

Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Management Plan 2024 - 2028



Consultation draft

Version 0



www.tmbc.gov.uk

Revision History

Version	Date issued	Summary of changes
0		Consultation draft
1		Adopted copy

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Foreword

I am proud that Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground holds a reputation as one of the best parks in the South East and holds the Green Flag Award. The site has a long history of collaboration between the Council and Tonbridge Sports Association, providing a home for many established sports clubs as well as an accessible location for informal public recreation and more recently holding events at the site.

The new site management plan is the second plan after achieving the international Green Flag Award in 2020, and the fourth consecutive plan for the site. The previous management plan spanned a period of change in which there was an increased use of the sportsground for recreation during the global coronavirus pandemic, and a greater appreciation of outdoor public open spaces. This is reflected in the market survey results for this site with an impressive overall satisfaction rating of 99%, which is a great credit to all those involved in the site.

Despite challenges, the Council has achieved a great deal during the last five years with significant investment in new facilities, with funding from both the Council and the generous support of local external funders.

The new management plan builds on previous plans and addresses community needs, climate change, and declining biodiversity. I am therefore confident that this management plan will continue to drive the Racecourse Sportsground forward so that we can continue to provide a high-quality open space.

Councillor Des Keers
Cabinet Member for Community Services

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. The headings in this plan are based on the CABE Space 'A guide to producing green space and park management plans' and 'Raising the standard: the Green Flag Award guidance manual'.

Part 1 – *Where are we now?*

The first section describes the current situation, at the time the plan was written. It is an introduction 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. A five-year Work Programme sets our 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 of the plan looks at how we will track progress and how the plan might be updated.



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Acknowledgements

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If the reader is using an internet enabled computer to view this document the document contains a number of website and email hyperlinks (words in blue text and underlined) which can be used to find out more about the subjects by linking to other documents or to email. The Council is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.

Other documents referred to in this plan

BSBI (2021) Rare plant register

CABE Space (2004) A guide to producing green space and park management plans

Visitor Surveys Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground (various years)

Kent Wildlife Trust (2009) Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground wildlife survey

Heyes A (2018-23) Botanical surveys of Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground

Keep Britain Tidy (2016) Raising the standard: The Green Flag Award guidance manual

Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground (including Tonbridge Castle moat) Water Safety Strategy

Part 1 - Where are we now?

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



1.0 – Introduction to Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground

This former meadowland was used for horse racing and originally grazed by sheep, but by 1920 it was also popular for sports. The Racecourse was later purchased by the predecessor of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and the site opened to the public in 1923. The Racecourse covers an area of approximately 28 Hectares (52 Acres) and is located in the heart of Tonbridge. The Racecourse provides a range of outdoor sports pitches and facilities and is well used by the local community for sports such as football, rugby, baseball, angling and for informal uses including: children's play, tennis, mini golf, walking, picnics and family days out.

The use of the Racecourse for formal field sports (football, rugby) is primarily over the winter period but the site also provides a popular casual visitor attraction with an extensive path network with grasslands edged by streams and trees. The Tudor Trail cycle route (formerly the Tonbridge to Penshurst cycle route) also runs through the Racecourse, linking it to Haysden Country Park, and Penshurst Place.

Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground was first awarded the Green Flag Award in 2020 and has retained the award since after being judged annually.

A number of regular events take place at the site including Parkrun, Walks for Well-being, Oktoberfest, Fireworks display and an annual Football Fiesta, for more details see **Table 9**.

The sites close proximity to the town centre and other attractions such as Tonbridge Swimming Pool, Tonbridge Castle, the miniature railway and the rowing boat hire (at the Big Bridge), means that people often spend the day visiting this area.

The role of the management plan – This is the fourth Management Plan for the Racecourse, which starts in January 2024. This plan has been developed to give guidance and direction to the future management of the Racecourse 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 Racecourse.

The previous management plan 2019-2023, has been very successful in delivering projects with around £228,000 of investment in the park, over the 5 year life of the plan. The management plan has been vital when attracting external funders, and setting out our intentions. Some projects are ongoing and have been included in this new plan. Some key investments that have been secured and delivered from the last plan are listed below, a full breakdown of our funding achievements can be found in **Appendix 10**.

- New river bridge at the swimming pool £100,000
- Revetment work along the river £55,000
- Dementia trail £25,500 (external funding)
- Replacement of play equipment £25,000
- Sponsored seats and picnic tables £14,411
- Replacement of play area gates £11,000
- Virtual orienteering courses (external funding)
- Play area impact absorbing surface replacements £4991 (external funding)
- Picnic seat replacements £2000
- Tree planting project £5000 (external funding)
- Replacing Tinkers island bridge £3400

The overall aim – To provide a site for the health and enjoyment of the local community with a balance of use between formal and informal uses: to include the development of formal and casual recreation and enhancement of its conservation and heritage.

Policy context – This plan has been developed to take into account the local policy/guidance. This includes the Councils Vision and four Core Values, for example:

The Councils vision for the next five years 2023-2027 are:

- Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective Council;
- Sustaining a borough which cares for the environment;
- Improve housing options for local people, whilst protecting our outdoor areas of importance;
- Investing in our local economy.

Table 1 lists other policy or guidance documents linked to this plan.

Table 1: Policy and guidance documents

Title
Kent Biodiversity 2020 and beyond - A Strategy for the Natural Environment 2015 - 2025 - Kent Nature Partnership
Standards of the Green Flag Award scheme
Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services - Departmental service delivery plan 2019/20 - 2023/2024
Tonbridge and Malling Borough - Councils Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Councils - Digital Strategy
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Tree Safety Strategy
Tree Charter
Community Safety Partnership
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Corporate Procurement Strategy
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Corporate Strategy 2023-2027
Tonbridge & Malling Open Spaces Equality Impact Assessment
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Local Development Framework/ Local Plan
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Open Space Strategy
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Innovation, Transformation and Delivery Corporate Strategy 2023-2027
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Savings and transformation Strategy
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Sustainable Procurement Strategy
Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Water Safety Strategy and Policy
Tonbridge Sports Association Tenancy Policy

Green Flag Award – This is the national and international award scheme now organised by the Green Flag Award consortium setting the minimum standard of a quality for green spaces of all types. To find out more see their website www.greenflagaward.co.uk The plan has been written using the Green Flag Award criteria shown below, which are used to judge the award.

- A welcoming place
- Healthy safe and secure
- Well maintained and clean
- Environmental management
- Management of biodiversity, landscape and heritage
- Community involvement
- Marketing & communication
- Management



There is some crossover between the award criteria and this should be considered when reading the document.

The evaluation that follows, considers 'where we are now', using the Green Flag Award criteria as headings, but there will also be many criteria that have areas in common with other similar awards, such as those run by Britain in Bloom, Fields in Trust, and Horticultural Week.

2.0 – A Welcoming Place

Location – The Racecourse is located in the heart of Tonbridge, Kent. (See map **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 in the Master Plan (see **Appendix 2** and **list in Appendix 3**).

Land use – The present internal land uses can be found within the compartment descriptions or alternatively, in 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 Racecourse itself is within the flood plain of the River Medway and is subject to significant periodic flooding.

Accessibility – The Council’s Open Spaces Equality Impact Assessment is a borough wide assessment that sets down the principles that open spaces that are safe and accessible for the local community and visitors to the borough. A site specific access audit is carried out at the site every five years, the first of these was undertaken in 2003. The last audit was undertaken in 2022 (**Appendix 4**) and this will be implemented during the period of this plan. Various site improvements have been made as a result of these audits. The Racecourse has disable toilets, parking, a dementia trail, various accessible play equipment, with hard surfaced paths around most of the site.

Access by bus – Bus stops are located in Tonbridge High Street within a short walking distance of the Racecourse.

Access by rail – Less than ½ a mile from Tonbridge Station which offers mainline 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 Racecourse (see Master Plan - **Appendix 2** for detailed locations).



Access by foot – The Definitive Public Right of Way footpath MU24 runs long the northern boundary of the Racecourse. For further details on Public Rights of Way and other footpaths see **Appendix 5**. Pedestrian routes to the Racecourse are

signposted from Tonbridge High Street, in Tonbridge Castle grounds and from New Wharf Road and all pedestrian entrances into the Racecourse have been identified on the Master Plan (**Appendix 2**).

Access by bicycle – Cycle routes provide access to the Racecourse 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 Racecourse, linking Tonbridge Castle, Haysden Country Park, and Penshurst Place. The cycle route runs along the northern boundary of the Racecourse 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 Racecourse.



Formal recreation – The site caters for a wide range of sports including angling; canoeing, football; rugby; volleyball and; baseball.

For sports such as Football, Rugby, and Baseball, pitch tenancy agreements are agreed on an annual basis in liaison with the Tonbridge Sports Association. The tenancy agreements are between the Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust and the individual clubs. This aspect is also managed by the Trust at the Angel Leisure Centre, in Tonbridge.

The lawn bowling green area is no longer operating and will be put to a new use.

Table 2 provides examples of the clubs and organisations that currently use the site.

Table 2: Clubs and organisations

Clubs and organisations	Season of Use
Tonbridge & District Angling & Fish Preservation Society	Year round
Epic Life paddle boarding	Year round
Tonbridge Parkrun	Year round
Tonbridge Canoe Club	Year round
Autumn/ Winter	
Roselands Football Club	Sept - April
Tonbridge Invicta Junior Football Club	Sept - April
Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Football Club	Sept - April
Tonbridge Junior Football Club	Sept - April
Tonbridge Mini Soccer Alliance	Sept - April
Woodlands Football Club	Sept - April
Spring/ Summer	
Tonbridge Baseball Club	May - August
Tonbridge Model Engineering Society	British summer time
Tonbridge Volleyball Club	May - Sept

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

The formal playing pitch provision (2022/23 season) has been summarised in the **Appendix 7**, and **Table 2** highlights the normal extent of the playing season. The number of football and rugby pitches can vary from year to year, depending on demand.

Informal recreation – The following facilities are also provided at the Racecourse for casual public use:

- A large equipped children’s play area provides for a wide range of ages from toddlers to teenagers
- Large grassland areas for causal recreation
- 9-hole mini golf course within the fenced children’s play area.
- Outdoor table tennis
- Four hard-surfaced tennis courts are available for casual hire
- Skate park
- Outdoor gym
- Ballcourt
- Tonbridge Model Engineering Society miniature railway track for public train rides
- Boat slipway to the River Medway in the car park
- Dementia friendly walk trail



Catering and equipment hire – The Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust operate the Games Kiosk and catering concession within the play area from which mini golf equipment, table tennis equipment and the tennis courts can all be hired; with ice creams, confectionery and drinks also for sale.

Toilets – Separate male, female and disabled public toilets are located by the main entrance to the Racecourse. The former bowls building and Sports Pavilion also contain dedicated toilet facilities.

Seating – The Racecourse 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 and a back to assist less able people.



Paths – There is an extensive connected network of surfaced paths to walk around the site.

Ballcourt lighting – The ballcourt is provided with lighting to allow play later into the evening.

NB: For the location of facilities and services 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 Racecourse.

Risk assessments – The Council also has a suite of generic Risk Assessments with specific assessments being sought from individual contractors and all event organisers (see examples in **Appendix 6**).

Incident reporting – The Incident Report Form IR1, is used by staff to record incidents and accidents. All staff are trained to record incidents and some staff are also trained to investigate incidents. The completed forms are circulated upwards to the manager and signed off by the Council's Health and Safety Officer. Appropriate action is then taken if necessary depending on the type of incident and the urgency.

Site staffing – A Ranger patrols 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 Racecourse. The staff wear uniforms so that they can easily be identified by the public.

Site monitoring – As part of the management of contractors, Council Officers monitor health and safety aspects and routinely visit the site to inspect work and the condition of the Racecourse. Officers are empowered to stop unsafe work, fence off areas and take other remedial actions to keep the public safe.

Public open spaces inspection – A health and safety site inspection is carried out annually by Council Officers.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – This is issued to staff and supplied to volunteers as identified within risk assessments. Contractors must also supply PPE to their staff as identified within their own risk assessments; this aspect is also monitored by Council staff.

Closed circuit television – This is present at the Racecourse and linked into the Town Centre system. The control centre is staffed 24 hours a day and operators have direct links with the Rangers, 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. A Water Safety Strategy was developed for the site, both the overall Policy and Strategy have been written in liaison with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

Children’s play area – Safety inspections of all play equipment are carried out by qualified Registered Play Inspectors, see **Table 3** for details.

Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) – The Council’s staff have developed links with the Police and Police Community Support Officers in order that they can offer assistance when available. The PCSOs also carry out independent patrols of the site.

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 Council staff. Reports are prioritised for risk and action taken accordingly. Young trees are planted, inspected and maintained under the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

Civil and Environmental Enforcement Officers – These officers patrol the car parks and can issue penalty notices for parking contraventions, littering, and Public Open Space Protection Order offences.

4.0 – Well Maintained and Clean

Grounds maintenance – Maintenance tasks at the Racecourse are, with only a few exceptions, specified within the Council’s Ground Maintenance Contract. All activity conforms to the appropriate legislation through procurement, vetting of contractors and monitoring of contractors. 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 3**, along with other maintenance tasks. Weekly meetings are held between the Parks Officers and the contractor’s foreman, to review progress and plan for the week ahead, including variations to the work programme. The staff undertake and record inspections of grounds maintenance contract and monitor all aspects.

Table 3: Grounds maintenance summary

Maintenance Area	Description of Operations	Who
Litter control	All litter bins are checked and emptied and the site cleared of litter 364 days a year.	Grounds contractor
	Litter bins are washed monthly.	Grounds contractor
	The Ranger carries out additional litter picking as required as do the clubs as part of their agreements.	Rangers & clubs
	Fines for littering can be issued by various staff under the Clean Neighbourhoods Environmental Act 2005.	Council
Dog bins	Dog bins are emptied once a week.	Waste contractor
Dog control	Public Open Space Protection Orders (Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014) cover all of the aspects previous covered under the Dog Control Orders. More details can be found elsewhere in the document.	Council and Dog Warden
	Bag and flag days and responsible dog ownership days are held periodically to highlight to dog owners the need to bag up waste and to control their dogs.	Council
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 is removed as soon as possible.	Council
Playground	The playground equipment is inspected weekly by the grounds staff and a written report made.	Grounds contractor
	An annual independent inspection report	Contractor
	Routine repairs are instructed as required	Council
	A funded programme of capital renewals for all play equipment is in place.	

Table 3: Grounds maintenance summary

Life buoys	Lifebuoys are inspected weekly and a written report made.	Council
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. Fertiliser and pesticides are applied as required.	Grounds contractor

Building and asset maintenance – Table 4 lists the various buildings and assets and their management. 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 grounds building (and yard), Bowls Club buildings, and Mini Soccer Pavilion which are the responsibility of the respective leaseholders. Neither the Rugby Club pavilion or the Mini Soccer Pavilion are owned by the Council. Staff undertake inspections of these aspects.

Table 4: Building and asset management

Asset	Description of task	Who
Public toilets	The toilets are cleaned three times a day during the school summer holidays and twice a day at other times of year.	Contractor
	Inspection of the toilets recording the performance of the contractor.	Council
Land drainage	Manage the drainage outlets and river non return valves. Clean slit traps and clear debris and keep in working order.	Council
Tennis courts	Courts are maintained as required.	Grounds contractor
Mini golf	The course is prepared for use daily; the surrounding grass is maintained to an amenity standard.	Grounds contractor
Park furniture	All park benches and bins are checked and washed monthly and re-painted annually if required.	Grounds contractor
	Lifebuoys are inspected weekly by staff and a written report made.	Council
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.	Council Technical Services

Table 4: Building and asset management

Car parking	Managed directly by the Council's car parking team. Machines checked daily, in car parks.	Council Technical Services
	Car parking machine servicing and inspection.	Contractor
Baseball	Backstop net and diamond repair and maintenance.	Council
Skate park and ball court including lighting	The surfaces are inspected daily and weekly.	Grounds contractor
	Any repairs are reported and action taken.	Council
Outdoor table tennis	The tables are visually inspected for damage, action would be taken if there are any defects.	Licensee and Parks Officers to instruct annual inspections
Paths and hard surfaces	Sweeping is carried out twice a week. Herbicide application is carried out annually. Litter picking is carried out 364 days a year. Winter maintenance is carried out as needed.	Grounds contractor
Slipway	Inspected periodically.	Council
Maintenance building and yard	Leased to the contractor under a repairing lease.	Grounds Contractor
Kiosk	Maintenance and building repairs.	Council
Mini football pavilion and yard	Maintenance and repair. Land leased to the Mini Soccer Alliance.	Football Alliance

Equipment maintenance – All machinery is owned and maintained by the grounds maintenance contractor. All machinery is subject to a full maintenance and renewal programme; and has daily checks. All equipment conforms to health and safety standards and staff are fully trained in its operation. Council staff carry out ad-hoc recorded inspections of ground maintenance operations.

Land drainage and flooding – The site has a stream running along the northern 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 regularly occurs across the site during the winter months. The lowest lying area is the play area and tennis courts which can hold flood water for some weeks. The extent duration and impact of the seasonal flooding is monitored and the drainage is being recorded by the Council.

A field drainage pipe system is installed under the sports pitch areas and play area to allow drainage from these areas into the river and drainage ditches. During periods of flood when the river level is higher than the sportsground, and as a result drainage ditches are unable to discharge flood water into the river.

Maintenance of habitats and landscape – The Racecourse has natural assets such as it's a pond, hedgerows, woodland, scrub, river, streams and drainage ditches which require programmed monitoring and maintenance. These aspects are monitored by the staff, **Table 5** notes this programme of works.

Table 5: Maintenance of habitats and landscape

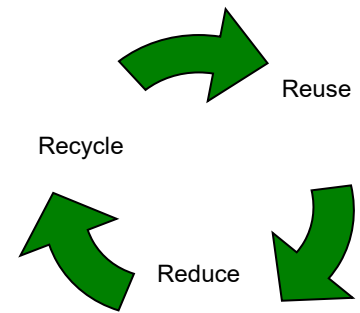
Task	Description of task	Who
Pond	Cleared of litter and floating debris monthly.	Grounds contractor
	Maintain the pond to stop the water becoming fully overgrown with vegetation.	Volunteers
River, streams and ditches	Fishing swims checked monthly and keep culverts clear of vegetation, swims maintained by the Tonbridge and District Angling and Fish Preservation Society.	Grounds contractor for checks and culverts Angling Society for swim maintenance
	Ditch vegetation maintained by removing vegetation and accumulation of leaves in different sections each year annually.	Grounds contractor
	Removing vegetation and silt from the ditch and river periodically to improve the flow of water.	Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board
	Clear litter and floating debris monthly.	Grounds contractor
Grassland margins and scrub	Grassland field margins cut back in rotation every 2-3 years.	Parks Officers to order from a contractor
	Scrub trimmed back to prevent encroachment onto paths annually, areas cut back to ground level in rotation every 2-3 years. (leave marginal vegetation along water courses to form a barrier).	
Hedgerows	The hedges are cut either once or twice a year, the timing and amount of the cuts will be dependant on plant species.	Grounds contractor

Table 5: Maintenance of habitats and landscape

Trees and woodland	Trees are inspected annually.	Parks Officers for basic inspections, grounds contractor for expert and immature tree inspections.
	Identified tree works carried out on a priority basis.	Parks Officers to order from a contractor
	Tinkers Island managed as a coppiced woodland, rotational cutting of trees to original stools every few years.	Parks Officers to order works from contractor

5.0 – Environmental Management

Corporate policy – The Council has a Climate change Strategy and a number of other related documents including a Sustainable Procurement Policy; technical guidance and; also takes into consideration the Council’s biodiversity duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The Plan has been written in accordance with the Council’s Corporate Purchasing Policy. At the time of publication the Council is developing a Green Infrastructure Policy.



The Climate change Strategy has a number of themes and most of those are relevant to the sportsground:

- Policy and engagement
- Sustainable development
- Transport
- Ultra-low emissions vehicles
- Air Quality
- Habitats and biodiversity
- Waste minimisation
- Community and business engagement
- TMBC estate

Below are a list of actions relevant to the site, but these ideas will continue to evolve and develop as we go forward.

Policy and engagement

- We have already undertaken a review of our current carbon footprint.
- Climate change and biodiversity is being considered in all reports.
- Carbon literacy training will be delivered for staff.

Sustainable development

- Sustainable urban drainage schemes will be considered for any new drainage projects

Transport

- A walking and cycling strategy is being developed with Kent Country Council
- Forms of transport to travel to the sportsground are monitored in our market survey
- We promote alternative means of travel to sportsground on our website including cycling
- Finger posts indicating walking routes to the site direct people from the High Street

Ultra-low emission vehicles

- Electrical vehicle chargers are being installed in car parks
- When the council replaces our fleet vehicles we are changing to ULEV

Air quality

- We are implementing a vehicle anti idling campaign
- When we replace small tools we will change to electric powered machines where practical

Habitats and biodiversity

During heat waves green areas such as parks in town centres are about 6 degrees cooler than the surrounding streets where there are just buildings and vehicles. By protecting existing habitats and enhancing biodiversity within the park, we can also increase species resilience against the impacts of climate change.

