

Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Management Plan 2014 - 2018

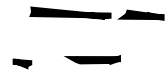


GUIDANCE NOTES

The following notes have been prepared to help guide you through and understand the Management Plan. Section headings are highlighted below along with descriptions of their relevance within the overall plan.

Part 1 – Where are we now?

The first section of the plan describes the current situation at the time it was written. It is an introduction to Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground and advises on the current facilities and their management.



Part 2 – Where do we want to get to?

This section of the plan describes our vision for the Sportsground and sets out our management aims and objectives.



Part 3 – How will we get there?

This section sets out how we are going to achieve our aims and objectives. A Five Year Work Programme sets out long-term targets and annual Action Plans focusing on each year will flow from this.



Part 4 – How will we know when we have arrived?

The final section looks at how we will track progress and how the Plan might be updated.



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Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground - Management Plan 2014-2018

Part 1 – Where are we now?

The first section of the plan describes the current situation at the time it was written. It is an introduction to Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground and advises on the current facilities and their management.



1.0– Introduction

Background to Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground-



Opened to the public in 1923, the Sportsground covers an area of approximately 28 Hectares (52 Acres) and is located in the heart of Tonbridge. The Sportsground provides a range of outdoor sports pitches/facilities and is well used by the local community for formal seasonal sports such as football, rugby, baseball and bowls, and for informal uses including: children's play, tennis; crazy golf, dog walking, picnics and family days out.

The use of the Sportsground for formal field sports (football, rugby) is primarily used over the winter period with the Sportsground providing a popular casual visitor attraction particularly during the summer months. The Tudor Trail cycle route (formerly the Tonbridge to Penshurst cycle route) also runs through the Sportsground, linking it to Haysden Country Park, Penshurst Place and Hever Castle.

A number of annual events take place at the site including a Football Fiesta and Kite Festival, for further details see **Table 7**.

Its close proximity to other attractions such as Tonbridge Swimming Pool, Tonbridge Castle and the rowing boat hire available from the nearby Big Bridge, means that people often spend the day visiting this area.

Management Plan Aim

To provide a Sportsground facility for the health and enjoyment of the local community: to include the development of formal and casual recreation and enhancement of its conservation and heritage.

The Role of the Management Plan

This is the second Management Plan for the Sportsground which starts in January 2014. This Plan has been developed to give guidance and direction to the future management of the Sportsground for both the users of the site and managers. It is intended that this document is used as a management tool and will provide the basis for the maintenance and development of the site. It will be used to guide current site management and play an integral role in the development of future projects and decisions relating to the Sportsground.

Policy Context

The Plan has also been developed to take into account the policy/guidance listed in **Table 1** and contributes to the following Council Key Priorities, 2012/15 these are: “Continued delivery of priority services and a financially viable Council; A clean, smart, well maintained and sustainable Borough; Healthy living opportunities and community well-being; Children and young people who are safe, involved and able to access positive activities; Low levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime; A continuing supply of homes, including affordable housing to buy and rent, and prevention of homelessness; Sustainable regeneration of Tonbridge town centre and; economic development in communities across the Borough.”

Table 1: List of Policy Guidance

Council Policy or Guidance Documentation
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Local Development Framework
Local Cultural Strategy
'Key Issues' within the Borough Leisure and Arts Strategy
Corporate Performance Plan - Key Priorities
Playing Pitch Strategy
Open Space Strategy
Local Play Strategy
Tree Safety Strategy
Water Safety Policy and Strategy

The Council has also developed this plan based on the established Green Flag Award national standards.

A welcoming place
Healthy safe and secure
Clean and well maintained
Sustainable

Conservation and heritage
Community involvement
Marketing
Management



2.0 – A Welcoming Place

Location – The Sportsground is located in the heart of Tonbridge, Kent. (See **Appendix 1**)

Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference
TQ584464
Grid Reference Easting 558376 Northing
146807
Nearest Postcode TN9 1DS



Entrances – All vehicular and pedestrian access points have been highlighted on the Master Plan (see **Appendix 2**).

Land Use – The present internal land uses can be found within the compartment descriptions (see section 9.0), or alternatively, on the Master Plan (see **Appendix 2**). Externally the site is surrounded predominantly by residential properties, with retail premises to the south (Tonbridge High Street) and educational land located to the north (Tonbridge School). The Tonbridge to Redhill railway line runs along the far western boundary and the Sportsground itself is within the flood plain of the River Medway and is subject to significant periodic flooding.

Accessibility – A Disability Discrimination Act Audit was carried out by users at the Sportsground by a sub group of the former 'Disability Working Party' on 12 December 2005. The resulting Improvement Action Plan can be found at (**Appendix 3**).



Access By Bus – Bus stops located in Tonbridge High Street are within a short walking distance of the Sportsground.

Access By Rail – Less than ½ a mile from Tonbridge Station that offers direct connections to London Charing Cross, London Cannon Street, Ashford and Hastings.

Access By Road – There are several car parks located within walking distance of the Sportsground (see Master Plan - **Appendix 2** or detailed locations).

Access By Foot – The Definitive Public Right of Way footpath MU24 runs along the northern boundary of the Sportsground. For further details on Public Rights of Way and other footpaths see **Appendix 4**. Pedestrian routes to the Sportsground are signposted from Tonbridge High Street, Tonbridge Castle and New Wharf Road and all pedestrian entrances into the Sportsground have been identified on the Master Plan (see **Appendix 2**)

Access By Bicycle – Cycle routes provide access to the Sportsground via the Avebury Avenue entrance (end of route), Riverside Walk (end of route) and New Wharf

Road to Tonbridge Swimming Pool (end of route). The Tudor Trail Regional Cycle Route 12 runs through the Sportsground, providing access from Tonbridge Castle, Haysden Country Park, Penshurst Place and Hever Castle. The cycle route runs along the northern boundary of the Sportsground following the River Medway. This route was the subject of an Order under the Cycle Tracks Act, however, cycling is prohibited in all other areas of the Sportsground.

Formal Recreation – The site caters for a wide range of sports including Football, Rugby, Lawn Bowling, Canoeing, Cricket and Baseball.

For sports such as Football, Rugby, Baseball and Cricket, pitch tenancy agreements are agreed on an annual basis in liaison with the Tonbridge Sports Association. The tenancy agreements are between the Council and the individual clubs who participate in local league competitions. This aspect is managed by the Council's Leisure Service Business Unit at the



Angel Leisure Centre, in Tonbridge. These agreements enable clubs to use their allocated pitches according to fixtures agreed by the respective Leagues.

