

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

Community Select Committee

20 November 2024

TITLE:	Parks Development Plan
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:	Councillor Damien Greenhalgh - Deputy Leader & Executive Councillor for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure Councillor Jean Todd - Executive Councillor for Climate Change and Environment
CONTACT OFFICER:	Sally Curley – Senior Strategy & Partnerships Lead
WARDS INVOLVED:	All Wards

Appendices Attached – None

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 To update the Community Select Committee on the progress made to implement the High Peak Parks Strategy, Parks Development Fund and the Play Investment Plan.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 For the Committee to discuss the report which sets out progress made to date to implement the above Strategy and Plan.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 Approval of the High Peak Parks Development Plan, including the new Parks Strategy, Parks Development Fund and Play and Outdoor Sport Investment Plan was given by the Executive in 2021. The Strategy is a 10-year document that identifies key areas which the Council will focus its resources on, whilst working collaboratively with partners and local stakeholders, supported by the Parks Development Fund.
- 3.2 The Play and Outdoor Sport Investment & Delivery Plan was developed to provide a proposed programme of refurbishment or/and replacement of selected facilities over a 4 year rolling period.

- 3.3 The Strategy identifies four strategic priorities along with a set of guiding principles and key objectives, to ensure that any development, projects and changes are delivered in an appropriate, affordable and sustainable manner and are in line with the agreed approach.
- 3.4 Feeding out of the priorities and principles is a set of 8 objectives that will contribute towards delivering the Strategy. These objectives are carried forward into action plans within each park management plan, from which local actions or projects will be developed.
- 3.5 The development of certain Park Management Plans are a key objective (7) and these plans provide clear direction for the future management and maintenance of specific formal parks, ensuring they are maintained and developed effectively, whilst balancing the needs of residents and visitors alike.

Park Management Plans

- 3.6 Due to the significant number of formal parks, informal parks, recreation areas and green spaces that the Council has responsibility for managing, it is not possible to have detailed management plans for all of them. Park management plans have been developed for the formal parks listed below due to their size, key features and complex maintenance regimes:
- **Buxton:** Pavilion Gardens including Serpentine Walks
 - **Glossop:** Howard Park and Manor Park
 - **Whaley Bridge:** Memorial Park
- 3.7 A detailed Biodiversity Plan was developed for Serpentine Walks in Buxton in 2022, with Buxton Field Club and Buxton Civic Association, and in 2023, two further park management plans were developed for Ashwood Park in Buxton and Bankswood Park in Glossop.
- 3.8 Over the next 12 months, all park management and action plans will be reviewed, along with the development of one further park management plan for Harehills Park in Glossop.

Mowing Regime Changes

- 3.9 With the recent changes to the Council's corporate priorities and following the development of both the Plan for Nature and the Park Strategy (Objective 1) which commit to enhancing nature and biodiversity, it has been identified that changes to mowing regimes are required but that a strategic and well planned approach is taken.

- 3.10 In September 2024 a report was approved by Community Select Committee to formalise changes to mowing regimes at some Council owned sites. The proposed approach is initially to reduce the mowing frequency on identified Council owned sites, to enable review and monitoring over the first year of changes (2025/26).
- 3.11 The sites proposed for 25/26 changes include: -
- **Buxton:** Serpentine Walks, Temple Fields, Ashwood Park, Granby Road Park and Gadley Lane.
 - **Whaley Bridge:** Memorial Park and Whaley Incline
 - **Glossop:** Bankswood Park and Manor Park

Sports Pitch Maintenance

- 3.12 On 1st October 2024, maintenance of Council owned sites which contain formal sports pitches transferred to AES. This was an agreed change following the expiry of the Leisure Operating Contract with Parkwood Leisure. Extensive work was completed in advance of 1st October to ensure the maintenance specification for the sites at Cote Heath Recreation Ground, Whaley Bridge Memorial Park, Newshaw Lane Recreation Ground and Pyegrove, better meets ours and user groups requirements, with an affordable and sustainable financial model.

