

# **Priory Country Park**

## **Management Plan 2017 – 2022**

### **Appendices**

# 1 Policy Context

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NOT REVIEWED

The following policy documents and strategies provide a context for the aims and objectives of the Management Plan.

## 2.1 Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009–2021

Bedford Borough Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009–2021 includes the following key themes relevant to the Country Park:

- **A Thriving Borough** – Economic Development, Regeneration and enterprise.

Aim 4 – Support and work in partnership with the local tourism industry to expand what it has to offer and market the borough as a tourist destination. *Work with Forest of the Marston Vale on HLF funded archaeological and heritage interpretation project for River Valley Park 2014.*

- **A Greener Borough** – Environment and Climate Change

Aim 3 – Develop a strong green infrastructure network through protecting, extending and linking landscapes, biodiversity sites, heritage sites, green spaces and paths. *Linking the park into the wider Bedford River Valley Park through access improvements, managing restored quarry sites and installing heritage interpretation.*

Aim 4 – Improve the understanding, enjoyment and care for the natural and built environment. *Through walks, talks and events. Partnership with Groundwork.*

Aim 5 – Protect and enhance our natural resources including air, soil and water to minimise the impacts of flooding, climate change and pollution. *Successfully completed SITA funded wetland drainage project at Fenlake Meadows.*

Aim 7 – Protect and enhance the rich biodiversity of the Borough. *Sowing and maintenance of wildflower areas.*

- **An Aspiring Borough** – Children and Young People

Aim 1 – Help all children and young people to achieve their full potential through high quality teaching and learning in schools that have accessible community activities and facilities. *Work Experience placements from local schools and colleges, talks given to school and college groups on management of the park and help given to students requiring information for school projects.*

- **A Healthy borough** – Adult Health and Well Being

Aim 2 – reduce health inequalities by focusing effort on deprived areas and increasing opportunities for healthier lifestyles. *Location of park in deprived ward areas gives the opportunity to provide cheap and informal exercise and recreation to many.*

- **An Inclusive borough** – Social Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Culture

Aim 2 – Promote activities that bring people and communities closer together. *Work with Woodland Faith communities bringing people of different faiths together*

Aim 3 – Encourage and support more people, particularly from under represented groups, to take on civic roles and volunteer within their communities. *Further Develop park Volunteer group which now works every Monday and monthly Sundays.*

Aim 5 – Encourage and enable more people to participate in local arts, culture and sporting activities. *Host variety of organized and charitable running events and Alzheimers Memory walk.*

## **2.2 Bedford Borough Council Corporate Plan 2012–2016**

Priory Country Park makes significant direct contributions to all four themes:

- Protecting and preserving the local environment
  - **Improve the quality of our parks and green spaces** – *Green flag award for thirteen years running*
- Brighter futures for children

- **Ensure children and young people are healthy and thriving** *play area to give young people a further stake in the park; all staff trained in play inspections..*
- Providing a healthy future
  - Improving the health and well being of the Borough's residents – **Promoting healthier lifestyles** - *inter schools X-country event. Canoeing, sailing and orienteering by schools and university of Bedfordshire students all year round, Nordic walkers and forces fit run regular sessions in park and we have a Tri-athlon event in May 2013.*
- Serving Residents effectively.
  - **develop and increase number of friends groups at cultural/leisure facilities.** *Developing Volunteer group taking on practical activities across the park.*

The Borough Council's Greenspace Strategy has been produced within the context of these objectives.

## **2.3 Bedford Borough Greenspace Strategy**

The Greenspace Strategy for Bedford Borough provides a framework that will help the Borough Council and its partners to effectively protect, improve and sustain all of the area's accessible greenspaces. It provides a comprehensive and coordinated plan for future greenspace management and biennial reviews will enable it to keep pace with changing circumstances and policies.

The Vision of the Greenspace strategy is as follows:

***'We will work with others to provide a network of high quality and accessible parks and green spaces that contribute to everyone's quality of life, the natural environment and social and sustainable economic prosperity across the Borough both now and in the future'***

The main policy aims of the strategy are:

- To encourage community involvement and participation in planning and managing parks. *Further develop emerging volunteer group to increase numbers volunteering.*
- To provide a range of greenspace sport and recreation facilities that meets the activity, health and social needs of all community groups. *New play area (2011)*
- To maintain, improve and promote sustainable transport links and on site 'access for all' infrastructure. *Large bridge replaced over Marina entrance July 2014.*
- To conserve and enhance the natural environment and ecological value of all new and existing green spaces and corridors. *Liaison with Wildlife Trust and bat group.*
- To promote and improve the cultural and heritage value of all greenspaces. *Installation of BRVP heritage interpretation following Successful bid to HLF for £78,900.*
- To raise awareness of the value and range of greenspaces to all residents and visitors in the Borough. *Park leaflets in visitor centre, bespoke talks and guided walks for Community Groups.*
- To improve the management of the Borough's greenspaces through the effective use of all resources, available data and the skills and capacity of organizations and individuals. *Partnerships with WT, Bedford museum, Marston Vale Trust etc.*
- To plan, create and manage a Green Wheel of networked greenspaces around Bedford to buffer the urban fringe and provide informal recreation and wildlife benefits. *interpretation board promoting Bedford's Green Wheel.*

