

The Mere at Ellesmere

Management Plan

2010 - 2020



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List of Reference Documents

Title	Author	Date
The Moors Management Plan	Whilde Associates	2001
Conservation Management Plan (Stage 1 Lottery bid report)	Land Use Consultants	21 Dec 2005
The Mere Development Plan: Audience (Stage 1 Lottery bid report)	Ken Burlton Consultants	January 2006
The Mere at Ellesmere Heritage Project Heritage Lottery and Big Lottery Parks for People Stage II Application	Shropshire County Council	July 2007
Stage 2 Submission Design Report	Golder Associates Ltd Landscape Architects	July 2007
Interpretation and Education Plan	Focused Learning and Interpretation	July 2007
Training Plan	Rayska Heritage	July 2007
Volunteer Plan	Shropshire County Council	July 2007
Access Strategy	LPR Associates	July 2007
Audience Development Plan	LPR Associates	July 2007
Marketing Strategy	LPR Associates	July 2007
Business Plan	JLA	July 2007
Volunteer Plan	Shropshire County Council	July 2007
2002 -2005 Public Consultation Summary	Shropshire County Council	2005
The Mere Heritage Project Feedback: 2007 Consultation Reports Summary	Shropshire County Council	July 2007
Construction Design Management Report		2008 & 2009
Maintenance Schedule for Boat House	Purcell Miller Tritton	2009
Construction Drawings Landscape and Buildings	Golders Associates Ltd & Purcell Miller Tritton	2009
Garden Terrace and Castlefields: Historical Review and Design Proposals	Golder Associates Ltd	July 2009

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Summary

Intent / Concept

This plan intends to bring together the management, maintenance and development of The Mere at Ellesmere (referred to as The Mere in this plan) in an overall framework. The plan is intended to be both a working document and a reference document. A working document that contains actions and timetables that will need to be implemented and reviewed. Also, a reference document that provides references to other documents, policies and strategies and explores their implications for the park. As such the plan has to be read in conjunction with these documents in order to manage, maintain and develop the site. The list of reference documents set out earlier shows the wealth of reports that exist in relation to The Mere and this management plan draws on these and brings together any outstanding actions into a single action plan.

Audiences

The plan has been prepared for a number of audiences

- Shropshire Council staff
- Shropshire Council elected members
- Ellesmere Town Council
- Partner organisations and stakeholders,
- Heritage Lottery Fund staff / monitors

It also has the potential to be of interest to

- Other funding bodies
- Award schemes e.g. Green Flag Award

In order to try to make the document accessible to a wide range of audiences we

have tried to produce it in a readable and straightforward style.

Need

The need for this plan is driven by the authority's completion of the physical restoration works at The Mere funded by a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Big Lottery (BIG) Parks for People grant. It is also a useful process for the authority in assessing its current management and maintenance arrangements to respond to the restoration and also recent local government re-organisation.

Style

It has been the aim to produce this plan in a readable and accessible style, following guidance produced by CABE Space. The plan is laid out under 4 key headings

- **Where are we now?** – here the plan describes the current situation of the park – what it is, who manages it, its history to date, what is known about the park, what policy and procedures govern the way it is and can be managed, where it is located, what is known about current users and the surrounding community.
- **Where do we want to get to?** – here the plan takes a step back to assess the significance of the park, what issues are to be addressed, what improvements are needed both to the site itself and the way it is managed. This section also develops aims and objectives that can then be translated into actions in the next section.
- **How will we get there?** – here the plan sets out what actions need to be taken to deliver change, it also sets out proposals for new management and maintenance arrangements as well as considering the financial and resource implications of the actions.
- **How will we know when we have arrived?** – the final section sets out how the success of the actions will be measured and when the plan itself will need to be monitored and updated.

Key issues

- The need to develop a costed maintenance schedule and identify appropriate resources to deliver this to a high standard – various documents exist to set out what maintenance should take place but they need to be pulled together, costed and resources allocated to deliver them.
- The need to develop a Friends of the Mere – this has been an ambition for some time and the authority needs to be clear as to why this is an aim and how it would compliment volunteering and overall management
- The need to deliver a comprehensive volunteering programme – a volunteer plan exists and the HLF bid was heavily reliant on in kind match funding through this route, now the authority needs to implement the plan
- The need to address restoration items not covered by the HLF project (e.g. the garden terrace, woodlands on west of the Mere) – the restoration of the Mere is not completed, the HLF funded capital project was one aspect of a longer term vision. The HLF capital scheme did not cover all items and there are still areas of the site that need to be addressed either through restorative maintenance or capital intervention
- The need to develop visitor surveys and measurements against base lines set – the project has not yet delivered on its measurement of success, it has base line information but needs to develop a framework and deliver it so that it can show how it meets the outcomes of the Parks for People programme
- The need to look at staffing issues post HLF – HLF funded posts are short term and the authority needs to consider firstly what posts are required in the longer term and secondly how it funds the posts in the future. This is linked to the overall business planning for the site as a whole

- The need to review catering operations after 1 year and decide whether to go out to the market. Again linked to the overall business plan for the site but the authority needs to ask whether it should continue to run the catering in house or put it out to the market and use the income generated to invest in the Mere.

Vision

The shared vision for The Mere taken from the Design Report (2007) is as follows:

“Shropshire Council will work with partners and the local community to develop and manage the Mere at Ellesmere, a regionally significant park of cultural value within a nationally significant wetland landscape. It is a well used community facility and a visitor destination of regional importance: a place of value to wildlife, local residents and visitors alike.

Through the provision of access, facilities and interpretation visitors to the Mere at Ellesmere are provided with a unique and enjoyable experience and the information to help them explore the landscape and local attractions for themselves.”

The overarching objectives for the Park are:

- **To conserve and enhance the heritage value** of the park, including the natural heritage of the landscape which is of national significance and the cultural landscape and buildings which are of national, regional and local significance.
- **To improve access and increase the range of audiences** by creating better infrastructure which is sympathetic to the character of the park and which will provide new opportunities to explore. Provide better facilities for informal recreation and support a more extensive events programme run in partnership with the community, voluntary sector and other organisations. The park will be promoted through the development of a marketing plan in partnership with other organisations.

- **To encourage involvement and increasing the range of volunteers** involved by broadening the range of activities thereby making the park appeal to a wider audience. To actively promote volunteering and support the creation of a 'friends' group to take ownership of elements of the park.
- **To increase knowledge and skills** by providing interpretative information, running events to include life long learning and informal training for volunteers and partner organisations.
- **To improve management and maintenance standards** in the park to provide a better welcome and user experience. The process will be supported by a new 'Mere Advisory Board' which will include representation from a range of sectors.