Just outside the boundary to the Sportsground, Tonbridge Canoe Club operates from a building on the bank of the River Medway. Canoeists use the water courses around the Sportsground.

Fourteen different sports clubs currently use the Sportsground on a regular basis, see **Table 2**.

Table 2: List of User Clubs

Clubs
Hildenborough Athletic Football Club
Riverside Bowls Club
Roselands Football Club
Roselands Junior Football Club
Simla Football Club
Tonbridge Bobcats (baseball)
Tonbridge & District Angling & Fish Preservation Society
Tonbridge Invicta Junior Football Club
Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Football Club
Tonbridge Canoe Club
Tonbridge Junior Football Club
Tonbridge Mini Soccer Alliance
Tonbridge Royal Touch Rugby Club
Tonbridge YMCA Cricket Club

The lawn bowling green is managed under a separate agreement with the Riverside Bowls Club who operate this facility both for its own members and the general public, with maintenance provided by the Council.



The formal playing pitch provision (2013/14 season) has been summarised in **Table 3**, and also highlights the normal extent of the playing season. The number of Football and Rugby pitches can vary from year to year, depending on demand.

Table 3: Pitch Provision and Extent of Playing Season

Sports	Number	Season Starts	Season Ends
Baseball	1 Pitch	May	August
Cricket	1 Pitch	June	September
Bowling	1 Green	May	September
Football	23 Pitches	September	April
Rugby	12 Pitches	September	April
Touch Rugby	3 Pitches	May	September



Informal Recreation – The following facilities are also provided at the Sportsground for casual public use:

- A large equipped children’s play area provides for a wide range of ages from toddlers to teens
- A bouncy castle is provided during the summer months
- 9-hole crazy golf course is sited within the fenced children’s play area.
- Four hard-surfaced tennis courts are available for casual hire
- Skate park
- Outdoor Gym
- Ball court
- An orienteering course (permanently marked ‘fixed course’)
- Tonbridge Model Engineering Society has a permanently sited miniature railway track and offers train rides for children during the summer months.



Catering and Equipment Hire - The Leisure Service Business Unit operate the Games Kiosk within the Sportsground play area from which putting equipment for the crazy golf, the inflatable 'bouncy castle' and the tennis courts can all be hired. Leaflets for the orienteering course, ice creams, confectionery and drinks are also available for sale from the Kiosk.

Toilets – Separate male, female and disabled public toilets are located by the main entrance to the Sportsground. The Bowls Club and Sports Pavilion also contain dedicated toilet facilities.

Seating - The Sportsground contains a large number of seats and picnic benches. Members of the public are able to sponsor a seat and many have already been donated. The style of seat illustrated here is now our preferred standard seat, this has arms to assist less able people.



NB: For the location of facilities and services highlighted above please see **Appendix 2**.

3.0 – Healthy, Safe & Secure

Health and Safety - The Council has an overall health and safety policy statement and policies are also sought from all major contractors working at the Sportsground. The Council also has a suite of generic Risk Assessments with specific assessments being sought from individual contractors and all event organisers.

Site Staffing – A Park Ranger and a Seasonal Ranger patrol the site on a part-time basis to enforce aspects such as dog and litter control, liaise with the public and assist with events. The Council's Grounds Maintenance Contractor has both a depot and maintenance team based within the Sportsground. These staff are uniformed so that they can easily be identified by the public. The Council's Senior Parks Officer monitors site maintenance and controls its management.

Close Circuit Television – This is present at the Sportsground and linked into the Town Centre system. The control centre is staffed 24 hours a day and operators have direct links with the Park Ranger, Officers at the Council and the Police.

Water Safety Policy – The Council has an overarching Water Safety Policy to address the issue of public safety around inland water bodies at/adjacent to its outdoor leisure sites. Flowing from this there is also a site specific Water Safety Strategy for the Sportsground. Both the overall Policy and Strategy have been written in liaison with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

Children's Play Area – Weekly health and safety inspections of all play equipment are carried out and recorded in writing by the Grounds Maintenance contractor. All inspection sheets are monitored by the Senior Parks Officer and repairs carried out as appropriate. In addition an annual inspection is carried out by an independent external inspector.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) – The Park Ranger has developed links with the Police and PCSOs in order that they can offer assistance on demand and carry out independent patrols of the site.



Inspecting play standards

Tree Safety Inspections – The Council's Tree Safety Strategy outlines the need for regular inspection of mature trees. Within the Grounds Maintenance Contract mature trees have an Expert Tree Inspection with a report by a qualified arborist carried out every three years. Every other year, a Basic Tree Inspection with report is carried out by qualified staff. Reports are prioritised for risk and action taken accordingly. Young trees are planted and maintained under the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

4.0 – Clean and Well Maintained

Grounds Maintenance – Maintenance tasks at the Sportsground are, with only a few exceptions, specified within the Council’s Ground Maintenance Contract. The contract details all tasks that are to be carried out highlighting both frequency and quality requirements. Due to the scale of the contract it would be inappropriate to incorporate this into this Plan in any great detail, however, some of the key tasks have been summarised in **Table 4**, along with other maintenance tasks. Weekly meetings are held between the Senior Parks Officer and the contractor’s foreman, to review progress and plan for the week ahead, including variations to the work programme.

Table 4: Grounds Maintenance

Maintenance Area	Description of Operations
Litter Control	All litter bins are checked and emptied and the site cleared of litter daily. Litter bins are washed monthly. Fines for littering can be issued by various staff. The Rangers carry out additional litter picking as required.
Public Toilets	The toilets are cleaned three times a day during the school summer holidays and twice a day at other times of year. The building is locked at night.
Dog Control	Dog bins are emptied once a week. Dog fouling is checked by the Rangers and cleared as found. Fines under the Dog Control Orders apply to this area and these can be issued by various staff under the Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Bag a flag days are held periodically to highlight to dog owners the need to bag up waste. Dogs are not permitted in the children’s play area. No more than six dogs maybe walked at one time by any single person.
Playground	The playground equipment is inspected weekly by the grounds staff and a written report made and an annual independent inspection with a report is also carried out. Routine repairs are instructed as required. A programme for the renewal of all play equipment is also in place.
Sports Pitches	All sports pitches are marked out and mown once a week during the season. The football pitches are harrowed and slit once a month, with sand applied weekly to goal mouths and centres during wet periods. During the cricket season, the square and outfield is cut once a week, and wickets three times a week; wickets are prepared the day before each match. Fertiliser and pesticides are applied as required.
Bowling Green	The green is mown on average three times a week, and switched daily. Fertiliser and pesticides are applied as

