

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Itchen Valley Country Park provides a range of facilities and opportunities for the local community and visitors from further afield to take part in informal recreation and have contact with nature in an area of significant nature conservation importance. Visitor facilities include an exhibition area, café, gift shop, classroom/ meeting room, public toilets, pay and display car parks, waymarked trails, two play areas, barbecues and many smaller facilities.

The park has been open for over 20 years, and following major capital investment in a new building in 2007, a significant programme of renewals and improvements is under way to raise the quality of all the facilities to meet the expectations of visitors. To mark its commitment to the park and in order to achieve recognition for the quality of the site, the Council is entering the site for the Green Flag award in 2009.

This plan is a key part of the assessment process for the award, but is also be a working document, which sets out the aims and objectives for the park, and helps to translate them into actions planned for the amenity areas of the park in particular, in an accessible form.

The aims and objectives for the country park are as set out below:

<b><u>Aim</u></b>	<b><u>Related objectives</u></b>
To provide open space, facilities and activities to enable the residents of Eastleigh and visitors from further afield to have contact with nature and learn about environmental issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signage is necessary and useful, and consistent in design</li> <li>• The main visitor areas will be accessible to the widest possible range of users.</li> <li>• Obtain visitor feedback on the condition and quality of facilities and services</li> <li>• Consult visitors and the community on major developments and new facilities</li> <li>• Maintain or increase levels of volunteer support</li> <li>• Increase awareness of the Country Park among all potential user groups</li> <li>• Ensure signs and written materials present a consistent image</li> </ul>
To ensure the country park is clean, safe and maintained to a high standard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use safety and risk management processes to keep accidents to staff and visitors at the lowest possible levels.</li> <li>• Minimise the risk that park staff and visitors will be the victims of crime</li> <li>• The main entrance and approaches to car parks, High Wood Barn and High Hill Field are maintained to a high standard.</li> <li>• Maintain high standards of arboriculture, horticulture, site cleanliness, grounds and building maintenance</li> <li>• Develop a programme for maintenance, repairs and renewals within the context of the Council's asset management plan</li> </ul>
To achieve sustainability in the use of resources, land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimise the amount of waste generated at the park which goes to landfill</li> <li>• Minimise the use of pesticides</li> </ul>

and the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce carbon emissions by reducing energy consumption and making maximum use of renewable energy sources</li> <li>• Reduce consumption of water and other natural resources.</li> </ul>
To protect conserve and enhance biodiversity and other features of interest in the country park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain or enhance populations of priority species and the condition of priority habitats found within the park</li> <li>• Protect and conserve significant historical and archaeological features</li> </ul>
To operate the park as efficiently as possible and make maximum use of the resources available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To retain and develop a team of staff with the capacity, experience and skills needed to manage the country park</li> <li>• Record and make use of relevant performance management information</li> <li>• Improve customer service and make more efficient use of staff time by keeping business processes under review</li> <li>• Improve financial efficiency by reducing costs and increasing income, and when necessary seek additional funding for new initiatives</li> <li>• Increase the quantity of information and services which are available electronically</li> <li>• Standardise the designs of seating and other site furniture used within the Country Park.</li> </ul>

Elsewhere in the plan these objectives are also linked to the Green Flag assessment criteria.

The plan then describes and assesses various aspects of the way the park is managed, and its physical features and facilities, and identifies actions required in order to achieve the objectives for the park in relation to each. The full list of actions, with related timescales and budgets, is then set out in tabular form at the end of plan to enable easy monitoring. Some of the key actions are listed below in relation to each aspect of the site and its management.

## **THE COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE**

### **1) Staff resources and roles**

- Recruit and retain suitably skilled and experienced staff.
- Review team structure and roles in light of changing demands on the service.
- Review routine site maintenance work with Direct Services' Streetscene section.

### **2) Performance Management Systems**

- Submit management plan as part of Green Flag assessment from 2009 onwards.
- Monitor progress against the action plan contained in this management plan.
- Work with local authorities to identify good practice and generate benchmarking information

### **3) Financial resources**

- Implement actions to increase income as part of the Council's efficiency strategy.
- Contribute to the Council review of budgets for asset management.
- Seek sponsorship for ongoing services and activities.
- Maximise grant funding from partner organisations.

### **4) Health and safety**

- Complete review of Safe Systems of Work and COSHH assessments.
- Secure funding for baseline condition survey of trees in high priority areas of Country Park.

### **5) Environmental management**

- Provide new better designed litter bins for recyclable materials.
- Incorporate energy efficient systems and technologies when making repairs/renewals to buildings.

### **6) Marketing**

- Upgrade IT link to IVCP.
- Add live information from IVCP to Council website, e.g. nestcams, weather information.
- Replace events information and notice boards.

### **7 Community involvement and partnerships**

- Carry out new in-depth visitor survey.
- Maintain support and improve the effectiveness of the volunteer group
- Maintain partnership working with groups such as BTCV, Grasslands Trust and HWT.

### **8) Habitats**

#### **a) Water Meadows**

- Complete Water Meadows Management Plan
- Ongoing monitoring of key species
- Commission survey of historical/archaeological features

#### **b) Woodlands**

- Complete Woodland Management Plan
- Ongoing monitoring of key species

**c) Grassland/Meadows**

- Continue to utilise appropriate grassland conservation management techniques i.e. grazing, hay cut
- Ongoing monitoring of key species
- Review grass cutting regimes for all other amenity grassland areas

**d) Ponds**

- Control invasive species
- Ongoing monitoring of key species

**e) Scrub**

- Employ appropriate scrub management techniques throughout the Country Park

**9) Infrastructure**

**a) Buildings**

- Carry out planned maintenance and repairs to High Wood Barn, Kingfisher Barn and Hangar as required
- Reduce consumption of water and other natural resources through use of existing sustainable technologies and explore new opportunities as they arise

**b) Play Areas**

- Carry out weekly inspections of play areas
- Commission independent annual inspection
- Investigate opportunities to enhance existing play areas

**c) Access Points**

- Review signage at all access points
- Ensure access points are welcoming and appropriate

**d) Signage**

- Undertake a review of all signage

**e) Seating**

- Continue rolling programme of renewals of all benches and picnic tables

**f) Trails/footpaths**

- Carry out regular inspections of all trails & footpaths
- Maintain/repair as necessary

**g) Car Parks**

- Carry out regular inspections of car parks
- Maintain/repair as necessary
- Explore funding options to resurface existing and overflow car parks

**10) Grounds Maintenance**

- Review grass cutting regimes
- Review existing litter picking zones/schedules