- The Council have adopted a Tree Charter
- We will restore the shrub bed by tennis courts to attract biodiversity
- We will continue tree and hedgerow planting where practical
- Investigate if more margins of the site can be left uncut or cut few times a year
- Investigate putting in pockets for water plants along the margin of the new wooden river revetments

Waste minimisation

- We use air hand driers in the toilets to reduce paper waste
- The toilets have Watergate units that automatically switch off
- Investigate a water bottle refill station to reduce waste from plastic bottles
- Any water leaks are reported and repaired as soon as possible
- Energy use readings are monitored

Community and business engagement

- We promote the climate change message to local business
- We have a webpage on climate change and annual action plans
- With Kent County Council we promote and support the Lower Carbon Across the South East initiative

TMBC Estate

- We use digital reporting for some records to reduce our carbon footprint
- We produce management plans like this one for our key sites
- Our main contractors have ISO 14001 environmental accreditation
- We work with our contractors to bring forward actions to address climate change
- We monitor and reduce chemical usage as much as reasonably practical
- Opportunities are provided for the public to engage with the natural world
- No peat is used on this site
- Green waste that is removed from site is recycled

Chemical use – Chemical use is vetted and usage is reduced or is kept to a minimum. Alternative methods of control including cultural controls are always considered and remain under annual review. A limited number of chemicals are used at the Racecourse by licensed operators to control turf pests, diseases; and weeds, as disinfectants and for graffiti removal. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health assessments 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 Racecourse is listed in **Appendix 8**. European Union Black and Red Listed Chemicals are not used.

6.0 – Management of Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

Site history – The site contains some historical boundary markers marking the boundary of the Tonbridge Town Lands, which is now interpreted with a sign. The original stone markers dated from 1575 and were replaced in 1904 with the present metal markers. The Racecourse was so named due to its original use for horse racing which was very popular at the turn of the century (1900). 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 has always been popular for playing sports and in 1920 the Tonbridge Sports Association was specifically formed to manage sports activities at the Racecourse, 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 forms Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground.



The Borough Council has since 1923, worked in partnership with the Tonbridge Sports Association to enhance the Racecourse for the benefit of sports clubs and the wider public.

In 1944 a Doodlebug V1 rocket, crash landed on Tinkers Island, after being tipped over with the wing of Spitfire aircraft, this action avoided bomb damage to the town.

Over the years the town has grown up around the Racecourse but, being within a flood plain and containing sports pitches, was never built upon. Today this green space begins 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, a pond 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 and shrubs with a wide bands of wildflowers along the base. These edge habitats form the ideal refuge for insects and animals. A baseline wildlife survey was commissioned from a field surveyor in 2009, and some these ideas have been implemented or incorporated into this plan. A range of species have been recorded on the site **Appendix 9**. With the help of volunteers our knowledge of the species present at the site is increasing. The key habitats present on the site have been noted in **Table 6** and species in **Table 7**. The Racecourse forms part of a wider wildlife corridor along the River Medway from the town of Tonbridge out into the countryside.



Local Authorities have a duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) to have regard to biodiversity in the exercise of their

functions (the biodiversity duty). Under section 41 of this same Act, Natural England lists several priority habitats. Several of these habitat types occur within Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground these are a national priority or valuable habitats.

- Hedgerows
- Ponds
- Rivers

The Council aims to increase biodiversity within parks and open spaces in line with the national policy and the Council’s Open Space Strategy. To paraphrase from these, greenspaces are of increasing importance to wildlife as a place where people come into contact with the natural world, and for wildlife and plants to thrive.

Habitats of importance – Tables 6 and 7 have the various columns which have asterisks indicating the importance of the habitat or species. The International/ European column indicate those covered by International and European law. National are those covered by United Kingdom law, such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act, or Countryside Rights of Way Act and or in the United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan. Regional/ local importance indicates those species which are important in Kent or the southeast region, they are species recorded in the Kent Red or Amber Data Books, or species that are scarce or if they are known to occur in Kent and are noted

Table 6: Key habitat types present in the Racecourse				
	<u>Importance</u>			
Habitat type	International / European	National	Regional / Local	Approx. area of Racecourse
Hedgerows		*	*	<1%
Unimproved grassland				<1%
Amenity grassland				93%
Rivers, ditches and streams		*	*	4%
Woodland/ scrub (broadleaf)			*	2%
(Based on the priority habitat types in section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and 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 (Appendix 2).				

within the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan. From time to time these tables will need updating when the ‘importance’ of a habitat or species changes.

Trees – The Racecourse contains a mixture of native (oak, ash etc.) and exotic (horse chestnut, flowering cherries etc.) species of trees; a number of mature and veteran oak, willow and ash specimens are also present. Some veteran willows have been pollard in the past to regenerate them and extend their life. See **Table 5** for

Table 7: Key species present within the Racecourse

Group and name	Importance			Habitat
	International / European	National	Regional / Local	
BIRDS				
Chiffchaff	*			Woodland, scrub
Herring gull		*		Grassland
House sparrow		*		Hedges, woodland
Starling		*		Scrub, woodland grassland
Song thrush		*	*	Woodland, grassland
PLANTS				
Mares tail			*	Damp areas
Sedge true fox		*	*	Wet ditches flooding in winter dry in summer, rivers and ponds
St John's wort perforate			*	Damp ditch/ hedgerow
St John's wort square stalked			*	Riverside damp areas
INVERTEBRATES				
Dark bush cricket			*	Hedgerows, rough grassland
Speckled bush cricket			*	Hedges, scrub, leaf litter
Damselfly white legged			*	Ponds, ditches and streams
Damselfly large red			*	Ponds, ditches streams, and bogs
MAMMALS				
Bat species	*	*	*	Woodland, rivers
Wood mouse			*	Woodland, hedgerow
AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES				
Smooth newt		*		Pond, ditches, hide under fallen logs
Slow worm		*	*	Rough grassland
Grass snake		*	*	Rivers/ wet ditches, Rough grassland



management details.

Topography features and soils – The Racecourse 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) - gravel with soil comprising mainly stone less 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

7.0 – Community Involvement

Visitor surveys – Have been carried out in 1999, 2003, 2009, 2012, 2016 and 2022. These are used to profile visitors and provide data on customer satisfaction, facilities, suggested improvements, and establish trends. The 2022 findings have been incorporated into this Management Plan.



At the Racecourse Sportsground between July and September 2022, 400 face-to-face interviews of groups were completed (made up of 1,118 individuals) with the results highlighting very high levels of customer satisfaction since the last survey.

Key results from the 2022 survey include:

- 99.8% of visitors were satisfied
- 55% of groups visited with a child as in 2016
- Most people were in the 35-44 age group as in 2016
- 10% of the visitor groups had someone with a disability
- 50% lived within 1 mile of the site

Suggestions for improvements include:

- Improvements to the toilets, cleaner and safe, nearer to the play area
- Improved facilities
- Bigger better cafe
- More seats, and better maintained



Whilst the above surveys are very useful at giving an overall impression of visitor patterns, it has limitations and we are unable to calculate accurately annual visitor numbers or establish daily patterns of use, or trends in usage.

Tonbridge Sports Association – The Association is actively involved in the representation and development of sports clubs using the Racecourse and meet with the Council every six weeks to discuss issues. The minutes from these meetings are distributed to the Council and the Association.

Tonbridge Model Engineering Society – The group are all unpaid volunteers. The first track was built in this location in 1951 and 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 be found at <http://micklow.wixsite.com/tmes>

Tonbridge Junior Football Club & Tonbridge Mini Soccer Alliance – The club and alliance are both run by volunteers: with the Club being one of the largest in Kent. The Clubs focus is on young people, and together they run a variety of soccer related activities throughout the year (**Table 9**). The Mini Soccer Alliance raised the funds to build and maintain the Regal Pavilion. Their website can be found at www.tjfc.co.uk

Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Football Club – The club runs three senior Men sides. The 1st XV, is a Level 4 Club in the RFU national structure whilst all other Senior teams compete in competitive Merit Tables (75+ senior players). The club also enters the Kent County cup competitions. The club has a thriving Youth and Minis sections, (100+ players U16-U18), (400+ players U6-U15) with matches or training sessions on Sundays throughout the season for Under 6s all the way through to an Academy structure. There is also a Women's section who have a full list of league fixtures with training, and have training for Girls aged between 10 and 18. They have a website at <http://www.tjrjc.co.uk/>

Tonbridge & District Angling & Fish Preservation Society – The Society are licenced by the Council to control the fishing rights within the Racecourse, as well the rights around Tonbridge. The Society was formed in 1875 and has around 2,000 members. The licence allows the Society to control their own closed season at a time to benefit the fish such as during fish spawning. The Society supervises the angling by employing water bailiffs, and charging for membership or for day tickets. They have a website at www.tonbridge-angling.co.uk/

Tonbridge Parkrun – The national scheme was introduced in the Racecourse in 2013. The scheme aims to encourage local people to run 5 kilometres each week. The concession is organised by volunteers and there is no charge to take part. The 5 kilometre event takes place every Saturday morning at 9am and covers a route from the Racecourse to Haysden Country Park and back. This has proved very popular, regularly attracting around 500 people per week. They have a website at www.parkrun.org.uk/tonbridge/

Tonbridge Canoe Club – Formed in 1977 to promote the various disciplines of canoeing from its base on the River Medway opposite Tonbridge Castle. The Club meets every Saturday morning throughout the year, and on various weekday evenings for race training and general Club sessions. The club assist with community river litter picks often getting to places inaccessible by land. Their website can be found at <http://www.tonbridgecanooclub.org.uk/>



Tonbridge Baseball Club – The club have a home pitch at Racecourse and play on a regular basis. Their website can be found at <http://www.tonbridgebaseball.com>

Walks for Well-being – Formerly called the ‘Health Walks Scheme’ the renamed initiative encourages people to enjoy their local open spaces while socialising and getting or keeping fit. The Council’s Healthy Living Team run the scheme every week, which are led by a group of trained volunteer walk leaders, with around 18,000 miles collectively walked every year. For more information visit www.tmbc.gov.uk email healthy.living@tmbc.gov.uk or call 01732 876077.

Tonbridge Volleyball Club - The club run outdoor training sessions at the sportsground during the summer. For more information visit www.tonbridgevc.teamapp.com

Epic Life Paddle Boarding - The company have licence to run sessions on the rivers around the site. For more information visit www.epiclifeco.uk

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (volunteer river wardens) – The Medway Valley Countryside Partnership organise volunteers from the local community to carry out regular litter patrols and record wildlife along the River Medway and organise ‘River Round-up’ events, where the public assist with litter picking. For more information visit www.medwayvalley.org

Local educational establishments – At present the Racecourse 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.

Corporate social responsibility – This is promoted via our volunteering leaflet and the Green Business Award is promoted to local businesses.

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 8**.

Copies of the Management Plan Consultation Draft were sent to:

- Stakeholders (**Table 10**)
- All other interested persons

This Management Plan was made available to view at the Council’s offices at Kings Hill, and at Tonbridge Castle. 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.

Table 8: Timetable for consultation

Action	Timescale
Internal consultation (including the Tonbridge Sports Association)	October 2023
Report with the consultation draft to the Councils Community and Environmental Scrutiny Select Committee	7 February 2024
Public consultation	Ends March 2024
Report to the Council committee with the results of consultation	22 May 2024
Plan amended to reflect agreed changes	June 2024
Publication of final Management Plan	June 2024

8.0 – Marketing and Communication

Marketing strategy aim – Encourage visitors to the Racecourse from the local area using local press releases and articles, and the Racecourse's webpage, and through advertisements of activities for young people, and events.

Publications – The Council markets the Racecourse as a local facility with the principal means of marketing being through: the Council's website; through press releases, social media and event publications.

Racecourse webpage – The Racecourse's webpage can be found at www.tmbc.gov.uk/TRS. The webpage gives details about the Racecourse facilities and services.

Signage – A network of waymarking signage directs pedestrians from the town centre towards the Racecourse and to the children's play area.

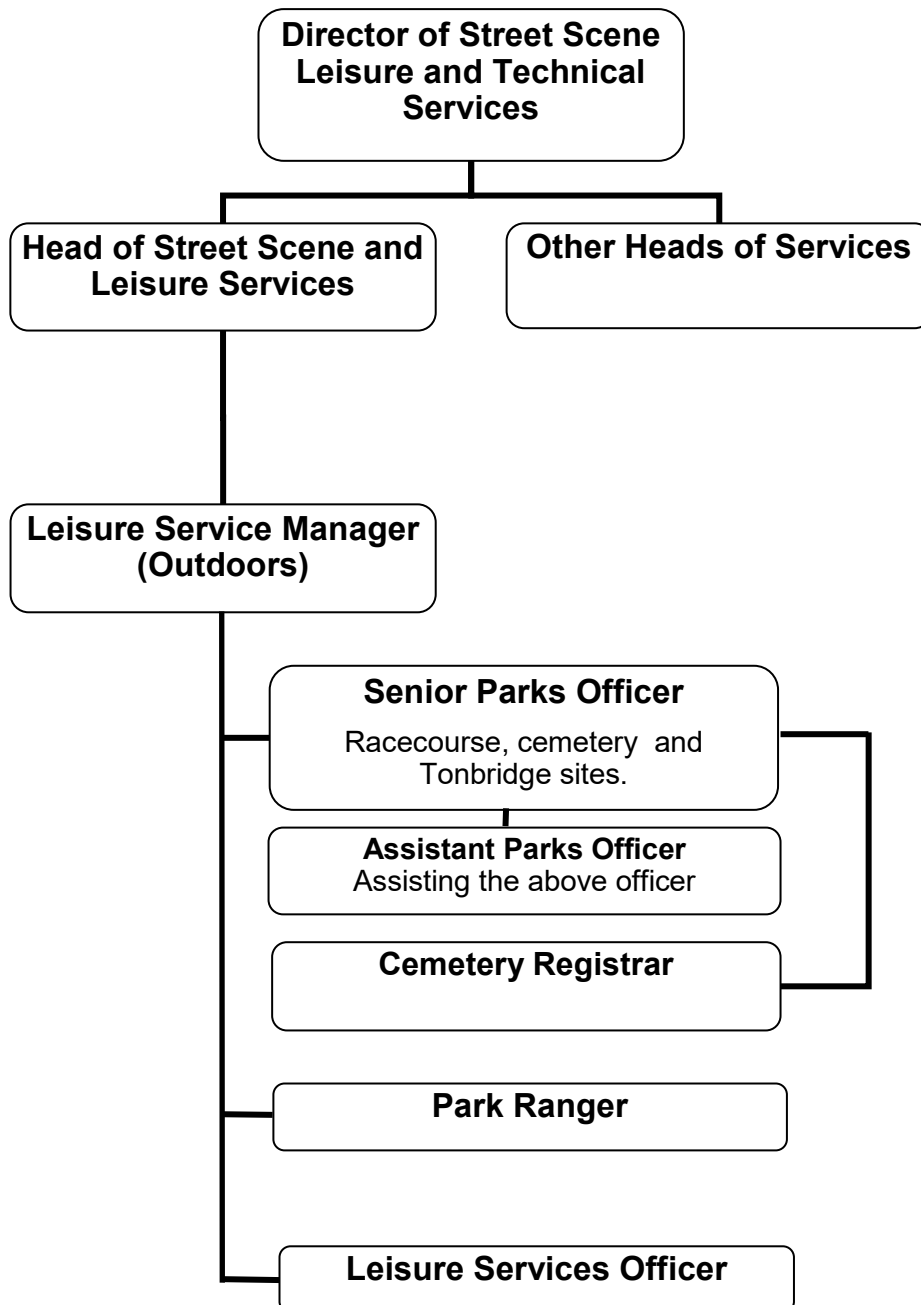
Events – A number of events are run at the Racecourse each year. Most events are run by local community volunteers, the events from 2022, which is a typical year, are listed in **Table 9**.

Table 9: Examples of annual events and activities

Event/ Activity	Frequency
Walks for Well-being	Weekly
Mason Mile	Twice a year
Parkrun	Every Saturday
River Round-up (litter pick) - Medway Valley Countryside Partnership	Annual
Tonbridge Calling	Annual
Food and drink festival	Annual
Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Football Club - Schools Tag festival	Annual
Self led walk Christmas	Once
Self led walk Easter	Once
Self led walk Halloween	Once
Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Football Club - Touch Rugby leisure event	Annual
Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Football Club - Coaching Course (tutoring novice rugby coaches)	Annual
Tonbridge Junior Football Club - Football Fiesta	Annual
Tonbridge Junior Football Club - Presentation Day and open day	Annual
Walk Tonbridge festival	Annual
Oktoberfest (German food and drink festival)	Annual
Tonbridge charity fireworks (Tonbridge Lions)	Annual

9.0 – Management

Management structure – Major policy issues will be determined by the Council through recommendations made by the Communities and Environmental Scrutiny Select Committee, then endorsed by the Council’s Cabinet as appropriate. These are implemented by the Street Scene, Leisure and Technical Services Directorate. The management structure is shown below:



Management of the Racecourse is carried out by the Council in liaison with a number of other Council departments and partners.

The existing partners are as follows:

- Tonbridge Sports Association – sports club liaison and pitch layout
- Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust – tenancies for pitch bookings, running of the Games Hut/ kiosk for catering, tennis courts and mini golf

Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust – Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council leisure facilities are managed on behalf of the Council by Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust. The trust is a charitable, not-for-profit organisation. Several aspects of this site are managed directly by the Trust: tenancies for pitch bookings; running the kiosk and catering, tennis courts and mini golf.

Out of Hours Service – 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 a form for the public on the Council’s website www.tmbc.gov.uk

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, equality training (access for all, anti discrimination) and health and safety training.

Contractors – A range of commercial companies and local organisations already contribute to the management of the site, **Tables 2 and 10**.

Stakeholders – Various groups have an interest in the site and have been consulted on the development and production of this Management Plan. These organisations may also be consulted on issues relating to the ongoing development on site and are listed in alphabetical order in **Table 10**.

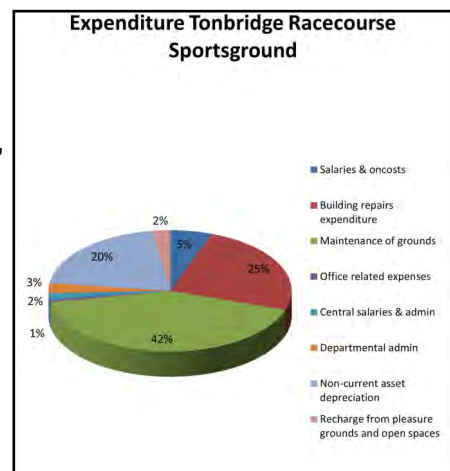
Table 10: List of Stakeholders for the Racecourse

Name of Organisation
Emergency services
Environment Agency
Friends of the Earth
Walks for wellbeing - One you
Kent County Council – West Kent Area Office (Public Rights of Way)
Kent Wildlife Trust
Landscape Services
Local schools
Medway Valley Countryside Partnership
Mini Soccer Alliance
Network Rail
Parkrun
South East Water
SHS
Tonbridge and District Angling and Fish Preservation Society
Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust (TMActive)
Tonbridge & Tunbridge Wells Dementia Friendly Community
Tonbridge Baseball Club
Tonbridge Canoe Club
Tonbridge Civic Society
Tonbridge Juddians Rugby Football Club
Tonbridge Lions
Tonbridge Model Engineering Society
Tonbridge Sports Association (representing the sports clubs)
Tonbridge Town Lands and Richard Mylls Charity
Tonbridge Volleyball club
Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board
Urbaser Ltd

Racecourse budget –

Maintenance cost of the Racecourse Sportsground is 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 10**.

Income is generated from a variety of sources including the fees and charges for sports pitch hire, catering and kiosk sales that are all collected and retained by the Leisure Trust, and are included within the budget at **Appendix 10**. Income from car parking and events is also not recorded there, because it does not relate solely to the use of Racecourse Sportsground.



The budget is reviewed annually and will take account of any price increases in the contracts. As for all Council services, the Racecourse competes for resources alongside other services provided by the Council. It is noted that additional funding is sought 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 and installing a children’s play equipment, revetment work, bridge work and drainage work, these projects have mainly been funded through the Council’s Capital Plan, grants and partnership funding.

External funding – The Council, regularly applies for grants from external organisations to fund projects. The Council seek developer contributions from planning applications in the town centre where no on site public open space provision is possible, and these contributions are used to improve the site. There is also a public scheme to sponsor seats at the site which has been very successful. Kent County Council has also provide funding for tree planting.

Rules – We ask that Racecourse users observe some simple guidelines when visiting to ensure that the majority of peoples enjoyment is not unduly effected by a few.

These rules are set out below:

Commercial/ community activities – Any commercial/ community activities (commercial are those that make a profit) that are conducted at the Racecourse, must have the written permission of the Council, and will require an agreement or licence in place. It is at the Council’s complete discretion which activities will be approved.

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

Car parking – Cars are restricted to parking in designated car parks and are not permitted elsewhere in the Racecourse without written consent.

Anti-social behaviour – Aspects such as littering, fly posting, fly tipping and graffiti are covered in **Table 3**.

Helicopter landing, model aircraft, ballooning and drones – The Racecourse is on the direct flight path for commercial airlines and their use could be dangerous to users of the Racecourse therefore no unauthorised use is permitted.

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.

Public Open Space Protection orders where fix penalty notices and fines apply:

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 Racecourse.

No unauthorised drones - No person may operate a drone from any open space owned by the Borough Council without first obtaining authorisation from the Borough Council.

No unauthorised camping – This activity is not allowed in the Racecourse.

No dog fouling – It is an offence for dog owners/ walkers to not clean up when their dog fouls in the Racecourse, and to correctly dispose of this waste.

No dogs in the play area – Dogs are not permitted inside the fenced children’s play area of the Racecourse, as they can cause distress and alarm to young children.