A – Where Are We Now?

1. Introduction

This section of the plan sets out the current situation of The Mere in terms of where it is located, who manages and maintains it, a short summary of its history to date, what is currently known about the space and what it currently provides in terms of facilities and features. It also sets the management and maintenance of the space into a wider context by examining the implications of relevant policy and strategy and also by setting out information about current use and the nature of the surrounding community.

2. Site Description

2.1 The Park

The Mere, at 46 hectares, is the largest of Shropshire's meres. Located on the edge of Ellesmere in North Shropshire, The Mere and its immediate setting demonstrate a rich diversity of natural and cultural heritage. Figure 1 below shows the location of the site.

The thick glacial sands, gravels and boulder clays of the Cheshire Basin extend southward into North Shropshire, where they produce a flat or gently undulating landscape. In and around Ellesmere this landscape is interspersed with hummocks and lakes formed in front of receding glaciers. The meres and mosses including those surrounding Ellesmere were formed by the retreat of glaciers during the last ice age some 12,000 years ago. The meres that were formed are known as 'kettle holes' and resulted from large blocks of ice from the glacier creating deep holes in the glacial moraine. Local soils within the park are of the typical brown earths (non-alluvial loamy soils with a non-calcareous subsoil) and typical stagnogley soils (clay enriched subsoil with distinct topsoil).

The park is predominantly flat, and provides a number of easy access walking routes. The highest point is the remains of the Motte & Bailey which along with the Garden Terrace walks afford views over the surrounding landscape.

The Mere was enclosed as part of the development of the Bridgewater Estate at Ellesmere House from c.1854 when the area now known as Cremorne Gardens became the 'pleasure grounds' to the Bridgewater family, inventors of the British inland navigation system. Its subsequent owners, the Brownlow family, transferred The Mere and the grounds around it by deed of gift 'for the benefit of the public' in 1953.

Use of the park has developed over the years and now consists of a series of linked but distinctive 'character areas' offering a wide range of heritage experiences. These character areas were used as a basis for the original conservation management plan and also for the analysis section of this document.

2.2 Features and Facilities

The park provides a number of heritage features and public facilities, many of which have been improved as part of the Mere at Ellesmere Heritage Project as outlined below.

The new Boathouse Visitor Information Centre has brought together the key public facilities in the park into one building. This involved the refurbishment of the existing Boathouse Restaurant and the addition of extension. The facilities provided include catering, a shop, exhibition space, interpretation resources and public toilets. Two of the three historic boathouses, which are located adjacent to Boathouse, have been restored as part of the heritage project. Mere Cottage which was a redundant building lying between The Boathouse VIC and the Promenade has also been restored. Future planned uses include a base for volunteers and community groups. The kiosk which sits on the Promenade and provides snacks and light refreshments was also restored as part of the heritage project.

Figure 1 Location

Figure 2 Site Plan of The Mere

Cremorne Gardens provides additional public toilets, a children's play area and will shortly also provide an adventure play area (due to be completed by summer 2011). The Gardens and promenade provide formal beds, specimen trees, lawns and seating. The Garden Terraces provides an additional area of formal gardens which are currently undergoing restoration. When complete this will complete a circular garden walk linking all the designed elements of the park. There are two pay and display car parks at the Moors and Castlefields. The park provides a number of themed walks which encourage the exploration of the park, provides interpretation of its heritage and makes links with Ellesmere town, the Llangollen Canal and surrounding countryside. The site also provides for fishing and boating activities.

2.3 Heritage Context

A full description of the heritage significance of the park is set out in the Conservation Management Plan; however a very short summary is set out here:

The landscape and archaeology features and the history of the park's evolution are key to understanding its significance nationally and regionally. Its exploitation and use extends from pre-history for fishing, then for defence during the 11th century, through industrial exploitation in the 17th century and ultimately for recreation, initially solely for the gentry during the 19th century and ultimately by the public from the mid 20th century onwards. The mere itself is of national significance because of its unique geological and geomorphological.

The motte and bailey, a scheduled ancient monument is of national significance and occupies what was once one of the most significant positions in the County. The buildings on the mereside relate to the unique historic development of the mere and its setting by aristocratic proprietors. The development of the buildings in the park is of regional significance. Ellesmere House lies adjacent to the park and is now in private ownership however it is important in terms of the context of the park. The Garden Terraces which once formed the terraced walkway link between the house and the Mere are of regional and local significance.

The Mere contains a variety of wetland, grassland and woodland habitats of local,

county and national importance, including the largest Mere in Shropshire. Together they provide suitable conditions for a range of species of nature conservation importance, such as bats, badger, birds (especially the Heronry, Gull Roost and wildfowl), invertebrates and coarse fish . The most important areas for nature, the Moors, is designated as a County Wildlife Site.

2.4 Legal Issues and Designations

2.4.1 Ownership and Covenants

The Mere Charitable Trust, established in 1975, now owns the majority of the site, including The Mere itself and most of the adjacent shore. Shropshire Council and Ellesmere Town Council jointly own the land upon which the major buildings of the site are grouped. Shropshire Council has outright ownership of the whole of the western part of the site which includes Castlefields and the Garden Terraces. In addition, there is an area of Common Land to the south of the site known as The Moors, which falls within The Mere Charitable Trust land. This includes the area of Promenade and Mereside land to the south of the Boathouse Visitor Centre. These areas are shown on Figure 3 together with the site boundary.

A full copy of the deeds are held centrally and available on request and include:

- Deed of Gift for the Mere Charitable land
- Deed for land jointly owned by Shropshire Council and Ellesmere Town Council which includes the Boathouse Visitor Information Centre, Mere Cottage, fishing, bathing and boating rights.

Figure 3 land ownership

2.4.2 Leases & Licences

There are a number of agreements in place relating to The Mere:

- The Kiosk tenancy - under a 7 year lease which began in March 2009. The income is £8,400 p.a.
- Warden's bungalow – it was agreed that its function as accommodation for an on-site warden was no longer needed and therefore the property should be sold. Proceeds from the sale would contribute to restoration work on the charitable land. While its sale was agreed in principle with the Charity commission in 2008 at the time of writing this plan the property has not been sold and remains empty.
- Boating license – this is under a 3 year lease with Shropshire Steamboat Company which ends on 31st March 2010. This provides a steam boat which gives tours and rents out 8 rowing boats and a Wheelyboat which are owned by Shropshire Council. The licence is nominally on a peppercorn rent.
- Angling license – under a 3 year lease which is renewed annually from 31 May. Under the lease the club have the use of one of the Council's 3 boathouses and 3 of the 6 fishing platforms. This generates £1300 per annum.