	required. Slitting and scarification are carried out periodically. The surround to the green is also maintained. The clubhouse is owned and maintained by the Club.
Tennis Courts	Courts are prepared for use and swept daily.
Crazy Golf	The course is prepared for use daily; the surrounding grass is maintained to an amenity standard.
Park Furniture	All park benches and bins are checked and washed monthly and re-painted annually if required. Lifebuoys are inspected weekly by staff and a written report made.
Bridges and paths	All bridges and paths are inspected as part of regular health and safety inspections. Bridge defects if found by the Council are reported to the owner or if in the ownership of the Council repaired as they arise. Paths are regularly inspected and surface repairs carried out in rotation as required.
Car parking	Managed directly by the Council's car parking section. Machines checked daily, car parks inspected by an Engineer quarterly.
Graffiti control	Graffiti is controlled by prompt painting over or removal. The Council has targets to remove offensive graffiti within 24 hours and other graffiti within 28 days.
Baseball backstop net and diamond	Tonbridge Bobcats are responsible for repair and maintenance.
Skate park and ball court including lighting	The surfaces are inspected daily. Any repairs are reported and action taken.



Building Maintenance – The Council has a planned maintenance programme for building work that is implemented by the Council's Property Services department. This includes aspects like internal and external decoration, routine maintenance and urgent repairs. The only exceptions to this are the leased buildings on the site, namely the Bowls Club buildings, and Mini Soccer Pavilion which are the responsibility of the respective leaseholders. The Rugby Club pavilion is not owned by the Council.

Equipment Maintenance – All machinery is owned and maintained by the Grounds Maintenance contractor.

Land Drainage and Flooding – The site has a stream running along the far boundary and through the centre and drainage ditches and a river along the other boundaries. Being a low lying area on the flood plain flooding does occur on occasions and during the winter months the river can overflow its banks, flooding the pitches and play area.

A field drainage pipe system is installed under the sports areas to allow drainage from these sports pitch areas into the river and drainage ditches.

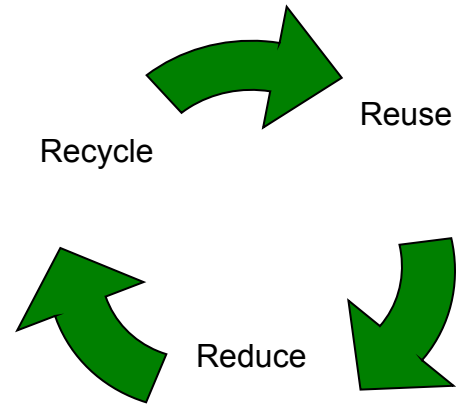


Slipway – There is a slipway is available for the public to launch small boats into the river near the car park. (An Environment Agency boating licence is required.)

5.0 – Sustainability

Corporate Policy – This Plan has been written in accordance with the Council’s Climate Change Strategy and Corporate Purchasing Policy and also takes into consideration the Council’s biodiversity duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Pesticide Use – Chemical use is vetted and, where possible, is kept to a minimum. Alternative methods of control are always considered and remain under annual review. A limited number of chemicals are used at the Sportsground to control turf pests, diseases; and weeds, as disinfectants and for graffiti removal. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health and Risk Assessments are carried out and kept on file as necessary. All chemicals are stored in a locked and purpose built store, with all usage logged in a chemical application book. A summary of the chemicals currently used in the Sportsground is listed in **Appendix 6**. European Union Black and Red Listed Chemicals are not used.



Peat Use – No peat is used on site and purchases of nursery stock are normally as bare root plants. All planting compost used on site is recycled green waste.

Energy Efficiency – The public are encouraged to visit the Sportsground by sustainable means either cycling (using the Tudor Trail) or on foot (48% people visited on foot or by bicycle in the last visitor survey). These alternatives are offered when promoting the Sportsground.



Within the toilets water use is kept to a minimum with taps that automatically switch off and any leaks are reported and repaired as soon as possible. Where possible, water saving devices have been installed to all toilet cisterns. Warm air blowers are used for hand drying. Meter readings for all electricity and water usage are taken manually on a regular basis and monitored, with any higher than normal usage investigated. All staff are aware of the importance of reducing energy consumption and are regularly reminded of the need to ensure that energy usage is kept to a minimum and to turn off lights and taps.

Waste Minimisation – Public recycling points are present in the car park adjoining the Sportsground.

The other waste generated by visitors is usually placed in the litter bins. This waste is very mixed and, as a result, is disposed of via the municipal waste stream and incinerated at the waste to energy site, not on the site.

Recycling - Safety surface used within the play area are made from re-cycled tyres where possible.



EMS 574 900

ISO 14001 - The Grounds Maintenance contractor, Kent County Council Landscape Services, have achieved the international standard ISO14001, the contractor uses low sulphur fuel, and electric vehicles.

Timber – an extract from the Council’s Sustainable Procurement Policy statement - “Where relevant, a contractor has stated commitment to using local sources of timber and wood products wherever possible. Any timber and wood products used should carry the Forestry Stewardship Council trademark, or equivalent internationally recognised certification of good forestry management.”

6.0 – Conservation and Heritage

Site History – The Sportsground was so named due to its original use for horse racing. This former ‘meadowland’ was grazed by sheep under a lease from the Tonbridge Water Works Company Ltd and others, to a private landowner until 1923. The area was however always popular for playing sports and in 1920 the Tonbridge Sports Association was specifically formed to manage sports activities at the Sportsground, for the benefit of the sports clubs in



Tonbridge. In 1923 the ‘Racecourse Meadows’ were purchased by the then Tonbridge Urban District Council along with Tinkers Island which was acquired from another private landowner. In 1923 the Tonbridge Sports Association was also granted a representative on the Parks Committee of the District Council (the predecessor to the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council) and the site was officially opened in June of that year. The land at Brightfriars Meadow and Deacons Field were acquired more recently and all this land now makes up the Sportsground.

The Borough Council has, since this time, worked in partnership with the Tonbridge Sports Association to enhance the Sportsground for the benefit of sports clubs and the wider public but always having sports use as a primary purpose of the site.



Over the years the town has grown up around the Sportsground but, being within a flood plain and containing sports pitches, was never built upon. Today this green space still starts close to the town centre and leads out into the open countryside beyond.

Habitat and Landscape Structure -

The site consists mainly of grassland, with hedgerows, woodland and running water. These habitats are at present managed in harmony with recreation and visitor management. The streams, and hedgerows snake between the playing fields and along these a selection of mainly native trees shrubs with a wide bands of wildflowers along the base. These edge habitats form the ideal refuge for insects and animals. A



range of species have been recorded on the site. The key habitats have been noted in **Table 5**. The Sportsground forms part of a wider wildlife corridor along the River Medway from the town of Tonbridge out into the countryside.

