested ways in which their services/organisations could contribute to improved management.

3.1.8 Further management and maintenance issues highlighted by the Steering Group were **security, water drainage/flooding, and quality of water** in the lakes.

3.1.9 A number of physical, visual, and intellectual **access** issues emerged from consultation with the Steering Group:

- ◆ Views in to the park from outside could be improved, as currently the park is screened from the seafront by Museum, generally hidden from town, and poorly signposted.
- ◆ The park is physically sunken, which does not aid its visibility from outside and creates certain physical access issues. Better quality entrances would both advertise the park and ensure better access to it for all people with visual, hearing and mobility problems.
- ◆ In terms of intellectual access, it was felt that people need new reasons to visit the park, new facilities and activities to stimulate their interest in going there

3.1.10 The need for improved **marketing and more publicity** for the park was another key issue for the Steering Group. Members pointed to the need for:

- ◆ a brand/identity for the park

- ◆ a greater role for Tourism & Regeneration at RDC in raising awareness of park
- ◆ promotion of the park and events there in the annual Bexhill brochure, local press, websites, leaflets and tourist information, and also through accommodation
- ◆ providers, DLWP, Museum, and other public places etc
- ◆ more audience development initiatives
- ◆ signage in town to the park, linking the park to the town and seafront
- ◆ signage & info boards in the park, e.g. interpretation of heritage

3.2 FRIENDS OF EGERTON PARK COMMITTEE

- 3.2.1 From our initial meeting with members of the FOEP committee, a walkover of the park with some committee members (11th October), observation at Friends Committee meeting (26th October), and feedback from the Friends through the 3 questionnaires returned, the following broad aspirations, specific aspirations, views on key issues and on audiences emerged.

Broad Aspirations

- 3.2.2 The broad aspiration of the FOEP Committee is also primarily for Egerton Park to be a park for the whole community and to be a park with a strong and clear identity. As with the EPIC Steering Group, the FOEP Committee members broad aspire for the park to be:
- ◆ **Strategically linked** to the seafront and the De La Warr Pavilion, and for the park to stand as **a third key attraction in the regeneration of Bexhill**
 - ◆ **appealing to a wider range of people**, of all ages, colours, creed, gender. The aim should be to increase usage of the park, and to ensure that it serves members of the community “from the cradle to the grave”. The park should be a healthy and sociable place that both residents and visitors want to spend quality time in.
- 3.2.3 In addition the FOEP were generally keen that:
- ◆ **Heritage features** of the park should be enhanced
 - ◆ The park, its current balance of activities and facilities, should **not be changed too radically**

Specific Aspirations

- 3.2.4 Although cautious about radical change, the following Friends’ Committee aspirations for the development and enhancement of the park have come out of consultation with them:
- ◆ **Enhance particular key features:** for example, make the most of the key features of the model boat pond and the boating lake, and improve the lakes generally, through dredging of the lake to the north and silting up the lake to the south. The play area, the gentle, quiet areas, and the park’s wildlife

should also receive attention. It is clear from this list of appreciated key features that the Friends too value the balance and variety of areas and activities in the park.

- ◆ **Ensure higher quality landscaping & more attention to planting schemes:** it was suggested that this could be achieved by putting more life back into borders & shrubberies, by changing some of the planting in the park so that it is in tune with the natural, seashore environment, and by softening the impact of buildings on edge of park with soft landscaping.
- ◆ **Rethink use of particular spaces:** once again, it was particularly the 'putting green' area between the tennis courts and the playground that was highlighted, and a Friend suggested that this space could be used for an activity area that catered for all age groups of children. Likewise, the possibility of converting some of the tennis courts into multi-use games area was also discussed by the Friends.
- ◆ **Improve facilities and services,** particularly through the provision of a café, a performance area (possibly associated with the outdoor bowls pavilion area), improved lighting and exercise stations
- ◆ **Implement an events & education programme:** this was seen by the Friends' as vital for the future success of the park. The events programme needs to go beyond the events currently organised by the Friends, and might include regular theatrical and musical performances, sculpture in the park and events tied in to national events and competitions. Health walks could be organised in the park, and educational events on wildlife management, school events, hands on gardening, winter talks, green days etc. could also be organised.

3.2.5 In addition, the Friends identified addressing the following, not only as key issues, but also as amongst their specific aspirations for the park:

- ◆ Reduction of vandalism & anti-social behaviour
- ◆ Resolution of flooding problems in the park, particularly on the main green
- ◆ Creation of wildlife habitats

Audiences

3.2.6 The following were identified by the Friends' Committee as the main **current users** of the Park, and it was noted that each of these groups tend to use particular areas of the park:

- ◆ Older park users (particularly use the bowls area)
- ◆ Parents with young children (particularly feed the ducks and go to the play area)

3.2.7 The Friends Committee felt that the following were probably the **key groups under-represented** in the park:

- ◆ 18-50s not visiting, unless cutting through it because there is nothing to tempt them
- ◆ Family groups may not be using the park, deterred by anti-social behaviour

3.2.8 In terms of **target audiences** for the park, the Friends' committee felt that the following groups should be focussed on:

- ◆ Bexhill residents of all ages
- ◆ Family groups
- ◆ Day visitors

Key Issues

3.2.9 A range of issues that should be addressed to improve the **management and maintenance** of the park were highlighted by the Friends Committee.

- ◆ Management currently 'ticks along' and changes could be made to improve this, such as the employment of a Park Keeper as the main point of contact, loo attendants etc.
- ◆ There should be a greater role for the Friends in the future management of the park; this group is in its infancy and needs more members and should play its part in organising events, ensuring measurable improvements, facilitating between the public and planners etc.
- ◆ Local groups of community volunteers could also be organised to assist with weeding etc.
- ◆ Alternative funding streams should be explored

3.2.10 A particular key issue for the Friends is the **relationship between the Park and the museum**. The Committee felt that improved communication between the park and the museum is vital to ensure the success of both of these HLF funded projects, and particularly to resolve the issue of access to the café and use of the outdoor café space backing out from the museum into the park.

3.2.11 **Improved security** was reinforced again as a key issue and the need to reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour, to improve lighting, and to introduce CCTV and a park ranger reinforced. Additional management and maintenance issues highlighted, as with the Steering Group, were **water drainage/flooding**, and **quality of water** in the lakes.

3.2.12 A number of **physical access** issues emerged from consultation with the Friends:

- ◆ The steps down into the sunken park create physical access issues and barriers in places, particularly for those with visual and mobility problems.
- ◆ Access to the car park tends to be monopolised by users of the indoor bowls facility
- ◆ There is a limited vehicular access to the park, which will be increasingly important if a thriving events programme is put in place
- ◆ The lack of entrances on Egerton Road inhibits access to the park and movement from the seafront and the museum. An entrance could be created to the west of the museum
- ◆ A Friends Committee member felt that elsewhere there are too many entrances, and that some of these could be closed

- 3.2.13 The need for improved **marketing and more publicity** for the park was another key issue for the Friends. Committee members pointed to the need for:
- ◆ Better signage, as current signposting to the park is poor
 - ◆ More publicity beyond the local press – a good website, inclusion in the annual Bexhill brochure, and publicity around the progression of the HLF bid would be important.

3.3 ADDITIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

Walkover with Parks Officer

- 3.3.1 Atkins landscape team walked over the park (26th October) with the head of the Park Service and the Parks Development Officer to discuss issues and opportunities. This provided a wealth of practical information about the physical features, structures, services of the park, and on its management and maintenance, which is informing the management plan and landscape design process (see the landscape baseline information report for further detail).

Telephone Interviews

- 3.3.2 Consultation by telephone interview with **Councillor Graham Gubby** (10th November, 2006) - Leader of Rother District Council, member of the Local Government Association, member of the SE England Regional Assembly, member of the Hastings & Bexhill Task Force Steering Group, and Chairman of the Local Strategic Partnership – provided a valuable **political perspective** on the value and significance of the EPIC project, in the context of the wider local and regional strategic picture. The following key views were gleaned from this conversation with Councillor Gubby:
- ◆ Egerton Park needs to be viewed as a **resource** that is part of a **much bigger ‘jigsaw puzzle’**, and plans for its development should be conceived in this context. It needs to be heavily linked to other key resources in Bexhill and have an integral place in the social, economic, cultural and leisure life of the community. These other key resources include:
 - the DLWP, which is getting up to 50,000 visitors a month
 - the beach and seafront with a regeneration strategy in place for it
 - the museum, about to be renovated thanks to HLF funding.
 - ◆ The park needs to be **financially viable and sustainable** – the project should kickstart plans for the park in the long term future of the park, not just the next 30 years.
 - ◆ The Park should be a canvas for social, cultural, economic and leisure activities for the whole community, without making the canvas itself too ‘busy’. It is important not just to have a nice park, but a park that can act as a springboard for activities, events and education. E.g. events like the Sculpture Trail; get artists involved in the planting and activities in the park.

- ◆ Regeneration of the park can contribute, by a range of means, to **local economic sustainability initiatives and issues**, particularly to the building of a sustainable group of young people and an economic base for the future, as Bexhill is currently demographically 65+ heavy.
 - One sector to try to attract, through cultural events and quality facilities, are the skilled professionals making a lifestyle choice and moving out of London to Hastings, Lewes, Eastbourne, Ashford.
 - RDC is heavily investing in young people and intergenerational relations. EPIC needs to draw young people in to the process of the project, get them involved in the design. The project should be careful not to patronise them or to lower their aspirations.
 - DLWP has put great effort into developing a successful education programme; spin off of these projects is to instil civic pride, reduce crime rates, encourage young people to stay in the area and improve quality of life. A similar approach should be taken with Egerton Park.
 - It is important to ensure that incidents like the recent attack in Egerton Park do not colour people's views of young people and over exaggerate the fear of crime amongst existing and potential park users.
- ◆ People in the area really have a sense of the **value & worth of open spaces**.
- ◆ It will be important to capture and retain the history and heritage of the park, but not just in an imitative pastiche. Development of the park should celebrate the new, the ideas and values of the here and now too.