2.4.3 Other Agreements

There are two DEFRA Stewardship agreements at the Moors and Castlefields.

- The Moors expires on 31st October 2010. The management regime should follow actions outlined in the Moors Management Plan. The annual payment is £268.00.
- Castlefields Countryside Stewardship Scheme expires 31st October 2014. The agreement requires grazing and an occasional hay cut. The annual payment is £707.25.

2.4.4 Designations

The park falls wholly or partly within, or adjoins, the following Local Plan designations:

Scheduled Ancient Monument

The Motte and Bailey is listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. English Heritage is responsible for providing legal protection for nationally important sites and monuments by placing them on a list or 'schedule'. On scheduled sites preservation is given priority over any other land use. The current legislation, The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Area Act 1979, supports a formal system of Ancient Monument Consent for any work to a designated monument which is made to the Secretary of State.

Conservation Area

The whole of the park falls within the Ellesmere Conservation Area (excluding the Swan Hill entrance road). This designation is made by the local authority as the area has 'special architectural or historic interest' the character and appearance of which is worth protecting and enhancing.

Consent is required from the local authority for the following:

- demolition
- minor developments
- the protection of trees

When considering proposals the local authority will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area and proposals will not be permitted unless:

- they retain open spaces and the materials, features and details of buildings or structures which contribute to the character of the conservation area;
- are of height, size, design and materials which respect the character of the

conservation area;

- the proposed design and materials of the development are of high quality.

Archaeologically Sensitive Area

The Motte and Bailey, the Garden Terraces and the northern section of Castlefields is designated an Archaeologically Sensitive Area. As such any planning applications for works within these areas need to be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation. Where preservation in situ is not feasible, planning consent for development will normally be conditional upon developers making satisfactory provision for the excavation, recording and safeguarding of archaeological remains as appropriate prior to the commencement of the proposed development. The settlements identified in this policy have important historic significance, having been inhabited for many centuries. Evidence suggests that Ellesmere may have been occupied since the Iron Age. It is probable that archaeological deposits remain within the historic cores and, in accordance with PPG 16: - Archaeology and Planning, the policy requires developers to undertake an archaeological field evaluation before any decision on the planning application is taken so as to ascertain the significance of the site and to ensure that decisions are based on properly conducted investigations.

Sites of Special Conservation Value

The local authority will use its planning powers to protect and enhance sites of nature conservation value and will not normally grant permission for development which would adversely affect these sites. The Mere County Wildlife Site as identified by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust as County Wildlife Sites falls into this category. Where development is permitted, the Council will use conditions or planning obligations to ensure the protection and enhancement of the sites' nature conservation interest.

This policy seeks to protect the District's most valuable conservation sites by ensuring that scientific and conservation issues will normally take priority over all other uses involving development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Area of Special Environmental Interest

The Mere, Castlefields, the Motte and Bailey and the Garden Terraces are all designed an Area of Special Environmental Interest.

The Council will use its planning functions of negotiation, regulation, advice, support and assistance to protect and enhance the ecological, archaeological, historical and amenity value and the visual character of areas of special environmental interest which includes The Mere as outlined in the North Shropshire Local Plan 2000-2011, Revised Deposit February 2003.

Proposals for development within the areas of special environmental interest will, in addition to the Council's normal policies for development in the countryside, need to have regard to the existing character of the surrounding area in terms of design, materials, scale, siting and landscaping. This policy identifies areas where special emphasis needs to be placed on the conservation of landscape and other environmental features.

The area within which the Mere is located is of high landscape and ecological value, containing the majority of North Shropshire's Meres and many of the smaller Mosses. The Meres and Mosses are of international importance for nature conservation. The area is characterized by a rolling countryside of small but steep hills produced by glacial deposits.

3. Wider Context

3.1 Policy Context

This management plan complements the wider strategic context of national, regional and local organisations. As part of the production of the plan a number of key policies and strategies have been identified that provide a policy framework for the management, maintenance and development of The Mere. The key policies, strategies and documents that have been identified are:

3.1.1 Regional Policy

- Growing The Cultural Economy In The West Midlands, Culture West Midlands (2007)
- Evolution, Revolution and Innovation: A Cultural Strategy for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, October 2009.
- Local Area Agreement Shropshire Partnership April 2008 – March 2011

3.1.2 Local Policy

The Mere at Ellesmere is subject to specific non-statutory designations and policies. These are illustrated on Figure 4 Designations & Planning Context.

Planning Policy

The Development Plan (2006) for the site refers to the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Joint Structure Plan (adopted November 2002) and the North Shropshire Local Plan 2000-2011(Revised Deposit Draft February 2003).

The Council has no specific policies relating to the Mere although it is committed to the proposed development.

Figure 4 designations and planning context

Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2002

The section of the Biodiversity Plan which most directly relates to the Mere is 'Standing Open Water (Meres, Pools, Ponds and Canals)'. This includes a number of objectives related to preserving the quality of water and associated habitats and ensuring that management practices do not have a detrimental effect. In line with the Biodiversity Action Plan the developments make recommendations to conserve and enhance wetland habitats and to "increase awareness of the value of standing open water".

Shropshire Tourism Strategy 2004

Background research for the strategy shows the visitor profile for the Mere as typical for the County with adult couples comprising 60% of all day visitors to the Mere and parties and groups with children making up only 15% of all visitors compared to a national average of 19%. Walking is one of the most popular activities in Shropshire and at the Mere.

The strategy seeks to reinforce Shropshire's tourism strengths as a rural leisure destination – 'tranquil and relaxing with a remarkable and varied landscape'. It is recognised that these qualities appeal most to the 45+ age group, a fast developing part of the national and Shropshire visitor market. It recommends that "landscape should be promoted as the primary appeal of the area and underlying all other themes and activities".

The strategy states that "the market towns reflect many aspects of the life and culture of the county" and "are fundamentally important and central to the successful development of this strategy". The town of Ellesmere itself also, therefore, has an importance for tourism in its own right and strategies for the Mere recognise and complement this.