The Council aims to increase biodiversity within parks and open spaces in line with the Council’s Open Spaces Strategy.

Table 5: Key Habitat Types Present within Sportsground

Habitat type	Importance			
	International / European	National	Regional / Local	Approx. area of Sportground
Hedgerows			*	<1%
Unimproved grassland				<1%
Amenity Grassland				93%
Rivers, ditches and streams			*	4%
Woodland/ scrub (broadleaf)			*	2%

(Based on the habitat types in the ‘Kent Biodiversity Action Plan’ (1997))
 Level of significance – High *** Medium ** Low *

The protection and enhancement of these habitats have been incorporated within the objectives set out later in this Plan. Some ecological information can also be found on the Master Plan (see **Appendix 2**).

Trees – The Sportsground contains a mixture of native (oak, ash etc) and exotic (horse chestnut, flowering cherries etc.) species of trees; a number of mature oak and ash specimens are also present. See **Table 4** for maintenance details.



Topography Features and Soils – The Sportsground lies at a height of 25 metres above Ordnance Datum. The land is essentially flat and comprises part of the valley floor of the River Medway. The underlying geology of the site is alluvium, (due to river deposition) and gravel with soil comprising mainly of stoneless clay-like fine silt and fine loam. The characteristics of these soils are that they are affected by ground water and flood but have a large water holding capacity. In terms of nutrients the soils typically have low levels of phosphorus, high levels of potassium and moderate levels of magnesium.

7.0 - Community Involvement

Customer Surveys – Carried out in 1999, 2003, 2009 and 2012 within the Sportsground and used to profile visitors and provide data on customer satisfaction, facilities, suggested improvements, and establish trends. The 2012 findings have been incorporated into this Management Plan.



404 face-to-face interviews were completed with users of the Sportsground in August 2012 with the results highlighting significant improvements in customer satisfaction since the last survey.

Key results from the 2012 survey include:

99% of users are satisfied overall with the Sportsground
96% of users are repeat visits
93% of users felt safe using Sportsground in the daytime
94% of users are most satisfied cleanliness of the grounds
48% of users visited by walking or on a bicycle
46% of users travelled only 2 miles or less (significantly more local users)

Suggestions for improvements include:

- Improved refreshment facilities
- Toilet facilities closer to the play area

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (volunteer litter wardens) – At present the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership organise volunteers from the local community to carry out regular litter patrols along the River Medway and organise ‘River Round-up’ events, where the public assist with litter picking.

Tonbridge Sports Association – The Association is actively involved in the management and development of sports clubs using the Sportsground and meet with the Council every six weeks to discuss issues. The minutes from these meetings are distributed to the Council and the Association. The Association also meets with its member clubs, to discuss topical issues.





Riverside Bowls Club – Another self managed organisation is the Riverside Bowls Club who run the bowling green and pavilion on behalf of members but also offer access to the general public.

Tonbridge Model Engineering Society – The first track was built in this location in 1951 the track has since been expanded. The Society's facilities now include a steaming bay and turntable, passenger trolleys, refreshment facilities and meeting room, store, and a well appointed workshop. The carriage, which is used as a refreshment area and meeting room, is an ex-British Rail General Delivery Van dating back to 1939. The carriage is situated on 60ft of full size track and is equipped with both water and electricity.



Regular meetings are held on Saturday and Sunday afternoons throughout the summer for running on the track and the close season allows for evening meetings, usually on a monthly basis, for film shows, talks etc. Their website can found at www.tmes.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/1.html?submenu=0

Local Educational Establishments – At present the Sportsground has limited known use by educational establishments but given the close proximity of several schools it is likely to be a valuable asset for them.

Consultation on the Management Plan – Involvement of external parties in the production of this document was essential, and the programme for consultation was developed and is outlined in **Table 6**.

Table 6: Timetable for Consultation

Action	Timescale
Consultation with the Tonbridge Sports Association, and Leisure Service Business Unit	Spring 2013
Councils – Leisure & Arts Advisory Board to approve Consultation Draft	May 2013
Public Consultation – including all key stakeholders	May – August 2013
Plan amended to reflect consultation comments	May – September 2013
Councils – Leisure & Arts Advisory Board to adopt final Management Plan	September 2013
Publication of final Management Plan	December 2013

Copies of the Management Plan Consultation Draft were sent to:

- Stakeholders (see **Table 8**)
- All other interested persons

This Management Plan was made available to view at the Council’s offices at Kings Hill, Tonbridge Castle and at the Tonbridge Town Library (Reference section). The Plan was also available on the Council’s website at www.tmbc.gov.uk. All comments about the Consultation Draft Plan were considered by the Council and amendments made as required. Amendments were fed back to the consultees who made comments.

8.0 – Marketing

Publications – The Council markets the Sportsground as a local facility with the principal means of marketing being through; the Council’s website; through press releases; in the Council’s [Here & Now](#) residents’ magazine; through on-site notice boards; and event publications.

Events – A number of events are run at the Sportsground each year which are naturally mainly sport orientated. Most events are run by local community volunteers, typical events are listed in **Table 7**.