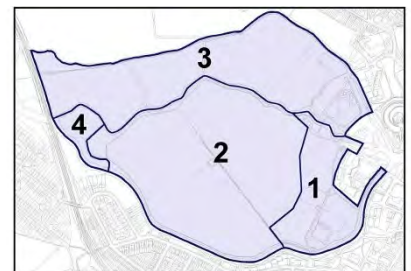
Dogs on lead by direction – If a dog is causing a nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to other people or to wildlife, dogs must be kept on a lead if the owner is instructed to do so by an authorised person.

Maximum number of dogs – The total number of dogs permitted that one person can take onto the Racecourse is six dogs and they must ensure that they have full control and do not allow them to cause alarm or distress to other people.

Controlled alcohol zone – It is an offence to fail to comply with a requested by an authorised officer to cease drinking or surrender alcohol within the Racecourse.

Public urination/ defecation – It is an offence to urinate or defecate within the Racecourse. Toilets are provided.

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, kiosk, mini golf, skate park, ball court, outdoor gym, former bowling green and four hard surfaced tennis courts. The area also contains the events field and maintenance building. The events field is for casual use and ad-hoc events and excludes regular formal sports. The whole 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, and mini football. 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 football pavilion is located at the centre of this compartment and volleyball court to one side. 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, dry ditch 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. There is a small pond near the east boundary. 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 with trees that have in the past been coppiced. The island is separated from the main site by water courses and open drainage ditches but is accessible from the main site via two bridges. The land has potentially higher wildlife value, than the southern end of the site. An interpretation sign about the wood is present at the location.



10.0 – Constraining Factors, Policies and SWOT Analysis

Limiting factors – Every facility has constraints on the management of the site and limitations to the services it can provide. The Overall Aim, ensures the site is suitable to play a wide range of sports, has open space for recreation, and a home for a wide range of wildlife these fundamentally limit the other activities and development that can take place at this site. The Racecourse also has the following constraints and limitations:

Flood plain – Being part of the River Medway flood plain, the Racecourse is subject to significant periods of flooding.

Car parking capacity – Car parking spaces in the car parks nearest to the site regularly reach capacity, at peak times.

Water abstraction area – The use of fertilizers, and pesticides to promote grass growth, control sports turf pests, diseases and weeds, 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).

Planning restrictions – The Racecourse is designated as publicly accessible open space to be protected (Policy OS1A in the Council’s Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document) and lies within the Green Belt outside of the confines of Tonbridge.

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 the Racecourse in 1923 and for water abstraction from the whole of the site in 1988. In 1988 a restrictive covenant was also made that Deacons Field shall be ‘kept

solely as playing fields’.

Existing leasehold/ agreements – The following clubs are long-term and established users for parts of the site:

- Mini Soccer Alliance – football pavilion
- Tonbridge & District Angling and Fish Preservation Society – fishing along the River Medway
- 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 5**.





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

Budget – The Racecourse has its own revenue budget that covers the basic maintenance of the site (see **Appendix 10**). Management, maintenance and development carried out within the Racecourse is therefore limited in relation to available funding. At present the income generated from the sports usage of the site offers only limited income recovery. The infrastructure elements of the Racecourse require expenditure such as replacing dog bins, resurfacing paths, and replacing play equipment. With the exception of the play equipment, there is a limited amount of additional council funding available for this.

Site security and patrolling – Limited staff are available for patrolling and this resource is shared with Haysden Country Park and other Tonbridge sites.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) – **Table 11** identifies the main strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats at Racecourse Sportsground.

Table 11: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths 	Weaknesses 
<p>Tonbridge Sports Association</p> <p>Well organised and successful clubs</p> <p>Over 100 volunteer sports club helpers</p> <p>Regular reviews of sports pitch usage</p> <p>Capital investment</p> <p>High use of sports pitches by young people</p> <p>A good range of casual facilities (ball court, skate park, play area and outdoor gym)</p> <p>Good level of usage and high levels of satisfaction</p> <p>Connection to the Tudor Trail Cycle Route</p> <p>Parking and easy walking access from town centre</p> <p>Visitor surveys with a high satisfaction levels</p> <p>Playing Pitch & Open Space Strategies</p> <p>Quality of provision</p> <p>Water Safety Strategy</p> <p>Grounds maintenance contractor based on site</p> <p>Developer contributions</p> <p>Performance of the contractors</p>	<p>Limited income recovery from charged facilities</p> <p>No indoor seating for the refreshment service</p> <p>Limited marketing with no road signage</p> <p>Seasonal flooding with high water table</p> <p>River bank erosion</p> <p>Deteriorating condition of paths</p> <p>Limited volunteering outside of sports</p> <p>Low usage of the tennis courts</p> <p>Car parking capacity low at peak times</p> <p>Limited areas to increase biodiversity</p> <p>Location and condition of toilets</p>
Opportunities 	Threats 
<p>Developer contributions</p> <p>More volunteering</p> <p>Retender of the grounds maintenance contract</p> <p>Improve marketing/ signage</p> <p>Increase biodiversity long grass/ wildflower areas</p> <p>More tree, scrub and hedge planting</p> <p>Covered refreshment facilities and toilets</p> <p>Improve tennis courts</p> <p>Develop connections to the river views and usage</p> <p>Expand the range of recreational facilities provided</p> <p>Income generation through events</p> <p>External funding</p> <p>Increase parking to serve the site</p> <p>Improvements to paths and seating</p> <p>Improvements to bridges</p> <p>Improvements to river banks</p> <p>New use for former Bowling Green area</p> <p>Review staff presence</p> <p>Improve the recovery of the site after flooding</p>	<p>Financial constraints</p> <p>River bank erosion with the loss of amenity land</p> <p>Site flooding more frequently, and loss of land for sports</p> <p>Maintenance costs increasing due to high demand and increased user numbers</p> <p>Anti social behaviour</p> <p>Fluctuations in demand for sports</p> <p>Fluctuations in demand for informal activities</p> <p>Pollution of water bodies and water supply</p> <p>Land and water based invasive species</p>

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

Part 2 - Where do you want to get to?

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

The Council intends managing the site in accordance with the Green Flag Award standards and as such our aims and objectives are reflective of the Award criteria.

11.0 Management plan aim & objectives

The overall aim - To provide a site for the health and enjoyment of the local community with a balance of use between formal and informal uses: to include the development of formal and casual recreation and enhancement of its conservation and heritage.

Objectives - This Aim will be achieved through management focused on the following key objectives:

- A well managed site.
- A welcoming site.
- A healthy, safe and secure site.
- A well maintained and clean site.
- An environmentally managed site.
- A site that addresses biodiversity, landscape and heritage.
- A site that encourages community involvement
- A site with good marketing and communication.

Each of these objectives may give rise to several projects, with tasks or actions 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 will require a range of projects to achieve them and these are highlighted within the Five-year Work Programme at **Table 12**.

Projects are specific areas of work that may require investigation, costing, identification of funding and in some cases several tasks to complete them. The feasibility stage of this process will ultimately determine whether the project is implemented.

The Programme that follows indicates the compartments (**Appendix 2**) in which specific projects will be applied and the estimated year they will be implemented. All projects have also been given year/s for implementation and a priority which is based around the Council's objectives, and where funding is the limiting factor, these priorities will be used to determine which projects go ahead.

13.0 Annual Action Plans

More detailed one-year Action Plans will be drawn up on an annual basis and will be produced in accordance with the Five Year Work Programme. The Annual Action Plan will contain details of what exactly is to be done, when and by whom and will be included in later updates of this plan at **Appendix 12**.



Table 12 Five-year Work Programme - Project List

Project No	Description
1	Green Flag Award application
2	Annual action plan
3	Budget control
4	Budget considerations
5	Investigate new opportunities for partnerships and income streams
6	Facility improvements
7	Tonbridge Sports Association
8	Concessions
9	Visitor survey
10	Community involvement
11	Grounds maintenance and other contracts
12	Water Safety Strategy
13	Health and safety aspects
14	Site specific risk assessments
15	Basic tree inspections
16	Expert tree inspections
17	Access audit 2022
18	New access audit
19	Walks for Well-being
20	Paths
21	Park furniture
22	Plant more trees and hedges
23	Buildings and assets
24	Control of pest species
25	Dog and litter bin usage
26	Catering rights
27	Angling rights
28	Tennis court improvements
29	Habitat management

Project No	Description
30	Sustainability
31	Waste reduction
32	Habitat and landscape management
33	Renewal of play equipment
34	Improvements to the children's play area/ skate park
35	Cleanliness
36	Site signage
37	Expand informal facility provision
38	Grounds maintenance contract
39	Fisheries improvements
40	Ranger
41	Wildlife and wildflower and monitoring
42	Bridge inspections
43	Developer contributions
44	External organisations
45	Car parking provision
46	Marketing and communication
47	Pesticide and chemical usage
48	Review of site boundaries
49	Programme of activities and events in the sportsground
50	Events income
51	Pitch locations/ sizes
52	Road signage and directions to the Racecourse
53	River planting and bank protection

Project No	Description
54	Automated visitor footfall counters
55	Tinkers Island coppicing
56	Goals for sports pitches
57	Public space protection orders
58	Land drainage
59	Flooding
60	Replace flood lighting
61	Tudor trail cycle route
62	Review cycling provision within the site
63	Fees and charges
64	New use for the Bowling Green area
65	Notice boards
66	Bridge replacement 1
67	Bridge replacement 2
68	Veteran tree work
69	Flagpole for Green Flag Award
70	Outdoor tables for board games
71	Water bottle filling station
72	Interpretation and marketing plan
73	Climate change initiatives
74	End of year review
75	New management plan

Table 12 : Five Year Work Programme

Key: R= Revenue, C= Capital, G= Grant, J= Joint funding opportunity, N= No cost overheads only, S= Sponsorship (income), I= Income, K= in kind donation of time

Priorities : 1 high priority, 2, 3 to 4 lowest priority

Proposed year ●

Progress colours: completed = **green**, started but incomplete = **amber**, not started = **red**.

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
1	Green Flag Award application - Submit application for the award, which is judged annually against the criteria used as the objectives within	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
2	Annual Action Plan - Review the plan, and prepare a new Annual Action Plan for the forthcoming year.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
3	Budget control - Manage the site budget in line with the adopted Revenue and Capital Plan. Prepare budget estimate projections based on estimated expenditure and income on an annual basis.	1	All	R, C	●	●	●	●	●
4	Budget considerations - Explore opportunities within all new projects, and existing management of the sportsground, to reduce expenditure/ generate new income.	1	All	R, G	●	●	●	●	●
5	Investigate new opportunities for partnerships and income streams - Investigate opportunities to work with other organisations, and to generate new income to improve and develop the site and in order to make the site financially sustainable.	1	All	N, I, J	●	●	●	●	●
6	Facility improvements - Investigate enhancements of catering and retail outlet at the Games Kiosk, and the other suggestions made in the market survey results, toilets, lighting, CCTV, paths and water drinking etc.	2	1	C, J, G, I		●	●		

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
7	Tonbridge Sports Association - Attend regular meetings, to seek the views of users on how the site is managed and future improvements linked to demand and any gaps in provision.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
8	Concessions - Liaise and support the on-site concessions, including arranging regular meetings.	1	All	R, I	●	●	●	●	●
9	Visitor survey - Commission a new survey and compare results with the last survey from 2022.	1	All	R				●	
10	Community involvement - Explore opportunities to involve more volunteers at the site.	2	All	R, K, G	●	●	●	●	●
11	Grounds maintenance and other contracts - Implement the work and monitor contracts as necessary and report on progress and defects, including all the work in Tables 3, 4 and 5.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
12	Water Safety Strategy - Implement the actions identified in the Water Safety Strategy Action Plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a natural barrier protection along sections of the river • Consider if nag signage is required 	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
13	Health and safety aspects - Carry out a formal site inspection with the H&S Officer, act on any findings within the report. Develop inspection regime for bridges. Ensure that organisations using the site have current public liability insurance cover at an appropriate level.	1	All	N	●				
14	Site specific risk assessments - Continue to review and develop the suite of site specific risk assessments.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
15	Basic tree inspections - Carry out basic tree inspections in line with the Tree Safety Strategy and implement as appropriate.	1	All	R	●	●		●	●
16	Expert tree inspections - Carry out tree inspections in line with the Tree Safety Strategy and implement as appropriate.	1	All	R			●		
17	Access audit 2022. - Progressively implement the actions within the Access Audit in accordance with the priorities within the Access Audit, to promote fairness of access, as funding permits.	2	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
18	New access audit - Undertake a new Access Audit of the sportsground utilising the Councils Access Officer, to promote fairness of access, in preparation for the next management plan.	2	All	R					●
19	Walk for Well being - Continue to support the year round twice weekly walks, utilising the trained volunteer walk leaders and working with the Healthy Living team.	3	All	R, G, K	●	●	●	●	●
20	Paths - Assess the need for path resurfacing and repairs, progress as funding permits, on an annual basis. Consider the width and type of paths in relation to their uses.	3	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
21	Park furniture - Ensure existing furniture is maintained in good order and investigate the installation of additional litter and dog bins, benches and picnic tables as required. Implement the sponsored seat scheme if enquires from the public arise.	1	All	R, S, G, C	●	●	●	●	●

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
22	Plant more trees and hedges - Where appropriate create hedgerows (instead of fences), and plant more trees. To create shade, wildlife corridors and reduce the need for fences.	3	All	R, G, K	●	●	●	●	●
23	Buildings and assets - Ensure buildings, structures and park furniture are monitored regularly and maintained as required.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
24	Control of pest species - Keep invasive alien species (non-natives) and those classed in law as 'pests' under control for example: Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam, Hemlock, Japanese Knotweed, Rabbits, Ragwort and Rats.	2	All	R, S	●	●	●	●	●
25	Dog and litter bin usage - Monitor usage, placement and capacity around the site, and make changes that are the most cost effective.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
26	Catering rights - Review catering opportunities at the site.	1	1	I, J, S	●	●			
27	Angling rights - Consider the licence before the review date and the income opportunities.	1	All	I			●		
28	Tennis court improvements - Investigate upgrading the courts, consider also automated smart access/ booking systems, to increase usage and ease of booking, in liaison with the Trust. See the Lawn Tennis Association website www.lta.org.uk	1	1	G, I	●	●			

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
29	Habitat management - Consider where wildflower areas could be left to grow or planted around the edges of the fields to improve their potential for biodiversity. Consider the other management actions suggested in Appendix 9 .	3	All	R, G, K		●		●	
30	Sustainability - Ensure the sportsground is run as sustainably as possible, use peat free compost, Forestry Stewardship Council timber, recycling, re-use of green waste materials, and minimal chemical use. Where practical move to using electric equipment, See section 5.0 for more information.	2	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
31	Waste reduction - Explore potential for recycling/ reducing litter waste and investigating environmentally sound solutions.	3	All	R		●	●		
32	Habitat and landscape management - Ensure the sportsgrounds habitats are maintained to minimise disturbance from visitors and to protect key species. See Table 5 for more information.	2	All	N	●	●	●	●	●
33	Renewal of play equipment - Replace play equipment and impact absorbing surfaces as required. <i>Note: consider inclusive provision</i> and consider the market survey suggestions <i>when replacing equipment and surfacing</i> .	2	1	C	●	●	●	●	●
34	Improvements to the children's play area and skate park - Improve the children's play area, consider the market survey suggestions by adding more variety of play and skate features for a range of ages, providing increased play opportunities, and inclusive provision such as sensory items and inclusive play equipment, subject to funding. See illustrations.	2	1	G, J, C		●	●		
35	Cleanliness - Ensure the sportsground is cleaned. See Table 3 for more information.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
36	Site signage - Review the current site signage and replace/upgrade where appropriate.	3	All	R, S	●	●	●	●	●
37	Expand informal facility provision - Consider expanding the amount of outdoor gym equipment.	3	All	G			●	●	●
38	Grounds maintenance contract - The retender of this contract offers opportunities to adapt and change the way we do some things, the current document will be reviewed and revised as part of the retender process.	1	All	R	●				
39	Fisheries improvements - Consider options for fishery development and improvement making appropriate adaptations in order to maximise income from the angling rights. Consider additional disabled access swims if appropriate. Work to be carried out in phases.	4	All	R, G, I	●	●	●	●	●
40	Ranger - Ensure staffing levels are maintained to provide an efficient service and the actions outlined in this Management Plan and to the accreditation standards.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
41	Wildlife and wildflower monitoring - Collect & record information on wildlife and flora for visiting and present species in the sportsground and report the findings to the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre. Set up a regular monitoring programme, paying particular attention to any rare and protected species, and where possible record the location of sightings in liaison with Kent Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Medway Valley Countryside Partnership and other local wildlife organisations.	2	All	R, K	●	●	●	●	●

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
42	Bridge inspections - Carry out formal inspections of the bridges and repair as necessary.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
43	Developer contributions - Investigate and pursue opportunities for investment to the site from developer contributions.	2	All	C	●	●	●	●	●
44	External organisations - Liaise with external organisations such as the Tonbridge Sports Association, Police, and the Environment Agency and ensure work carried out in the site is in line with the Management Plan.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
45	Car parking provision - Investigate opportunities to extend/ enhance parking provision in the existing car parks that surround the site at peak times.	3	1	C	●	●	●	●	●
46	Marketing and communication - Ensure the sportsground, and the events and activities taking place, are well promoted through the use of articles, press releases, adverts, local posters and in the Council's publications.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
47	Pesticide and chemical usage - Investigate alternative pest, weed control methods and chemicals where appropriate and practical with the grounds contractors and others.	2	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
48	Review the site boundaries - Along internal and external boundaries make provision to repair, paint, replace or remove fences, and gates and maintain or plant more hedging if more appropriate. Consider planting new hedging to screen and fill gaps in the existing hedge along waterworks boundary.	2	All	R	●	●	●	●	●

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
49	Programme of activities and events in the sportsground - Run events at the sportsground that: engage the public in our work; encourage healthy living; link to national sporting promotions; promote environmental awareness and; interpretation of the sportsground. Also encourage and support applications for appropriate events from recognised organisations and clubs. <i>Note ensure that public liability insurance and risk assessments are in place before events.</i>	2	All	R, I, J	●	●	●	●	●
50	Events income - Investigate appropriate opportunities to run income generating events at the sportsground.	2	All	J, S, I	●	●	●	●	●
51	Pitch locations/ sizes - Review and relocate sports pitches, and practice areas annually to reflect demand and spread wear across the site in liaison with the Tonbridge Sports Association.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
52	Road signage and directions to the Racecourse - Investigate options to improve road signage and directions to the Racecourse to make it easier for visitors to find the sportsground. Subject to funding implement the findings.	2	N/A	R				●	●
53	River planting and bank protection - Continue with next phases around selective areas of the river bank where erosion has occurred, carry out planting and bank protection works, (see illustration below) to create a healthy river eco system, for aesthetic reasons, to attract a wide range of wildlife.	2	All	R, G, K	●	●	●	●	●

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
54	Automated visitor footfall counters - Investigate the feasibility of a footfall counter system around the site. Better visitor number monitoring would provide accurate usage numbers, useful for future investment by proving that the site is well used, and can be used to target resources. Install if feasible and funding allows.	3	All	R, G		●	●		
55	Tinkers island coppicing - carry out rotational coppicing in this woodland as funding allows.	3	4	R		●		●	
56	Goals for sports pitches - carry out condition inspections and replace goal posts as required.	1	All	R	●	●	●	●	●
57	Public Space Protection Orders - Promote to raise awareness and enforce the Orders that apply to the site in particular those for dog control.	1	All	N	●	●	●	●	●
58	Land drainage - Keep existing drainage systems in working order by removing silt, dead trees, undergrowth as required to avoid flooding.	2	All	N	●	●	●	●	●
59	Flooding - Evaluate the report on land drainage and flooding at the site and consider the feasibility of any adaptations or improvements that can be made. Implement if feasible and agreed and funding allows.	2	All	C, R	●	●			
60	Replace floodlighting - for the ballcourt and skatepark replace the lighting when this reaches the end of its lifespan.	3	2	C				●	
61	Tudor Trail Cycle route - Consider partnership opportunities and establish maintenance needs.	3	3	J		●	●		

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
62	Review cycling provision within the site - Re-consider the options and cycling restrictions though the sportsground, but ensuring that any changes do not negatively impact on the sportsground and its other users. Also consider this as part of the wider KCC Kent Cycling Strategy when this is reviewed.	4	All	C, J		●	●		
63	Fees and charges - Review fees and charges annually to maximise income and recover costs where practical to do so. Including review of pitch tenancy agreements, leases, membership and activity fees.	1	All	I, R	●	●	●	●	●
64	New uses for the Bowling green area - Investigate options for new uses and implement.	1	1	R, I	●	●			
65	Notice boards - Provide additional notice boards to display information to the public about events, and relevant information about the site.	3	1	R	●	●	●		
66	Bridge replacement 1 - Replace the Memorial Garden bridge when it becomes beyond economic repair. Add to the Capital Plan and proceed as necessary and as funding allows.	1	1	C			●		●
67	Bridge replacement 2 - Replace the Maintenance building bridge when it becomes beyond economic repair. Add to the Capital Plan and proceed as necessary and as funding allows.	1	1	C			●		●
68	Veteran tree work - Consider options to extend the life of the veteran trees on site, and carry this out if considered feasible and funding allows.	1	All	R	●	●	●		
69	Flagpole for the Green Flag Award - Provide a flagpole to fly the Green Flag.	3	1	R, S	●				

Project No	Project	Priority	Compartment	Funding	Year to implement				
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
70	Outdoor tables for board games - Provide outdoor games table/s for chess or other games near to the play area as funding allows. (See illustration below.)	3	1	R, G, S		●			●
71	Water bottle filling station - investigate the feasibility of installing one at the site and if agreed install as funding permits.	1	1	R	●				
72	Interpretation and marketing plan - Implement projects with the plan Appendix 13 as funding permits.	1	2	R, C	●	●	●	●	●
73	Climate change initiatives - Implement projects if agreed and when funding permits.	2	All	R, C	●	●	●	●	●
74	End of year review - At the end of each year review the plan and update it to ensure that the plan is still relevant.	1	All	N	●	●	●	●	●
75	New management plan - Carry out and end of plan review and produce the next sportsground management plan for the period 2029 - 2033. Consult the public on the draft plan before adoption of the final plan by the Council.	2	All	R				●	●

Example illustrations for projects



Smart access for tennis court



Climbing rocks



Outdoor chess table



Planting pockets along the edge of a river revetment ,
Westgate Gardens Canterbury, Kentish Stour
Countryside Project



Climbing pole
4 Meters

Some examples of sensory play equipment



Xylophone



Babel drum



Musical flowers



Talking tubes



Rainmaker noise spinning wheel



Spinning disc



Wide slide for social play



Distorter mirror



Low level access spinner



Tactile tree

These illustrations are examples, similar products may also available from other suppliers

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

The final section looks at how we will track progress and how the Plan is 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.