Play and Outdoors Sports Investment & Delivery Plan

- 3.13 In 2021 the Play and Outdoor Sports Investment and Delivery Plan was approved by the Executive along with the Parks Strategy. The purpose of this plan is to provide a more strategic view on the quality and play value of the Council's play facilities, identifying priority sites requiring future investment and securing the funding needed to deliver these improvements over a rolling 4 year period.
- 3.14 In order to develop the plan, quality assessments of existing Council owned play and outdoor sports facilities were undertaken including a timeframe for delivery and a required budget. As a result these assessments, 6 priority play areas have benefitted from full or partial refurbishments with a total investment of £445,000. Cote Heath Skatepark and Manor Park Sports Court refurbishments are to be completed in 24/25 financial year.
- 3.15 An updated Play and Outdoor Sports Investment & Delivery Plan for 24-27 includes further sites for improvement over the next 3 years.

Parks Development Fund

- 3.16 As part of the Parks Development Plan approval in 2021, a Parks Development Fund was also established to support projects involving biodiversity, habitat creation/preservation, physical activity and accessibility, which were highlighted in a number of the consultation responses in 2021, and to help achieve the actions highlighted in the park management plans.
- 3.17 An amount of £50,000 was approved in 2021 to support the delivery of the Park Strategy priorities and objectives, and a number of community initiatives across the parks and open spaces were delivered as a result. Projects were supported under the guiding principles of the Strategy.
- 3.18 A further agreed budget of £100,000 over the next four years (£30k 24/25, £30k 25/26, £20k 26/27 and £20k 27/28) to continue the Parks Development Fund in support of the delivery of the Strategy has been agreed and factored into the MTFP.

4. How this report links to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 Aim 1 of the Borough Plan is “Supporting our communities to create a healthier and safer High Peak” a key objective of which is the “Provision of high quality leisure facilities both in formal leisure centres and out in our communities”.
- 4.2 Aim 4 of the Borough Plan is to “Protect and Improve the Environment” with a key objective for “Effective provision of quality parks and open spaces”.
- 4.3 Aim 5 is to be “A responsive, smart, financially resilient and forward thinking Council”.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 As a progress update report, the actions and progress summarised to date follow what was previously reviewed and agreed by the Executive.

6. Implications

6.1	<u>Community safety, including safeguarding and prevention of terrorism</u> Parks provide a range of opportunities for people of all ages to engage in positive activities. Outdoor play and sports facilities can provide an outlet for young people and help deter them from antisocial behaviour, therefore it is important these facilities are provided and kept in a good condition.
6.2	<u>Workforce</u> None

6.3	<p><u>Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment</u></p> <p>An EIA has been completed in accordance with the Council's policy</p>
6.4	<p><u>Financial Considerations</u></p> <p>A further approved budget of £100,000 over the next four years has been allocated (£30k 204/25, £30k 25/26, £20k 26/27 and £20k 27/28) to continue the Parks Development Fund in support of the delivery of the Strategy. This has been included the MTFP.</p> <p>The updated Play and Outdoor Sports Facilities Investment and Delivery Plan includes a request for £195,000 of capital funds to improve identified facilities over the course of the 24/25 financial year. This has been approved and included as a growth item in the MTFP. Further approvals will need to be secured for the budget allocation for 25/26 and 26/27.</p> <p>Where it is appropriate to do so, s106 receipts will be used to reduce the reliance on the Council funding. The risk remains that should there be a delay or shortfall in anticipated s106 funding the on-going costs would have to be met by the Council.</p> <p>AES are responsible for the maintenance of play and outdoor sports facilities which the Council owns. The maintenance costs associated with these schemes can be contained within existing revenue budget provision.</p>
6.5	<p><u>Legal</u></p> <p>There are no specific legal considerations at this stage.</p>
6.6	<p><u>Climate Change and Sustainability</u></p> <p>The approval and creation of a Parks Development Plan in 2021 was a key action in response to Aim 4 of the Council's 2019-2023 Corporate Plan to protect and improve the environment, including responding to the climate change emergency.</p> <p>The adopted Parks Strategy 2021-31 states that the environmental impacts of all planning and decision making relating to delivery of the strategy will be considered, so that our parks and green spaces contribute towards the Council's targets for zero carbon emissions.</p>
6.7	<p><u>Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity</u></p> <p>Objective 1 of the Strategy prioritises to review maintenance regimes to ensure the parks and green spaces are maintained to a high standard, in an affordable and sustainable way and make</p>