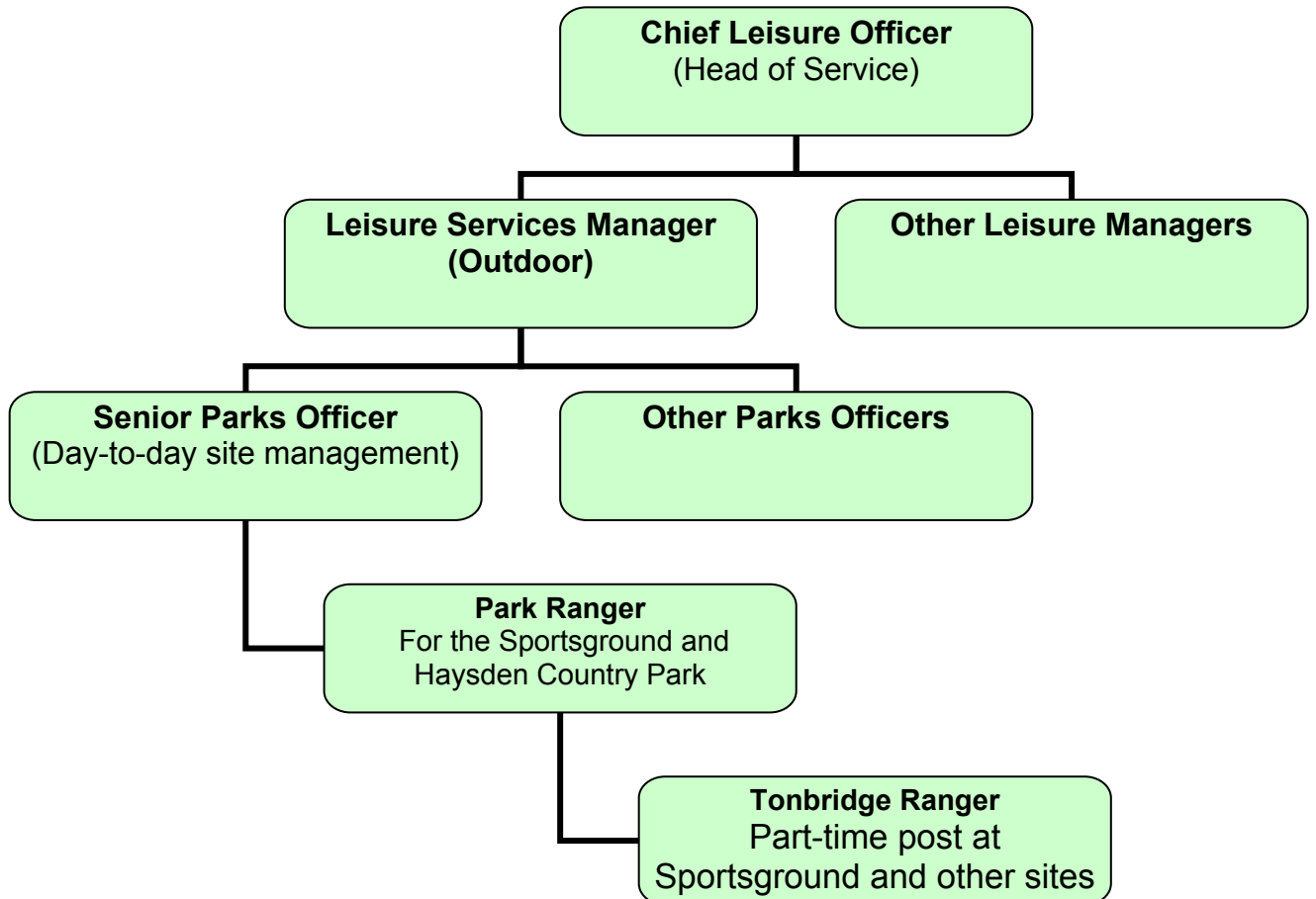


Table 7: Typical Annual Events held at Sportsground:

Event
Canoe Events - Tonbridge Canoe Club
Cycle fun day
Football Fiesta – Tonbridge Junior Football Club
Jamboree Days - Tonbridge Junior Football Club
Mini Rugby Festival – Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Football Club
Open Days – Tonbridge Junior Football Club
River Round-up (litter pick) - Medway Valley Countryside Partnership
Skills Day - Tonbridge Junior Football Club
Summer Soccer School - Tonbridge Junior Football Club
Summer Soccer Skills - Tonbridge Junior Football Club
Tonbridge Kite Festival
Touch Rugby Tournament – Touch Rugby Club

9.0 – Management

Management Structure – Major policy issues will be determined by the Council through recommendation made by the Leisure & Arts Advisory Board, recommendations are then put to the Council’s Cabinet. Implementation will be undertaken by Leisure Services. The Council’s Officer management structure is shown below:



Management of the Sportsground is carried out by the Council in liaison with a number of partners. The existing partners are as follows:

- Tonbridge Sports Association – sports club liaison and pitch layout
- Leisure Services Business Unit – pitch bookings, running of the Games Hut/ kiosk for catering, hire of bouncy castle, tennis courts and crazy golf
- KCC Landscape Services - Grounds Maintenance Contractor
- Cleanaway Limited – Dog Bin Maintenance Contractor
- Medway Valley Countryside Partnership –Volunteer Litter Warden Scheme
- Kent County Council (West Kent Area Office) – Public Rights of Way
- Tonbridge & District Angling & Fish Preservation Society – Fishing Rights
- Tonbridge Model Engineering Society – Model train track
- Sevenoaks District Council – Public conveniences contract

Out of Hours – The Council operates an ‘out of hours’ emergency call out system on the normal Council telephone number 01732 844522. The operator can answer some questions from a set script and in exceptional cases has a contact list for Council staff. For non-urgent items there is the Council’s website with Report Forms at www.tmbc.gov.uk Minicom 01732 874958, or SMS (text) 07781 482959.

Staff training – This is identified through the annual performance appraisal for each member of staff. Individual and corporate training needs are part of the assessment process and the outcomes are recorded and signed off by both parties. Training needs can vary from year to year but typically they might include First Aid at Work, diversity training and health and safety training.

Contractors are assessed on staff training and competence as part of the tender evaluation process. Only contractors of sufficient competence are employed. Future training needs are discussed with contractors on an ongoing basis.

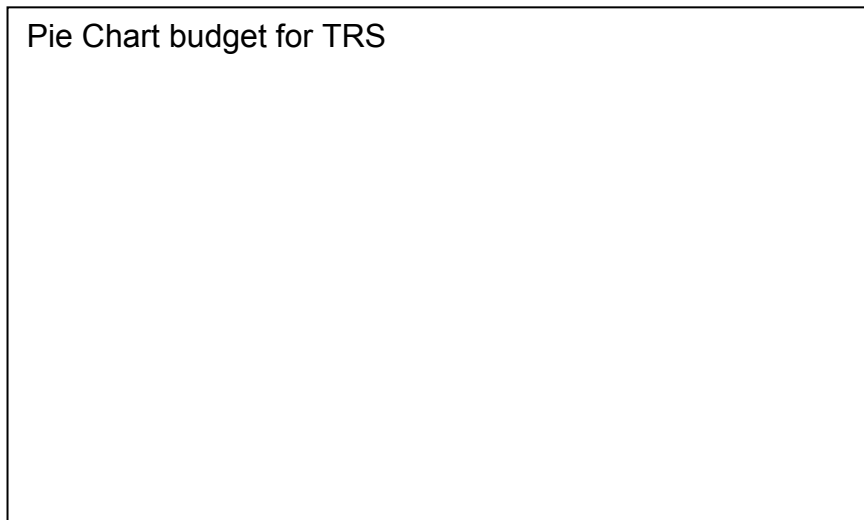
Stakeholders – Various groups have an interest in the site and have been consulted on the development and production of this Management Plan. These organisations will also be consulted on issues relating to the ongoing development on site and are listed in alphabetical order in **Table 8**:

Table 8: List of Stakeholders for the Sportsground

Name of Organisation
Emergency Services
Environment Agency
Kent County Council – Landscape Services
Kent County Council – Public Rights of Way – West Kent Area Office
Kent Wildlife Trust
Leisure Service Business Unit
Local Schools
Medway Valley Countryside Partnership
Network Rail
South East Water
Police mainly via the Police Community Support Officers
The Conservation Volunteers
Tonbridge Canoe Club
Tonbridge Civic Society
Tonbridge Model Engineering Society
Tonbridge Sports Association
Little Venice Boats
Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board

Sportsground Budget – Maintenance of sportsground is currently met through the Council’s Revenue Budget. The budget provides for ground maintenance, running costs, repairs, administration and essential services. A breakdown of this budget can be found in **Appendix 9**.