3.3.3 The need to consider targeting visitors from beyond Bexhill as a key audience has emerged from initial consultation. A telephone interview with **James Kimber**, proprietor of Cooden Beach Hotel and accommodation representative on the Bexhill Chamber of Commerce (10th November, 2006) indicated the cross-section of visitors coming to Bexhill, current levels of visitor interest and promotion of the park, and highlights what changes might be required to make the Park a part of the wider tourist offer of Bexhill in the future. Ideas and information emerging from this interview can feed into recommendations of the Audience Development Plan and the Management Plans.

- ◆ **Visitors:** few international visitors, more coming from London and Kent for the coast, but many older visitors from Eastbourne, Lewes, Tunbridge
- ◆ Egerton Park **does not really feature** amongst the assets in Bexhill and the area that are promoted to tourists. The park is overshadowed by the seafront and there is little interest in the park.
- ◆ The park would require upgrading and a lot more care to **make it a resource that the tourism sector could be proud of** - only then could it really be

promoted to visitors. Currently the park is unimpressive. The stagnant lake water needs to be dealt with, more money put into planting and bedding.

- ◆ A bandstand, or performance area, and a **series of events** would improve the attraction of the park for visitors.
- ◆ If regenerated then it could be **promoted** through the Bexhill Guide, 1066 Country material, and the other channels through which Bexhill is currently advertised.

3.3.4 Another current concern that has arisen from initial consultation is anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the park. A telephone interview with THELMA BLANKLEY, RDC CRIME REDUCTION OFFICER (9th November, 2006), probed further on how to tackle this particular issue and ideas arising from this interview can be fed into the Management Plan and design process.

- ◆ There have been violent crime issues in recent times, but crime is perceived as being a much bigger problem than it actually is. Thus it is important **to address the perception of crime** that can sometimes distort reality.
- ◆ It is important to make people feel safe - improving **open sight lines** across the park will contribute to this
- ◆ Increased activity in the park would also mean **increased observation**
- ◆ More **lighting** might make people feel safer

3.3.5 Telephone interviews were also conducted with **Alex Sim, Community Police Officer**, and **Peter Hardy, Crime Prevention Design Adviser for Sussex Police Authority**. These calls were very informative, particularly with regard to discussions about how, where the resources are available, improved lighting, CCTV, considered design (trees and bushes at the right height, designing out black spot areas etc), involvement of teenagers in anti-graffiti campaigns, different means of discouraging groups of young people hanging out in the park and intimidating other users etc., can address some of these security and anti-social behaviour issues.

3.3.6 A telephone conversation with Sally Ann Lycett, Head of Communications at the De La Warr Pavilion, also provided valuable comparative information, set out below, on the Pavilion's experience of audiences and users since it reopened last year.

- ◆ The Pavilion has been successful in attracting target audiences – young people and young families. Particularly through their education programme young people feel welcome in the Pavilion and have a real presence there now.
- ◆ 70% of visitors come to the Pavilion to the galleries – the Pavilion appears to have successfully reinvented itself as an art gallery, attracting in a new galleries audience.
- ◆ Notably the one area where they have experienced some issues is in attracting visitors in to ticketed performances and events – they are currently reviewing the cause of this – a national trend? New and experimental performance not what audiences want?
- ◆ Some useful figures were also provided indicating the balance between local, national and international audiences:

- 30% of users have Bexhill postcode, 70% from elsewhere
- 60% are from Rother area, 40% are from outside Rother area
- 8-9% are from London
- 1-1.5% are from outside the UK

4. PUBLIC CONSULTATION: ANALYSIS

4.1 PUBLIC CONSULTATION EVENTS: 26TH-28TH OCTOBER 2006, BEXHILL

- 4.1.1 Consultation at the Sure Start event at Bexhill Leisure Centre, on Thursday 26th October 2006, provided an opportunity to talk to parents in Bexhill, predominantly mothers with toddlers and young children. 50 questionnaires were distributed, 1 was filled in with a parent on the day, and a further 2 were returned on the day.
- 4.1.2 There was a steady flow of public interest in the exhibition at the De La Warr Pavilion on Friday 27th October, 2006. While many of those who showed interest in the project and responded to the questionnaires were older park users, there was a Youth Festival event at the De La Warr (Access All Areas) which provided the opportunity to talk to and survey a number of young people from Bexhill and the surrounding area. There was also useful input from representatives of The Learning Link, the Arts Development Officers from Hastings Borough Council and Rother District Council, staff of the DLWP Pavilion, and organisers of youth festival. Representatives of the Society of Bexhill Museums, wildlife enthusiasts, tennis club members, and bowling club members also came along, discussed their views on the future of the park, and made comments specific to their own particular interest areas.
- 4.1.3 At the De La Warr, 14 Green Stat questionnaires were filled in with Atkins on the day, 4 completed and returned to Atkins there, and 10+ questionnaires distributed.
- 4.1.4 The consultation day at St. Andrews Church Hall, on Saturday 27th October 2006, was well attended, with a busy flow of people coming in and out of the church hall all day. Respondents were primarily older members of the community, regular park users, and residents local to the park.
- 4.1.5 At St Andrews Church Hall, 20 questionnaires were filled in with Atkins' team members on the day, 3 completed questionnaires were returned and several questionnaires distributed.
- 4.1.6 The sections below report back on the key information gleaned from consultation with the public, both through face to face conversations and from Green Stat statistical data, about:
- ◆ the public's broad and specific aspirations for the future of the park
 - ◆ current and under-represented audiences of the park, their needs and interests
 - ◆ key issues identified by the public in the development and regeneration of the park
- 4.1.7 Results from a previous Egerton Park User Survey (carried out by RDC in December 2005, with 163 questionnaire returns) are also woven in to the discussion below.

4.2 ASPIRATIONS

- 4.2.1 A number of broad aspirations were identified in general discussion with the public at the consultation events and these were elaborated upon in the views expressed in the Green Stat questionnaires. **67%** of respondents felt that they could think of things that would encourage them to stay in the park longer or use it more often, and it is particularly the responses to this question, and the additional comments made at the end of the questionnaire, that elaborate upon aspirations for the park. Key amongst these aspirations were:
- ◆ **Retain the balance of facilities, activities and spaces in the park.** It was clear from consultation that the public generally like the mix of relaxation and activity areas in the park, with the circular walk linking these areas together. A small number of respondents expressed concern in additional comments at the end of the Green Stat questionnaire that this current balance would be spoilt by unnecessary change, that the park should not be over designed or its peaceful nature upset. Yet others felt that achieving such a balance in the park is an aspiration for the future and very many comments made highlighted the need to do more to provide new or better facilities and/or an events programme, including for teenagers.
- 4.2.2 The detail provided in the issues section below elaborates on several specific ways in which the public would like to see this valued open space developed and enhanced. Statistics from the previous Egerton Park Users Survey, carried out in December 2005, reinforces the point that the majority of park users are in principle in support of restoring and regenerating the park (79%).
- ◆ **Provide new & enhance existing facilities:** it is overwhelmingly clear that a **café/refreshment area** is the key new facility that the public feel would encourage them to stay in the park for longer and to use it more often. This was specifically noted by approximately **100 out of 251 respondents** who made additional comments in response to the question ***Can you think of anything that would encourage you to use the park more often, or stay for longer?***
- 4.2.3 The **play area** was repeatedly picked out (by around **25 respondents** to the same question) as a key attraction in the park which requires rejuvenation, including suggestions that there might be an indoor play area, a paddling pool and more for older kids. Several members of the public mentioned the history of this play area as an outstanding facility in the area and many reminisced about their own childhood memories of the park.
- 4.2.4 The following were also commented on as facilities that would encourage users to come to the park more often and to stay for longer:
- ◆ Better seating and table areas (approx. 15 respondents) and better shelter (approx. 8 respondents)
 - ◆ a performance area/bandstand (approx. 10 respondents)
 - ◆ improved toilet facilities (approx. 13 respondents)

- ◆ different and improved sports facilities (skating, boating, tennis, cycling – approx. 11 respondents)
 - ◆ facilities for both older children and younger people
- 4.2.5 At the same time a couple of respondents had mixed feelings about, for example, the provision of a skateboard area and cyclists in the park, and there was also concern that there should not be too much new building in the park, as this might encroach upon the valued open space of the park.
- ◆ **Improve security and tackle crime in the park.** Both face-to-face discussions with the public and questionnaire responses made it clear that the public are concerned that reduction of crime and increased security in the park are made top priorities in any future plans for the park. Many respondents to the questionnaire noted the problems of intimidating groups of youths, and of anti-social behaviour in the park, especially at night at a number of different points on the questionnaire. In response to the question ***Can you think of anything that would encourage you to use the park more often or stay for longer?*** **55 of the 251** additional comments focussed on these issues. A range of responses were suggested – vandal proof fencing, improved lighting, CCTV, enforcement of park laws, police presence, closed gates at night, better supervision of the activity of youths in the park and, most repeatedly, the request for improved management through the appointment of a Park Keeper or Park Ranger.
 - ◆ **Implement an events & educational activities programme.** A host of different events were suggested by the public at a number of points in response to the Green Stat questionnaire – arts, nature, heritage; walks, guided talks, workshops, performances etc. **26 out of 251** respondents to the question ***Can you think of anything that would encourage you to use the park more often or stay for longer?*** felt that events and entertainment (6 particularly commenting on the sculpture event held in the park 2 years ago) and approximately **10** that improved information, educational guided walks and talks would encourage them to stay longer. However, some members of the public were concerned that events should not be too loud, overpowering, or run too late into the evening, as this might have an impact on the relaxing atmosphere of the park and the surrounding residential areas.
- 4.2.6 A range of other issues were highlighted by the public which, in many ways, constitute **aspirations for practical and design improvements to the park**. These are more appropriately dealt with under key issues below, but include enhancing and improving the visibility of the park, access and parking facilities, bedding, planting and landscaping, cleanliness of the lake and the park in general, and regulation of dogs in the park. The latter was an issue that was particularly highlighted, with approximately **17 respondents** to the question ***Can you think of anything that would encourage you to use the park more often or stay for longer?***

4.3 AUDIENCES

- 4.3.1 A broad sense of the main current park users was gained from face-to-face consultation with the public at the key consultation events. Older members of the community and local young families appeared to be the predominant current park users. However, analysis of Green Stat information provides a

clearer understanding of exactly who uses the park currently, when they use the park and why they are using the park.