Ellesmere Market Town Initiative

The Ellesmere Strategic Action Plan of August 2004 identifies the Mere at Ellesmere Heritage Project as a high priority project providing cultural, leisure, environmental and economic benefits. It identifies the project as “enabling more people to access and enjoy the attractive environment of the area whilst protecting and enhancing its value.

3.2 Organisational Context

Following creation of the Shropshire Council Unitary Authority on 1 April 2009 the management of The Mere falls within Parks and Countryside Sites team, in Leisure and Outdoor Recreation Service, in Culture and Leisure, in the Community Services Directorate, see figures 5 to 8 for the organisational structure charts.

While the park falls within the management of the Parks and Countryside team’s responsibility Ellesmere Town Council owns part of the park and therefore have shared responsibility for those elements, namely the Boathouse Visitor Centre, Mere Cottage, the three boathouses boating, bathing and fishing rights. A memorandum of agreement between Shropshire County Council and Ellesmere Town Council was drawn up in 2008 (the aim of this is to clarify issues relating solely to the jointly owned elements of the park, this should not fall within the role of the Mere Committee/ Mere Advisory Board.)

Historically the park has received advice and guidance on strategic matters from the Mere Committee which had representation from Shropshire County Council, North Shropshire District Council and Ellesmere Town Council. The make up of the committee is being reviewed due to the establishment of a unitary authority for Shropshire from 1 April 2009 with a view to creating a Mere Advisory Board (for proposed structure see figure 9 below). This has provided an opportunity to look at the role and remit of the group and representation on it with the aim of broadening input to consider environmental, community and economic issues and opportunities for the park from a range of stakeholder and partners.

Figure 5 Shropshire Council Organisational Structure

Figure 6 Community Service Directorate Structure

Figure 7 Leisure and Outdoor Recreation and The Mere Organisational Structure

Figure 8 mere advisory board

3.2.1 Current Maintenance Arrangements

In 2006 a document called Grounds Maintenance Responsibilities was drawn up to set out works that were required by external contractors and in house rangers.

- landscape maintenance

A grounds maintenance specification exists that covers amenity grass cutting currently under taken by external contractors. The contractor is renewed annually and will in the future be re-let by the Parks Manager.

- habitat maintenance

This work is mostly undertaken by the in house Rangers and the Estate Worker and includes strimming, weed control, managing wildflower areas, management of The Moors wetland and some hedge trimming.

Rangers will also do any health and safety works related to trees and shrubs. Any specialist arboricultural work would go out to contract.

- infrastructure maintenance

The Site Attendant deals with cleaning off graffiti and minor repairs helped by the estate worker. She also cleans the Promenade, Cremorne toilets, undertakes litter picking and empties litter bins. Recently she has also been able to find time to undertake some basic winter horticultural maintenance tasks. The former operation is not helped by the recently restored surface of resin bound gravel which prevents effective cleaning of goose fouling.

Dog bin emptying is carried out by the Environmental Maintenance Team twice a week in the summer and once a week in the winter.

- facility maintenance

The majority of buildings on site are in a Service Level Agreements with the Council's in house Property Services this covers all building inspections and any maintenance works required. This excludes the kiosk which is in a full repair and maintenance tenancy agreement.

- safety inspections

There are a number of mechanisms currently in place to ensure a basic duty of care for anyone entering the site.

Safety procedures and Risk Assessments have been conducted for all of the activities and facilities in the park to make sure staff and visitors are safe when in the park. Any new activities are risk assessed prior to commencement. All risk assessments are reviewed and are subject to internal audit.

The various inspections carried out within the park are set out below:

Regular site safety audits are carried out by the site attendant

- Play Areas – daily visual check, the annual inspection is done by RoSPA
- The Gardens and Promenade receive a weekly visual check
- Less visited areas (such as Castlefields and The Moors) receive a monthly site safety audit

3.2.2 Environmental Sustainability

Shropshire Council Parks and Countryside Sites Service has an Environmental Policy which sets out how the Service aims to minimise the impact of its service provision on the environment under the following headings: Tree and Scrub Management; Amenity Grassland Management; Use of Pesticides; Use of Peat; Transport; Oils for Power Tools; Litter; Dog Fouling; Buildings; Procurement.

3.2.3 Current Management Arrangements

The table below sets out the current staffing allocations for The Mere:

Name of Post	Main duties	% time dedicated to park	Based in park yes / no	Estimate £k cost / annum to park (2009/10)
Parks & Countryside Sites Manager	Responsible for overall strategic management of the Outdoor Recreation Service. Provides line management support for the Park Manager.	5%	no	£1787
Park Manager 3 year post	Manage staff & budget Deliver Management Plan Partner & stakeholder liaison Marketing and promotion	100%	yes	£24,331- £25,940
Community Development Officer 3 year post – started 8 Jan 09	Set up ‘Friends of the Mere’ Establish volunteers Deliver an events & education programme	100% (part time/ temporary)	yes	£12,847 - £13,707
Site Attendant/ Gardener	Caretaking of park: litter, toilets, horticulture, basic maintenance.	100% (part time)		£10,530
Restaurant Catering Manager	Manages the Boathouse Restaurant	100%	yes	£22,221 - £23,708
VIC staff – managed by Customer Services	Provides an information service for visitors and manages the shop.	100%	yes	£N/A

3.3 Community Context

3.3.1 The Surrounding Community

The local audience are primarily within the town of Ellesmere, on the edge of the Mere. The town has a small population of just 3,367 with a further 4,416 people living in the outlying parishes. An estimated population of 3,900 live within 1km of the park.

Within the current profile a significant proportion of the population is economically inactive (34.2%) and over retirement age (19.3%). There has been a population and

home ownership increase by 13.4% between 1991 and 2001. It is worth noting that Wharf development in Ellesmere will significantly increase the population and change the profile.

3.3.2 Current Users

General usage statistics

Although there are some variations in visitor survey results there is reasonable consistency in response about who visits the Mere and why they visit. The following conclusions can be drawn.

- At least 70% of visitors arrive at the Mere by car with an almost negligible percentage arriving by any other mode of transport. Those not arriving by car are generally walking from the town or the canal.
- Around 70% of visitors are from outside the Ellesmere area and include tourists to the area as well as day visitors from the 'local' catchment of the West Midlands, North West England and North Wales.
- 60% of visitors are over 45 and there is a high level of 60+ users.
- Around 75% of visits are repeat visits. Conversely, 25 % of all visitors each year are new visitors.
- It is the natural attractions of the Mere and the opportunity for outdoor activities, particularly walking and contact with wildlife, which most attract visitors.
- The Visitor Centre has a high recognition level and comparatively high satisfaction level among visitors, although only a small proportion of local people used the old Visitor Centre prior to restoration work. Other areas/ facilities in the park have lower recognition levels.