The budget is reviewed annually and will take account of any price increases in the contracts. As for all Council services, the Sportsground competes for resources alongside other services provided by the Council. It is noted that additional funding maybe available through developer contributions, grants or additional income generation.



Capital Funding – The site has benefited from a large amount of the Council’s capital funding over the last few years. Some larger value items such as replacing children’s play equipment, re-surfacing paths, flood lighting the rugby pitches have been funded in recent years through the Council’s Capital Plan.

External Funding – Where practical, funding will be sourced from outside the Council, and this can take the form of the public sponsoring seats, grant bids and developer contributions.

Rules – We ask that Sportsground users abide by a few rules because the Sportsground is used by a large number of people; this ensures that a few people do not affect the enjoyment of everyone else using the Sportsground, these rules are set out below:

Water Safety Rules – After the Water Safety Policy was developed a number of site specific recommendations were made including publishing water safety information for users.

No Barbeques – In line with all the Council’s public open spaces, and to both reduce the likelihood of fires and to avoid inconveniencing other users, barbeques are not allowed in the Sportsground.

No Camping – The public are not allowed to camp in the Sportsground.

No Motorbikes – Motor bikes are permitted in the designated car park but are not permitted in all other areas of the Sportsground.

Anti-social behaviour – Aspects such as littering, fly posting, fly tipping and graffiti are covered in **Table 4**.

Bylaws – These can be enforced by the Council and Police Officers. There are Bylaws that apply to this area under Section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875 and 1969.

Helicopter landing and Ballooning – The Sportsground is on the direct flight path for commercial airlines therefore helicopters or ballooning are not allowed to land or fly from Sportsground.

Dog Control Orders – See **Table 4**.

Compartments – For the purpose of this Plan, the site has been divided into four compartments to reflect their different management needs and uses. The compartment descriptions outline the current condition and features.

Compartment 1 – Informal Recreation: This compartment comprises of land containing the main amenities for the site and a section of Riverside Walk. This is the most visited and popular area for frequent users and includes the toilet block, large

children's play area, games hut/ refreshment kiosk, crazy golf, skate park, ball court, outdoor gym, bowling green and four hard surfaced tennis courts. The area also contains the events field and maintenance building. The area is amenity grassland, with some trees and shrubs. The wildlife value of this area is limited and reflective of the high volume of users and a high level of maintenance.

Compartment 2 – Main Field: The area is used for football, mini football, and cricket. The area is mown grassland with few intrusions to open views. There is a path along the west boundary with a hedge-line that divides the field in two. The mini soccer pavilion is located at the centre of this compartment. As above, the field in this compartment has limited wildlife value that is reflective of the high volume of users and a high level of maintenance, however around the edges there is a stream and margin of native trees shrubs and wildflowers which has higher value for wildlife.

Compartment 3 – Sports fields known as ‘Brightfriars Meadow’ and ‘Deacons Field’: Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Football Club pavilion, the Model Railway and two public car parks are located in the east of this compartment. The Cycle Route and Public Right of Way MU24 run along the northern boundary. The compartment is bordered by rivers and drainage ditches on three sides and the mainline Railway forms the final boundary. The land is mainly mown amenity grassland with one part used for baseball in the summer months and the remainder as rugby pitches during the winter months. Margins of wildflowers, native trees and shrubs can be found along the boundaries. A wild area behind the hedgerow is present along the northern boundary with a further hedgerow along the east boundary. The land has potentially higher wildlife value than the southern end of the site.

Compartment 4 – Tinkers Island: Mixed deciduous woodland and former coppice. The island is separated from the main site by water courses and open drainage ditches but is accessible from the main site via two sleeper bridges. The land has potentially higher wildlife value, than the southern end of the site.

10.0 – Constraining Factors, Policies and SWOT Analysis

Flood Plain – Being part of the River Medway flood plain, the Sportsground is subject to significant periodic flooding.

Water Abstraction Area – The use of pesticides to control sports turf pests and diseases is limited and controlled by the Council as water quality is critical. Water quality is closely monitored by the Environment Agency and South East Water (the latter operate the adjacent water pumping station and water abstraction wells within the site).

Site Designations – The Sportsground is designated within the Local Plan as an Area of Local Landscape Importance' (Policy 3/7e) and as Green Belt. The Sportsground is also designated as Public Open Space.

Sports Use – The majority of the site is set out and used on a seasonal basis for various sports for example football, and rugby. This means that in simple terms there needs to be large open 'fields' of closely mown grass, with limited scope for a more varied landscape, apart from around the field margins.

Access Rights – Large vehicular access is difficult, as access rights, weight limits and widths of bridges give limited scope to enter the site. For example the Council has rights of access across the roadway near the Waterworks but is not the owner of the land.

Easement Privileges – Access rights for purposes of water abstraction and construction rights in relation to Deacons Field.

Restrictive Covenants – A restrictive covenant was made in 1907 registering rights on Deacons Field over water and another in 1917 for the laying of electric cables. Several other restricted covenants also exist on the land for abstraction of water on part of Sportsground in 1923 and for water abstraction from the whole of the site in 1988. In 1988 a restrictive covenant was also made that Deaconsfield shall be 'kept solely as playing fields'.

Existing Leasehold/Agreements – The following clubs are long-term/ established users for parts of the site:

- Mini Soccer Alliance – football pavilion and surrounds
- Riverside (Tonbridge) Bowls Club – bowls green buildings and surround
- Tonbridge & District Angling and Fish Preservation Society – fishing along the River Medway
- Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Football club – Rugby Club and some surrounds
- Tonbridge Model Engineering Society – Miniature railway area

Public Rights of Way – Legal obligations regarding the Public Right of Way MU24 must always be adhered to. For the location of the footpath see **Appendix 4**.





Condition of Sports Facilities – The sports pitches, greens, and courts are maintained to a local/ regional quality standard.