Who is using the park?

Age & Ethnic profile of current and under-represented audiences

4.3.2 With regard to the age and ethnic profile of park users, the interim statistics indicate that of the 97 respondents:

- ◆ 3% of respondents were under 19
- ◆ 3% were aged 20-29
- ◆ 14% were in the 30-39 age group
- ◆ 32% were aged 40-59
- ◆ 31% were aged 60-74
- ◆ 18% were over 75
- ◆ 95% White British; 1% White Irish; 2% other white background; 1% Indian; with White and Black Caribbean, White and Asian, and Indian, each constituting less than 1% of the total.

4.3.3 Thus, 49% of respondents were over 60 years old and only 6% of those surveyed were under 30. It is possible, given the consultation process to date, that these statistics under-represent the number of young people in Bexhill using the park. The main period of consultation will spend time focussed on school workshops to try to address this issue. However, given the demographic make up of the area and the general impression of patterns of use of the park, they probably do give a reasonable indication of the cross-section of the population currently using the park – **predominantly parents with their children and older members of the community**, with **young people** as a less frequent users and **BME groups** as an **under-represented audiences** in the park.

A family Park

4.3.4 That Egerton Park is very much a family park is also borne out by the responses to the question: Do you normally visit the park or open space alone or with a group? When you visit as part of a group, who normally visits the park or open space with you? The statistics indicate that the park is regularly used by people both alone and as part of a group. However, 39% of the respondents to this question said that they visit with a partner, 34% with their children, and 21% with other family, whereas only 6% said they visited with a team or club, and only 2% with a school group.

A resource for the immediate local community

4.3.5 Other statistics gathered to date indicate that the survey group indicated that 95% of respondents live in the Borough.

4.3.6 This figure indicates that the park is primarily a resource used by the immediately surrounding local community. This conclusion is reinforced by

responses to the following questions: ***When you visit the park or open space, where do you usually travel from? How would you normally travel to the park or open space? Approximately how long does your normal journey take?*** The responses to these questions make it very clear that the majority of park users (93% of the respondents to this question) come directly from home to the park, that the majority come on foot (64% of the respondents to this question; the other significant means of travelling to the park is in the car – 32%), and that the majority travel no more than 15 minutes to get to the park (87% of respondents to this question). This very local emphasis may partly result from the cross-section of the public surveyed, but these figures make it very clear that the park is first and foremost a resource utilised by the immediately surrounding local community.

When & how are they using the park?

A Park used all week & all year round

- 4.3.7 Responses to the questions ***How often do you visit the park? How long do you normally stay?*** make it clear that Egerton Park is a very well used open space, not only in the summer as might be expected, but also in the winter. 83% of respondents to this question stated that they use the park more than 2 or 3 times a year. Of the respondents who provided answers about their seasonal use of the park, 63% used the park once a week or more in winter, and 79% in summer. 8% use it every day in the winter, and 12% in the summer.
- 4.3.8 However, it is true that respondents (unsurprisingly) spend longer periods of time in the park in summer than in winter (e.g. in the summer 33% of the respondents to the question *How long do you normally stay?* spend 1-4 hours in the park during the week, and 39% at weekend, whereas only 12% of respondents spend 1-4hours during week, and 18% at the weekend in the winter).
- 4.3.9 While more people tend to stay for longer periods of time in the park at the weekend, compared to during the week, in both winter and summer (e.g. in winter 47% of respondents to this question stay for between 30mins-4 hours during the week, compared with 59% at the weekend; in summer 71% of respondents stay for between 30mins-4 hours during the week, compared with 75% at the weekend), the park is in fact very steadily used all week (particularly in the summer), and **there is no serious bias towards weekend, as opposed to week day, use.**

A valued open space for relaxation & family activities

- 4.3.10 Responses to the question ***What do you normally do when you visit the park?*** start to tell a story about current uses of the park. The most frequently chosen option was 'For a walk', with 47% of respondents

indicating that this is an important reason for visiting the park. Other frequently chosen options included: 'Get fresh air': 42%; 'See birds and wildlife', 41%; 'Enjoy flowers and trees' 40%; 'Feed the birds/ducks' 34%; 'Enjoy the beauty of the surroundings' 33%; 'To relax or think' 25%; 'Visit the play area' 25%; 'For peace and quiet' 23% and 'Play sports or games' 18%. Options such as 'Picnic/BBQ' (4%), 'To eat/drink' (3%), 'Meet friends' (9%), 'To attend events' (8%), 'Guided walks' (1%), 'Watch sports or games' (6%), are clearly much lower

- 4.3.11 Thus, while the play and sports facilities are an attraction for some, it appears that people tend to come to the park to take advantage of the open space for a walk, to relax and enjoy nature, rather than to attend organised activities and events, or to spend social time eating outdoors or meeting with friends.
- 4.3.12 The results from the Egerton Park User Survey in December 2005 reinforce these broad conclusions, with 83% of respondents using the park for walking and general exercise, 67% using it for relaxation, 36% using the children's play area, and 49% using it as a short cut, and only much smaller percentages identifying specific sporting activities or events (e.g. 15% bowls, 15% public use of tennis courts, 2% tennis club, 1% boating and 9% attending Sure Start centre and events).
- 4.3.13 Clearly the park is valued by the community for its spaciousness, as a place to be and to relax with partners and friends and this needs to be recognised in any future proposals. At the same time, the small percentage of people using the park to attend events reflects the fact that there is currently a very limited events programme at the park – **building up cultural and educational programmes might well attract current users to the park for new reasons and also drawn in quite new audiences**. Obviously the park's role as a quiet, relaxing space, and as a canvas for an events programme needs to be handled sensitively.

4.4 KEY ISSUES

Maintenance & Management

- 4.4.1 As already highlighted in the public aspirations section above, concern about **security** in the park was repeatedly voiced by the public during consultation. A number of other **maintenance and management issues** arose in the course of consultation. In general, several comments suggested an appreciation of the work that parks staff and contractors do, but that there is a need for **more staff and gardeners** in the park.
- 4.4.2 In response to the Green Stat question ***How would you rate the standard of cleanliness and maintenance of the open space?*** 53% of respondents rated the cleanliness of the park as good and only 4% rated it poor or very poor, but only 17% rated it as very good. The majority of park

users are thus satisfied with cleanliness, but it is clear from the small percentages of respondents who felt that these aspects were very good that there is considerable scope to improve the quality and standard of cleanliness.

- 4.4.3 Analysis of the 97 additional comments made in relation to standards of cleanliness and maintenance can assist in understanding the issues at stake here. While at least 13 responses commended the work of the park staff and grounds maintenance contractors, 5 respondents generally stated that standards are declining, and the many respondents predominantly expressed concern about **dog mess** in the park and the negative effect that dogs have on wildlife, planting and the sand pit area (approximately 30 respondents), about litter (15 respondents), graffiti and vandalism (approximately 12 respondents), and **dirty or stagnant lake water** (15 respondents). Several respondents clearly feel that there is not enough staff in the park and that many of these issues could be resolved through more observation of young people and enforcement of regulations regarding dog mess and keeping dogs on leads.
- 4.4.4 A majority of respondents to the question on **the care and protection of nature and wildlife** in the park (56%) felt that this aspect of park management was good or very good. However 35% of respondents felt that this was only fair, and 9% that it was poor.
- 4.4.5 From the (84) additional comments made, it seems that this satisfaction rate is particularly affected by previous incidents where wildlife, particularly swans, have been harmed by dogs (25 comments), gulls (5 comments) or vandals (11 comments). Once again the **regulation of dogs** in the park featured as a particular concern. Views on how to address this problem ranged from suggestions that they should be kept on leads, that they should only allowed off the lead in designated areas of the park, and that there should be stronger enforcement of regulations, to views that they should be banned from the park altogether. Other respondents felt that more protection for the birds is required, more conservation areas and natural habitat areas should be set aside for them (14 comments), water quality needs to be improved (10 respondents), and a park ranger should be around to watch over the wildlife (5 comments). 5 respondents felt that more should be provided in terms of information panels and education to teach children and the general public more about wildlife in the park.
- 4.4.6 2 respondents did particularly comment on how the park had handled well a recent signet injury. It seems that the parks' efforts to curb and respond to incidents where swans or other wildlife come to harm need to be bolstered and, importantly, these efforts promoted to the public.
- 4.4.7 In response to the **question How would you rate the standard and maintenance of the trees, the flowers and flower beds, shrubs and grass areas of the park or open space?** 85% of respondents felt that this was good or very good, and only 3% rated it as poor. The statistics indicate that respondents are very satisfied with this aspect of park maintenance and this satisfaction is perhaps reflected in the fact that there were fewer additional comments made to this question than those on wildlife and cleanliness for example (59 comments here). However the aspiration must

be to increase the percentage of users who feel that the standards and maintenance of trees and flowers is very good (34% in this survey) and analysis of the qualitative comments made in response to this question indicate ways in which this might be achieved.

- 4.4.8 Many of the 59 additional comments commended the hard work and dedication that the parks staff and contractors here (18 comments), particularly given that they appear to be under-resourced and having to deal with a very large area, where dogs and vandals are thought to be a challenge to the maintenance of trees, flowers, shrubs and grasses . However, while a few responses commented on the flower beds as excellent, a number of responses indicate a general feeling that some of the **bedding could be more diverse and specialised and that planting is uninspiring** in places (13 comments). A further 7 commented particularly on the need to improve shrubs, another 4 that trees need to be maintained better, and 2 others commented on the particular importance of the sensory garden. Problems with **drainage** were commented on again here. One particular respondent was very concerned that 'rejuvenation' of the park might involve radical techniques, when in fact that there are particular mature shrubberies, important mature trees, and recently refurbished borders that must be protected.