Other recreational use

- Canoeing (groups) – a wide variety of groups including schools and voluntary organisations use the Mere for canoeing and kayaking and this generates an income of around £2000 per annum (which stays at the Mere as boating rights are jointly owned with the Town Council)
- Recreational boating (individuals) – this was developed as a pilot in 2009 to allow individuals to sail or canoe on the Mere. This was developed in response to a known demand and has proved successful
- Day ticket fishing – tickets can be bought from the visitor centre or the Swan Hill offices
- Model boating – previously a local group (the Group of Ellesmere Modellers) had an annual agreement to allow them to park at the Swan Hill Offices and sail their boats on the Mere
- Open water swimming – this was previously undertaken on the Mere as part of training for triathlons but the organiser has left the area

Events

The Cremorne Gardens are licenced under the Licencing Act which covers any performance of music (including recorded music), dance or drama. Recent events that have taken place include

- A classical concert to mark the 90th anniversary of Save the Children Fund (2009)
- Storytelling in The Park : A free event aimed at families with young children

Local community annual events include:

- Ellesmere Regatta (July) – organised by Ellesmere Rotary Club

- Ellesmere Carnival (August bank holiday) – organised by the local carnival committee
- Bonfire and firework display (November) – organised by Ellesmere Round Table

Another annual event that takes place is the Shropshire triathlon – organised by the Ellesmere Triathlon Committee and supported by Shropshire Council Sports Development section. This attracts around 700 competitors when it is part of an Olympic qualifier event.

Heronwatch

An annual event run by The Heronwatch Group strongly supported by The local authority. This was set up in 1995 and used to run March to May however it has recently been developed into Wildlife Watch for 2010 onwards.

Video cameras are set up on Moscow Island and the mainland to relay footage of the Herons to the visitor centre. Spotting scopes are also available within the visitor centre.

Volunteers from the group are on hand to talk to visitors and monitor the success of breeding colony.

A proposed baseline for visitors was established in the 2006 version of the Audience Development Plan and this is shown in the table below:

Criteria	Proposed Baseline
The total number of annual visitors to the park	128,000 visitors per year (This does not take account of visitors to special events).
The number of visitors who are local residents and the number who have travelled from outside Ellesmere	30% of visitors local/ 70% from outside Ellesmere
The number of first time visitors.	New visitors form 25% of all visitors

An age profile of visitors	<p>Age %</p> <p>0-14 13</p> <p>15-24 5</p> <p>25-34 9</p> <p>35-44 14</p> <p>45-54 21</p> <p>55-64 20</p> <p>65+ 18</p>
A profile of the number of visitors at different seasons of the year	<p>Months %</p> <p>Jan/Feb 7</p> <p>Mar/ Apr 17</p> <p>May/June 21</p> <p>July/ Aug 29</p> <p>Sept/ Oct 17</p> <p>Nov/Dec 9</p>
An average length of stay at the Mere	Average length of stay at the Mere of 90 minutes.
An assessment of the most and least frequently visited parts of the park	<p>Zone %</p> <p>Moors Car Park 6</p> <p>Roadside parking 11</p> <p>Garden Terraces 1</p> <p>Visitor Centre 35</p> <p>Promenade 85</p> <p>Playground 25</p> <p>Castlefields Car Park 2</p> <p>Castle Mound 1</p> <p>Boathouse Restaurant 20</p> <p>Kiosk 30</p> <p>Cremorne Gardens 55</p> <p>Woodland Walk 35</p>
An analysis of activities undertaken by visitors	<p>Activity %</p> <p>Walking 65</p> <p>Observing wildlife 45</p> <p>Enjoying scenery 30</p> <p>Feeding birds 25</p> <p>Visiting Boathouse 20</p> <p>Visiting Playground 25</p> <p>Fishing 1</p> <p>Boating 8</p>
Spend per head at the Mere	An average visitor spend of £1.12
Socio economic profiles of visitors	Category %

	AB	29
	C1	28
	C2	22
	DE	20
Further definition of visitor type – weekend stay, annual holiday etc.	Category	%
	Day Visitor	51
	UK Touring	28
	UK	17

3.3.3. Audience Development

Audience development plans were produced at stage 1 and stage 2 of the HLF bidding process and identified some key issues to be addressed.

The reports set out four targeted groups:

- Family groups with young children.
- Specific activity groups e.g. wildlife, sporting, cultural and community.
- Educational groups.
- Local 13 to 19 year olds

Other research identified that the visitor experience needed to be improved and information should be provided which enhances the experience and encourages visitors to explore further and stay longer.

The Audience Development Plan had the following objectives:

- To consolidate and increase the number of existing core visitors to the park.
How: Raising the standard of visitor experience and offering a higher level of “value” per visit.
- To specifically target an increase in visits to the park by families with young children.
How: Ensuring that the specific needs of these visitor groups are met and that marketing is directed towards them.

- To develop a programme of sporting, cultural, community and environmental activities which will attract new audiences to the Mere.

How: Through providing appropriate facilities, direct contact and practical support in order to facilitate groups who wish to use the park.

- To establish the Mere as an educational centre.

Providing appropriate facilities and joint working with schools, education service providers and volunteers to develop an education programme.

- To increase the average length of stay at The Mere.

How: Offering more to do and encouraging visitors to fully explore the park.

- To work with other local and county wide agencies to develop the Mere as a tourist destination.

How: Ensuring that the Mere links into established tourist networks and takes full advantage of county and regional tourism initiatives.

- To encourage better use of the park by local young people

How: Making very specific provision of facilities for this group. Working with them to encourage engagement and ownership.

In delivering the above objectives, the following targets were proposed. The years relate to years after completion of the scheme.

Indicator	Base (2006/07)	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Number of local visitors	38,400	42,000	43,500	43,500
Number of day visitors	45,700	49,000	54,000	57,000
Number of other tourist visitors	43,900	46,000	48,000	50,000
Number visitors Oct to March	37,000	38,000	40,000	42,000
Average length of stay	1hr 30 mins	1hr 45 mins	2hrs 15 mins	2hrs 15 mins
Number of school visits	-	15	25	30

Number of special events	6	8	10	12
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The target for total number of visitors after 5 years i.e. 2013/2014 is 150,500 which is an increase of 17.5% over the 2006/07 estimates of 128,000 (which were based on evaluation of visitor data over preceding years).