Budget – The Sportsground has its own revenue budget that covers the basic maintenance of the site (see **Appendix 9**). Management, maintenance and development carried out within the Sportsground is therefore limited in relation to available funding. At present the income generated from the sports use of the site offers only limited income recovery. The infrastructure elements of the Sportsground require expenditure such as replacing dog bins, resurfacing paths, and replacing play equipment. With the exception of the play equipment, there is limited additional funding available for this.

Site Security and Warden Patrolling – Limited budget is available for patrolling staff and this resource is shared with Haysden Country Park and other Tonbridge sites.

Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats – **Table 9** identifies the main strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats at the Sportsground.

Table 9: Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths 	Weakness 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tonbridge Sports Association partnership • Well organised and successful clubs • High use of sports pitches by young people • Variety of sports played • Good range of casual facilities (ball court, skate park, play area and outdoor gym) • Year round use • Good level of usage • Tudor Trail Cycle Route • Accessible car parking • Easy access from town centre • Close to other leisure facilities • Little pesticide use • Customer surveys carried out • High levels of customer satisfaction • Playing Pitch & Open Space Strategies • Water Safety Strategy • Wildlife Survey • Developer contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited refreshment service • No toilets near the play area • Long-standing bylaws need review • Limited marketing • Seasonal flooding • Road signage to the sportsground • Condition of existing bridges • Street furniture/ fences need refurbishment/ replacement • Limited biodiversity • Limited volunteer input • Deteriorating condition of some paths • Limited use of tennis courts • Limited use of the river • Car parking limited at peak times
Opportunities 	Threats 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer contributions/ town centre regeneration • Establish a Volunteer Group • Improve marketing/ signage • Improved drainage for playing pitches • Increase biodiversity • Review bylaws • Improve refreshment facilities • Toilet provision close to play area • Increase use of tennis courts • Develop river use • Expand/ extend current facility provision • Regular reviews of sport pitch allocation • Improve bridges • Increase parking serving the site • Improve existing path network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River bank erosion • Anti social behaviour • Financial constraints • Fluctuations in demand for sports • Growing demand on existing casual facilities • Inability to cope with increasing demand for formal sports

Conclusion – The above table identifies and number of possible areas for improvement and where possible these have been taken forward in the sections that follow.

Part 2 – Where do we want to get to?

This section of the plan describes our vision for the Sportsground and sets out our management aims and objectives.



As highlighted in the first section the Council's aims and objectives are reflective of the Green Flag Award criteria.

11.0 Management Plan Aim & Objectives

Management Plan Overall Aim – To provide a Sportsground facility for the health and enjoyment of the local community: to include the development of formal and casual recreation and enhancement of its conservation and heritage. This is to be achieved through management focused on the following objectives:

1. A well managed sportsground
2. A welcoming sportsground
3. A healthy, safe and secure sportsground
4. A clean and well maintained sportsground
5. A sustainable sportsground
6. A sportsground that addresses conservation and heritage
7. A sportsground that encourages community involvement
8. A well marketed and promoted sportsground

Each of these may give rise to several projects, tasks or action within the Five Year Work Programme:

Part 3 – How will we get there?

This section sets out how we are going to achieve our aims and objectives. A Five Year Work Programme sets out long-term targets and Annual Action Plans, focusing on each year, will flow from this.



12.0 Five Year Work Programme

Each objective, identified earlier at 11.0, will require a range of Projects to achieve them and these are highlighted within the Five Year Work Programme at **Table 10**. Projects are specific areas of work that may require investigation, costing, identification of funding and in some cases several tasks to complete them. The plan also indicates the compartment in which specific projects will be applied and the estimated year they will be implemented. The compartments are shown on the Master Plan (**Appendix 2**) and each Project has been linked to its corresponding objective.

As highlighted at 4.0 – Grounds Maintenance, regular maintenance tasks are specified within the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract and due to the scale of the Contract it would be inappropriate to include all this within this Plan. It is, therefore, recognised that as part of the management of the Sportsground the Contract will need to be implemented and monitored alongside this Plan.

13.0 Annual Action Plans

A more detailed one-year Action Plan will be drawn up on an annual basis and will be produced in accordance with the Five Year Work Programme. The Annual Action Plan contains details of what exactly is to be done, when and by whom.

Table 10: Five Year Work Programme

Objectives	Proposed ●	Action	Compart ments	Year 1 2014	Year 2 2015	Year 3 2016	Year 4 2017	Year 5 2018
	Completed ✓							
Project								
1		1. Budget Control/Review – Manage expenditure in line with the agreed site budget. Investigate opportunities for external funding and income generation. Prepare annual budget estimates.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 3		2. Bylaws – Review existing bylaws that cover the Sportsground.	All				●	
1		3. Annual Work Programming – Prepare Annual Action Plans prior to the commencement of each year.	All	●	●	●	●	●
3, 4, 5, 6,		4. Grounds Maintenance – Implement and monitor the Council’s Grounds Maintenance Contract.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 7		5. Tonbridge Sports Association – Attend regular Tonbridge Sports Association meetings, to seek views of users on how the site is managed and future improvements linked to demand.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 3		6. Property inspection and maintenance – Carry out routine inspections of properties as necessary within the site and report repairs and issues. <i>Responsibilities for inspection repair and maintenance will vary, report these to the responsible party.</i>	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 7		7. Sports pitch review – Evaluate sports pitch provision in comparison to demand, prepare layout plans and relocate pitches as required.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 7		8. Event Applications – Encourage and support applications for appropriate events from recognised organisations and clubs. Consult the Tonbridge Sports Association on proposed events.	1	●	●	●	●	●

2, 5	9. Refreshment facilities – Investigate the provision of new / extended refreshment facilities alongside the extension of the existing Games Kiosk as funding opportunities arise.	1	●	●	●		
2, 5	10. Improve toilet provision – Investigate adding toilets nearer the play area, as funding opportunities arise.	1	●	●	●		
2, 7	11. Healthy Walks Programme – Maintain and develop the walks programme at the Sportsground encouraging the involvement of volunteer walk leaders.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 7	12. Customer Survey – Carry out an on site customer survey to seek the views of visitors. To be carried out prior to/and feed into the next five year plan.	All			●		
7	13. Volunteer Group – Investigate and establish a Volunteer Group for the Sportsground.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 3	14. Control of Pest Species – Keep pest species (non natives) and those classed in law as ‘pests’ under control for example: Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam, rabbits, ragwort (Ragwort Control Plan), and rats.	All	●	●	●	●	●
3	15. Site Specific Water Safety Strategy – Continue to implement actions arising from the site specific strategy.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 3	16. River Bank Stability – Investigate erosion control methods and implement as funding allows.	1	●	●			
1, 2, 3	17. Integrate the River as a Site Feature – Investigate opportunities to make more use of the river as a feature of the site.	All		●	●		
3	18. Site Specific Risk Assessments – Develop a suite of site specific risk assessments.	All	●				
1, 5	19. Waste reduction – Explore potential for recycling/reducing waste and investing in environmental friendly technology as opportunities arise.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 2	20. Expand Informal Facility Provision – Investigate expanding/ extending informal facilities such as the Outdoor Gym, skate park, and play area as demand dictates and funding allows.	All	●	●	●	●	●