Design & Access

- 4.4.9 Comments in relation to the maintenance of trees, flowers and shrubs above indicate that there is a public desire for more inspiring and diverse landscaping and design. Responses to the question ***How would you rate the design and appearance of the park?*** reinforce this conclusion. While 50% rated the design of the park as good and only 4% rated it as poor or very poor, only 20% rated it as very good. Thus, while the majority of respondents are satisfied with the design and appearance, there is some scope to improve quality and standards in this area.
- 4.4.10 Approximately a quarter of additional comments (81 in total) on this question also indicate public contentment with the traditional feel and appearance of the park and that people feel it is well kept, with a good variety of activities on offer. At the same time, approximately 10 respondents commented that the park is a bit neglected, shabby, tired, and in need of a revamp and many commented on particular areas of design and appearance that need improvement. Several commented on the landscaping and planting as poorly maintained and in need of rejuvenation, and others pointed out the issues of stagnant water in the lakes and poor drainage in the park. Others noted a range of issues including - the poor state of repair of buildings overlooking the park (including the museum) and of the toilets; fencing – broken, repaired unattractively, or lacking (particularly around the play area, and around ponds to keep dogs out and improve H&S for children); damaged tables and chairs, the lack of water fountains; the need for better amenities such as a refreshment area; the lack of grand entrance; poor disabled access, the lack of signage in the park and the need for better use of space (one respondent was particularly

keen to reduce the space given over to bowling). Another respondent asked that a more fun 'buzzy' atmosphere be created.

- 4.4.11 While not always directly a comment on design and appearance, at least 12 people commented here on **security** issues, concern about vandals and safety in the park at night, the need to lock the park and the possible role for a full time park ranger. 8 respondents also commented here on **dogs**, the need to keep them on leads, particularly in order to protect wildlife, dog mess in the park, and one suggested a total ban on dogs.
- 4.4.12 Statistically, access to and movement around the park did not appear to be a concern. In response to the question **How easy is it for you to get around the park or open space?** 93% felt that ease of movement around the park was good or very good. Respondents clearly had few issues about access inside the park itself, although it is worth noting that only 5% of respondents felt that they had a disability that affects their use of the park. This may have had some knock on effect on the response to this particular question.
- 4.4.13 Additional comments on this question (24) did discuss problems with the paths (8) - particularly **flooding** and mud after the rain, and broken and worn surfaces impeding movement around the park – 5 discussed the need for more **disabled access**, less steep ramps and more seating; 2 discussed the need for more entrances, 1 the need for improved lighting, another the need for **better signage** between the park and the Polegrove, better general accessibility, and another the fact that pedestrians disapprove of **cyclists** in the park. Comments made elsewhere on access, either through the questionnaire or in person at the consultation events, reinforce that there could be:
- ◆ better access for cyclists (a cycle track, bike racks)
 - ◆ better access & facilities for the disabled, including more regular maintenance of paths and drains to ensure Health & Safety and DDA compliancy
 - ◆ better signage in the park and to the park to improve its visibility
 - ◆ improved pedestrian entrances and vehicular access & parking facilities

Improved Facilities and Services

- 4.4.14 Both the statistics and qualitative comments on visitor, parent and children, and sports facilities in the park tell a very clear story.
- 4.4.15 With regard to the range of **visitor facilities** available, 26% of the respondents to this question felt that the range of visitor facilities was good, but only 5% felt that they were very good; 47% felt that they were just fair, and 22% that they were poor or very poor. Thus, approximately 2/3 of respondents did not think that visitor facilities were good and there is **clearly a need to enhance the range and quality of such facilities in the park.**
- 4.4.16 The majority of the 126 comments made in response to his question made suggestions for the enhancement or addition of visitor facilities, although 4 did caution against changing the park or upsetting the current use of space

and atmosphere. Most strikingly, it was felt that visitor facilities could be improved by the addition of a café (61 comments) and improved toilet facilities (26 comments)

- 4.4.17 Others commented on the need for improvement of the play area, and the possibilities of more seating (2), shelter (8), more signage to direct people to the park and provide information in the park (7), a bandstand or performance area (5), and more entertainment and events (3), adding to the value of the park for visitors.
- 4.4.18 With regard to activities for children and young people, 6 noted the need to improve the play facilities, another 2 that some inside play areas would be good, 3 that there should be more for older kids and another that there should be summer activities for kids. 4 respondents felt that the loss of the outdoor swimming pool was regrettable, and another 3 felt that there could be more provision for football.
- 4.4.19 While 56% of respondents thought that **facilities for children and their parents** were good or very good, and only 9% that they were poor, 35% said that they were fair. Given that statistics and general comments indicate the significant role of Egerton Park as a family park and a valued play area space in Bexhill, the fact that over a third of the people surveyed feel the facilities are only fair indicates that **more could be done to satisfy a key park audience, to provide them with really high quality facilities, and to attract families in from further afield.**
- 4.4.20 Additional comments made by (83) respondents to this question expand on what the issues are with the play areas. While 14 responses indicate a general appreciation of the play areas and of the Sure Start facility, it is clear that the equipment and design of the area are in need of repair, replacement, updating and vandal-proofing. 5 respondents said the play area was not good, 9 commented on the depleted equipment, 2 on the poor state of the sand pit, 9 on the need for a refreshments/café area, 10 on the need for improved toilet facilities, 5 on the need for a sheltered area and another 3 on the need for more seating and table areas. 5 generally said that it requires refurbishment and more innovative play areas, 5 that it needs vandal-proofing, and 10 that it needs more adventurous areas for older kids and more activity areas for teenagers, such as soccer, basketball and skateboard facilities.
- 4.4.21 Similarly over half (58%) of the respondents to this question felt that **sports facilities** are good or very good, but 33% felt that they were only fair, 8% that they are poor and 1% that they are very poor.
- 4.4.22 The 81 additional comments shed some light on these statistics. While there were a few complaints about their maintenance (e.g. drainage, vandalism, repair), the cost of using these facilities, and misuse for purposes other than those for which they are intended, those who use the tennis courts (12 comments), bowling facilities (7 comments), and the football goals (5 comments), feel quite well catered for. However, a number of comments suggest that tennis and bowls dominate too much (10 comments) and that more variety in sports facilities, for example the addition of a basketball court (9 comments), skateboard area (3

comments), Astro turf/more football facilities (5), or crazy golf (3), would be a positive thing. Indeed **this might address some of the problems of misuse and help to satisfy those users who felt that rather neutral about, or dissatisfied with, the park's sport facilities.** It should be noted however that several respondents (approximately 10) discussed which sports facilities may or may not be required in the park in relation to what is provided by the Polegrove, and this should be taken into account when making new design proposals.

Conclusion on Key Issues

- 4.4.23 From the Green Stat information it appears that the majority of users surveyed are satisfied with the maintenance and management of the park and with the design of and access to the park. At the same time, there is scope to improve the quality and standard of these areas, in order to boost the numbers of users who feel that these aspects of the park are not just good or satisfactory, but excellent. Furthermore, when asked to comment in more detail about the Park's maintenance, management, access and design, the responses were often less favourable than the rating given. **Protection of wildlife** in the park appears to be the area of maintenance with which the public are least satisfied, and it is clear that the public is much less content when it comes to the **provision of facilities**. There is obviously room to improve the quality and diversity of sports and play areas, but it is particularly general visitor facilities with which the public are strikingly most dissatisfied.
- 4.4.24 The response statistics on the question ***What is your overall impression of the park?*** can be interpreted similarly. 53% of respondents said they are satisfied with the park, 20% that they are very satisfied, 18% that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 8% that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Thus, over 2/3 of park users are satisfied, but the aspiration must be to boost the numbers of park users who are very satisfied.
- 4.4.25 As often with the responses already analysed above, it is the 49 additional comments which are more revealing about exactly how this might be achieved, as they indicate both that the public feel more needs to be put into the park service and the ways in which this regeneration of the park might be achieved. . Some responses (8) reiterate the key aspiration that, while this refresh of the park is necessary to improve quality and to make the park a more exciting and accessible place for all elements of the community, this should not be at the expense of sense of space, views, the relaxing atmosphere and historic character of the park. At the same time, the general need to improve the somewhat neglected park with shabby buildings was noted by at least 13 respondents and the issues of security, vandalism and young people hanging around the park at night, to be dealt with by a park ranger, fencing or locking the park, was again reinforced (14 comments). Additionally, the need for a café, more seating, improvement to the play area, better toilets, information boards, better planting, and measures to deal with the dogs, are all reiterated here.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1.1 Table 1 below provides a useful summary both of the key issues and requirements that have been highlighted by stakeholders and the public, and some broad conclusions can be drawn from this.
- 5.1.2 Those issues that stakeholders raised, but which were focussed on much less by the public, tend (perhaps unsurprisingly) to be more aspirational and strategic aims. Thus, for example, stakeholders talked about creating an identity and profile for the park, and about desires to broaden user groups and to make the park a vibrant and creative space, considering its design and regeneration in terms of its strategic role in the wider economic and cultural regeneration of the area. Public comments were much more focussed on the specifics of park features and the practicalities of using the park – the play area, the toilets, the desire for enhanced visitor facilities, security issues, protection of wildlife and the control of dogs.
- 5.1.3 This suggests that there is more scope for communicating stakeholder aspirations for the park project to the public. By the same token, it is clear that the public's specific desires on more practical enhancements need to inform design proposals for the park.
- 5.1.4 However, while a range of different perspectives on the issues may exist and a range of different solutions put forward, there are several key issues which both stakeholders and the public are keen to address. Most clearly, these are:
- ◆ Appropriate levels and nature of staffing of the park, the value of a Park Ranger/Park Keeper being particularly discussed
 - ◆ Improved security for the park, whether through enforcement of regulations or improving security through design and strategic community involvement
 - ◆ Improved drainage in the park, and improved lake water quality
 - ◆ Enhanced visitor facilities in the park, whether to fulfil very practical needs or to provide a canvas for social and cultural events
 - ◆ Organisation of events and educational activities in the park