3.3.4 Community Consultation

Consultation has been on-going in the park since local dissatisfaction with the general condition of the park and its facilities was recognised in 2002, (See Consultation Report 2002-2005 and Mere Heritage Project Feedback July 2007). Consultation has clarified what people value and the need and demand for improvements. In summary people value the following: wildlife, social history, gardens and specimen trees, good accessibility and events. There is a strong feeling of local ownership (but this isn't translated in to local action). People want the following: improved maintenance; a long term tree planting plan; improved visitor centre and toilets; facilities for young people (partially addressed through plans for an Adventure Play Area); improved interpretation education support for schools; improved recreational opportunities; improved highway and car parking; improved access to ensure the whole of the park is used (delivered through infrastructure improvements and interpretative literature); provision of better information, signage; more furniture; an improved events programme.

While deficiencies in provision have been recognised development work particularly with partner organisations recognised that the Mere has great potential to provide a boost to the local economy and the community. This effectively broadened the scope of developmental work to take on board the potential to contribute to the regeneration of Ellesmere town.

Feedback has been provided throughout the development process explaining why decisions have been made and the resultant actions. This has been in the form of exhibitions, newsletters, media coverage to the public as well as reports and minutes provided to key stakeholders.

A key priority to ensure on-going input from the public is to establish a 'Friends of the

Mere' group, see section below for more details.

3.3.5 Community Involvement

The aim is to increase the number and range of volunteers to bring in more local input and support for the park and consider a broader scope of activities such as gardening, guided walks and events, education and local wardening.

Details of volunteer input over the three years post capital works are included in the Volunteer Plan July 2007 and are summarised in section 6.

Mere Cottage has been identified as a facility that can be used by volunteers and community groups for meeting, events, office space etc.

4. The Restoration Project

4.1 Introduction

Over recent decades there has been a general lack of attention to the park's heritage importance and some unsympathetic development, as a consequence the Mere at Ellesmere was failing to realise its potential as a heritage asset and also in the number and diversity of visitors which it attracts prior to the delivery of the Heritage Project. It was also failing to provide visitors with information or learning experiences relating to the heritage of the park. The landscape and architectural restoration work has considerably enhanced the visitor experience and also provide a unique setting in which a diverse range of visitors can find enjoyment in both passive and active recreational activities and lifelong learning.

4.2 Capital items

4.2.1 HLF outcome : Conserving and improving the heritage value

The overall strategy for the buildings and landscape at the Mere was, where possible, to remove inappropriate late 20th century additions and to repair, restore and conserve the parts of the buildings and landscape of most historic significance.

This strategy, to conserve and restore the elements which give the Mere at Ellesmere its unique character, is underpinned by the need to find a long-term sustainable solution for the entire park. A solution which includes a coherent and beneficial use for all buildings, the surrounding gardens and landscape whilst promoting the preservation, conservation and management of the park in the broadest sense, covering its unique natural and built heritage assets.

The diversity in character throughout the park provides the potential for an interesting and varied visitor experience. However this also presented a challenge when trying to identify a clear vision for the park as a whole and when trying to demonstrate its heritage significance. It is the sum of the whole which the key to the park's interest. This has been addressed by defining 'character areas' throughout the park (see

figure 9 below). The restoration work has been identified in the Stage 2 Submission Design Report (July 2007). The restoration work consists of landscape conservation and enhancement works, conservation of the heritage architecture and enhancement of visitor facilities by extending the Boathouse. Access throughout the park and links to Ellesmere town have also been addressed.

Work within the park work falls into three 3 categories:

1. Restoration and enhancement which was completed as part of the Lottery funded Heritage Project completed in 2009.
2. Some of the restoration and enhancement work that was identified in the Heritage Project was not completed during the capital programme due to budget restrictions. These works are a crucial element of the Heritage Project and should be carried as part of on-going work programme to realise project objectives.
3. On-going management and maintenance works as identified in the 10 Year Management and Maintenance Plan aimed at meeting Green Flag standards and conserving and enhancing the distinctive character of the park.

The table below summarises the restoration and enhancement work that has been completed. Outstanding work necessary to fulfil the Heritage Project objectives are summarised in section 6.1 – 6.9.8 below. The majority of the capital work was completed in 2008/09 however some elements were incomplete due to budget restrictions. It was recognised that these works, which solely relate to landscape restoration, could be achieved as part of on-going management and maintenance programme, see section 6 below.

Figure 9 landscape character areas

Summary of Restoration Work Completed 2009

Character Area A: The Mere & its islands

Area/ Item	Completed Work
The Mere & its islands	Strategic removal of trees and scrub along Mere edge to allow building works and open up views.

Character Area B: Promenade and Boathouse Gardens

Area/ Item	Completed Work
B1: Boathouse Gardens	New path. Vegetation clearance to tidy up area, make way for building works and open up views of the Mere and Moscow Island. Tree surgery to specimen trees. Vehicular and pedestrian access realigned and new car park created. Demolition of Moors toilet block. New garden created around Boathouse.
B2: Boathouse Visitor Information Centre	Restoration of Boathouse Restaurant and extension to accommodate VIC, exhibition, retail and toilets.
B3: Kiosk	Restoration and internal reconfiguration.
B4: Mere Cottage	Restoration of building.
B5: Boathouses	Minor restoration of southern and central boathouse, minor repairs to northern boathouse.
B6: Promenade	Extension and resurfacing; clearance of vegetation and new planting beds including avenue of limes.

Character Area C: Garden Terraces

Area/ Item	Completed Work
Garden Terraces	Works to create new path to create a link between the Garden Terraces, Castlefields, the Boathouse and promenade were started in 2009, with the lower paths being cleared and a new route identified. Vegetation clearance to reveal sightlines - large trees and scrub clearance completed in one section only.

Character Area D: Castlefields

Area/ Item	Completed Work
D1: Castlefields car park:	Extend bitmac path; new pedestrian link to Sandy Lane, new drainage; new surfacing; thinning of silver birches.
D2: Castlefields	Proposed grassed central area - removed from scheme. No work carried in capital scheme - all to be addressed in maintenance programme.