14.0 Monitoring progress

Progress will be monitored against the Five Year Work Programme and the Annual Action Plan, at contractor meetings and by the Parks Officers. To help keep track, the progress for both the Five Year Work Programme and the Annual Action Plans will be marked using the traffic light background colours, green for completed tasks/ projects, amber started but incomplete, and red not started.

Accreditation – This Plan has been written to meet the criteria for the Green Flag Award. Its appropriateness can be assessed against the outcome of any future applications for this or other awards.

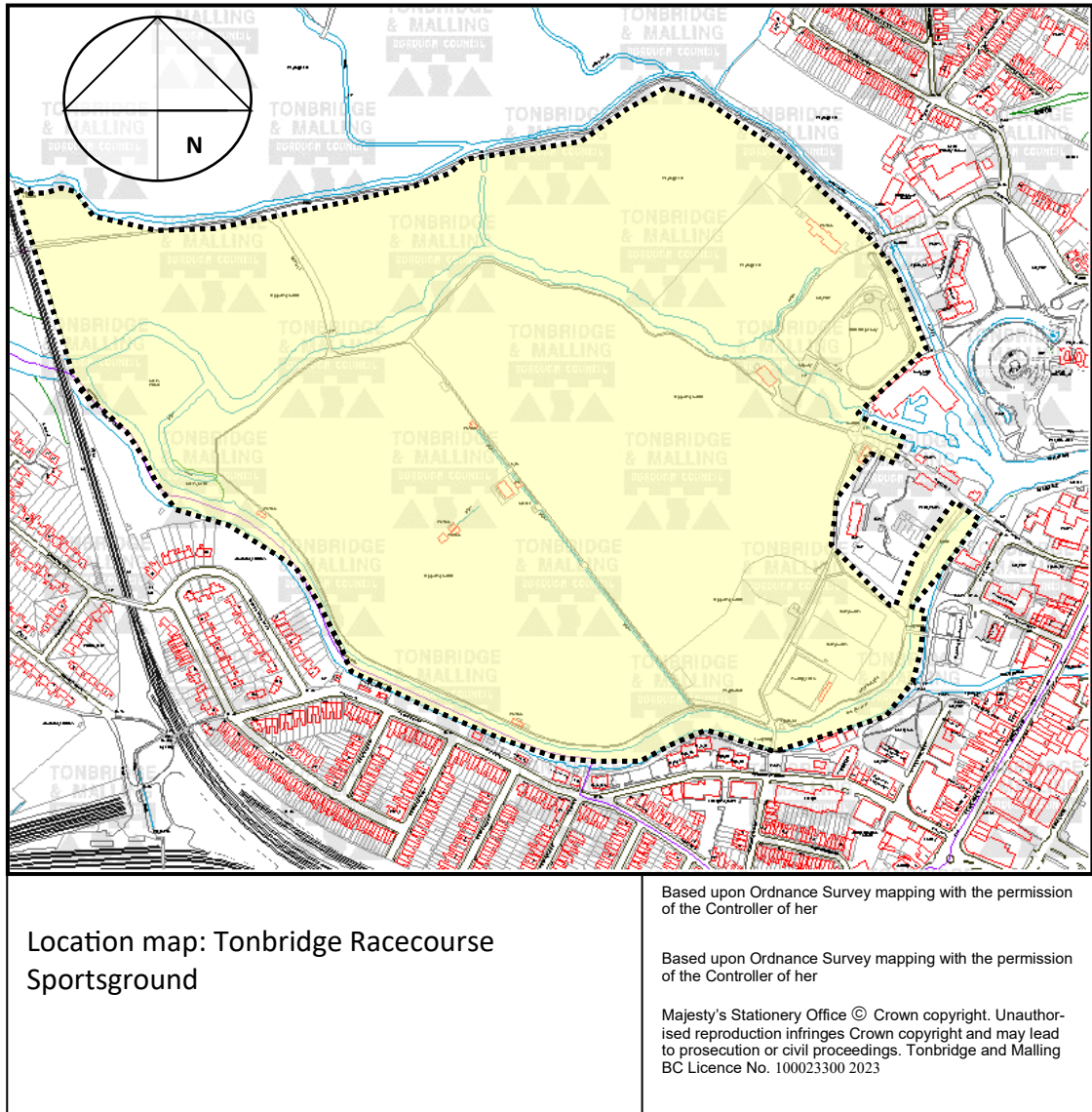
Annual management plan review – In order to keep the plan relevant, prior to the start of each year, an annual review will be carried out. Much of the site description, policy and aims are unlikely to change from year to year, but the final sections of the plan are more dynamic and the whole plan will 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 2028 a full review and rewrite will be carried out to develop a further Five-year Management Plan.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - Location map
- Appendix 2 - Master plan
- Appendix 3 - Entrance accessibility
- Appendix 4 - Access audit
- Appendix 5 - Legal aspects map
- Appendix 6 - Example risk assessment
- Appendix 7 - Asset list Racecourse
- Appendix 8 - Chemicals used at Racecourse
- Appendix 9 - Habitat characteristics and species composition
- Appendix 10 - Racecourse budget, past projects and investments
- Appendix 11 - Land tenure map
- Appendix 12 - Annual Action Plan
- Appendix 13 - Interpretation and marketing plan

Location map

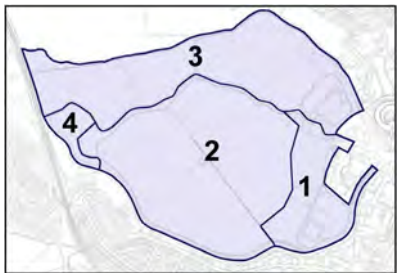


Master plan

Appendix 2



- KEY**
- River
 - Site Boundary
 - Woodlands
 - Scattered Trees/Scrub
 - Grassland
 - Footpaths
 - Cycle Route
 - Bridge
 - Vehicular/Pedestrian
 - Pedestrian Access
 - Play Area
 - Toilets with Disabled Facilities
 - Car Park
 - Fishing
 - Lawn Bowling
 - Tennis
 - Mini Golf
 - Games Kiosk
 - Baseball
 - Football
 - MUGA
 - Tonbridge Castle
 - Outdoor Gym
 - Pavilion
 - Skate Park
 - Rugby
 - Miniture Railway
 - Tonbridge Swimming Pool
 - Canoeing
 - Volleyball
 - Entrance Number



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, mini 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, and mini football. 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 ‘Brightfriths 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.

Compartment 3—continued 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 and there is a small pond at the Deacons Field entrance. 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.

Appendix 3

Entrance accessibility							
Entrance number	Description	Pedestrians	Wheelchair access	Public vehicles	Emergency vehicles	Contractor vehicles	Rugby football club
1	Main entrance for visitors by car	✓	✓				✓
2	Swimming Pool entrance	✓	✓				
3	High Street entrance	✓	✓		✓	✓	
4	River Walk entrance	✓	✓				
5	Memorial Garden entrance	✓	✓				
6.	River Lawn entrance	✓	✓				
7.	Railway entrance	✓	✓				
8.	Field entrance	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
9.	Rugby field gate				✓	✓	✓
10	Rugby building footpath entrance	✓	✓				✓

See Master Plan - **Appendix 2** for numbered locations

Appendix 4

Access audit report

Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground
August 2018 updated



A Report to:	James Fay – Parks Officer Chris Fox - Leisure Services Officer For TMBC use only	Date:	07/08/18 20/9/22
Project No:	Access Audit 2018/01	Issue No:	2
Document Reference:	TMBC_BC_AA_2018_01	Page:	1

(For and on behalf of TMBC Building Control)



Visit to Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground 07 August 2018. Updated 20 September 2022

By Duncan White (Building Control) Updated by Richard Alfieri (Building Control)

Area or Building	Problem	Suggestion / Solution / Action	Suggestion / Solution / Action 20 September 2022
Footpaths	<p>Uneven surfaces where tree roots have grown under the paths, or the path has deteriorated. Both causing a trip hazard for the visually impaired, and for wheelchair users.</p>	<p>Only a very limited number of case of this happening and it is noted that substantial amount of work has been carried out improving footpaths and cycle paths.</p> <p>Monitoring of paths to be carried out to ensure where paths deteriorate remedial work is carried out as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Issue now extensive. Although some works have been carried out to repair, issues apparent and remain in cracking and breaking up of wearing surface as well as camber of paths generally excessive caused by ground movement. Overgrowth of weeds in some areas. Wearing surface of paths particularly poor to areas adjacent to rugby club (floodlit area) as well as path leading to bowls club.</p> <p>Monitoring / survey of paths to be carried out to ensure where paths deteriorate remedial work is carried out as soon as possible.</p>
Seating	<p>A good variety of seats adjacent to paths is provided. Some are isolated from the path. No wheelchair or pushchair spaces adjacent to ends of seats are provided outside the play area. Some of the new benches, or benches with a new concrete base, adjacent to paths have not been provided with a specific space for wheelchair users adjacent to the bench.</p> <p>Continued overleaf</p>	<p>Ensure that 75% of all seats are either adjacent to the path or linked to the path by a hard surfaced path at least 760mm wide. – Since the last report in 2013, a large number of seats are now connected to the tarmacked path. As more seats are added the relative percentage should be kept under review.</p>	<p>A recently formed 'Picnic area' has been formed adjacent to the tennis courts; the seating in this area should have at least 75% of them linked to the path by a hard surfaced path at least 760mm wide.</p>

Visit to Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground 07 August 2018. Updated 20 September 2022

By Duncan White (Building Control) Updated by Richard Alfieri (Building Control)

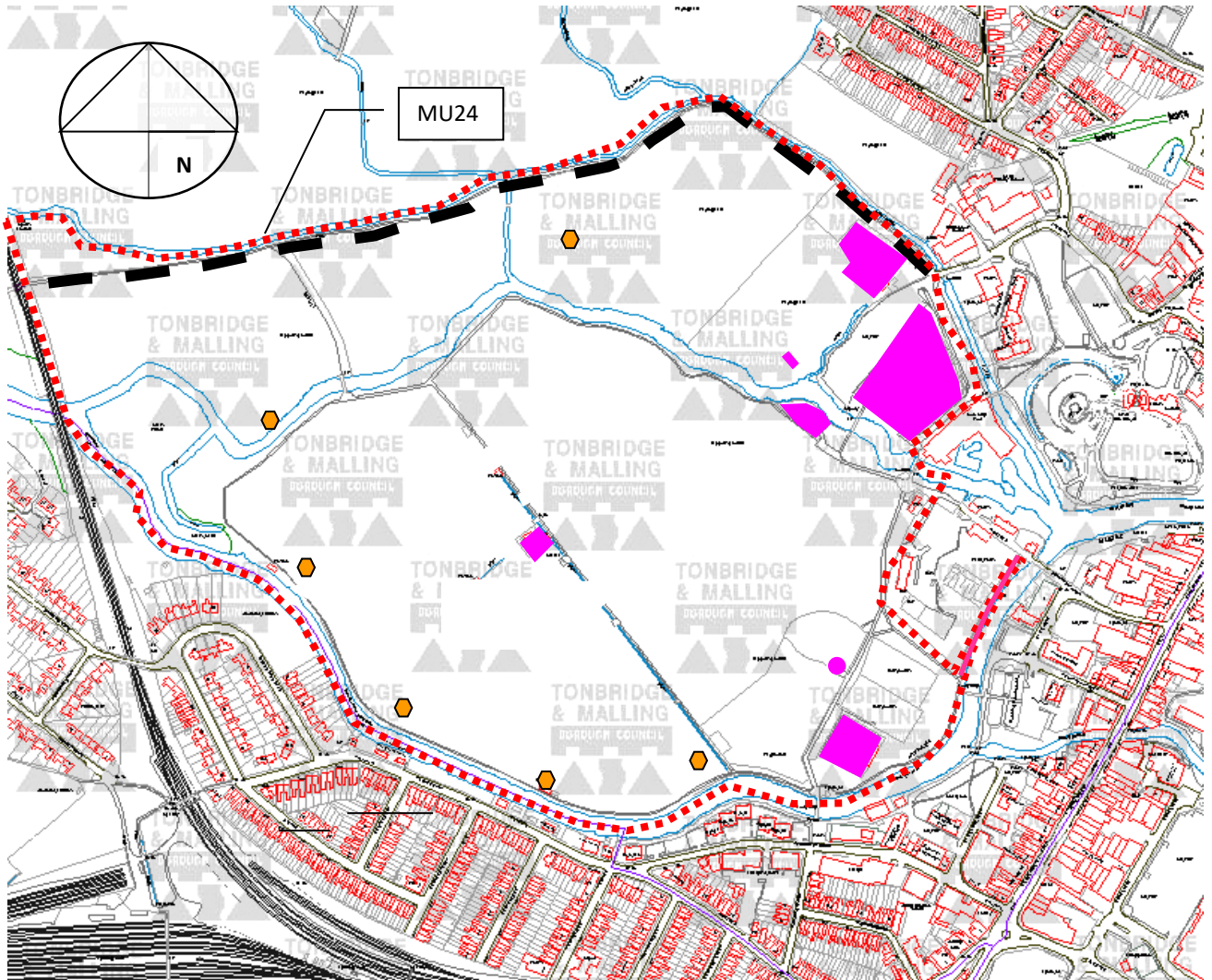
Area or Building	Problem	Suggestion / Solution / Action	Suggestion / Solution / Action 20 September 2022
Seating	<p>A good number of fixed picnic benches in the play area have an enlarged concrete space at one end and the tables have extended ends to allow a wheelchair user to sit at the table, but not all picnic benches in the park have this, nor do they have hard paths to them from a main path.</p>	<p>Where new seats are installed, provide a hard surface space at one end of the seat, of sufficient size for a wheelchair user to manoeuvre and park. A hard surfaced path at least 760mm wide should be provided if the seat is not adjacent to the main path. The space provided should allow for a turning circle of 1500mm, which may include the path, but have a minimum size of 760mm x 1200mm. The longer dimension should be perpendicular to the path.</p> <p>It is recommended that a number of the existing seating areas are improved to a similar standard. The number of adapted wheelchair provisions of existing seating should be not less than 20% after 3 years.</p>	<p>A large number of seats adjacent to the path around the sportsground as well as inside the play area still are not linked directly to the main path with a hard surface or do not have a hard surface area at one end of sufficient size for a wheelchair user to manoeuvre and park. In addition, many of the seats do not have arm rests.</p> <p>As previous report: It is recommended that a number of the existing seating are improved to a compliant standard. The number of adapted wheelchair provisions of existing seating should be not less than 20% after 3 years.</p>
Play area	<p>Generally good facilities allowing use by everyone.</p> <p>Some equipment is now provided for disabled children, but limited access available.</p>	<p>Provision is not expressly required for disabled children to access the play equipment, however consideration should be given to providing a hard surface path 760mm wide to each item from the main footpath so that a wheelchair user can get to the equipment and a parent/carer in a wheelchair can be part of the experience.</p>	<p>Some equipment still not accessible by path from main path through play area. Further consideration should still be given to provision of a hard surface path 760mm wide to each item from the main footpath so that a wheelchair user can get to the equipment and a parent/carer in a wheelchair can be part of the experience.</p>

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By Duncan White (Building Control) Updated by Richard Alfieri (Building Control)

Area or Building	Problem	Suggestion / Solution / Action	Suggestion / Solution / Action 20 September 2022
Accessible WC	Generally good allowing access and use by disabled people.	Not considered in 2018 report	<p>Concrete step 'nosing's' require repair and highlighting with use of yellow paint.</p> <p>Ideally 'corduroy' hazard wearing surfaces should be in place at the top and bottom of steps.</p> <p>Within the Accessible WC itself a drop-down rail should be installed adjacent to the WC to replace the fixed vertical rail and, an emergency assistance alarm system should be introduced with visual and audible indicators externally.</p>

Legal aspects



KEY

- Site Boundary 
- Public Right of Way 
- Wells 
- Agreements 

Legal aspects map: Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground

This drawing is for illustration purposes only, always refer to the legal documents for exact areas.

Drawn By CF


Date 03/07/23

Scale Not to Scale

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Example risk assessments *Appendix 6*

	RISK ASSESSMENT: Children's Play area at Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground		RISK ASSESSOR/S: Chris Fox						
	RISK REF:	SEVERITY (S) X (L) LIKELIHOOD = (RR) RISK RATING	RISK ASSESSMENT DATE: 27/7/2018 RISK REVIEW DATE: Jan 2024						
Description of Area/Activity/Process: Provision for children's play equipment and the surrounding areas including fencing etc.									
Hazard / Activity / Risk	Person (s) at Risk	S Severity	L Likelihood	R Risk Rating	Existing Control Measures in place	Additional Control Measures / Action Required	Risk Grading After Actions Completed	Person Responsible	Date completed
Collision of users with each other in the play area - number of users unknown.	Public	1	5	5	Guard rails installed around single point swing Play area layout considered at design stage Equipment selections for age groups Play area layout designed to avoid as far as reasonable practical conflicts, with areas for, toddlers, juniors and seniors Competent contractors employed to commission new play equipment Conflicts between different age groups using the play area and the suitability of the equipment for that age group		2		

Falls from the play equipment leading to head and limb injuries	Public	4	3	12	<p>The play equipment provided conforms to the current British (EN) Standards</p> <p>Impact Absorbing Surfaces are installed in all areas in accordance with the current British (EN) Standards</p> <p>All work to equipment and safety surfacing must comply with the requirements of BS(EN) 1176 and 1177</p>		4		
Slips, trips and falls on the play surfaces.	Public	1	2	2	As above		1		
Collisions with the equipment leading to head and limb injuries	Public	4	4	16	As above in 1, plus the play area layout and any guards required is considered before installing new equipment.	4	1 2		
Entrapment injuries caused by catching fingers etc in the equipment.	Public	4	4	16	Weekly and Annual safety inspections undertaken by trained Registered Inspectors of equipment are carried out and recorded by a competent contractor. Equipment is either repaired at the time or taken out of service until full repairs can be undertaken. Equipment complies to BS EN standard at the time it is installed.		1 2		

<p>Illnesses arising from contact with dog faeces which could lead to blindness.</p> <p>Dog bites from unruly or unrestrained dogs.</p>	Public	4	3	12	<p>Areas are suitably fenced gated in accordance with guidance issued by RoSPA/CIEH to reduce access by dogs</p> <p>Dogs are excluded from the play area by signs and the law</p> <p>Suitable receptacles for litter and dog excreta are provided nearby.</p> <p>These are emptied weekly or ad hoc if full.</p> <p>No dogs signs, and listed in leaflet.</p>	8		
<p>Cuts from sharp edges on equipment or glass and other sharps discarded carelessly or wilfully in the play area.</p>	Public	4	3	12	<p>GMC inspects the site and removes sharps, glass and reports sharp edges to equipment</p>	4		
<p>Chemical usage in the play area (see chemical usage RA) injury either through direct contact during the operation or latent contact with residues.</p>	Public	3	3	9	<p>Grounds maintenance is carried out without recourse to the use of toxic chemicals.</p>	3		

		RISK ASSESSMENT FOR: Waterside working DEPARTMENT: Leisure Services – Racecourse Sportsground		ASSESSORS NAME AND SIGNATURE Chris Fox				DATE OF INITIAL ASSESSMENT: 14/3/99		REVIEW DATE:					
								Latest:		Next Due:		Latest:		Next Due:	
								Jan 2023		Jan 2024		Jan 2023		Jan 2024	
No.	ACTIVITY/ PROCESS/ OPERATION	HAZARDS AND PERSONS AFFECTED	RISK RATING			EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES	RISK RATING			ADDITIONAL CONTROL MEASURES (ACM) REQUIRED	DATE OF ACM IN PLACE				
			S	L	RR		S	L	RR						
1	Working near water	Drowning after falling onto water course	4	3	12	Risks assessed in advance of working. Additional safety equipment is available for staff.	4	1	4						
2		Rapidly rising water levels leading to areas being cut off	3	2	6	Mobile phones available for staff.	3	1	3						

3			Diseases and irritations associated with water including Leptospirosis, (Weils Disease) and Blue Green Alga	3	2	6	Cover cuts and open wounds, with water proof dressing. Wear water proof gloves. Personnel hygiene washing hands before food or drink. Publicise the risks and symptoms, and report any illness to doctor	3	1	3		
4			Soft/ slippery / muddy bank edges or collapse of bank	3	2	6	Life jackets must be worn for work near water courses	3	1	3		
5			Lone Working, increases risk	4	3	12	Procedures for lone working in place	4	2	4		

Asset list Racecourse

Asset	Supplier	Quantity
Baseball diamond and fencing		1
Bridges owned by TM	CDM and others	8
Bridges owned by others		2
Bollards		14
Car parking machines		3
CCTV	Not stated for security	
Cycle stands	Various makes	7
Disabled sensory planter 0199	Green circle garden	1
Dog waste bins	Glasdon	7
Fencing		1300 LM
Flood lighting columns		2
Football pitches Junior (with goal posts)		12
Football pitches mini (no goals)		23
Gate - barriers		7
Gate - field		2
Gate - self closing mono hinge	Medway Galvanising Co	5
Hedges		2927 M2
Hard surfaces		8064 M2
Interpretation panels	Shelley signs, Black box	11
Kiosk building		1
Lamp post		16
Life ring stations	Glasdon	14
Lighting for ballcourt/ skate park		2

Asset	Supplier	Quantity
Litter bins	Glasdon, Streetmaster,	35
Maintenance building		1
Mini golf		9 holes
Miniature railway track		1
Multi use games pitch	Steelway	1
Outdoor gym equipment	SMP	6 items
Pavilion and bowling green		1
Pavilion - football		1
Picnic tables	Wicksteed and others	18
Play equipment	SMP, Wicksteed and	27 items
Rugby pitches senior		4
Rugby pitches junior		10
Salt bin	Galsdon	2
Seats	Streetmaster and others	90
Skate park equipment	Bendcrete	6 items
Signs		25
Sign - entrance		1
Sign - finger post		4
Slipway		1
Sound posts	Black box AV	5
Street lamp post		16
Table tennis	Concrete Sports	2
Teen shelter	Monster Play	1
Tennis courts		4
Three counties access barrier	Fearn Truck Bodies	1
Volleyball court		1
Water tank for bowling green		1

Appendix 8**Chemicals used at Racecourse**

Chemical Group	Examples	Reason for use
Cleaning products	Cream cleaners, toilet cleaners, hand washes, soaps, washing up liquids	Cleaning of the buildings, hygiene, and maintenance work
Glues and solvents	Glue	Repairs and maintenance
Oils and petrol	White spirit, brush cleaners, fuels, oils, and lubricants	Cleaning of paint brushes, fuel for machinery, oil and grease for care of tools, machinery and play
Paints and stains	Paints and stains	Maintenance of buildings and park furniture
Pesticides and fertilizers	Weed killers, fungicides, insecticides and fertilizers	Hard surface maintenance and selective weed, pest and disease control on sports surfaces
Others	Graf-Off wipes and cleaning products	Removing graffiti.