Consultation Group	EPIC	FOEP	Additional stakeholders	Public
Particular Issues				
Identity for Park	•	•		
Link Park to e.g. DLWP, seafront – (strategically, physically)	•	•	•	
Ensure Park is financially viable & sustainable			•	
Regeneration contributes to wider local initiatives – economic sustainability, investment in young people			•	
Need new facilities / reasons to draw people into Park (intellectual access)	•			
Appeal to all age groups/good intergenerational mix	•	•		
Better communication between organisations	•	•		
Enhance role of Friends / other support/volunteer groups	•	•		
Ranger / Park attendant/more staff	•	•	•	•
Explore different/new funding streams		•		
Organise activities / Events within Park	•	•	•	•
Keep current space / facility balance		•		•
Retain / enhance history/historical features (e.g folly)	•	•	•	
Improve landscaping/planting schemes	•	•	•	•
Improve habitats for wildlife		•		•
Water quality and drainage	•	•	•	•
General maintenance needs improving				•
Dogs (mess and not on leads)		•		•
Enhance play area (including shelter, seating, indoor area)	•	•		•
Rethink use of the 'putting green' area	•	•		
Rethink use of tennis court area	•	•		
Need different/improved sports facilities				•
Need for performance area/bandstand	•	•		•
Need for a café	•	•		•
Need for improved toilet facilities				•
Access to proposed Museum Cafe		•		
Need facilities & services for young people	•	•	•	•
Need to accommodate for cyclists				•
Security (lighting, CCTV, vandalism)	•	•	•	•
Improve perception of Park as safe			•	
Better views into & out of Park	•		•	
Better quality entrances	•	•		•
Close some entrances		•		
Steps into Park / physical access in	•	•		•
Car Park dominated by sports users		•		
Lack of vehicular access / Parking		•		•
Health & Safety issues				•
Better publicity of Park	•	•	•	
Interpretation	•			
Improve signage	•	•		•

Table 1: Stakeholder and Public Issues/Requirements for regeneration of the Park

5.1.5 Table 2 below summarises who current and potential visitors to the park are, according to the views of stakeholders, and which groups the Green Stat statistics indicate as the predominant current users of the park. This is a useful rough tool, a starting point from which to consider who target audience for the park might be and from which to formulate key points of the Audience Development Action Plan.

Consultation Group	EPIC	FOEP	Additional stakeholders	Green Stat
Visitor Groups – Users & target groups				
Parents & Young children	•	•	•	•
Older citizens	•	•		•
Sports users	•	•		•
Dog Walkers/walkers	•			•
Friends		•		•
Local community				•
All local community -all ages, status etc	•	•		
Young People	•		•	
BME	•			
Education Groups			•	
Young professionals relocating & living			•	
Visitors from outside Rother District	•	•	•	
Day visitors from Rother District	•	•	•	

Table 2: Current and Potential Visitors to the park

5.1.6 It is clear that current park audiences are first and foremost local audiences, predominantly made up of young families, older citizens, sports users, walkers and Friends of the Park.

5.1.7 There are stakeholder aspirations to expand the age groups within the local community who use the park - particularly to include young people and educational groups - to ensure that park audiences are as ethnically diverse as possible, and to attract both tourists and relocating young professionals. In face to face consultation, only a few members of the public discussed attracting audiences from outside the local community. Many more were thinking about the place of young people and educational groups in the park – some felt quite ambivalent, and a few even negative, about targeting young people as an audience for the park, but most recognised the need to welcome, provide for, involve and inspire young people through the facilities and activities provided by the park.

6. ADDENDUM

- 6.1.1 Further public consultation is ongoing in December 2006 and January 2007. A public event was held at the De La Warr Pavilion on Sunday 17th December, where members of the Atkins team distributed comment forms and consulted with the general public on their views on project progress to date, and on the content of the draft Access Audit, Audience Development and Conservation Management Plans, and initial design ideas. These display boards will be used as a peripatetic exhibition in Bexhill throughout the rest of December, January and early February 2007, appearing at the following locations:
- ◆ Redstack Theatre - performances on Fri 22 Dec + Sat 23 Dec
 - ◆ Sidley Community Centre - Monday 18th December to Friday 22nd December
 - ◆ Bexhill Leisure Centre - Tuesday 2nd January to Sunday 7th January
 - ◆ Sure Start, 77 Western Road - Monday 8th January to Thursday 11th January
 - ◆ Bexhill Observer - Friday 12th January to Thursday 18th January
 - ◆ Bexhill Youth and Community Centre - Monday 22nd January to Friday 26th January
 - ◆ Community Help Point - Monday 29th January to Friday 2nd February
 - ◆ Bexhill Museum - Monday 5th February to Saturday 10th February
- 6.1.2 The comment form and summaries of the draft Plans and information on initial design ideas are available online for 8 weeks from 15th December 2006 to provide further opportunity for the public to consider and comment on them.
- 6.1.3 In addition to the public event, 2 short workshops were held with Bexhill College and Bexhill High, on Friday 15th December, 2006. Approximately 12-15 student representatives attended at both the College and the High school events, which proved immensely useful in gauging what young people do and do not like about the Park, and their views on the future regeneration of it. It is hoped that, using the information provided to the schools, these student representatives and their teachers will raise awareness about the E.P.I.C. project amongst the wider student body and encourage them comment on the summaries of Atkins' draft Plans and design ideas. Student feedback gathered at these sessions themselves has already been assimilated into the draft Audience Development Plan.
- 6.1.4 A further meeting was also held on Friday 15th December 2006 to consult with representatives of the Friends group and to get their feedback on the draft Plans and progress on design ideas to date.

ANNEX 1

E.P.I.C. STAKEHOLDERS & PARTNERS CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Organisation/Stakeholder:.....

The Park:

1. What are your aspirations for Egerton Park?

2. What do you consider to be / or should be the best features of the Park?

3. Which aspects of the current Park management structure do you feel work effectively?
Are there any areas of the current management structure that you feel do not work well?

(e.g. the role of volunteer support groups? Funding streams? Organisation of park maintenance?
Park-based projects? Marketing and publicity?)

4. Do you have any particular views on how the Park might be most effectively managed in the future?

5. Is there a particular contribution that you feel the organisation/group you represent can make to the future success and vitality of the Park? (particular initiatives, regular events, particular users etc.)

Audience development:

6. Who do you consider to be the target audiences (both current users & non user groups) for the Park, and what are your reasons for this?

7. If you have identified particular non user groups, why do you think they are currently not visiting the park?

8. Are there any key contacts or contact groups that you feel it is particularly important to consult and involve in this current project?

9. Are there any events / festivals / competitions that you would like to see promoted further or initiated at the Park, to ensure that it plays a focal and vibrant role in community life?

10. Do you have any suggestions for future audience development initiatives? How do you think the Park might be most effectively advertised and promoted to the local community / to UK visitors? (For example, on webpages? Posters? Signage? Etc)

Access:

11. Do you have any particular concerns regarding access provision at the Park?

12. Do you know of any difficulties raised by other Park users/non users about access (physical, intellectual, sensory, cultural)?

Please feel free to add any additional comments below.

Please return to: Ken Sabel, Atkins Limited, Euston Tower, 30th Floor West, 286 Euston Road, London NW1 3AT

**APPENDIX C: SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION
ON EGERTON PARK CONSERVATION
MANAGEMENT PLAN, AUDIENCE
DEVELOPMENT PLAN, ACCESS AUDIT AND
DESIGN CONCEPTS (MARCH 2007)**

APPENDIX C: CONSULTATION ON THE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN, AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND ACCESS AUDIT, AND DESIGN CONCEPTS, DECEMBER 2006

1.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 A public exhibition and consultation event, held at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea, 15th December 2006, provided an important opportunity to share the draft conservation management, audience development and physical access proposals, and initial design concepts, with the public and to gauge community responses to them. Members of the public were provided with a comment form on which to return their views formally to the Council (see Annex 1). This comment form was available online (and in hard copy on request) for a period of 8 weeks, along with summaries of the Plans' key findings and overarching principles/objectives. The exhibition boards were on display in a number of public buildings throughout this time. A total of 71 forms were returned to the Council.

1.2 CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 1.2.1 Of the 61 respondents who answered the question *Do you agree or disagree with the content of the Conservation Management Plan as outlined by the summary documents?* 43 agreed, 16 agreed in part, only 1 respondent disagreed and 1 person responded Don't know, indicating that over 2/3 of the people who answered this question felt that the draft conservation management plan had correctly identified the major issues and opportunities for regeneration of Egerton Park. Additional comments made on the draft CMP reiterated a number of key issues already identified in earlier consultation with the public in November 2006 and reinforced a number of the key opportunities proposed by the Plan. For example, the need for a Park Ranger, for more patrolling of the Park, more lighting, and/or locking of the Park at night to address vandalism, misuse of the facilities and security issues in the Park at night, were flagged up. Comments were also made again on the need to improve toilets, and to provide more bins, water fountains and a refreshments facility. Requests for the provision of facilities to give young people something to do in the Park, improvement of drainage and water cleanliness, and protection and enhancement of the ecology and habitats of the Park were repeated too. A couple of respondents emphasised the importance of retaining the folly and island planting. All of these issues have been addressed in the detail of the Plan, which will also meet the requests of a few other respondents who felt that they would like more detailed and/or simpler, clearer statements of the proposals in general, or on the plans for the tennis facilities and provision for the Tennis Club in particular. A few responses variously emphasised the

need to liaise with the Museum over the provision of refreshment and toilet facilities, to consult with neighbouring residents on wildlife issues, and to consider the offer and potential of the Polegrove Recreation Ground in conjunction with plans for Egerton Park. These are important comments which are reflected in measures suggested in the CMP and ADP to open management and communication channels, to improve townscape links and to integrate development of the Park with other regeneration initiatives in the town.