Character Area E: Motte and Bailey

Area/ Item	Completed Work
Motte and Bailey	Finger posts installed

Character Area F: Cremorne Gardens

F1: Walled Garden	Minor repairs to existing footpath; new benches; removal of beds adjacent to path; selective tree removal and replanting.
F2: Parkland	Specimen tree planting; selective tree removal; new benches; footpath repairs.
F3: Play Area/ Adventure Play Area	Tidying up of existing Play Area including repairs to equipment; path surfacing; restoration of benches; work to pavilion; new fencing. Works towards the creation of an 'Adventure Play Area' included a new path and a bespoke 'youth shelter'.
F4: Swan Hill entrance	Access improvements and planting around toilets.
F5: Mere edge treatment	Fill & reseedling to redefine mere edge, installation of coir rolls, planted with native marginal vegetation. Rip-rap removed from scheme.

Character Area G: Woodlands

Woodlands	No capital works identified.
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Character Area H: The Moors

H1: Moor Car Park	New surfacing, edging and signage.
H2: The Moors	New path linking car park to Boathouse/ prom; remove toilet block- done. Specimen tree planting Tree removal required.

Character Area I: Site Signage

Site Signage	Signage and interpretation - 3 interpretation panels – one at each car park and one on promenade
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Character Area J: Site Furniture

Site Furniture	Seating; bins; - done.
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4.3 Revenue Items

Much of the revenue work identified in the bid has still to be completed including the establishment of a friends group, audience development work, marketing work and developing volunteer opportunities. These are all addressed in section B below.

Insert plate 1 here

Insert plate 2 here

5. Analysis of key issues

This section draws on the descriptive text above and analyses the key issues under two main sections. Firstly an analysis by landscape character areas so that this plan follows the Conservation Management Plan and restoration works and enables the park manager to identify key projects that need to be addressed on the ground. The second analysis is carried out using the Green Flag Award criteria. The rationale behind this is two fold, firstly it gives a useful set of evaluation criteria against which to assess generic items around the management, maintenance and development of the site and secondly it enables the authority to develop a clear strategy towards a future Green Flag Award application, which is a condition of the HLF Parks For People funding.

5.1 Character Areas Analysis

The character area policies outlined in the CMP seek to consolidate the existing inherent characteristic of each area through enhancement, management and interpretation.

The majority of the restoration work was carried during 2008/09 however some work is outstanding and needs to be completed through on-going maintenance programme to comply with the Lottery grant conditions. This restoration work should be delivered during the first 3 years following completion of the MMP. Some of this work is suitable for volunteer input, see section 6.9.6 below.

5.1.1 The Mere and its Islands

The aim in this area is to conserve the open water habitat, where possible extend the marginal vegetation. While water-based recreational activities should be supported they should not have a detrimental effect on the aquatic ecology.

The Mere edge still requires ongoing attention as surveys have identified that aquatic marginal vegetation has diminished over recent decades largely due to shading from overhanging trees and vegetation, scrub development and wildfowl numbers. Measures were taken to address this along the Promenade and Cremorne Gardens through the installation of bird fencing and tree works.

Objectives
Maintain the existing shade free vegetated edges to the mere
Create new opportunities for marginal vegetation within the woodland and the Moors so that approximately 70% of the edge in these areas is open
Improve the biodiversity value of Neddy Jebb’s Island

In Cremorne Gardens the edge treatments need specific management to restrict scrub development. The edge treatments also need to be monitored for effectiveness in terms of the diversity of plants present.

Water based activities (boating and fishing) are currently zoned according to an earlier management plan in order to maintain the southern section of the Mere (The Moors) as a wildlife refuge. It has already been identified that there is a latent demand for recreational boating and a pilot was run in 2009, feedback so far is that it was well received however the pricing structure needs to be reviewed to accommodate season tickets rather than just day tickets.

Objectives
Maintain appropriate recreational use of the mere for angling and boating
Explore other appropriate recreational use of the mere such as Open Water Swimming

5.1.2 Promenade, Mereside and Boathouse Gardens

This area attracts the most visitors and is the focal point for the park in terms of facilities and information. The restoration work provided clarity in terms of its character and improved accessibility particularly by creating good links to the rest of the park. In particular, new planting along the promenade and around the principal

buildings and addition of trademark 'swingback' benches has provided a strong visual link as well as complementing the architectural heritage of the site. On-going maintenance should seek to maintain high standards of horticultural management which should adhere to the original planting plans.

Objective

Boathouse Gardens – Maintain the new landscaping and planting and further improve visual access across the mere

The area should remain clean and well maintained at all time as it is the 'shop front' for visitors to the Mere. Issues relating to bird feeding are particularly prevalent in this area. While it has been agreed that bird feeding is a popular family activity and therefore should be continued some control needs to be imposed.

The public should be advised about responsible bird feeding and should be encouraged to feed birds over the water .The issue of bird welfare is to be addressed through site information, by 'grain exchanges' as local events and through workshops and competitions in local schools It has been noted that the loose surface on the promenade may not suitable for the regular cleaning required. This should be reviewed and the surfacing improved if necessary. The need for additional 'bird fencing' to restrict bird access to the promenade should be monitored and addressed if necessary.

Objective

Promenade – maintain a clean and tidy surface

The area contains a cluster of historic buildings, all of which have been restored during the Lottery capital project. It is imperative that appropriate and timely building surveys and maintenance work are carried out in accordance with the Building Maintenance Report produced by Purcell Miller Tritton. Clarification of staff responsibility for carrying out surveys and ensuring conservation specification for repair work is required, as it the allocation of an adequate budget to ensure property maintenance standards are maintained. This should apply equally to buildings in Service Level Agreements with the council's Property Services and those in full repair

and maintenance contracts with tenants.

The Kiosk is let on a full repair and maintenance contract and it needs to be made clear what the tenant's responsibilities are.

A further issue relating to buildings is the use of Mere Cottage as a volunteer centre. Since its restoration in July there has been minimal use of this building other than at events and workshops. The aspirations for the cottage to be used solely as a volunteer centre needs to be reviewed and additional uses for the building need to be explored, including those which are a source of revenue for the building .

Objectives
Ensure that the buildings are in full and appropriate use
Ensure that the future maintenance of the buildings is secure and sustainable

Other general issues relating to this area relate to maintenance works to ensure views are kept open and that the marginal planting is adequate.