## **2.4 The Outdoor Access and Rights of Way Improvement Plan**

Bedford Borough Council has the duty to implement the OAROWIP. Priory Country Park helps to achieve the following elements of the plan:

- Getting involved

- Getting out and feeling great
- Open for access
- Looking after your outdoors
- Completing the jigsaw

The OAROWIP Plan has explicit actions to improve community facilities, including the provision of parent and child facilities at country parks, to enable more people to participate in and benefit from the wide range of outcomes linked to outdoor access such as the promotion of exercise and healthy living.

## **2.5 The Bedfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan**

Bedford Borough Council supports the complete Bedfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Priory Country Park contributes towards this through work to achieve the specific Species and Habitat Action Plans (SAPS & HAPS) for the Otter, lowland meadow, reedbed and wet Woodland among others.

## **2.6 Equality and Diversity**

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 contain general provisions requiring the Council, in carrying out its public functions, to “have due regard to the need” to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity between different groups.

The duties require the Council to “have due regard to” the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity and eliminate unlawful discrimination with regard to disability, gender and race.
- Eliminate harassment with regard to disability and gender.
- Promote good relations with regard to race.

In addition, the Disability Discrimination Act requires the Council to ‘have due regard to’ the need to:

- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons.

- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life.
- Take steps to take account of a person's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

## **Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 increases the existing obligations on the Council to advance equality when carrying out its day-to-day business. The Equality Act came into force in October 2010. The Equality Act will replace all existing discrimination legislation, including the Equal Pay Act 1970.

From April 2011 the Equality Act 2010 will place a duty on the Council 'to have due regard to' the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. This involves removing or minimising disadvantage, taking steps to meet the different needs of people who share a protected characteristic and encouraging people who are under-represented to participate in public life.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. This involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

## **2.7 Ongoing and Future Developments**

### **2.7.1 Bedford River Valley Park (BRVP)**

The proposed park is identified in the East of England Regional Plan and will consist of an 868 ha area of open spaces, habitats and recreation-facilities along the River Great Ouse corridor and restored former mineral extraction sites between Bedford and Willington. It will be delivered by a broad partnership with the initial lead being taken by the Marston Vale Trust.

Priory Country Park will become the main gateway into the BRVP from Bedford, and

will build upon its many recreational activities to become an activity hub for the park. Proposals to develop a café on site are now focusing on the existing building and (Jan 2015) and will help Priory to act as a hub for the BRVP.

A masterplan was produced in 2012, and a copy is included in the Appendices. The first phase of works was implemented in January 2010 and included thinning planted trees and creating wet woodland at the Grange estate near Willington.

The development of BRVP is proceeding according to the BRVP masterplan, which includes the Borough taking on the management of some areas adjacent to Priory Country Park that are being released from their restoration contract from Hope Construction. Recent meeting with Hope Construction have proposed grazing to be developed on river meadows adjacent to the current country park along with improved access and wildlife habitats.

Blunham Angling Club are beginning to extend their fishing into lakes left following extraction which will help to bailiff the site which suffers some unauthorised activities such as trail biking and shooting. This will be subject to conditions to protect the environment/wildlife such as closed season, limited car parking and barbless hooks etc.

Interpretation about the rich heritage of the River Valley Park, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is to be provided and will include noticeboards, QR codes to access information on mobile phone, geocaching, web pages and talking posts. Boards will extend from the Country Park across the River Valley Park towards Willington.

Long term aims for BRVP include a variety of housing and industrial development to help fund a rowing lake and associated access and habitat improvements. This sort of development is currently unconfirmed. Priory Country Park and Bedford Borough Council have been closely involved with the proposals to ensure that public access and wildlife protection are combined to good effect with existing facilities.

### **2.7.2 Bedford Green Wheel**

The park will also be a key destination on the Bedford Green Wheel (BGW), a

planned network of traffic-free routes that will improve the links between parks and open spaces to residential areas, schools and places of work. The Wheel will build upon the network already available and integrate closely with the town's cycle network. The river corridor is a vital link for the BGW which is being implemented in phases from 2009 onwards. It will complement the park's role as a main gateway to the Bedford River Valley Park. Work has started on the Green Wheel with improvements identified to improve the cycle tracks and access points into the park. A new Interpretation board and map of the Green Wheel was installed outside the visitor's centre in 2012.

## **2 Analysis and Evaluation**

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### **3 Site Description**

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## 4 Education

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