- 1.2.2 Given the number of responses, negative comments were minimal, and these have been duly considered in the final formulation of the CMP. Only one respondent strongly questioned in detail the need for many of the proposed Park developments (e.g. facilities for young people, provision of disabled parking, improvement of the Wickham Avenue entrance and of the model boat pond, opening up views and vistas). A few others cautioned against too much change, focussing on particular issues: for example, one was concerned that provision of a performance space would not equate to loud music in the Park, and another that removal of any trees and bushes could make the Park 'soul-less'; another felt that history should not be emphasised too much at the expense of contemporary needs and realities, and another that refreshment facilities and toilets beyond those that the Museum and private clubs will provide would be unnecessary.

1.3 AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 1.3.1 Of the 56 people who commented on the question Do you feel that we have correctly identified the facilities and services that Egerton Park should provide to suit the needs of Park users? 39 answered Yes and 17 answered No. Once again, many of the comments made reiterated issues that had been clearly picked up on in the first round of consultation and identified by the ADP. For example, the importance of adequate security for the success of all of these regeneration plans – security patrols, enforcement of byelaws, and locking of the Park gates at night – was emphasised. The need to improve toilet and refreshment facilities was commented on again (but with one respondent questioning the economic viability of a Park cafe), as was the need to regulate dogs in the Park, to improve drainage, and to protect wildlife. Many comments reinforced the desire to see improvement of the play area, with suggestions including better equipment (including traditional swings and slides), supervision, water play and more facilities for older children. Others picked up on the need to provide more for young people, whether in the form of more space for football practice and a skate park area (either in Egerton Park or in the Polegrove) or a 'chill out' area, with different levels, angled walls, steps and swinging seats etc.
- 1.3.2 There were a notable number of respondents (17) who felt that the ADP had not accurately identified the facilities to meet audience needs. Three of these expressed concerns about the impact of implementing all of the ADP objectives in Egerton Park, stressing that the Park should not be made too 'modern', that more buildings and sculpture should not be added and that, given that it is not a very large Park, some of the objectives might be better implemented in the Polegrove. These are valid concerns that have been duly noted in finalising the ADP. The rest of the negative comments on the

ADP stemmed from a desire for improvement of tennis facilities, including a new brick built tennis pavilion, resurfacing of the tennis courts and three courts dedicated to the Tennis Club. These comments have been considered in finalising suggested actions to meet the needs of sports users of the Park.

1.4 PHYSICAL ACCESS AUDIT

- 1.4.1 46 people comment on the findings of the physical access audit, with 42 of these respondents indicating that the audit had adequately addressed access provision for the Park. A few specific comments were made, for example, on the need to improve security in order to make the Park safe and accessible for all. Another respondent stated that dogs needed to be regulated in the Park to provide tranquillity for Park users and wildlife alike, another that designated parking facilities would improve access and another that they would like more input from a local disability organising such as Hastings and Rother Disability Forum on access issues.

1.5 OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- 1.5.1 Of the 49 people who answered the question Do you agree with our list of overarching principles that will for a framework for future development and change within the Park and which will safeguard important aspects of the historic and natural environment? 34 agreed, 15 agreed in part and none of the respondents disagreed or felt they did not know, indicating a very considerable degree of support for the overarching principles and objectives of the CMP and the ADP.
- 1.5.2 A number of specific comments again emphasised security as a top priority. Other individuals stated the support they gave to those principles or objectives that relate to provision of an improved play area, of learning opportunities, of opportunities for volunteers and for those with sensory disabilities; that relate to increasing biodiversity in the Park; and that emphasise investment in improvements that make the Park more accessible to all rather than respond to the needs of one particular group.
- 1.5.3 Some of those who 'agreed in part' were concerned that principles had not sufficiently addressed the needs of sports users and of the Tennis Club in particular. A few others variously felt that the principles were simply obvious, or were not obvious or specific enough. One respondent requested more detail on the prioritisation of these proposals; another emphasised again the importance of liaising with the Museum on their implementation; and a couple of others again voiced concerns that regeneration should involve small changes that did not overcrowd the Park or happen at the expense of the natural heritage of the Park.

1.6 DESIGN CONCEPTS

- 1.6.1 49 respondents commented on the design concepts, with 46 of these approving of them and only 3 who felt that they did not meet the needs of users, were rather obvious, or too conceptual to comment on at this

junction. Both these figures and many of the comments on the design indicate significant community endorsement of the approach taken. Several respondents were really pleased to see that this much loved Park is to be invested in, appreciating the design plans because they retained the familiar and good parts of the Park while developing it and because they aimed to reintegrate the Park with the rest of the town, promoting it as a part of the wider historic seaside resort. Comments here echoed the desire to keep design simple and 'not too modern', and to protect and enhance the ponds, planting, vegetation and landscaping, and the Park in general as a tranquil green space in Bexhill.

- 1.6.2 A range of comments familiar from consultation earlier in this project and from the responses made on the Plans, as above, were made, and the masterplan design concept has been developed with these in mind. For example security patrols, enforcement of byelaws, and a design that provides opportunities for lighting, CCTV and locked gates, were suggested. The request to update the play area was repeated and the need to provide for young people recognised. There were mixed views on the appropriateness of a skateboard park in Egerton Park and a couple of respondents who felt that ball games would be more appropriate at the Polegrove. Others suggested a multi-use games area, better football nets and a climbing wall. In terms of other facilities, it was again a refreshment area, drinking water provision, improved toilets and improved tennis facilities that were focused on. A number of other specific maintenance and design issues were emphasised, including suggestions to reinstate the bandstand and the swimming pool; to retain the folly, making the island larger and planting more foliage to attract birds; to maintain hedgerow to encourage nesting; to address drainage issues; to restrict dogs in the Park or create dog friendly and dog free areas/paths; to use of more attractive paving; to improve the Rose Garden area; to open up the shelter in the Sensory Garden; and to improve parking facilities.

Annex 1: Consultation Comment Form

Egerton Park

Comments Form



This sheet is for your comments on the summaries of the three documents produced (see below) and our initial design concepts.

The **Audience Development Plan** presents the results of extensive public consultation and the **Access Audit** details the findings of an audit of physical access to the Park. The **Conservation Management Plan** looks at the historic use of the park, its landscape and facilities, and the key issues relating to it. It recommends a set of overarching principles to be applied to the future management of the park, and it will also recommend specific projects and improvements.

Atkins Landscape Architects have used the summary points of these documents to produce some design ideas for consideration. Please make your comments below. It is not essential to comment on every plan if you don't want to. Your comments will form the basis of the preparation of more detailed outline proposals for Egerton Park.

Conservation Management Plan

Do you agree or disagree with the content of the Conservation Management Plan, as outlined in the summary documents? Delete as appropriate and add comments, if desired;

Agree Agree in part Disagree Don't know

Do you have any further comments in relation to the proposals in the summary plan?

Audience Development Plan

Do you feel that we have correctly identified the facilities and services that Egerton Park should provide to suit the needs of park users? Yes/No

If 'No', what additional facilities and services do you feel should be provided?

Access Plan

Do you feel that we have adequately addressed the key access issues at Egerton Park? Yes/No
If 'No', which other access issue(s) do you think needs to be addressed?

Over-arching Principles

Do you agree with our list of overarching principles that will form a framework for future development and change within the park and which will safeguard the important aspects of the historic and natural environment? Delete as appropriate and add comments, if desired;

Agree Agree in part Disagree Don't know

Do you have any further comments in relation to the overarching principles?

Design Concepts

Do you feel that our approach to the future design concept for the park is correct? (i.e. retaining the park's existing features/structure and introducing new facilities/activities and features) Yes/No
If 'No', what approach do you think should be taken?

Do you have any further comments or ideas in relation to the future designs of the park?

APPENDIX D: SUMMARY OF YOUTH CONSULTATION DECEMBER 2006 – FEBRUARY 2007 (MARCH 2007)

APPENDIX D: SUMMARY OF YOUTH CONSULTATION DECEMBER 2006-FEBRUARY 2007 (MARCH 2007)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Appraisals and consultation early in this project made it clear that the place of young people in the Park was an issue that needed to be explored further. Young people do use the Park regularly as a place to meet friends and to socialise generally, and at the same time few Park facilities are specifically promoted to or designed for this target audience. It also seemed that parts of the community feel that groups of young people are responsible for the creation of a threatening atmosphere at times in the Park.
- 1.1.2 The lack of response from young people to the Green Stat questionnaires and public events indicated that a different approach would be required to engage with young people, to find out their views on the facilities in the Park, how they feel about safety in the Park, and what their aspirations for its future are.
- 1.1.3 Subsequent consultation sessions were arranged at Bexhill College and Bexhill High in December 2006 (with approximately 12-15 young people at each session) and consultation with a range of youth groups in January and February 2007 contributed enormously to our understanding of their needs and views.

Bexhill College & Bexhill High School, 15 December 2006

- 1.1.4 The results of the December school sessions showed that, just as much as other members of the community consulted, young people were concerned with security in Egerton Park. They voiced concerns about vandalism and about using the Park, particularly in the evenings, due to fear of intimidation by groups of peers or violent attack. Their general feeling was that the Park should remain open in the evenings, so that people could still take advantage of the open space, to walk their dogs etc., but that new lighting, a rethink of landscaping, and patrol by a Park Ranger was vital.
- 1.1.5 These sessions confirmed the conclusion of other consultation, that the Park caters for younger children, but has less to offer to older children and young adults. Many of these teenagers used the Park play area when they were younger, but fewer of them use the Park regularly now.