	<p>improvements to increase and enhance biodiversity and positively affect climate change.</p> <p>Site specific park management plans include actions to actively protect and enhance biodiversity.</p>
6.8	<p><u>Consultation</u></p> <p>A period of 4 weeks public consultation was completed between January and February 2021 on the draft Parks Strategy and the initial set of parks management plans, through a web based survey collected responses via the Council's website. Further consultation was also undertaken on the development of a further two park management plans for both Ashwood Park and Bankswood Park.</p> <p>Significant consultation and community engagement is built into the delivery of the Play and Outdoor Sport Delivery & Investment Plan for each individual project within the plan.</p>
6.9	<p><u>Risk Assessment</u></p> <p>Appropriate assessments are made as per each project within the strategy.</p>

Anna Eastgate
Executive Director (Community Services)

**Web Links and
Background Papers**

Contact details

Sally Curley

Sally.Curley@highpeak.gov.uk

7. Detail

7.1 Aim 4 of the Council's 2019-2023 Corporate Plan set out an aspiration to protect and improve the environment, including responding to the climate change emergency. One of the key actions within this aim was to create a Parks Development Plan and this was then refined to include:

- Development of a new Parks Strategy and individual Park Management Plans for an initial set of formal parks and two subsequent parks
- Proposal to establish a Parks Development Fund
- Development of a Play and Outdoor Sport Facilities Investment & Delivery Plan

- 7.2 Approval of the High Peak Parks Development Plan, including the new Parks Strategy, Parks Development Fund and Play and Outdoor Sport Investment Plan was given by the Executive in 2021. The Strategy is a 10-year document that identifies key areas which the Council will focus its resources on, whilst working collaboratively with partners and local stakeholders, supported by the Parks Development Fund.
- 7.3 The Play and Outdoor Sports Investment & Delivery Plan was developed to provide a proposed programme of refurbishment or/and replacement of selected facilities over a 4 year rolling period.

8.0 Parks Strategy

- 8.1 The Strategy identifies four strategic priorities along with a set of guiding principles and key objectives, to ensure that any development, projects and changes are delivered in an appropriate, affordable and sustainable manner and are in line with the agreed approach;

Strategy priorities

1. Make investment in parks and green spaces a priority
 2. Use resources effectively and sustainably
 3. Increase the use and accessibility of parks and green spaces for all
 4. Work cooperatively with our communities and effectively with partners through positive community engagement
- 8.2 Feeding out of the priorities and principles is a set of 8 objectives that will contribute towards delivering the Strategy. These objectives are carried forward into action plans within each park management plan, from which local actions or projects will be developed.

Objective 1: We will review maintenance regimes to ensure our parks and green spaces are maintained to a high standard, in an affordable and sustainable way and consider improvements to increase and enhance biodiversity and positively affect climate change. (addresses priorities 1, 2 and 4).

Objective 2: We will ensure that infrastructure and heritage features are protected and well maintained, in accordance within the resources available to the Council (addresses priority 1, 2, 3 and 4).

Objective 3: Encourage and enable positive physical and mental wellbeing by developing strong partnerships with community groups, sports clubs and other stakeholder groups to ensure parks fulfil their

potential for enabling healthy lifestyles for all ages (addresses priority 3 and 4).

Objective 4: Ensure parks are safe, welcoming and accessible places for the whole community and that the highest possible standards of health and safety are maintained by our service providers, event organisers and when engaging the community in projects (addresses priority 3 and 4).

Objective 5: Actively encourage community engagement and involvement in the protection, maintenance and development of our parks (addresses priority 3 and 4).

Objective 6: Effectively manage internal budgets and attract external funding wherever possible towards the ongoing maintenance and the future development of our parks (addresses priority 1,2,3 and 4).

Objective 7: We will review park management plans and their associated actions plans annually to ensure these objectives are being delivered against effectively (addresses priority 1,2,3 and 4).

Objective 8: We will create a Parks Development Fund to be used to make improvements to our parks and green spaces. (addresses priority 1,2,3 and 4)

Park Management Plans

- 8.3 Park Management Plans provide clear direction for the future management and maintenance of specific formal parks, ensuring they are maintained and developed effectively, balancing the needs of residents and visitors alike.
- 8.4 Park Management Plans are working documents, each containing action plans that detail how the objectives of the strategy will be delivered over a period of time. These will evolve and be developed between the Council, service providers and community groups who all have an interest in each park.
- 8.5 Action plans, contained within each management plan, are reviewed annually to ensure they continue to reflect the local circumstances and opportunities and that they are delivering successfully against the objectives outlined in the Parks Strategy, including very specific opportunities highlighted locally.
- 8.6 Due to the significant number of formal parks, informal parks, recreation areas and green spaces that the Council has responsibility for managing, it is not possible to have detailed management plans for all of them. Park management plans have been developed for the formal parks listed below due to their size, key features and complex maintenance regimes:
- **Buxton:** Pavilion Gardens including Serpentine Walks
 - **Glossop:** Howard Park and Manor Park