3	21. Tree surveys expert – Carry out an external expert tree survey, record results and implement actions arising, as appropriate.	All			●		
3	22. Tree surveys basic - Carry out basic tree survey, record results and implement actions arising, as appropriate.	All	●	●		●	●
4	23. Restore Tinkers Island Woodland – continue the rotational coppicing to restore the woodland.	4			●	●	
3, 4, 7	24. Park Ranger – Review the level of site based staff, in relation to the re-tender of the Grounds Maintenance Contract.	All	●				
6, 7	25. Record Flora and Fauna – Carry out a biannual survey for wildlife and flora and encourage the public and contractors to report sightings of flora and fauna. Setup a monitoring programme, paying attention to protected species and, where possible, record the date and location of sightings. Work with volunteers and other agencies like the Kent Wildlife Trust and Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre and use this information to inform the management of the habitats in the Sportsground.	All	●	●	●	●	●
5, 6, 7	26. Habitat management – Leave uncut margins along field boundaries to encourage wildlife and flora, consider planting wildflowers along these boundaries in liaison with the Kent Wildlife Trust. Avoid cutting hedges in the bird nesting season February to July. Plant more native species hedgerows where boundaries have gaps and this is practical. Plant more native species trees and shrubs, all as funding and space allows.	All	●	●	●	●	●
4, 5	27. Pesticide and chemical use – Investigate alternative pest, weed control methods and chemicals where appropriate and practical with the grounds contractors and others.	All		●	●	●	●
2, 4	28. Street furniture provision – Review the current level of seating, litter bins, dog bins, bollards provision. Consider which items to paint, refurbish or replacement, and investigate provision of funding.	All	●				

3, 4	29. Review the site boundaries – Along internal and external boundaries make provision to repair, painting, replace or removing fences, and gates and maintain or plant more hedging if more appropriate. Consider planting new hedging to screen the waterworks boundary where missing.	All	●	●	●	●	●
3, 4	30. Play Equipment Replacement – Replace play equipment and associated surfacing as appropriate and in accordance with the Council's Capital Renewals Programme. <i>Note: consider the Equality Access Audit when replacing equipment and surfacing.</i>	1	●	●	●	●	●
3, 4	31. Bridge inspection – Review, repair, record and monitor the condition of bridges on site.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 2, 3, 4	32. Replace Avebury Avenue Bridge – Replace the existing bridge at this location.		●				
1	33. Town Centre Regeneration – Investigate and pursue opportunities for investment in the site from developer contributions.	All	●	●			
2	34. Equality Access Audit – Implement actions arising from the site specific audit and record progress.	All	●	●	●	●	●
2	35. New Equality Access Audit – Carry out a review of the previous Audit on site, with the Council's Access Officer.	All				●	
1, 7	36. Bowling Green – Investigate options for self-management of the bowls green with the resident club and Tonbridge Sports Association.	1		●			
1, 2	37. Review Orienteering Course – Review the fixed point orienteering course with the local club.	All				●	
3, 4, 8	38. Improve marketing – Design and produce a promotional site leaflet, and investigate any other marketing that maybe appropriate. Review the current site signage and replace/upgrade/ remove where appropriate. Investigate signage both external to the site and internally.	All	●		●		●
4	39. Shade for the Play Area – Consider further options for providing shade in the play area.	1		●			

4, 5	40. Tudor Trail Cycle Route – Consider partnership opportunities, and establish maintenance responsibilities and implement as required.	3	●	●	●	●	●
1, 7	41. Pitch Bookings – Encourage and promote the booking of sports facilities in accordance with agreed policies and tenancy agreements.	2,3	●	●	●	●	●
4	42. Invest and inspect and repair hard surfaces- Carry out regular inspections of the paved areas of the site to Highway Standards. Carry out repairs as necessary.	All	●	●	●	●	
2	43. Car Parking – Investigate opportunities to extend/ enhance parking provision especially at peak times. Review parking arrangements at Lower Castle Field.	3	●	●	●	●	●
1, 4	44. Land Drainage – Keep the land drainage systems in working order keeping drains and culverts unblocked. Consider improvements to land drainage, and flood protection measures where necessary.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 7	45. Investigate new partnership opportunities – Investigate opportunities to work with other organisations, to improve and develop the site.	All	●	●	●	●	●
1, 5, 6	46. Plant more trees and shrubs - Plant more trees and shrubs to increase biodiversity, and replace and lost trees where appropriate, as funding allows.	All	●	●	●	●	●

Part 4 – How will we know when we have arrived?

The final section looks at how we will track progress and how the Plan might be updated.

It is important to realise that a Management Plan is only a snap shot in time and may need periodic updating to keep it relevant. This may include alterations to reflect policy changes, new innovation, changes in resources or feedback from users and others.



Green Flag Award – The Plan has been written to meet the criteria for the Award.

Monitoring Progress – Progress will also be monitored against each Annual Action Plan, at programmed weekly contractor meetings and at progress meetings between the Leisure Services Manager (Outdoor) and the Senior Parks Officer.

Annual Management Plan Review – In order to keep the plan relevant, each year, prior to the start of the year, an annual review will be carried out. Much of the site description, policy and aims are unlikely to change from year to year, but the final sections of the plan are more dynamic and the whole plan will need reviewing and updating where necessary. The most important part of the review will be to look at the Five Year Work Programme and, from this, draw up the one-year Annual Action Plan for the coming year.

End of Plan Review – Prior to the expiry of this Plan on 31 December 2018 a full review and rewrite will be carried out to develop a further Five Year Management Plan.

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Location Plan
- Appendix 2 - Master Plan
- Appendix 3 - Access Audit
- Appendix 4 - Map of Legal Aspects
- Appendix 5 - Example risk assessments
- Appendix 6 - Chemicals used
- Appendix 7 - Asset List
- Appendix 8 - Species list
- Appendix 9 - Sportsground Budget
- Appendix 10 – Annual Action Plan