- 1.1.6 These students had a number of ideas about how to make the Park more attractive for young people, but in fact also for the wider community and tourists coming to Bexhill. In terms of the existing sport and leisure facilities, they felt that if these were better maintained, managed and marketed (for example, if the boating ponds were cleaner and equipment up-to-date), young people would be more likely to use them and would be content to pay for the experience. They were also keen to see some diversification and improvement of facilities for children and young people, for example, suggesting multi-use games areas or outdoor trampolining for teenagers, and a paddling pool, more water play features, and toilets and baby changing for younger children and families.
- 1.1.7 These students also felt that a shop selling drinks, chocolate and possibly souvenirs would attract not only young people to come to the Park and stay longer, but also tourists and the local community in general. In addition, they suggested that marked routes or trails around the Park, and more events – for example arts/sculpture design competitions and festivals - would improve the Park's image and offer. These would also provide a way for young people to challenge the negative perceptions they felt that some older members of the community had of them, by contributing positively to and enjoying park life.

Rother District Council Youth Consultation January – February 2007

- 1.1.8 Atkins produced a worksheet, accompanied by a plan and guidance notes (see Annex 1 of this Appendix), as a framework for Rother District Council's Parks Development Officer to run a number of youth consultation workshops. Workshops were run in January and February 2007 with Bexhill Youth Club, 9th Bexhill Scout Group, Girl Guides (London Road), Explorers (Wainwright Road), and King Offa Primary School.
- 1.1.9 The worksheets focused on three key questions: How can we make the Park a safe place?, How can we make the Park a more interesting place to visit?, and How can we make use of the Park's history? to stimulate discussion on the key issues arising out of work on the Conservation Management and Audience Development Plans – security, facilities, and conservation of the Park's heritage.
- 1.1.10 Primary school aged children generally felt safe in the Park, and all of these young people indicated that the Park was largely safe during the day. However, they were all also aware of problems with groups hanging around the Park, of security issues at night, and of the kinds of solutions that might be proposed to deal with these issues, such as outdoor lighting, lighting in the public toilets, CCTV, better visibility

into shelters, more police/ranger patrol, and provision of a graffiti wall. They were attuned to the pros and cons of locking the Park at night, for example, recognising that if people wanted to get into the Park and cause damage they would do so regardless of locked gates, and that there was little point in lighting the Park at night if it was locked. There was a general feeling that the Park should either be locked, or investment made in lighting, cameras, ranger patrols etc. made. A couple of the groups were sensitive to the fact that if there was lighting, it would need to be low level to limit light pollution, and others recognised the cost considerations of implementing some of the measures they suggested. Practical solutions to dog control, wildlife protection, health and safety and access issues were also discussed.

- 1.1.11 When asked about making the Park more interesting, a range of issues from visitor facilities, to the range of sporting opportunities on offer, the play area and maintenance of the Park were explored. Almost all these youth groups commented on the need for cleaner toilets and for some kind of refreshment facility like a café or ice cream van, and a couple asked for a permanent drinking fountain. Some of the requests for new facilities – swimming pool, indoor snooker and leisure, games arcade, other indoor youth/play facilities, assault courses – would require radical development in the Park and most would not fit with the character of the Park. However, many of the suggestions made were about revitalising the sports, games and play facilities that are already there or introducing new, and possibly only temporary, options.
- 1.1.12 Many of these young people were clear on the need to revamp the play area, to make parts of it more appropriate for older children and teenagers, and suggested the introduction of water play, boules, big chess, giant board games, and climbing walls/equipment for teens. Providing model boats for hire on the model boat pond, canoes on the boating lake, and raquets for the tennis courts; relocation of the table tennis table; refurbishment of the putting green; marking out fitness trails or footprint trails around the Park; provision of better football goal posts and turf, and of organised sports activities and coaching, were all sensible suggestions to make more of existing sports and games facilities. Suggestions for a range of other temporary options were put forward, including nets on the tennis courts to allow for volleyball, basketball, badminton, and also a seasonal ice skating rink and temporary trampoline.
- 1.1.13 The value of community and schools events, theatrical and choral performances, more organised sports and arts activities in the Park, activities associated with events in the Polegrove, and opening up a museum entrance on to the Park, was also highlighted as a means of making the Park a more interesting place. In addition to recognition of

the value of improved facilities and events, these youth groups were also made practical suggestions about the maintenance of green spaces, water bodies and park furniture. For example it was suggested that paths should be improved, water kept clean, the sensory garden expanded, park shelters improved, and interpretation boards, signage, water features, bird feeding areas and more wildlife introduced.

- 1.1.14 The youth groups gave less feedback on the question *How can we make use of the Park's History?* This may indicate that it was a more challenging topic that was harder to relate to or that seemed less relevant to them, or it may simply have been because it was the third question on the worksheet and so less time was left for it. Nonetheless, useful suggestions, both regarding design and park features and interpretation, were made. It was suggested that the basic shape of the Park and its ponds should be retained; the model boat pond and the Sensory Garden improved; the weather station opened up to school groups; old wooden boats used on the lake as well as modern ones and the wooden horses replaced in the play area. More technically ambitious design ideas, for the introduction of holograms of old features, were also suggested. Some wanted replacement of the bandstand, although perhaps in a new location, as this would provide a space for young bands and brass bands on Sundays.
- 1.1.15 In terms of interpretation, entrance boards and (possibly interactive?) interpretation boards around the Park with picture, maps and plans of the historic Park were suggested. A couple of the groups thought that historic and nature walks, and guided tours (possibly using information sheets or audio-tour equipment available from the Museum) should be marketed to make use of the Park's history and to educate visitors about the Park's heritage and wildlife.

Annex 1: Youth Consultation Worksheets

How can we make the Park a safe place?

THE PROBLEMS:

Egerton Park is generally a safe and friendly place, which is well used and appreciated by people in Bexhill.

However, there are sometimes problems with graffiti and vandalism in the Park. This makes it a less pleasant place for everyone and causes damage to shelters, walls, other Park features, and unprotected wildlife habitats.

Some Park users are fearful of crime and at times feel intimidated by groups of young people 'hanging about' in secluded places in the Park (such as shelters, areas with lots of trees and bushes, or the area just behind the Museum). This is particularly the case at night, when the Park is officially closed but the gates are left open. In the evenings there is very little organised activity, little or no lighting, and only irregular ranger or police patrol of the Park.

While many Park users like to walk their dogs in the Park, others feel that dogs leave a mess and can both intimidate people and threaten wildlife, particularly the swans.

QUESTIONS:

- ▶ How do you think we can make the Park a safe place for everyone who uses it ?
- ▶ What could be done to provide more protection for wildlife in the Park?
- ▶ What would you do to tackle the problems of graffiti and vandalism in the Park?
- ▶ Do you think the Park should be shut at night, or are there other ways to deal with park security in the evenings?
- ▶ How do you think landscape architects might redesign the layout or planting of the Park to make it less scary at night?
- ▶ What could be done to improve communication and trust between the different generations (age groups) in the Park?



Graffiti in the Park



Shelters provide hiding places



Park rules and regulations

How can we make the Park a more interesting place to visit?

THE PROBLEMS:

Egerton Park today offers a variety of things to do.

There are sports facilities and Park games, including tennis courts, an indoor bowling club and an outdoor bowling green, a putting green, a table tennis table, boats for hire on the boating lake in the summer, and a large open main lawn (with temporary football goals). Plenty of people use the tennis, boating and bowling in the summer, but the putting green area and table tennis table are under-used, and the range of activities on offer does not necessarily appeal to everyone.

It tends to be families and older people in Bexhill who like to use the Park to relax in its garden areas, to go for a walk along the paths around the lakes, and to enjoy nature in its green spaces. The play area is popular with parents and young children, but it is a bit old fashioned and shabby. The 'rocking horses' that many older people in Bexhill remember playing on were stolen from the play area in 1996.

Bexhill Museum is right on the edge of the Park too, although there is no entrance to the Museum from the Park and it doesn't really feel like part of the Park.

QUESTIONS:

- ▶ Using the 'Exploring the Park' plan provided to give you some ideas, discuss and come up with possible answers to the following questions.
- ▶ What do you think needs to be done to bring Egerton Park up-to-date and to make it an interesting place for everyone who uses it?
- ▶ Do you think there are particular groups of people who do not find Egerton Park an interesting place to visit? Who are these groups?
- ▶ What facilities or activities do you think are missing from the Park and are needed to encourage these people to come and spend more time there?
- ▶ Are there new and different sports or play areas that you would like to see in the Park?
- ▶ Do you think that some people don't visit Egerton Park because they don't know where it is or what is on offer there? What do you think could be done to make sure that as many people as possible know about the Park and all the activities that are on offer?



People hanging out in a seating area



Play area



Under used 'putting green' space

How can we make use of the Park's history?

THE PROBLEMS:

Egerton Park, the terraced houses that surround it and the seafront promenade, just to the south of the Park, were all set out as part of the 7th Earl De La Warr and John Webb's grand design for a seaside resort in Bexhill in the late 19th – early 20th century. The design of the Park itself was planned from its very beginnings, and the main features of this design can still be seen today – its boundaries, the two ponds with their islands (and the 'folly' on the top island), the main lawn, and the paths that go around the Park.

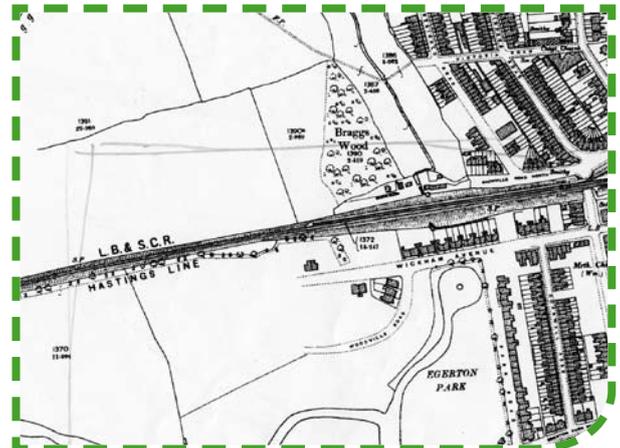
However, throughout the later 20th century, the historically important connection between the Park and the rest of the town has been lost a bit. Repairs and changes over time in the Park itself mean that we have lost many of the original features there too.