- **Whaley Bridge: Memorial Park**

- 8.7 Working in partnership with Buxton Field Club and Buxton Civic Association, a detailed Biodiversity Plan was developed for Serpentine Walks in Buxton in 2022. This Biodiversity Plan, which sits within the principal Pavilion Gardens and Serpentine Walks' Management Plan, contributes to the delivery of Objective 1 of the Strategy and outlines the approach to delivering improvements to increase and enhance biodiversity within Serpentine Walks, including specific identified actions, over a 5 year period.
- 8.8 In 2023, two further park management plans were developed for Ashwood Park in Buxton and Bankswood Park in Glossop. Both plans were established with involvement from the local community and will be reviewed annually to ensure they continue to reflect the local circumstances and opportunities, whilst delivering again Park Strategy Objectives.
- 8.9 Over the next 12 months, all park management and action plans will be reviewed, along with the development of one further park management plan for Harehills Park in Glossop.
- 8.10 It is important to highlight that the Council owns and maintains many other highly valued parks, recreation grounds and green spaces. These assets are also managed and developed using the principles of the Park Strategy and existing maintenance regimes already in place which are specific to each site. Opportunities for future development, including work with community groups to improve or care for them will also be prioritised.
- 8.11 Development work at Whitfield Rec, a smaller recreational site, has taken place over the last 2 years with the Friends of Whitfield Greenspaces. This has included new seating, planting and signage. In Harehills Park in Glossop, the Leisure Team has provided support to the Gorilla Gardening Group who have created a naturalised area for the benefit of biodiversity, including more nature friendly planting and signage to explain about the project.

Mowing Regime Changes

- 8.12 With the recent changes to the Council's corporate priorities and following the development of both the Plan for Nature and the Park Strategy (Objective 1) which commit to enhancing nature and biodiversity, it has been identified that changes to mowing regimes are required but that a strategic and well planned approach is taken.
- 8.13 In September 2024 a report was approved by Community Select Committee to formalise changes to mowing regimes at some Council owned sites. The proposed approach is initially to reduce the mowing frequency on identified Council owned sites, to enable review and monitoring over the first year of changes (2025/26).

8.14 To ensure that the number of sites under review is manageable, the mowing changes will take place at the following sites, most of which have specific management plans:-

- **Buxton:** Serpentine Walks, Temple Fields, Ashwood Park, Granby Road Park and Gadley Lane.
- **Whaley Bridge:** Memorial Park and Whaley Incline
- **Glossop:** Bankswood Park and Manor Park

8.15 Other sites, especially smaller sites of incidental green space, could be included in the changes where it is deemed appropriate, once the above changes have been implemented. Initial sites will be monitored throughout 2025/26 and the learning reviewed before other sites are progressed in a similar way.

Sports Pitch Maintenance

8.16 On 1st October 2024, maintenance of Council owned sites which contain formal sports pitches transferred to AES. This was an agreed change following the expiry of the Leisure Operating Contract with Parkwood Leisure. Extensive work was completed in advance of 1st October to ensure the maintenance specification for the sites at Cote Heath Recreation Ground, Whaley Bridge Memorial Park, Newshaw Lane Recreation Ground and Pyegrove Recreation Ground, better meets ours and user groups requirements, with an affordable and sustainable financial model.

Parkrun and Pavilion Gardens Active Trails

8.17 In 2022, the Council was able to support Buxton Athletics Club with the development of parkrun in the Pavilion Gardens. This is something which the Club had been keen to establish but needed support and guidance to set up the weekly 5k event in the Gardens. Through the Parks Development Fund, the Council was also able to provide some of the match funding needed and it was officially launched in November that year.

8.18 parkrun in the Pavilion Gardens has been extremely successful and has resulted in the establishment of a junior parkrun in the park on a Sunday morning. This now compliments the adult and junior parkrun in Manor Park and the junior one held in Whaley Bridge Memorial Park.

8.19 Pavilion Gardens Active Trails was developed in conjunction with the parkrun trails and provides a map of the 5k and 2k routes along with a specific bench walk. The maps, which are located at four key entrances to the park as well as in leaflet form, also include 5 short videos with exercises to do in the open spaces around the park, and can be viewed on the website, or by the QR code.