NB. The principle of using the least harmful chemical is always applied. Alternatives are always considered and this will remain under review.

Appendix 9

Habitat characteristics and species composition

Riverside areas

The main River Medway provides a long boundary on the west side of the site and has an excellent diversity of mature trees along the bank, including pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, alder *Alnus glutinosus*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastaneum*, with an understory of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosus* and elder *Sambucus nigra*. The banks also support a strong plant cover including Indian balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*, common comfrey *Symphytum officinale*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* water figwort *Scrophularia auriculata*, great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum* and thistles, which in turn provide valuable habitat for bees, hoverflies and other insects. There was a limited population of dragonflies and damselflies but again the emergent vegetation will be important for the life cycle of these species.

A grass snake *Natrix natrix* was observed on the first visit resting on a pile of cut vegetation beside the river.

The Leat of the Medway provides an important corridor across the site with similar marginal trees and shrubs with the addition of fine field maple *Acer campestre* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*. The marginal vegetation is rather less dense but on the north western section bank the reverse is true, with additional species including tansy *Tanacetum vulgare*, gipsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, common toadflax *Linaria vulgare* and nipplewort *Lapsana communis*. In the area opposite Tinker's Island the Leat joins the main river Medway, where there is a railway bridge over the river. The bank here forms another feature and in the corner there is a dense stand of bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg.*, which proved very valuable for insects, including the best site for recording damselflies, including common blue *Enallagma cyathigerum*, blue tailed *Ischnura elegans*, white legged *Platychnemis pennipes* and large red *Pyrrosoma nymphala* damselflies. Dark bush cricket *Pholidoptera griseoaptera* and speckled bush cricket *Leptophyes punctatissima* were also found here. This area demonstrates the high wildlife value of patches of coarse vegetation for the nectar seeking insects, and in turn food for the dragonflies and damselflies. Brown hawkler *Aeshna grandis* dragonfly was also seen hawking over the river. Such patches and the river side vegetation also provide cover for small mammals.

The Hilden Brook Stream

This waterway forms the northern and eastern boundaries of the site and again had a very low, almost imperceptible flow. There is a variable density of water plants within the stream, and similarly waterside plant species. This area was also found to be valuable for dragonflies and damselflies with common darter and ruddy darter *Sympetrum striolatum*

and *sanguineum*, brown hawker and black tailed skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* dragonflies and banded agrion *Agrion splendens* damselflies. Although study of the water bodies was outside the detailed survey it was notable that branched bur reed *Sparganium erectum*, reedmace *Typha latifolia*, common reed *Phragmites australis*, reed sweet grass *Glyceria maxima* and reed canary grass *Phalaris arundinacea* were present, providing a valuable wildlife resource for the dragonfly species.

This water body and the Leat were considered excellent potential sites for water voles, but detailed observation failed to record any evidence of their activity – no holes in the banks or feeding signs. These are potential introduction sites for this notable and protected species and it may be appropriate for a detailed water vole survey to be undertaken.

It was noted that, where the stream begins to turn south towards the main river, there was some management of the north bank of the stream with dredging of the plant material, which was deposited on the far bank, outside the survey area.

The vegetation on the west bank of the stream, the park side, is very dense precluding any viewing of the water body. Whilst it may be desirable for water safety considerations to largely exclude people from having easy access to the river bank, it is regrettable that there is virtually no way that the water plants and associated invertebrate species can be observed. This consideration also applies elsewhere, with the vegetated river banks.

In the final stages of the Hilden Brook there were additional tree species on the far bank including crack willow *Salix fragilis*.

Tinker's Island

This feature beside the main River Medway represents the only woodland area on the site. It appears to be a semi-natural feature, with old ash, and pedunculate oak, with alders beside the river. Hawthorn, blackthorn and elder are present with bramble, thistles, and willow herbs as ground cover. There are drainage channels within the area which link to the main river and the Leat. These were dry throughout the survey period but it is understood that they are wet in the winter months. Indian balsam, great willowherb and common comfrey strongly colonise the ditch areas.

Elsewhere there are some typical woodland floor species including yellow archangel *Galeobdolon luteum*, dogs mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, field rose *Rosa arvensis*, hedge woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*, lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria* and the uncommon goldilocks buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus*.

This woodland tree and shrub cover was found to be valuable for birds with 14 species recorded including the migrant chiffchaff and blackcap. This is an important location for breeding birds.

The area is used by local young people as a camp site with associated litter and fire sites. A number of cut or fallen trees are present. These were possible refugia for reptiles and were checked without success. Evidence of wood mice *Apodemus sylvaticus* was found with nibbled nuts and seeds.

In any management of the trees it would be valuable to create log piles with the cut material to provide further sites for fungi, small mammals and reptiles.

It was anticipated that Tinker's Island would be a good fungus site but the dry conditions of this year have virtually precluded evidence here, as elsewhere in the county. Some species were recorded including Turkeytail *Trametes versicolor*, Blushing bracket *Daedaleopsis confragosa*, King Alfred's cakes *Daldinia concentrica*, deer shield *Pluteus cervinus* and Jelly ear *Auricularia auricula-judae*, all species growing on wood.

Beside Tinker's Island, on the east side, there is a roughly vegetated area with a dense stand of herbs, which provide good nectar rich flowering plant species. This is in effect an overgrown marginal area which has developed into its own habitat. A dump area of wood chippings and vegetable material is established here and was found to have been colonised by a fungus species *Agrocybe rivulosa*. This fungus was new to Britain only 5 years ago but is now regularly occurring on wood chip piles. Such wood chip heaps are also valuable for reptiles, being a typical site for grass snake to lay eggs, and for slow worms to occupy in the winter months.

The cross ditch

This ditch extends from beside the River Medway across the sports fields and is apparently served as a drain by a culvert from the river. It was dry throughout the survey period but is understood to be wet in winter for part of its length. It was damp nearest to the river path but became completely dry within a short distance. A dense hawthorn hedge extends along the whole length with gaps at intervals. Some mature trees occur at the western end.

This ditch was interesting, holding a good selection of plant species, including some not found elsewhere on the site, Marsh cudweed *Gnaphalium uliginosum*, creeping jenny *Lysimachia nummularia*, creeping yellow cress *Rorippa sylvestris* and redshank *Polygonum persicaria* occur with fat hen *Chenopodium alba*, bramble, common knotgrass *Polygonum aviculare* and tufted vetch *Vicia cracca*. The margin on one side at the east end is a low brick wall which also has additional species including pellitory of the wall *Parlataia judaica*. The ditch is cut regularly and this restricts the potential development of the plant cover. Lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis*, True fox sedge *Carex vulpina* and purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria* beside the ditch indicate that it is occasionally wet.

It is considered that it would be helpful to encourage the wet condition of the ditch through at least the spring and early summer, and to limit the cutting regime. It would be interesting to see what developed if the wetter conditions could be applied

The Conservation Area

This small area in the extreme north west of the site lies beside a section of the railway line and the Hilden Brook. It appears not to have been managed for many years and has developed a dense grass and herb cover, with ladies bedstraw *Galium verum*, tufted vetch, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, crosswort *Galium cruciata*, which indicate dry conditions, yet with meadowsweet and wild angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, which are typical of wetter areas. There are also a number of old ant hills present which indicate that the land has not been disturbed or managed for probably

more than 50 years.

It is in significant contrast to any other location in the Park. It was very surprising that no grasshopper or cricket species were recorded here and this may indicate the isolated nature of the site. So much of the grassland in the sports ground is under a very strict and severe mowing regime that there is little opportunity for grasshopper species to thrive or to be linked to other locations. The area does lie beside the railway line, which normally acts as an excellent reservoir for reptiles, and common lizard and slow worm could be expected here. It is understood (per Rachel Cantwell) that slow worm *Anguis fragilis* has been reported, but it was not recorded during the survey.

It is considered that some limited management would be of benefit here to reduce the overall vigour of the grasses and to encourage other plant species to become established and thrive. Mowing management is not appropriate and it would require strimming with raking off the cuttings. Ideally this should be done in late autumn/winter. Cuttings can be raked into heaps to act as refugia for reptiles. These should be located near to the railway line and edge of the tree covered woodland section. It would also be valuable to have a narrow access and monitoring path maintained from the pathway to the Hilden Brook, near to the railway line, and returning along the tree margin. This would enable occasional recording and monitoring of invertebrate species to be undertaken.

Damselflies were noted on each visit, including the white legged damselfly, and butterflies included the common blue *Polyommatus icarus*, large skipper *Ochides venatus*, gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus* and meadow brown *Maniola jurtina*.

There are some semi mature pedunculate oaks beside the stream, with a dense patch of blackthorn. A narrow tree covered section extends from the Conservation Area along the side of the Hilden Brook, which has a strong water plant community. Fine specimen ash and oak trees also occur here.

The open grassland

This is the major component of the Sports Ground. Clearly it is necessary to maintain a close cut sward for the primary recreational usage, and it was found that the plant diversity was very limited. Where the cut grass sward is found near to the perimeter path system and waterside margins a greater diversity is found and it appears that some relaxation of the mowing regime would be possible which would stimulate a greater plant diversity. Some of the plants found here include ribwort and greater plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and *Plantago major*, bulbous buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, slender speedwell *Veronica filiformis*, common knotgrass, pineappleweed *Chamomilla suaveolen*, common cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* and white clover *Trifolium repens*

The Rugby Club car park ditch and bank are another feature here which add to the overall interest.

The Model Railway area

This is again a close cut area and it is necessary that this should mainly continue in this

condition. There are a number of fine mature trees here providing valuable conditions for feeding and nesting birds.

The Car Park Dyke.

There is a short waterway which extends from the Leat of the Medway beside a car park, leading to the Rugby Club pavilion, which is densely colonised on the banks and within the water body by crack willow *Salix fragilis*, and goat willow *Salix caprea* with elder and hawthorn. There is a marginal plant assembly which adds some relief and this was being visited by bees, hoverflies and butterflies.

Some clearance of the tree growth on the banks and within the dyke would be beneficial, and the culvert to the Leat could be opened so that the dyke remains wet during the summer months. It was completely dry for most of the survey period. Opening up the waterway would be visually pleasing and could be further enhanced by planting some waterside flowering plants such as purple loosestrife, meadow sweet and yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*.

On the west side, beside the open playing field, there is an open border section with a coarse plant community which could be developed as a wild flower bed. The buffer zone extension with limited mowing should also be applied **Appendix 11**.

The meadow adjoining comprises a large western section where active sports pitches are clearly in regular use.

Nearby, beside the rugby club car park, there is a wet ditch and bank which provides additional wildlife interest. The plant community has additional species including field horsetail *Equisetum arvense* and great horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* with marsh woundwort *Stachys palustris*, water mint *Mentha aquatic*, gipsywort and lesser stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*. (*Kent Wildlife Trust survey 2009 and other sources*)

Sportsground full species lists

General notes

In the full species list that follows, each asterisk indicates how many laws within the three categories (international/ European to regional/ local) apply to that species.

In the International columns where shown with an asterisk this indicates species protected by International or European Law. Examples are the Bern Convention, the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, Birds Directive (the combine spreadsheet master list from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee website [UK BAP Priority Species | JNCC - Adviser to Government on Nature Conservation](#) (data from 2007) was used to construct this list).

In the National columns, where shown with an asterisk this indicates those species covered by our national, United Kingdom law, such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act, or Crow Act and or in the United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan these are marked 'UK BAP' (as above Joint Nature Conservation Committee list was used).

In the Local/ Regional columns, the asterisk this indicates those species which are important in Kent or the southeast region, they are species recorded in the Kent Red

or Amber Data Books, or species that are scarce or if they are known to occur in Kent and are noted within the Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2020-2045 (website [Kent Biodiversity Strategy | Kent Nature](#) 2020) these are marked 'Kent BAP' in the below list. The Botanical Society of Britian & Ireland (BSBI) Kent Rare Plant Register (V16 2021 and 2023) have also been consulted.

The latest available information has been used at the time of writing, but much of the national and European legislation is under review and the information in some cases is a few years old.

Birds		Importance			
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local	
Blackbird	Turdus merula				
Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla				
Carrion crow	Corvus corone corone	*			
Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs	*			
Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita				
Dove collared	Streptopelia decaocto				
Dunnock	Prunella modularis				
Gull black headed	Larus spp				
Gull herring	Larus argentatus	*	*		
Jackdaw	Corvus monedula				
Jay	Garrulus glandarius				
Magpie	Pica pica				
Pigeon wood	Columba livia				
Robin	Erithacus rubecula				
Sparrow house	Passer domesticus	*	*		

Birds		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Starling	Sturnus vulgaris	*	*	
Swallow	Hirundo rustica			
Thrush mistle	Turdus viscivorus			
Thrush song	Turdus philomelos	*	*	*
Tit great	Parus major			
Wagtail pied	Motacilla alba ssp yarellii			
Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes			

Note: The Wildlife Survey carried out by the Kent Wildlife Trust in 2009 notes that 26 species of bird were recorded at the site (more than listed above), and estimated that around 19 nest at the site.

Insects		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Bee-fly	Bombylius major			
Butterfly comma	Ploygonia c-album			
Butterfly common blue	Ploymmatus icarus			
Butterfly gatekeeper	Pyronia titonus			
Butterfly large skipper	Ochiodes venatus			

Insects		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Butterfly meadow brown	Maniola jurtina			
Butterfly Orange tip	Anthocharis cardamines			
Butterfly peacock	Inachis io			
Butterfly speckled wood	Pararge aegeria			
Cricket dark bush	Pholidoptera griseoptera			*
Cricket speckled bush	Leptophyes punctatissima			*
Damselfly banded agrion	Argion spendens			
Damselfly banded	Calopteryx splendens			
Damselfly common blue	Enallagma cyathigerum			
Damselfly blue tailed	Ischnura elegans			
Damselfly white legged	Platychnemis pennipes			*
Damselfly large red	Pythosoma nymphala			*
Dragonfly brown hawker	Aechna grandis			
Dragonfly black tailed skimmer	Orthethrum cancellatum			
Dragonfly common darter	Sympetrum striolatum			

Insects		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Dragonfly emperor	Anax imprator			
Dragonfly ruddy darter	Sympetrum striolatum			
Ladybird	Coccinwlla punctata			
Snail white lipped	Cepaea hortensis			
<u>Plants</u>				
Apple	Malus domestica			
Agrimonia	Agonony eupatoria			
Alder	Alnus glutinosa			
Alkanet green	Pentaglottis sempervirens			
Apple	Malus sylvestris			
Ash	Fraxinus excelsior			
Angelica wild	Angelica sylvestris			
Annual meadow grass	Poa annua			
Anemone wood	Anemone nemorosa			
Archangle yellow	Galeobdolon luteum			
Autumn Hawkbit	Scorzoneroides autumnalis			
Avens wood	Geum urbanum			
Barberry	Berberis thunbergii atropurpea Rose Glow			
Barberry golden bedstraw	Berberis x stenophylla			
Barley meadow	Hordeum secalinum			