In the past, Egerton Park was an important part of the social and cultural life of Bexhill. A theatre (the 'Pergola'), a bandstand and a pavilion building (which first housed a tea room and then, from 1914, the Museum) were built at the beginning of 20th century. Old photos show crowds of people coming to events in the Park. As well as theatrical and musical performances, the Park hosted important civic events, like the Thanksgiving Service after the First World War in 1919, and sporting events, like the 1898 Cycling Tournament organised by the Bexhill Cycling Club.

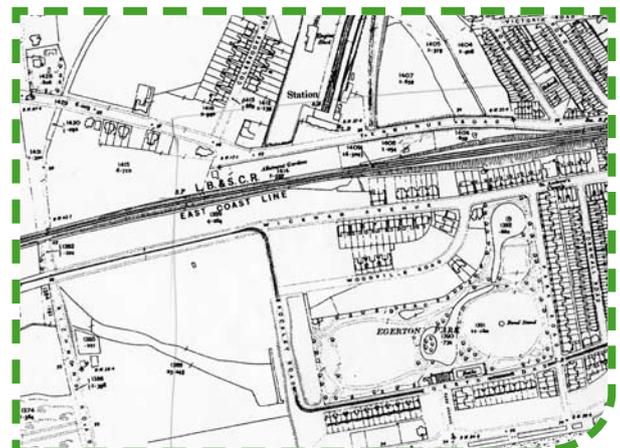
After the Second World War, the resort of Bexhill began to decline and so too did social and cultural life in the Park. The theatre and bandstand were removed and today the Park is only used very occasionally for cultural events.

QUESTIONS

- ▶ Using the 'Exploring the Park' plan provided to give you some ideas, discuss and come up with possible answers to the following questions.
- ▶ How can we make use of the Park's history when we are trying to improve the Park and make it a lively and exciting place to visit?
- ▶ Do you think it is important to try to put back the things that have disappeared from the Park? Why, or why not?
- ▶ Is it important to try to keep the original Park layout when repairs are being done and new things are being built in the Park?
- ▶ Do you think that any of the activities that used to happen in the Park should be brought back? Why, or why not?
- ▶ How do you think the Park's historical link with the seafront and the main town could be made clear again? Can you think of any good reasons for doing this?



1899 map of West Bexhill



1909 map of West Bexhill



Park plan c1890

Egerton Park Innovation and Conservation Project: Exploring Egerton Park



Playground Rocking Horses, 1929



Park Bandstand, 1959



Egerton Park Pergola, 1920



Guidance Note for Co-ordinators of Egerton Park Innovation & Conservation Project Youth Consultation Workshops Spring 2007

A. MATERIALS PROVIDED:

A plan 'Exploring Egerton Park' and three worksheets have been provided. These are intended to stimulate discussion and generate feedback from young people on the issues we face when setting out new design proposals and management policies for the conservation and regeneration of Egerton Park. This feedback will be taken into account in the final development of the proposals and policies currently being put in place in Atkins' Conservation Management Plan, Audience Development & Access Plan, and initial design proposals for the Park.

The plan of the Park draws attention to:

- ▶ current features and facilities in the Park
- ▶ the location of historical features that have now disappeared
- ▶ current and historically important routes towards the Park from the seafront and the town
- ▶ some of the key issues in the Park. For example, the lack of lighting and limited patrol of the park in the evenings; the way in which the indoor bowling centre and the tennis courts dominate the western end of the Park, giving it more of a 'leisure centre' character and restricting both movement around and views across the Park; the lack of Park-side entrance to the Museum.

The plan should be used in conjunction with the worksheets, to help stimulate the group's ideas and discussion in response to the 'problems' set.

The worksheets focus on three 'problem' areas that have emerged from specialist study of the Park and consultation with the general public and school groups in Bexhill in October and December 2006.

B. STRUCTURING THE WORKSHOP

These resources might be used in a number of ways. But, depending on the size of the group and the time available, we suggest that the workshop might be structured as follows:

- ▶ Brief introduction to the E.P.I.C. project, led by workshop co-ordinator, stressing that the aim of the workshop is to gather the group's views – their views matter to Rother District Council, who want to take their opinions into account when developing new Plans for Egerton Park.
- ▶ Quick orientation in the Park using the 'Exploring the Park' plan, led by workshop co-ordinator.
- ▶ Divide the group up into three smaller groups – each group can be allocated one worksheet 'problem' area and asked to discuss the questions set and to consider how they would tackle these problems.
- ▶ After mini-discussion groups, an appointed individual from each group can report back to the whole group on the key solutions that they have come up with to the particular problem they discussed.
- ▶ The workshop might be concluded with a broader discussion, led by the workshop co-ordinator, about how compatible all their solutions are and how easy it would be to implement them as part of one bigger strategy. So, for example, are there instances where suggestions made to make the Park more interesting clash with suggestions made regarding the conservation of heritage in the Park? Or does a coherent list of required solutions emerge?

C. THE PROBLEMS SET

1. How can we make the Park a safe place?

Consultation has indicated that crime and safety in the Park are of particular concern to the general public in Bexhill. As the worksheet indicates, this includes problems of graffiti and vandalism, fear of groups of young people 'hanging around' in the Park, fear of violent attack, as well as concerns about the threat that dogs off the lead pose to wildlife and wildlife habitats.



Guidance Note for Co-ordinators of Egerton Park Innovation & Conservation Project Youth Consultation Workshops Spring 2007

There have been some serious incidents in the Park but, in general, crime rates in the Park and in Bexhill are not high, and it is as much the perception of crime, as crime itself, which needs to be addressed.

The plan and worksheet questions are designed to get the group thinking about different approaches to tackling both the reality and the perception of crime and safety. The kinds of solutions that might be discussed in response to these problems might include:

- ▶ Lock the Park gates at night
- ▶ Introduce lighting in the Park and/or CCTV
- ▶ Have Rangers on more permanent patrol, day and night
- ▶ Make design/layout changes that open up any secluded areas of shelter or planting and improve surveillance across the Park
- ▶ Put better protection in place for wildlife habitats – fenced off areas etc
- ▶ Ensure that dogs are kept on leads, or restricted to particular areas of the Park
- ▶ Beyond these physical measures, the following might also be touched upon:
 - ▶ More activities/events in the Park at night would mean more people, more observation, and less opportunity for vandals etc.
 - ▶ Initiatives and activities that encourage communication and trust between generations – e.g. arts festivals, Park maintenance activities etc.
 - ▶ Active promotion to restore confidence that the Park is a safe place to be

2. How can we make the Park a more interesting place to visit?

Consultation has indicated that the public appreciate the mix of open space, play and sports areas in the Park, but that there is a need to bring some of these up-to-date and to introduce some entirely new facilities.

Young people do use the Park, but there could be more sports and play facilities, particularly for older children and teenagers who currently appear to be a minority user group compared with groups such as parents with toddlers and older citizens. The group's responses to the problems set here will therefore be particularly helpful in trying to redesign the Park to make it more attractive to young people.

The plan and worksheet questions are designed to get the group thinking about who does and doesn't use the Park and why; about how the Park needs to be improved in general for everyone; about what would make it a more interesting place for them in particular; about whether or not the quality and range of current facilities is sufficient and if totally new facilities are required.

The kinds of solutions that might be discussed in response to these problems could include:

- ▶ Young people do not use the park as much as other groups
- ▶ People from beyond the very local community, visitors to the town do not visit the Park much
- ▶ Up-date the play area equipment and design
- ▶ Introduce new kinds of sporting/leisure facilities to attract young people – for example a skateboard area, basketball court, pools, trampolines
- ▶ Introduce totally new visitor facilities – like a shop or a café

Beyond identifying groups who do not use the Park and physical facilities that might make it a more interesting place for them to visit, the following might also be touched upon:

- ▶ Hold interesting events in the Park to attract young, old, people from Bexhill and visitors to the town – music, arts, youth groups



Guidance Note for Co-ordinators of Egerton Park Innovation & Conservation Project Youth Consultation Workshops Spring 2007

- ▶ Advertise the route to the Park and what it has to offer better e.g. have better signs marking the route from the Park to the town; better information boards at entrances; better route finding around the Park; better advertising via tourist brochures, a website etc.

3. How can we make use of the Park's history?

Egerton Park was originally set out as part of the late 19th – early 20th century design for a seaside resort at Bexhill. It was closely linked to the houses around it and the seafront promenade, key features in the Park itself were all part of a planned landscape. This link to the seafront and the design coherence of the Park itself has been lost through alterations, repairs and piecemeal development in the last 60 years.

A key issue in managing the regeneration of the Park is striking the balance between conservation the Park's cultural and natural heritage and provision of new and innovative facilities to make the Park fit for 21st century needs.

Finding ways to integrate the regeneration of Egerton Park into wider economic and cultural regeneration plans for the town is an important issue for the success of the Park too. This can be achieved by reviving its historic role as a focus of the town's design.

The plan and the worksheet questions are therefore designed to get the group thinking about the value of heritage; the place of the Park in the town; why we should bother trying to retain the original design layout and features of the Park; and also about the inspiration that we can take from the colourful social and cultural history of the Park when thinking about how to make the Park a more exciting place today.

This is perhaps a slightly more conceptual discussion than the other two. The kinds of solutions that might be discussed in response to these problems could include:

- ▶ Only keep features of the Park that are relevant for 21st century needs
- ▶ Keep features of the Park that reflect its original design as a work of art or that still evoke memories and reminiscence of past times among older members of the community
- ▶ Bring back cultural and musical activities and facilities, and/or community events to the Park
- ▶ Keep or restore the original design because the old ponds, lawns and paths are the best features of the Park

Beyond these kinds of suggestions, the following answers might also be explored:

- ▶ Use the history of the Park to promote a sense of community identity and to provide educational opportunities
- ▶ Link the Park to the rest of the town through better signage, advertising or joint event organisation (e.g. with the De La Warr Pavilion). This way more people will know that the Park is there, know what it has to offer, and come to visit it. The Park will also be a part of bigger and more exciting initiatives.