8.20 Manor Park Active Trails are currently under development with the same format as above, and signage will hopefully be installed in the park in the new year.

9.0 Play and Outdoor Sports Investment & Delivery Plan

9.1 Play and outdoor sports facilities are important assets in many of our parks and green spaces. They are key attractions that help children, young people and adults keep active, build confidence, physical literacy and social skills. It is important that these facilities are provided, maintained and developed effectively.

9.2 In 2021 the Play and Outdoor Sports Investment and Delivery Plan was approved by the Executive along with the Parks Strategy. The purpose of this plan is to provide a more strategic view on the quality and play value of the Council's play facilities, identifying priority sites requiring future investment and securing the funding needed to deliver these improvements over a rolling 4 year period.

9.3 In order to develop the plan, quality assessments of existing Council owned play and outdoor sports facilities were undertaken including a timeframe for delivery and a required budget.

9.4 As a result of these assessments, priority sites across the borough were identified as in need of investment and to date the following sites have benefited from full refurbishments or enhancements:-

- Simmondley Play Area
- Jodrell Road Play Area (Whaley Bridge)
- Derby Road Play Area (New Mills)
- Pavilion Gardens Junior Play Area – cableway replacement and surfacing improvements
- Enhanced climbing unit and additional play items at Newshaw Lane Play Area (Glossop)

9.5 A further two projects which are currently underway is the replacement of Cote Heath Skatepark with a new concrete facility. Work on the site has now commenced and is anticipated to be completed before Christmas, and the refurbishment of Manor Park Sports Court. This latter project is also a pilot project with Active Partners Trust (the Active Partnership for Derbyshire) and aims to create a safe and welcoming activity space, particularly for women and girls. Design proposals have been developed recently ready for further community engagement in the coming months, where will be asking the community to help refine them ahead of proceeding with a procurement process to appoint a contractor to deliver the improvements.

9.6 Investment of £445,000 has been spent on play improvements since 2022 to date, to support the development of projects which contribute towards delivery

of the strategy.

9.7 The Council has recently updated the current Play and Outdoor Sports Investment & Delivery Plan for 24-27 which includes further sites for improvement over the next 3 years and priority sites for delivery during 24/25 financial year include Manor Park Toddler Play Area and Ashwood Park Sports Courts.

9.8 Sites for improvement in 25/26 and 26/27 are as follows:-

- Bankswood Park Play Area
- Howard Park Play Area
- Ashwood Park Play Area
- Elnor Lane and Mervil Road Play Areas
- Gamesley Play Spaces
- Ashwood Close Play Area
- Bridgemont Play Area
- Furness Vale Play Area

10.0 Parks Development Fund

10.1 To help achieve the actions highlighted in the park management plans., a Parks Development Fund was established and has been used to support projects involving biodiversity, habitat creation/preservation, physical activity and accessibility.

10.2 An amount of £50,000 was approved and a number of community initiatives across the parks and open spaces were delivered as a result. Projects were supported using the guiding principles of the Parks Strategy:-

1. That changes, improvements or projects are the right thing, in the right place and for the right reason.
2. That projects to protect or enhance our parks are in keeping and proportionate with the overall purpose and heritage of our parks and deliver against one of the priorities listed in this strategy.
3. That any projects or improvements are developed with accessibility in mind, ensuring that wherever practical our parks are accessible to all.
4. That any new projects which have an impact on the ongoing maintenance of our parks are both affordable and financially sustainable.

10.3 Examples of supported community projects include:-

- Biodiversity improvements at Serpentine Walks to help implement the Biodiversity Plan
- Enhancements at Hogshaw Rec which include installation of mini soccer goal posts, picnic benches and signage
- Support to establish the development of the junior parkrun at Pavilion Gardens
- Planting and signage to assist the Gorilla Gardening Group in Harehills Park
- Additional seating in Bankswood Park and Manor Park

10.4 A further agreed budget of £100,000 over the next four years (£30k 204/25, £30k 25/26, £20k 26/27 and £20k 27/28) to continue the Parks Development Fund in support of the delivery of the Strategy has been agreed, and has factored into the MTFP.

10.5 The fund will continue to deliver key actions from the parks management plans, once reviewed and updated, and support local community greenspace projects in line with the guiding Strategy principles.