Insects	Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	Importance	
				National	Regional/ Local
	Barley wall	Hordeum murinum			
	Bastard cabbage	Rapistrum rugosum			
	Bedstraw hedge	Gallium album			
	Bedstraw ladies	Galium verum			
	Bindweed hedge	Calystegia sepium			
	Bindweed field	Convolvulus arvensis			
	Birch downy	Betula pubescens			
	Birch silver	Betula pendula			
	Bittercress narrow leaved	Cardamine impatiens			
	Bittersweet	Solanum dulcamara			
	Blackthorn	Rhamnus catarticus			
	Black horehound	Ballota nigra			
	Black medic	Medicago lupulina			
	Blackthorn	Prunus spinosa			
	Bramble	Rubus fruticosus agg			
	Bristly Oxtongue	Helminthotheca echioides			
	Broome false	Brachypodium sylvaticum			
	Broome soft	Bromus hordeaceus			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Black horehound	<i>Ballota nigra</i>			
Black medic	<i>Medicago lupulina</i>			
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>			
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg			
Bristly Oxtongue	<i>Helminthotheca echioides</i>			
Broome false	<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>			
Broome soft	<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>			
Broad-leaved Dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>			
Bugle	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>			
Buttercup bulbous	<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>			
Buttercup creeping	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>			
Buttercup goldilocks	<i>Ranunculus auricomus</i>			
Buttercup meadow	<i>Ranunculus acris</i>			
Burnet-saxifrage	<i>Pimpinella saxifraga</i>			
Bur reed branched	<i>Sparganium erectum</i>			
Bur marigold trifold	<i>Bidens tripartita</i>			
Burdock lesser	<i>Arctium minus</i>			
Campion red	<i>Silene dioica</i>			
Car ears	<i>Hypochoeris radicata</i>			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Charlock white	Raphanus raphanistrum			
Checkerberry	Gaultheria mucronata Alba			
Cranesbill cut leaved	Geranium dissectum			
Cranesbill hedgerow	Geranium pyrenaicum			
Cranesbill round leaved	Geranium rotundifolium			
Cress winter	Barbarea vulgaris			
Celandine lesser	Rancunculus ficaria			
Cherry wild	Prunus avium			
Cicely sweet	Myrrhis odorata			
Cinquefil creeping	Potentilla reptans			
Cinquefil shrubby	Potentilla fruticose Elizabeth			
Cinquefil shrubby	Potentilla fruticose Goldfinger			
Cleavers	Galium aperine			
Clover white	Trifolium repens			
Cocksfoot grass	Dactylis glomeata			
Comfrey Russian	Symphytum x uplandicum			
Common couch	Elymus repens			
Cow parsley	Anthriscus sylvestris			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Creeping jenny	Lysimachis nummularia			
Cress yellow creeping	Rorippia sylvestris			
Crosswort	Cruciata laevipes			
Cudweed marsh	Gnaphalium ulginosum			
Current flowering	Ribies sanguieum			
Cypress bald	Taxodium distichum			
Cypress daisy bush	Oleria x haastii			
Daisy	Bellis perennis			
Dames violet	Hesperis matronalis			
Dandelion	Taraxacum officinale			
Dead nettle white	Lamium album			
Dogwood	Cornus sanguinea			
Dogwood	Cornus stolinfera Flaviromea			
Dogwood	Cornus alba Spaethii			
Dogs mercury	Mercurialis perennis			
Dock broad leaved	Rumex obtusifolius			
Dock wood	Rumex sanguineus			
Dock clustered	Rumex conglomeratus			
Elder	Sambucus nigra			
Escallonia	Escallonia Donalds seedling			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Fat hen	Chenopodium album			
Fern	Dryopteris filix mas			
Figwort water	Scophularia auriculata			
Firethorn	Pyracantha spp			
Fleabane common	Pulicaria dysenterica			
Fushsia	Fushsia Mrs popple			
Fumitory common	Fumaria officinalis			
Fungus Wrinkled Field cap	Arocybe rivulosa			
Fungus Blushing bracket	Daedaleopsis confragosa			
Fungus turkeytail	Trametes versicolor			
Fungus King Alfreds cakes	Daldina concentraca			
Fungus deer shields	Pluteus cervinus			
Fungus ear	Auricularia Auricularia-judae			
Gipsywort	Lycopus europeaus			
Goosefoot	Chenopodium rubrum			
Ground elder	Aegopodium podagraia			
Ground ivy	Aegopodium podagraria			
Groundsel	Senecio vulgaris			
Hairgrass tufted	Deschampsia cespitosa			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Hawkbit Autumn	Scorzoneroides autumnalis			
Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna			
Hazel	Corylus avellana			
Heather	Erica x darleyensis Furzey			
Hedge parsley upright	Torilis japonica			
Herb robert	Geranium robertianum			
Hemlock	Conium maculatum			
Hemlock Water Dropwort	Oenanthe crocata			
Himalayan honeysuckle	Leycesteria Formosa			
Hogweed common	Heracleum sphondylium			
Hogweed giant	Heracleum mantegazzianum			
Holly	Illex aquifolium			
Honeysuckle	Lonicera periclymenum			
Horehound black	Ballota nigra			
Hop	Humulus lupulus			
Hornbeam	Carpinus betulus			
Horse chestnut	Aesculus hippocastanum			
Horsetail	Equisetum arvense			
Horsetail great	Equisetum telmateia			
Himalayan balsam	Impatiens glandulifera			
Iris stinking	Iris foetidissima			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Iris yellow flag	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>			
Indian bean tree	<i>Catalpa bignonioides</i>			
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>			
Japanese yellow rose	<i>Kerria japonica</i>			
Knapweed common	<i>Centaurae nigra</i>			
Knotgrass	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>			
Lilac	<i>Syringa x hycinthflora Ester Staley</i>			
Locust black	<i>Robina spp</i>			
Lords and ladies	<i>Arum maculatum</i>			
Loosestrife purple	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>			
Loosestrife yellow	<i>Lysimachia vulgaris</i>			
Mallow	<i>Malva sylvestris</i>			
Mallow musk	<i>Malva moschata</i>			
Maple field	<i>Acer campestre</i>			
Mares tail	<i>Hippuris vulgaris</i>			* BSBI
Mayweed scent less	<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>			
Meadow grass rough	<i>Poa trivialis</i>			
Meadow sweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>			
Mint water	<i>Mentha aquatica</i>			
Mock orange	<i>Philadelphus Belle Toile</i>			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Mock orange	Choisya ternate			
Mugwort	Artemisia vulgaris			
Mustard garlic	Alliaria petiolata			
Nipplewort	Lapsana communis			
Nettle	Urtica dioica			
Oak red	Quercus rubra			
Oak	Quercus robur			
Oat grass false	Arrhenatherum elatius			
Onion wild	Allium ursinum			
Orache common	Atriplex patula			
Orache spear leaved	Atriplex prostrata			
Oxeye daisy	Leucanthemum vulgare			
Parsley fools	Aethusa cynapium			
Pellitory of the wall	Parietaria judaica			
Redshank	Persicaria maculosa			
Parsley fools	Aethusa cynapium			
Pinnappleweed	Matricaria discoidea			
Plantain broad	Plantago major			
Plantain narrow leaved	Plantago lanceolata			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Plum purple	Prunus domestic			
Poppy common	Papaver rhoeas			* BSBI
Poppy matilija	Romney coulteri			
Popular white	Populus alba			
Privet	Ligustrum vulgare			
Ragwort	Senecio jacobaea			
Ramsoms	Allium ursinum			
Rockrose	Cistus Silver and Pink			
Rose dog	Rosa canina			
Rose field	Rosa arvensis			
Rosemary	Rosmarinus officinalis			
Rowan	Sorbus aucuparia			
Rush compact	Juncus conglomeratus			
Rush flowering	Butumus umellatus			
Rush hard	Juncus inflexus			
Rush soft	Juncus effusus			
Ryegrass perennial	Lolium perenne			
Sage turkish	Pholomis fruticosa			
Sedge true fox	Carex vulpina		*	* BSBI & Kent BAP

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Sedge lesser pond	Carex acutifolia			
Sedge spiked	Carex spicata			
Selfheal	Prunella vulgaris			
Shepherds purse	Capsella bursa-pastoris			
Silverweed	Potentilla anserina			
Sorrel common	Rumex acetosa			
Sow thistle prickly	Sonchus asper			
Sow thistle smooth	Sonchus oleraceus			
Starwort water common	Callitriche stagnalis			
St John's wort	Hypericum calycium			
St John's wort	Hypericum perforatum			*
St John's wort	Hypericum tetrapterum			*
Spanish dagger	Yucca spp			
Speedwell ivy leaved	Veronica hederifolia			
Speedwell germander	Veronica chamaedrys			
Speedwell slender	Veronica filiformis			
Spindle tree	Euonymus europeaus			
Spirea	Spirea x bumalda			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Spirea	Spirea Anthony Waterman			
Spirea tose	Spirea nipponica Snowmound			
Stitchwort lesser	Stellaria graminea			
Sumac	Rhus typhina			
Swinecress lesser	Lepidium didymum			
Sycamore	Acer pseudoplatanus			
Tansy	Tanacetum vulgare			
Teasel	Dipsacus fullonum			
Thistle field	Cirsium arvense			
Thistle spear	Cirsium vulgare			
Timothy (grass)	Phleum pratense			
Traveller's-joy	Clematis vitalba			
Trefoil greater birdsfoot	Lotus corniculatus			
Trefoil lesser	Trifolium dubium			
Toadflax	Linaria vulgare			
Toadflax purple	Linaria purpurea			
Vetch tufted	Vicia cracca			
Vetchling meadow	Lathyrus pratensis			
Viburnum	Viburnum Davidii			
Violet dames	Hesperis matronalis			
Violet sweet	Volia odorata			
Walnut	Juglans regia			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Water dropwort Hemlock	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>			
Water lily yellow	<i>Nuphar lutea</i>			
Water pepper	<i>Persicaria hydropiper</i>			
Willowherb greater	<i>Epilobium hisutum</i>			
Willowherb hairy	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>			
Willowherb rosebay	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>			
Wintercress common	<i>Barbarea vulgaris</i>			
Woundwort hedge	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>			
Woundwort marsh	<i>Stachys palustris</i>			
Willow crack	<i>Salix fragilis</i>			
Willow sallow	<i>Salix caprea</i>			
Willow osier	<i>Salix x viminalis</i>			
Willow weeping	<i>Salix x chroscoma</i>			
Willow white	<i>Salix alba</i>			
Yellow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>			
Yellow cress creeping	<i>Rorippa sylvestris</i>			

Plants		Importance		
Common Name	Latin name	International/ European	National	Regional/ Local
Yellow loosestrife	<i>Lysimachia vulgaris</i>			
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>			

Mammals

Bat spp		*	*	*
Deer roe	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>			
Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>			
Mink	<i>Mustela vison</i>			
Mouse wood	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>			*
Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>			
Squirrel grey	<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>			
Stoat	<i>Mustela ermine</i>			

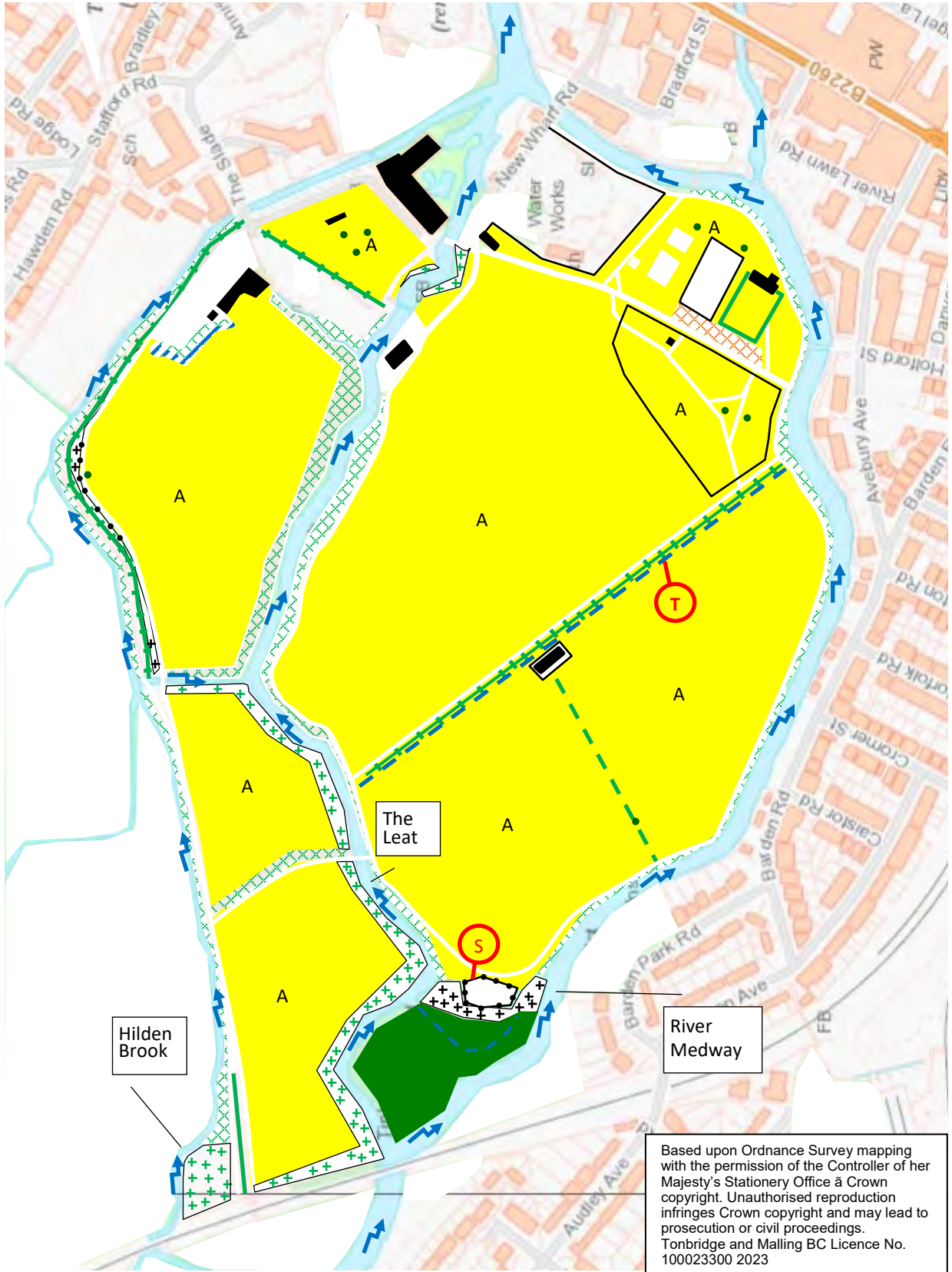
Note: A survey should be undertaken to identify which bats are present.

Amphibians and reptiles

Newt common smooth	<i>Triturus vulgaris</i>		*	
Slow worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>		*	*
Snake grass	<i>Natrix natrix</i>	*	*	*













Note: Given the habitats present it seems likely that Common Frog *Rana temporaria* and Common toad *Bufo bufo* may also use the water courses, but there are no records for the site. A survey should be undertaken.





Phase 1 habitat survey



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Key to the phase 1 habitat survey of Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground

Woodland - semi natural	
Scrub - continuous	
Scrub - scattered	
Parkland - scattered trees	
Swamp vegetation	
Running water	
Amenity grassland	
Short perennial	
Introduced shrub	
Intact hedge - species poor	
Defunct hedge - species poor	
Hedge and trees - species poor	

Dry ditch	
Earth bank	
Target notes (for some key species found)	
Bat species	Around running water
Grass snake	Along the river
Slow worms	
True fox sedge	

Appendix 10**Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Revenue budget 2022/23**

EXPENDITURE	Estimate (£)	Notes
Salaries & On-Costs	20,105	
Building Repairs Expenditure	89,272	
Maintenance of Grounds	152,307	
Office related expenses	2,102	Stationary, postage, insurance etc.
Central services administration	6,355	Central office costs allocated over all Council facilities.
Departmental Administration	9,693	Central office costs allocated over all Council facilities.
Non current asset depreciation	74,707	
Recharge from pleasure Grounds & Open Spaces	8,729	
Total Expenditure	£363,207.00	
INCOME	2022/23 (£)	
Rent	7,500	
Total Income	7,500	
Net Expenditure	£355,707.00	

Note: These figures are baseline costs at the start of the management plan. As the Racecourse Sportsgrounds budgets are not broken-down specifically within the Councils Budget Book the above costs are based on our experience. Income from sports pitch tenancies, the kiosk and vending are paid directly and retained by the Tonbridge and Malling Leisure Trust (TMLT) and are therefore not recorded here. Car parking income is also not recorded here, as it does not relate solely to this site.

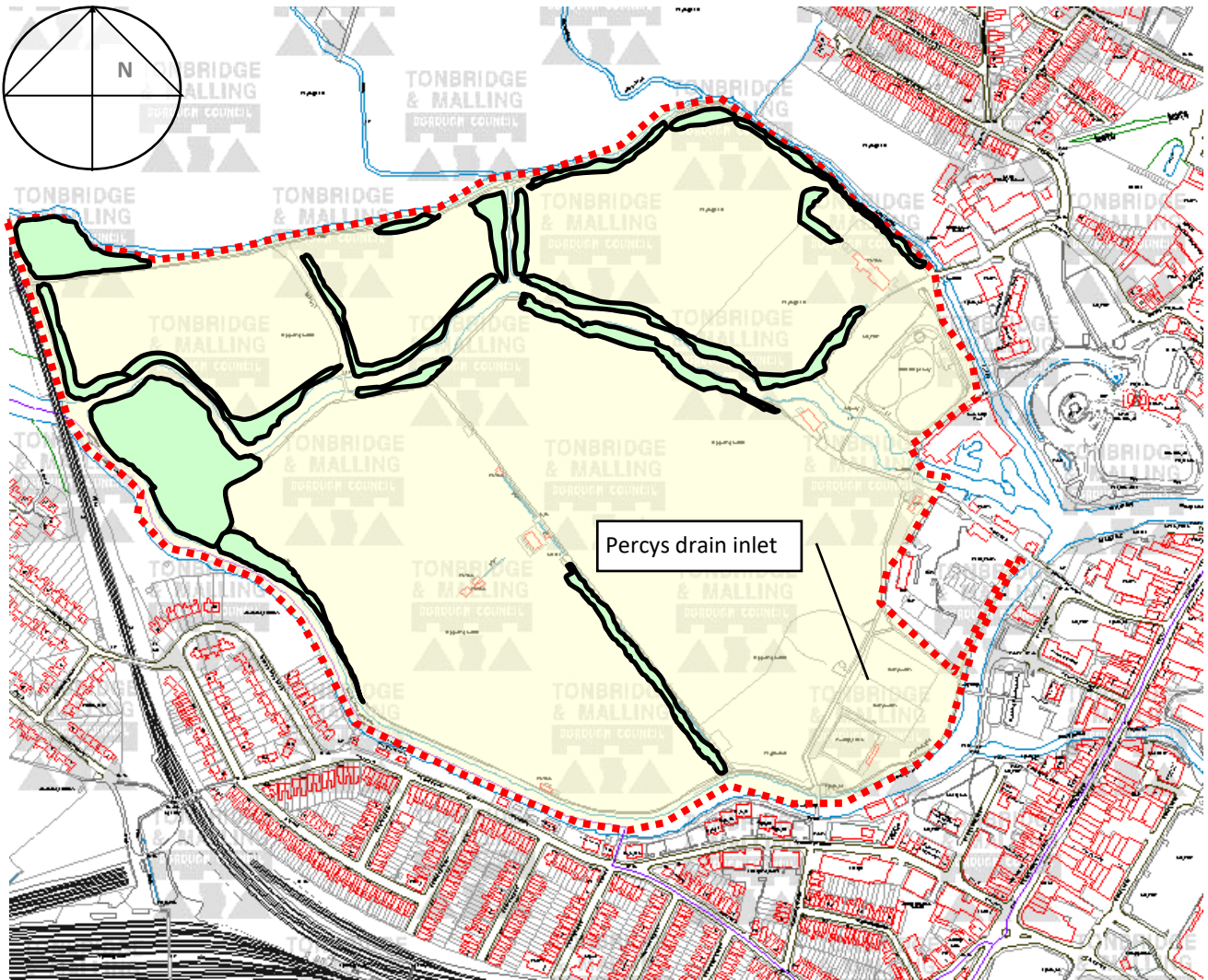
Appendix 10**Past projects and investments (2019 - 2023)**




Year	Project	Donor or funder	Value of funding
2019	Sponsored seat	Private donor	£1854
2019	Play area replacement information signage	Council	£550
2019	Replaced bridge near swimming pool	Council	£100,000
2019	Widening of Deacons Field Bridge for grounds machinery access	Council	£6500
2020	Hedgerow enhancement 105 young trees, planting cost only shown here	University of the third age (U3A) trees supplied by Kent County Council under the free trees scheme	£1080
2020	Covid 19 signs add to play information signs	Council	£560
2021	Four interpretation signs Doodlebugs, world war two information boards, and opne about Tonbridge townlands boundary markers	Tonbridge Town Lands and Richard Mylls Trust Charity	£2400
2021	Installed a new closable outlet for land drain on the river bank	Council	£3500
2021	Sponsored seats	Private donor/s	£3401
2021	Replaced covid signs with overlays and Love Parks messages	Council	£690
2021	Dementia friendly walk textured signs graphics, sound posts and a planter of herbs	Tonbridge & Tunbridge Wells Dementia Friendly Community *	£23,000
2021	Replaced Tinkers Island first bridge	Council	£4400
2021	Play area replacement of information signage	Council	£550
2022	Impact Absorbing Surface replacement in play area	Covid recovery funding	£4991
2022	River revetment works phase 1	Council	£53,000

* with support from Tonbridge Rotary, Tonbridge Lions Club, the Thorogood family, the Bennet family, Mrs Jill Grey, League of Friends Tonbridge Cottage Hospital, Abbey Funeral Services and Kent and Sussex Memorials

	Project	Donor or funder	Value of funding
Year	Project	Donor or funder	Value of funding
2022	Two new picnic seats and bases by river	Tonbridge Town Lands and Richard Mylls Trust Charity	£2000
2022	Donation of 29 small trees and planting	Friends of the earth and Covéa Insurance	£90
2022	Kent Plan Tree environmental project	Kent County Council & County members fund	£5000 estimated cost
2022	Dementia friendly walk additional sign for the trail about birds and a sound post	Homestead nursing home	£2500
2022	Sponsored seats	Private donor/s	£4051
2022	Find my Way virtual orienteering courses	Sports England via British Orienteering delivered by Dartford and Saxons Orienteering Clubs	Unknown
2023	Replaced Tinkers island second bridge	Council	£3400
2023	Two trees donated	Tonbridge Civic Society	£670
2023	Sponsored seats	Private donor/s	£3105
2023	Flood lighting for balling court and skatepark	Council	£900
2019 - 2023	Botanical surveys of the park	HCPV	In kind
		TOTAL	£228,192

Land tenure map



KEY	
Site Boundary	
Key Conservation Areas	
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	

Land tenure map: Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground

This drawing is for illustration purposes only, always refer to the legal documents for exact areas.

Drawn By CF

Date 03/07/23

Scale Not to Scale

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Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Annual Action Plan Year 1 (2024)

In accordance with the Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Management Plan 2024/28 – this document outlines the various tasks that are expected to take place over the 12 month period. Like all working documents it must be recognised that weather, seasonal changes and other factors can all have an impact on the programme.

The Green Flag Criteria are:

- 1 A Welcoming Place
- 2 Healthy Safe and Secure
- 3 Well Maintained and Clean but incomplete
- 4 Environmental Management
- 5 Management of Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage
- 6 Community Involvement
- 7 Marketing and communication
- 8 Management

Key

Proposed month ●

Progress background colours: **green** = complete, **amber** = started
red = not started or done

Project No	Project	Specific tasks	Who	Month
		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Cross reference to the Five Year Work Programme</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Project name from the Five Year Work Programme</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Detailed description of actions to be carried out during the current year, including what and where. If more than one for a project sub-divide into boxes.</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;">Initials of the lead office first and then any others involved</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Timeframe for the work J=January</div>		

Project No	Project	Specific tasks	Who	Month														
				J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D			
11	Grounds maintenance	Empty litter bins 364 days a year daily and collection of litter.	GMC	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
		Wash litter bins monthly	GMC	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
		Enforce litter control with fines	JF/MF/ JB	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
		Empty dog bins once a week	Waste con	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
		Enforce dog control	JF	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
		Run bag and flag events	JF						●			●						
		Graffiti control as necessary	JF	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
		Weekly inspection report on children's play area, skate park and outdoor gym	GMC	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
		Instruct annual inspection report on children's play area, skate park and outdoor gym inspections	JF			●												
		Carry out play area skate park and outdoor gym repairs as necessary	JF/MF	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
		Prepare sports pitches for use	GMC	●	●	●	●							●	●	●	●	●
Prepare bowling green for use	GMC					●	●	●	●	●								

Project No	Project	Specific tasks	Who	Month												
				J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
		Cut back vegetation from paths	GMC							●						
		Cut hedges twice a year	GMC								●			●		
		Coppice tinkers island in rotation	JF											●		
12	Water safety strategy	Maintain a natural barrier of vegetation along the streams and river	GMC	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
		Consider and add new NAG signs if necessary	JF		●											
13	Health and safety aspects	Arrange an annual health and safety inspection of the site with the Councils Health and Safety Officer	JF					●								
		Check that organisations using the site have current public liability insurance	JF/MF	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
14	Site specific risk assessments	Continue to develop a suite of site specific risk assessments	JF/MF										●			

Project No	Project	Specific tasks	Who	Month												
				J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
16	Expert tree inspection	Carry out expert tree inspection	MF				●	●	●	●						
		Carry out identified tree works on a priority basis	MF									●	●	●	●	
17	Access audit 2022	Implement actions from the access audit as priorities and funding allows	MF	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
19	Walks for well-being	Support the weekly walks	MF	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
20	Paths	Assess the need for path resurfacing and the width of paths in relation to their uses annually	JF									●				
		Progress repairs as necessary and funding allows	MF										●			
21	Park furniture	Inspect condition of the park furniture	MF						●							
		Investigate if additional litter/ dog bins, benches and seats are required. And install if funding allows.	JF							●						
		Implement the sponsored seat scheme and promote this	JF/MF	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
22	Plant more trees and hedges	Plant more trees and hedges to increase biodiversity and replace lost trees.	JF										●			

Project No	Project	Specific tasks	Who	Month												
				J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
35	Cleanliness	Ensure the sportsground is cleaned. See Table 3 for more information.	GMC/CE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
36	Site signage	Review the current site signage and replace/upgrade where appropriate.	MF									●				
38	Grounds maintenance contract	As part of the retender process review adopt and revise the documents to reflect the contents of this plan.	JF/MF	●	●											
39	Fisheries improvements	Consider options for fishery development and improvement in order to maximise income from the angling rights.	MF												●	
40	Ranger	Ensure that staffing levels are maintained.	MF	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
41	Wildlife and wildflower flower monitoring	Set up a regular monitoring programme, paying particular attention to any rare and protected species, and where possible record the location of sightings.	JF					●								
42	Bridge inspections	Carry out formal inspections of the bridges and repair as necessary.	AY			●			●			●				●

Appendix 13

Interpretation and Marketing Plan

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1.0 Introduction

Interpretation is the process of communicating ideas and information to people, and follows established principles used throughout the world. Planning is the foundation of all good interpretation, which is why many people start their interpretation project with an Interpretation Plan. It establishes why you are doing your project, who you are doing it for, what you are going to interpret and how you manage and review progress. Marketing is about how you tell people about your facilities, and so is closely related to interpretation.

Background

Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground is a well used park, located close to Tonbridge town centre, the sportsground consists of a wide range of facilities. The park is used by the public for a variety of activities, including: sports, dog walking, wildlife watching, playing in the children's play area, fishing, exercise etc.

The sportsground holds the national Green Flag Award.

Marketing

Marketing is made up of product, placement, and price. Our product in this case is the sportsground and this has been described at the beginning of this document.

Market placement

The sportsground is the nearest public open space to the town centre and many people see this as the towns 'park'. The sportsgrounds market position therefore attracts visitors as we will see, not only from Tonbridge but from the surrounding area, including some from outside the Borough boundary.

Branding - The Council's logo must be included on the bottom right-hand side on all printed material including signage. The Green Flag Award logo should be included, where practical, on printed material and entrance signs, as this shows the high quality of the facility. Further guidance on sizes, layout and colour palettes are available in the Council's Communications Strategy, from the organisers of the Green Flag Award Keep Britain Tidy. The sportsground does not have a logo for the site.



www.tmbc.gov.uk



The style and presentation of sportsgrounds layout and park furniture (signage, seats, bins etc.) also plays a part in the way that the sportsground is presented and perceived by the public. A unified style of park furniture presents an orderly approach which gives a brand to the park, and aids the maintenance and management of the furniture. There are many benefits of having a style guide for the park, but we must also consider that there will be new products coming onto the market that maybe of benefit to the public using the park, and we must therefore be careful to balance the desire for branding with the need for future innovation. The style guide will therefore need to be reviewed every few years to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. **Annex 5** gives some guidelines on our approach.

Public relations

The Councils Media and Communications Team issues news releases and photo calls to the media about the park as the need arises.

Market Surveys

The Council carries out market surveys every five years, the last was in 2022. Whilst a survey of 400 users is adequate for analytical purposes it is no more than a snapshot of users (in terms of patterns of use) on the days and times of the interview. Surveys at the sportsground have customarily been conducted in the school summer holidays so comparison with previous surveys can be made where questions are identically framed.



The survey results indicate who our visitors are, and some areas for improvement. At present little is known about patterns of use because Market Surveys are carried out too infrequently. Information on usage, all be it limited, is available on car park ticket sales for the main car park. This will indicate the number cars using the car park. Project 54 of this management plan would also investigate the feasibility of installing visitor counters which would determine patterns of visitor use.

Visitor profile

The primary audience for the sportground is local people, but the fact also needs to be recognised that people are travelling from further afield to visit. The 2015 market survey indicated that 59% of visitors live within 5 miles of the park.

The gender mix from market surveys also indicated a roughly 65:35, female: male. Age of users: it is more difficult to establish the age groups of users, although the age group under 16 was the highest in the survey at 27%.

In terms of ethnic diversity the survey at the park indicated that the majority of visitors were white British.

Disabled visitors

The park provides some specific disabled facilities like a toilet. In the 2022 survey 10% stated they had said they had an illness, disability or infirmity that had troubled them over a period of time or was likely to affect them over a period of time an increase on the previous survey (2015 survey 5%). An Access Audits were carried out in the park in 2022, 2016, 2011 and 2005 and the next audit is due in 2027. This audit included a site visit, covered marketing materials, interpretation and other topics (see **Appendix 4**).



Potential future visitor profile

The majority of visitors visited with a child (55%), and most visitors are local 50% live nearby another 26% within 1-5 miles. 71% are from the Tonbridge and Malling district. A large number of people travelled by car 50% and increase from 35% 2016. Over half visited once a week or more. The play area ranked the highest visitor numbers. Half our visitors stayed less than 1.5 hours (51%). There is potentially a very wide audience for interpretation information from: young people, less able users; regular users and club users. We need to target some of these and different types of messages will be needed for different groups of users.



Price - Facilities are provided free of charge at the point of use for the general public with the exceptions of car parking and activity charges. Charges are also made for commercial events, and for licensing/lease arrangements. All charges are market tested and felt to be competitive in the market place; income raised is offset against expenditure in the park.






Marketing segmentation

The Market Surveys and Management Plan for the site have helped identify and define the potential audience for interpretation of the park and by understanding our visitors needs we can tailor the interpretation to meet these. The park's marketing segmentation is shown on the next page.

Market segments	
<p>1. Local People</p> <p>Living within Tonbridge and surrounds</p> <p>Landowners and managers</p> <p>Regular repeat visitors</p>	<p>2. Visitors</p> <p>Day visitors</p> <p>Longer holiday visitors</p> <p>Families with young children</p> <p>People staying with friends of relatives</p>
<p>3. Education and young people</p> <p>Undergraduates</p> <p>'A' level students</p> <p>Primary and secondary school students</p>	<p>4. Visitors with special needs</p> <p>Visitors with mobility, sight, hearing, communication and learning impairments</p>
<p>5. Special interest visitors</p> <p>Sports users</p> <p>Event organisers</p> <p>Wildlife groups</p>	<p>6. Activity visitors</p> <p>Dog walkers</p> <p>Play area visitors</p> <p>Tennis and crazy golf</p> <p>Parkrun</p> <p>Cyclists,</p> <p>Long distance trail walkers</p>

2.0 Principles of interpretation

Because interpretation is a much misunderstood subject the next section explains and illustrates the principles of interpretation which were established in the National Parks Service in the United States of America, but are now acknowledged and well established throughout the world. The basis of all good interpretation is good factual information, but interpretation is not about just providing facts, information must be presented in a memorable and pleasurable way. It should encourage visitors to identify with the topic, mean something to them, and leave them wanting to find out more. The overriding aim of interpretation is to present the whole picture, a proven effective way of presenting interpretation is to use the formula Provoke, Relate, Reveal.

	<p>The core and acknowledged principles (Tilden 1977 et al) of interpretative communication are three- fold:</p>
	<p>Provoke - Essentially this is what makes interpretation different from just 'information' is that it should provoke thought, new ideas, curiosity, interest and even discussion. Your interpretation also needs to provoke people's attention to ensure they read your panel, attend your guided walk or pick up your leaflet</p>
	<p>Relate - If your message or story does not relate to the everyday lives of the audience, it will be meaningless. To be effective, interpretation must be meaningful i.e. speaking the same language as your audience and be personal, linking it to visitor's own lives.</p>
	<p>Reveal - It's the revelation that separates interpretation from other communication. Interpretation should reveal a new insight into what makes a place or object special, so that your audience walks away thinking 'ah, I never knew that', or 'now I understand'.</p>
<p>It is also usual for interpretation to convey a message following a theme.</p>	
	<p>A theme organises ideas and helps visitors remember the facts; a bit like a musical score brings together a tune into a song. Research shows that for communication to be effective it should be enjoyable, relevant, organised and, if we want it to be interpretive, a message must be conveyed as a theme.</p>

3.0 Methods of interpretation

There are many different ways of achieving interpretation, and in this section the following common methods are explained with their advantages and disadvantages.

- **Personnel interpretation**
- **Printed interpretation**
- **Interpretation panels**
- **Creative on-site Interpretation**
- **Digital interpretation**
- **Visitor Centre/ Interpretation Centre**

Personal Interpretation - This is when visitors ‘see’ or ‘meet’ someone face-to-face like a ranger giving a talk. Examples of personal interpretation include guided walks, story telling, costumed actor interpreters, events and activities and ‘street’ theatre.

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the most effective form of interpretation very effective for orientating visitors • brings history to life • can be tailored to a specific audience or age group • on the spot answers to questions • forms a memorable experience 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs skilled interpreters • expensive to run - staff time • weather dependant • needs good advertising • needs forward planning
---	--

Printed Interpretation - This aspect includes leaflets, publications, trail guides, indoor and outdoor panels and exhibitions. Published material must be written in Plain English (aim at the age group 9-12 years for easy reading) and have a contrasting background colour to aid those visually impaired. For more guidance see the Council Communication Policy, information from the Sensory Trust, Fieldfare Trust and the BT Access for All Guide. The Council’s Access Officer should be consulted at the design feasibility stage of new printed material.

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relatively cheap to produce • no specialist equipment needed • mobile makes it easier for visitors to find their way around the site • ease of distribution • can be readily available to visitors both on and off site 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs good design to be eye catching • leaflets can become litter • visitors only retain 30% of what they read • some people may have reading difficulties
--	---



Interpretation panels – these can be used to orientate visitors by using maps and could include tactile elements, Braille writing or textures. The written element should be short and to the point. These panels can be installed as a lectern; or upright; cut into shapes; and mounted in various ways. People tend to read signs very quickly taking in only the bare facts. They must therefore be: attractive, brief and clear.

Advantages

- can located panel where the topic needs discussing
- good for providing drawings/ photos



Disadvantages

- expensive to produce
- can go out of date, cannot update
- can be intrusive in the landscape
- some messages are seasonal
- maps maybe difficult for the public to follow
- vulnerable to vandalism
- only one shot at explaining the topic

Interactive Interpretation - Includes two and 3D installations such as seating, sculpture and specially designed waymarking, and hands-on displays. Can incorporate creative use of the arts such as design and sculpture.



Advantages

- can improve the appearance of site and bring a topic to life
- can use local or natural materials
- can add tactile and visual elements
- increases the sensory richness of site
- temporary displays are possible using recycled materials
- can involve problem solving for the users

Disadvantages

- can be vulnerable to vandalism
- could be intrusive in the landscape

Signs – these can be used to orientate and direct visitors around the site and give messages. They may include maps and tactile elements, Braille writing or textures. The written element should be short and to the point or use graphics. These signs can be installed in variety of ways on posts, as fingerposts, or as ladders. (There are other methods of directing people around the site such as coloured trail marker posts which are less intrusive.) People tend to read signs very quickly taking in only the bare facts. They must therefore be: attractive, brief and clear.

Advantages

- can located a sign where the topic needs discussing
- good for giving directions such as towards the car park, café and toilets



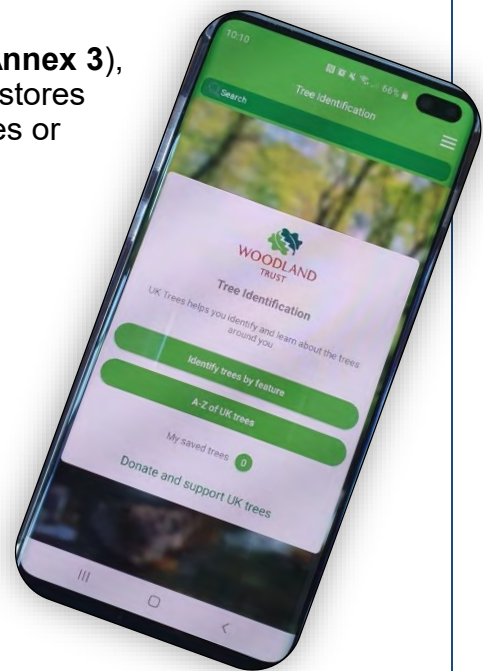
Examples from Singapore Parks where they found that cartoons worked well at getting negative messages across to the public

Disadvantages

- expensive to produce
- can go out of date, not easy to update
- can be intrusive in the landscape
- negative messages saying ‘no’ are difficult to get across
- maps maybe difficult for the public to follow
- vulnerable to vandalism
- only one shot at explaining the topic



Digital audio interpretation - this covers smart mobile phones and mp3 players for audio based material. Including audio guides (MP3 and iPod formats See **Annex 3**), these are usually downloadable via an app from app stores on mobile devices, they can be used to display images or videos for storytelling or sounds effects.



Advantages

- mobile systems like MP3, iPod and smartphones, can be carried around the site to where the topic needs interpreting
- should appeal to a younger audience
- should appeal to visually impaired
- the MP3 medium is becoming more widely used in outdoor and indoor facilities for trails
- can be less intrusive in the landscape than signs
- on some devices can use voices, and sound effects photographs and video to help tell a memorable story
- ownership of technology is increasing
- MP3 or sound posts do not involve reading
- brings the interpretation into the 21st century
- the most expensive element cannot be damaged
- headphones are used so not intrusive to other users

Disadvantages

- audio recording is expensive to produce
- audio recording needs a skilled professional to record and setup
- you only get the one shot at recording the audio
- can quickly go out of date
- users need to be confident with the technology
- users need access to a computer to view and or download mobile phone signal maybe poor



Digital quick response code interpretation - Quick response (QR) codes are like a bar code. By scanning the code the content from website is displayed on a smartphone. The trail can contain fascinating facts (audio), still images and recordings of wildlife and sound tracks which can be listened to during the walk.



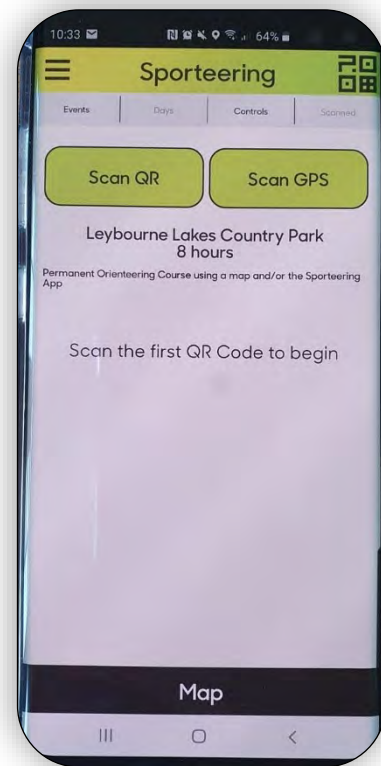
Quick Response code example

Advantages

- information can be readily and easily updated so is not fixed like on a sign
- should appeal to a younger audience
- can be less intrusive in the landscape than signs
- can have piece of writing and picture on site that grabs attention and more information available online
- encourage users to interact and enable them to find out more if they want to
- not expensive to replace if damaged
- headphones are worn so not intrusive to other visitors
- the least expensive option
- website information can easily be updated

Disadvantages

- can go out of date
- users need to be confident with the technology
- users need access to a smartphone
- mobile phone signal maybe poor



PERMANENT ORIENTEERING COURSE
Leybourne Lakes Country Park

Welcome to the Leybourne Lakes Country Park permanent orienteering course.

Challenging is the spirit of competitive orienteering, across country on foot. Using a specially chosen map and a compass, orienteers try to find their way as quickly as they can between control points. Because the skill is in finding the best route, it is a sport which is enjoyed by all ages.

These permanent orienteering courses, marked by fixed points in the ground, offer you the chance to try out our sport in a fun way without any competition. There are also a fine variety of exploring the area and other easier activities and views of the woods.

The fixed points are identified by a letter which helps to confirm where you are on the map and, in addition, we give you a partial description of the ground feature where the post is fixed.

We offer you three suggested courses which all START and FINISH at the park centre and marked by a RED TRIANGLE on the map:

BREVET (Blue) START: A, B, C, D, E, back to FINISH (Blue)

MIDDLE (Green) START: F, G, H, I, J, K, Q, R, D, E, A, back to FINISH (Green)

LONGER (Orange) START: K, L, M, Q, F, O, L, N, H, D, E, A, back to FINISH (Orange)

The short courses are recommended for beginners and when you wish to progress in distance and difficulty move on to the medium and longer courses. These courses have also been designed to be suitable for wheelchair users: all fixed points on the map to the wheelchair friendly paths.

Please TAKE CARE, particularly after wet weather when the ground may be slippery. You can still use the control post which are casted along paths where wheelchair are possible but keep away from the main's wide overpaths and please do not leave any litter.

information@dfel.co.uk

Start **Finish**

If you enjoyed the Sporteering course then try some more. Many of DFPOC Permanent Orienteering Course (POC) have a Sporteering Course as well as the standard courses based on the orienteering map.

The support and co-operation of the Rangers at Leybourne Lakes Country Park is much appreciated. Further information by going to the website: <https://www.tonbridge.gov.uk/activities/leisure-and-sport/leisure/parks-and-open-spaces/parks-and-open-spaces/parkbook-domain/leybourne-lakes-country-park>

Digital augmented reality interpretation - this covers smartphone apps for augmented reality games, GPS quizzes, treasure hunts, scavenger hunts, and immersive education. The activities are led by the app and triggered when you arrive at a particular geographical location. They can be text, video, audio or still images. The app is downloaded in advance of a visit onto your smartphone via a computer from a website.



Advantages

- smart phones, can be carried around the site to where the topic needs interpretation
- should appeal to a younger audience
- augmented reality medium is becoming more widely used in outdoor and indoor facilities for trails
- may drive visitor numbers upwards
- can be less intrusive in the landscape than signs
- can use voices, and sound effects, photographs and video to help tell a memorable story
- ownership of technology is increasing
- brings the interpretation into the 21st century
- cannot be damaged as no infrastructure on site
- some apps once downloaded don't need a signal to operate

Disadvantages

- setting up the apps needs a skilled professional to record and setup
- you only get the one shot at recording the audio
- can go out of date
- users need to be confident with the technology
- expensive to produce
- users need access to a computer to view and or download
- mobile phone signal maybe poor

Digital audio posts interpretation - this covers providing an audio post or sign at fixed points around a site. These have pre-recorded audio on them that playback as a visitor goes near them or presses a button. They can be used for oral history, storytelling and sound effects.



Advantages

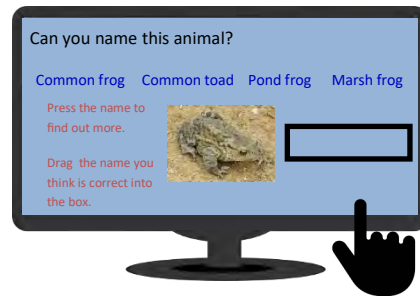
- should appeal to a younger audience
- can be less intrusive in the landscape than signs
- can use voices, and sound effects to help tell a memorable story
- brings the interpretation into the 21st century
- can be self powered by solar

Disadvantages

- you only get the one shot at recording the audio
- can go out of date
- can easily be damaged and vandalised
- costly if electricity is needed to power them
- can be noisy for other users



Digital visual displays - display screens linked to computer programmes can both play video or interactive touch screens can lead visitors through a story.



Advantages

- Should appeal to a younger audience
- May drive visitor numbers upwards
- Can create a memorable story
- Allows visitors to interact with the story
- Allows visitors to discover and explore the story
- Brings interpretation into the 21st century
- Equipment can be reused for another presentation

Disadvantages

- Can be damaged
- You only get one shot at setting this up
- Expensive to produce
- The story can go out of date

Visitor Centre/ Interpretation Centre – Most visitors have now come to expect a visitor centre in country parks to tell the story of place and develop an understanding and appreciation of that place. Leaders in the UK field like National Parks and the National Trust now offer these at most sites. Locally there are many examples where Kent County Council has built visitor centres at many of their country parks in Kent. The latest Market Survey at the park indicates that visitors wanted an undercover area of seating for the café but that a visitor centre was less desirable.

In terms of interpretation and educational use, a visitor centre is the typical solution. Ideally, to take full advantage of this facility, an educational officer would also be employed. The visitor centre opens up opportunities to display exhibitions of material not practical outside, give talks, slide shows and films; telling the story of the park and countryside, which could also be achieved with illustrations, models, artefacts and fixed exhibits. Successful centres have a range of media and interactive displays, to engage the visitor and influence their actions, but also have proactive staff involvement with the visitors. The majority of visitor centres also include toilets and undercover seating for refreshments, which also encourages year round visits. Many are also exemplars of good building practice, with sustainable living features such as solar power and log burning heating.

If the building was designed as a flexible space with few fixed internal walls, the space could also be put to a variety of other uses including: temporary and permanent exhibits; to hold programmes of education and other activities for young people and adults; and as a meeting room to hold talks but also for public hire for other events.



Reculver Country Park, Kent

Advantages

- increases opportunities for educational visits from schools
- year round visits practical
- opens up opportunities to display interactive hands-on exhibitions
- practical to show slides and films
- can meet the needs of a wider variety of audiences
- less-able visitors can still appreciate the park (equality of access)
- provides shelter from the weather
- a sustainable building could be used as an exemplar for sustainable building a multi - functional building
- could include toilets, and year round catering with undercover seating for refreshments

Disadvantages

- expensive to provide a building
- increased costs of overheads and utilities
- fitting out the building, can also be expensive
- planning permission would be required
- can become the main attraction



4.0 Where are we now?

This section of the Plan describes the current situation at Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground at the time the plan was written. It sets out where we are now and indicates which themes these cover.

As stated earlier it is normal to identify themes which are then used as the basis for interpretation.

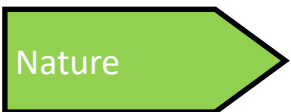
Themes



A theme organises ideas and makes sure that visitors remember the facts, similar to the way a musical score brings together notes into a song. Research shows for communication to be effective it should be enjoyable, relevant, organised and if we want it to be interpretive, it must convey a message or theme.

The interpretation around Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground can be broken down into three main themes: nature, history, recreation and management.

In the tables that follow the four themes have been ticked where they are currently being applied.



Personal Interpretation – We have never run any personnel interpretation at this site.

Educational Activities –

We have run the occasional educational activities around wildlife on demand and some self led seasonal trails.

Building a mini beast home with the ranger

Halloween trail

Easter trail

Christmas trail

Big Garden Bird Watch

Big Butterfly Count

Specialist Interest Groups – We have arranged site walks on demand with various groups including the Kent botanical recording group who found a rare sedge growing on the site.



THEME:	Nature <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	History <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recreation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Printed Interpretation

Leaflets – There is a leaflet about the Dementia friendly trail in print. The virtual orienteering course also has a printed map available.



THEME:	Nature <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	History <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recreation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Management <input type="checkbox"/>
---------------	--	---	--	-------------------------------------

Interpretation panels – There are 11 interpretation panels around the park some with sound posts. Most of these form the sensory Dementia friendly walk the other two are about V1 doodlebug and TonbridgeTownlands about historic boundary markers.



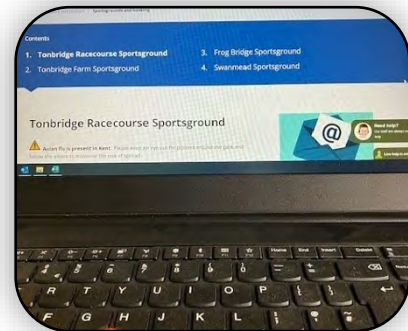
THEME:	Nature <input type="checkbox"/>	History <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recreation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Management <input type="checkbox"/>
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Audio posts - We have some solar powered audio posts installed around the park as part of the Dementia friendly trail. The sounds relate to the individual interpretation signs and include children playing, the war, bird song and river boats.



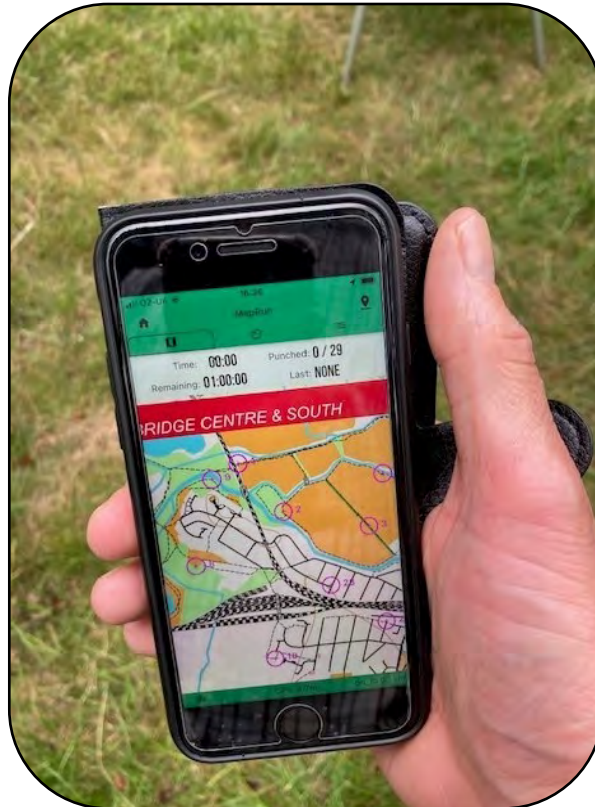
THEME:	Nature <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	History <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recreation <input type="checkbox"/>	Management <input type="checkbox"/>
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Digital interpretation - Since the launch of the Council's website Racecourse Sportsground page has detail of the facilities provided, parking and closing tiems and booking. It contains links to a number of external websites including the Green Flag Award, with the exception of this website, the Council is not responsible for the content of external internet sites. The park also features on several other websites such as Explore Kent.



THEME:	Nature <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	History <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recreation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---------------	--	---	--	--

Digital trails - There is a virtual smart phone orienteering course around this site using a free app called MapRun6. This goes around this site and then extends along the river and into the adjacent Haysden Country Park (there is also a map for sale for users who prefer this, available from Tonbridge Castle Tourist Information Centre). The course was designed in collaboration with the local Saxons Orienteering Club with external grant funding.



THEME:	Nature <input type="checkbox"/>	History <input type="checkbox"/>	Recreation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Management <input type="checkbox"/>
---------------	---------------------------------	----------------------------------	--	-------------------------------------

Signs - We already have some directional signage around the site, these take the form of play area signs, finger posts, and regulatory signs. The finger post waymarking include routes to and from the town centre.



Finger posts



Main entrance sign



Play area signage



Regulatory signage

THEME:	Recreation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	History <input type="checkbox"/>	Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---------------	--	----------------------------------	--

Funding - No additional revenue or capital funding has been identified from the Council to fund projects arising from this Plan. Funding from outside sources may be available, and it will be the role of the Site Manager to identify any potential sources and apply for fund where available.

5.0 Where do we want to get to?

Strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats

Summarising the information so far the Table identifies the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) to interpreting and marketing Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground.

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Flag Award • Dementia friendly walk installed • Virtual orienteering course • Some interpretation material already exists • Regular events • Demand and positive feedback from past events • Past customer surveys to draw on • Website pages are well used • Sensory experience interpretation • Occasional interest from specialist groups • Established partnerships with clubs and private organisers already run some events • 'Events on open spaces form' and procedures already in place • TMBC website is popular means of accessing information • Explore Kent partnerships for advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any bids for other funding could include an interpretation element • New technology may reduce cost • Develop socially inclusive interpretation • Staff and volunteers running events • Reduce costs by piggyback on advertising for national events like Love Parks Week • Posters can provide a cost effective themed message • Use leaflets and posters produced by others RSPCA, Keep Britain Tidy, Environmental Health dept where these match our needs • Webpage for volunteers • Web blog for wildlife spotted • Quick Response codes mean smartphone users can find out more • Social Media used this more • Adopt a standard style of signage for the park • New noticeboard/s • Clip frame boards for posters
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding interpretation can be costly • On-going maintenance of static interpretation panels • Signs can go out of date • Catering is at present seasonal and seating is outside • No standard style of signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising cost of static interpretation panels • Staff costs • Flooding of the sportsground • Apathy: some people don't want change and feel we are already providing what they want

The Role of the Interpretation and Marketing Plan

Overall Aim

To improve all forms of interpretation within Racecourse Sportsground.

This Plan has several objectives:

- To act as a framework that will identify, guide and co-ordinate efforts;
- To improve the quality and effectiveness of interpretation;
- To improve the image and identity of the country park;
- To ensure accessibility of interpretation materials;
- To help orientate visitors and raise awareness
- To influence behaviour, promote safety and;
- To improve the public's understanding and appreciation of the park.

6.0 How will we get there?

This section sets out how we are going to achieve our aims and objectives. The Programme of Work sets out long term targets, these actions will be draw forward into specific actions within the Annual Action Plan of the Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Management Plan 2024-2028. **Annex 1** indicates some cost effective resources that could be used to gather more information on the Themes. **Annex 2** lists some possible ideas for interpreting the site and looks at the themes in more detail. The Programme below outlines some possible options for interpreting and marketing the park, but is not intended to be too prescriptive. In order to achieve maximum impact with limited resources, only some of the opportunities identified in the SWOT can be implemented.

Themes key (ticked): N= Nature, H = History, R= Recreation, M = Management

Importance High = 1, medium= 2, low= 3-4

Projects	Theme				Cost range comments	Importance
	N	H	R	M		
1. Staff training on interpretation techniques and methods	✓	✓	✓	✓	Revenue budget	1
2. Continue the events programme in the sportsground, expand this where resources allow.	✓	✓	✓		Overheads	1
3. Create a leaflet about the dementia friendly walk	✓	✓	✓		Revenue budget	3
4. Take part in the national Love Parks week campaign to promote the park to the public			✓	✓	Revenue budget	2
5. Provide a leaflet rack at the park.	✓	✓	✓	✓	£1000	2
6. News Releases and Photo Calls to be issued about events, and activities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Overheads	1
7. Litter awareness campaign to continue, with community litter picks, and posters to highlight issues.				✓	Overheads	1
8. Water safety campaign to be continued.	✓			✓	Overheads	1
9. Continue to enter for the Green Flag Award, as a promotional tool for the public and to retain high standards.	✓	✓	✓	✓	£350 per annum	1
10. Use Explore Kent website to promote the park to a wider audience.				✓	Budgeted for under borough wide promotion.	1
11. Lead guided tours of the sportsground on demand.				✓	Overheads	2
12. Temporary posters to continue to be prepared or obtained and displayed covering topical seasonal issues but using the principles of interpretation set out within this Plan.				✓	Overheads	2

Projects	Theme				Cost range comments	Importance
	N	H	R	M		
13. Consider installing snap poster frames in suitable locations so that relevant posters can be displayed on a semi permanent basis such as in the toilets and in the outside of the kiosk building.	✓	✓	✓	✓		1
14. Consider providing some public noticeboards at the entrances so that orientation maps and posters can be displayed about events. Incorporate leaflet racks.	✓	✓	✓	✓	£1500 each	2
15. Continue to research and gather facts and information about the natural, human history, and management issues relevant to the park as time allows for future interpretation programmes.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Overheads	3
16. Consider the feasibility of alternative ways of interpreting the park, including the use of augmented reality, digital apps and QR codes. Look at the feasibility of a small scale trial of a technology led approach, to determine if there is any demand from visitors, and how this might be funded.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Grant or revenue budget.	3

7.0 How will we know when we have arrived?

Feedback - Feedback from visitors after events and during the year will tell us how well we are doing and help us to make changes to improve our visitors understanding.

Market surveys - Regular market surveys will also help us understand our customer's needs and we can then alter the way we interpret the park to reflect this feedback.

Monitoring progress – Progress will be monitored against the Programme in this document and Annual Action within the Management Plan.

Green Flag Award – judges feedback reports include the criteria: A welcoming place and marketing. The judges comments will help us assess how successful we have been in interpreting and marketing the site, and may offer suggestions on other items to interpret and how best to accomplish this.

Inventory of Resources related to topics at Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground**General**

Green Flag Award website <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/>

Tonbridge to Penshurst Cycle route

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (2024) Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground Management Plan 2024—2028

Human History

BBC (2010) *The German threat to Britain in World War 2* available at website http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/invasion_ww2_01.shtml

Environment Agency (undated) *Leigh Barrier: the silent saviour* booklet available at website <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/31716.aspx>

Ogley B (1992) *Doodlebugs and rockets: The battle of the flying bombs*, Froglets publication

Tonbridge Historical Society website <http://www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk>

Tonbridge Historical Society *Tonbridge Races* available on 25/1/22 at [Tonbridge Races \(tonbridgehistory.org.uk\)](http://www.tonbridgehistory.org.uk)

Wing C (1991) *Eden Valley Walk for Kent County Council Planning department*

Wilson A. Editor (2015) *Tonbridge through the centuries*, Tonbridge Historical Society

Natural History

Biological Records Centre includes apps that can be downloaded and more website www.brc.ac.uk/

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation website www.arc-trust.org

Bat Conservation Trust website www.bats.org.uk

Botanical Society of the British Isles website www.bsbi.org.uk/kent.html

British Dragonfly Society website www.dragonflysoc.org.uk

British Trust for Ornithology website www.bto.org

Bumblebee Conservation Trust website www.bumblebeeconservation.org/

Buglife website www.buglife.org.uk

Butterfly Conservation <https://butterfly-conservation.org/>

Field Studies Council publications training etc. website www.field-studies-council.org

Kent Amphibian and Reptile Group website www.kentarg.org

Kent Bat Group website www.kentbatgroup.org.uk

Kent Botanical Recording Group www.bsbi.org/kent

Kent butterflies website www.kentbutterflies.org

Kent Field Club website www.kentfieldclub.org.uk

Kent Mammal Group website www.kentmammalgroup.org.uk

Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre website www.kmbrc.org.uk

Kent Moths website www.kentmoths.org

Kent Trust for Nature Conservation, training and advice website www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk

Kent Ornithological Society website www.kentos.org.uk

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds website www.rspb.org.uk

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership website www.medwayvalley.org

Natural England website www.naturalengland.org.uk

Opal citizen's surveys run by The Natural History Museum website www.opalexplornature.org

Orpington Field Club website www.orpingtonfieldclub.org.uk

Pan Species Listing website www.brc.ac.uk/psl

People Trust for Endangered Species, surveys and information website www.ptes.org

Plantlife International website plantlife.org.uk/international

Pondlife information on pond related matters website www.pond-life.me.uk

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds website www.rspb.org.uk

Royal Entomological Society www.royensoc.co.uk/

The Mammal Society website www.mammal.org.uk/

Species records from various sources (1980-to date) *Country Park Species Lists* of plants and animals see Appendix 10 of this management plan website www.tmbc.gov.uk

Valley of Visions and Medway Gap project, Community Trails available on 1/10/20 at www.kentdowns.org.uk/our-projects/past-projects/valley-of-visions/

Management

CABE Space (former) research publications into park related issues available from the website www.cabe.org.uk

DEFRA website <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/>

Greenspace & Greenspace Southeast work to improve parks and green spaces by raising awareness, involving communities and creating skilled professionals

Keep Britain Tidy (litter and dog control) website www.keepbritaintidy.org.uk/

Corporate membership of the Keep Britain Tidy Network, involvement with national and local campaigns

Environmental initiatives - talks at local schools, litter picks and tidy up campaigns

Naturenet good for general outdoor topics available at the website www.naturenet.net

Non Native Species Secretariat information available at website Parkforce see website www.cabe.org.uk/public-space/parkforce

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents see website www.rosipa.com

Sports England www.sportengland.org

Sports Turf Consultancy strigroup.com

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council Invasive plants and weeds available at www.tmbc.gov.uk

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council *Water safety* information available at website www.tmbc.gov.uk

Tonbridge Sports Association

The River Restoration Centre (2002) *Manual of River Restoration Techniques* available at <http://www.therrc.co.uk/manual-river-restoration-techniques>

Visit Britain for information on tourism and trends, usage, marketing and sustainability www.visitbritain.com

Visitor Safety Group www.visitorsafetygroup

Themes

The Tables below list some possible ideas for interpreting the park and are linked together with topics and themes.

‘Themes’ link together related information into bite size pieces, sometimes these can be used to tell a story, and ‘Topics’ are more specific. ‘Objectives’ are measureable outcomes and can be ‘learning’, ‘behavioural’ or ‘emotional’; all the themes have been written using the principles of interpretation.

Objectives must ideally be SMART: Specific: be clear about what is intended. Measurable: so you can monitor and report on performance. They must be appropriate: to the site and audience, and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council goals, realistic: achievable, timely: when it should happen.

Theme 1: HISTORY – The influence of past land uses and the way they have changed the landscape. At Tonbridge Racecourse Sportsground humans have had many influences on the landscape that you can still see today.

Key year/s and Topics	Objectives
World war 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doodle bug
Racecourse past land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of the site
Flood plain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The need for a flood plain
2004 to present day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciate the changes that have taken place in creating a sportsground since Tonbridge and Malling took over ownership of the land and developed the modern day park.

Theme 3: MANAGEMENT ISSUES – the park is a managed landscape with public access and this brings with it some challenges

Theme Topics	Objectives
It's dangerous to swim in the River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To appreciate the risks of swimming in the water bodies ● To know what to do if someone has fallen into the water
Exploring the sportsground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To give visitors the confidence to visit less well used parts of the park ● To know the different types of path surfaces present ● To know how long it will take to walk around a given path
Food fit for ducks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To appreciate the effects of feeding the waterfowl ● To appreciate which foods are good and bad for them
We can all do something about litter in the park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The majority of visitors do not drop litter in the park ● To appreciate the negative impacts on wildlife and the environment ● More members of the public will be willing to take part in litter picks
Not a work of art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The majority of visitors will appreciate the park and do not graffiti ● Young people feel an affinity with the park and want to care for it
Don't let fly tipping turn the park into a dump	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The majority of visitors feel an affinity with the park and don't fly tip ● Visitors understand how much it costs to clear up fly tipping the negative impacts for wildlife
My dog's fine, what's the problem ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dog owners are aware of the dog control rules that apply in the park ● The majority of dog owners feel an affinity with the Park and will not break the dog control rules in the park <p>Example wording <i>"Your dog can still enjoy this walk whilst on a lead. Try to vary your pace and keep your dog engaged by talking to it."</i></p> <p><i>"Birds are breeding and need to stay quietly with their young. Allowing YOUR dog to run off the path here will disturb them. Please help your dog to help the birds"</i></p>
Dog Fouling	<p>Example wording</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>"All of our responsible dog walkers pick up after their dogs, please join in",</i> ● <i>"What makes you special? Please pick up after your dog"</i>
Saving native wildflowers and animals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To appreciate the impact of alien species in park and the need to control some of them
'A line to remember'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fishermen appreciate the hazard that fishing line left on site can cause to wildlife

Questions to consider when evaluating interpretation exhibits for the visitor audience

- Is it easy to understand, and key messages understood?
- Are the messages clear?
- What messages can visitors identify?
- What are visitors learning or doing as a result of the interpretation?
- Is attention being held and for how long?
- How enjoyable is it?
- What is most and least interesting?
- Is it well organised and easy to navigate? Does it have a clear structure?
- Was there enough/too little information or images?
- Are there connections or references to other interpretation sources or further information ?
- Are common questions still being asked by visitors?
- How much time is spent by visitors at individual exhibits/places and has this changed?
- Are visitors able to easily find interpretation on-site?
- What could be improved?

Countryside Commission for Scotland (1998) Battleby Display centre information sheets and catalogue. (Lewis)

Dog bins

The red dog metal bins shown here are our adopted style of bin within the public open spaces. They are bright red so that they can be seen from some distance by dog walkers.



Bollards

Steel bollards are our preferred style.

Older styles will be phased out as they come to the end of their lifespan.



Security gates and barriers

All metal steel furniture finished in gloss black paint. Hazard markings and signage added to prevent accidents.



Fencing

Wooden knee rail fencing set on edge is our preferred style of fencing.

The exceptions being around the children's play area (bowtop fencing) and the tennis courts (chain-link fencing).



Bridges

Wooden bridges are the preferred style.



Health and safety and regulatory signage

Metal signs, which follow the Health and (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 and Highway Act with the recommended logos and designs, these have colours with set meanings (red - prohibition, blue - mandatory, yellow - warning or hazard, green - safe environment). Highway style road signs are used around the roads and car parks and along the cycle route. We will also consider other more effective innovated approaches to providing important information to the public. It will however be important to keep a consistency of design across the site for any new style of signs.



Seats

Our preferred style of seat for the site is the Monmouth seat with arms. All new seats will be installed on concrete bases. The older seats will gradually be removed as they come to the end of their lifespan.



Picnic seats

All steel picnic tables is our preferred style. All seats are provided on concrete base. Where possible seats with a disabled access will be provided as the one shown here.



Litter bins

The all metal style bin shown to the right has been used throughout the park.



Life buoy stations

The style of the life buoy stations are shown here. These are a covered enclosed life buoy station with a door which has a toggle release to open. On the front of each station there is the emergency telephone number 999 and details on how to contact the Council should the life buoy be missing. They are bright orange so that they can be seen from some distance in case of an emergency.



Disabled accessible planter

This style of planter is used on the site.



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Countryside Agency (2005) *By all reasonable means: Inclusive access to the outdoors for disabled people*

Countryside Recreation Network (2009) *Dogs in parks and the countryside*

Department of Conservation (New Zealand) (2005) *Interpretation Handbook and Standard* available from the website <http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/interpretation-handbook-complete.pdf>

Department for Education and Skills (2006) *Learning Outside the Classroom. Manifesto*. London: DfES, available from the website www.lotc.org.uk/getmedia/fe5e8f73-a53c-4310-84af-c5e8c3b32435/Manifesto.aspx

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