Objective
Maintain views across the Mere
Consider further fencing and planting to deter wildfowl

5.1.3 Garden Terraces

The Mere Heritage project recognised that the Garden Terraces is a key element of the designed landscape, the significance of which had been lost over recent decades. As the area had been allowed to naturally regenerate with the establishment of fairly mature trees restoration work will have a high visual impact. Restoration work during winter 2008/09 removed a significant proportion of mature trees and a swathe of scrub. However since that time no addition clearance work, tidying or replanting has been carried out. As there was a significant amount of public opposition to tree removal throughout the park a considerable amount of public relations work was carried out particularly with Ellesmere Town Council to explain the importance of the area and the long term vision which will greatly improve the park and user experience. Lack of progress with the restoration of this area will only serve

to undo this good will, therefore the establishment of a clear restoration programme is imperative in this area.

There is therefore a strong need to address the restorative maintenance works required in this area and a three year restoration programme (2010-2013) needs to be established in line with recommendation in Garden Terrace Report 2009. This should involve volunteer input and associated skills training. Summary of work required:

- Vegetation and tree clearance to allow the establishment of appropriate garden planting and to reveal sightlines.
- Roadside hedge to be restored or removed.
- Increase ornamental planting along the terraces
- bring into active management existing overgrown specimens.
- Formal rockwork to be revealed.
- Complete new path to create link between the Garden Terraces, Castlefields, the Boathouse and promenade
- Ensure appropriate furniture and signing at all access points

In addition there is a large swathe of Japanese Knotweed in the northern section. This is currently treated annually and this should continue towards eradication.

Objectives
Restore the designed landscape of the Garden Terraces
Eradicate Japanese Knotweed in northern section of Garden Terraces

5.1.4 Castlefields

No restoration work was carried out in the grassland areas as part of the Mere Heritage Project, however recommendations were made in the Garden Terrace Report 2009 for small scale works which would restore the historic character of the area and improve accessibility.

Conservation grassland management should be continued in the area in line with the Countryside Stewardship Agreement.

The Castlefields car park was improved as part of the Mere Heritage Project. The on-going issue of water-logging should be monitored and addressed if necessary. Due to limited capital the replacement of the car park machines was not addressed.

Objectives
Maintain and improve the biodiversity interest of the meadows and pond
Improve the visual and historic character of the Castlefields meadows
Maintain the access and car park in good condition

Signage in the area was completed as part of the Mere Heritage Project the effectiveness of which in terms of encouraging people to explore the park and visit Ellesmere should be monitored. Interpretation of the area was addressed as part of the Mere Heritage Project and the presumption to avoid on-site interpretation should be maintained.

5.1.5 Motte & Bailey

No restoration work was carried out as part of the Mere Heritage Project however on-going management issues were raised in the Garden Terrace Report 2009, which involved continuation of grassland management through grazing and some scrub removal.

Objective
Ensure ramparts of the Motte and Bailey remain visible and in favourable condition.

5.1.6 Cremorne Gardens

Landscape restoration work to this area carried out during the Mere Heritage Project

largely involved rationalising and improving existing beds, removal of scrub and inappropriate tree and planting of additional specimen trees. On-going maintenance should address the areas which remain untidy by removing scrub and inappropriate trees.

Small scale improvements were made to the planting and footpaths around the Cremorne Gardens toilet block which will require on-going horticultural maintenance. Some improvements have been carried out to the existing Children’s Play Area and the new Adventure Play Area, however further improvements remain outstanding. Additional capital has been secured for additional adventure play to be implemented in 2010.

Overall in the restoration project there were insufficient benches installed due to lack of capital funds. This is particularly true in the Cremorne Gardens and may be addressed through memorial bench donations.

Objective
Ensure sufficient seating in Cremorne Gardens. Sufficiency based on customer feedback.

Trees are a significant feature in the parkland area and replacement planting of specimen trees over the longer term needs to be carried out. Self set trees such as sycamore and overgrown rhododendron need to be thinned to restore the formal parkland feel, expose the specimen trees and open up views across the Mere.

On entering the gardens from the Promenade there is a section of railings in poor condition, these were planned to be replaced during the restoration project but again funds were not available. External funding needs to be sought to replace these in order to retain the character of the Gardens.

Objective
Maintain and enhance the formal nature of Cremorne Gardens

5.1.8 The Moors

The Moors area has its own Management Plan produced for the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. This prescribed works such as rotational cutting of vegetation, ditch clearance.

Items originally identified in this area included a review of tree planting in the car park area with the aim of moving away from municipal planting and establishment of a more naturalist planting typical of the Meres and Mosses and also the need to continue to thin sliver birch.

Objective
Review the Moors Management Plan
Subject to recommendations from the review, maintain and improve the biodiversity of The Moors

5.2. Green Flag Award Analysis

This section analyses the site using the 8 main Green Flag Award criteria, it also includes an assessment of current performance against the assessment criteria of the scheme.

5.2.1 A Welcoming Place

Overall significant effort has gone in to making the Mere a more welcoming space. The capital restoration programme dealt with the majority of issues identified in the Access Plan and Landscape Design Report. Some further improvements can be made to meet the needs of those with mobility problems, such as providing more accessible picnic benches close to the Boathouse building.

Objective
Ensure the Mere remains a welcoming place with good access for all abilities, and facilities that are appropriate for the target audience.

The issue of pre-arrival information needs to be addressed and this is covered in marketing below.

5.2.2 Healthy Safe and Secure

Health and safety of staff and visitors is well covered. Shropshire Council's Property Services carry out inspections of the buildings every five years. In the intervening periods sites staff report any issues to Property Services for rectification. A robust risk assessment process is in place including Service Recovery Plan, Fire Risk Assessment and Buildings Risk Assessment. All activities are also risk assessed and reviewed annually.

The play area is inspected weekly by the site attendant however she has not been trained in play area inspections and this needs to be addressed.

Site inspections are carried out monthly to identify and address any outdoor risks to site users.

A visual tree safety inspection is carried out every two years.

Objective
Ensure visitors to The Mere are safe and limit the liability to Shropshire Council should an accident occur.

The only other issue relating to health and safety is the cleaning of the Promenade which has been covered earlier.

5.2.3 Clean and Well Maintained

General standards of maintenance and cleanliness had consistently been raised as a concern during public consultations leading up to the restoration project. Higher standards of maintenance and cleanliness have largely been met by restoration works which have provided new public toilets, tidied up and defined planting beds, provided new surfaced paths, new signage and new park furniture.

Also during the restoration project a number of documents were produced relating to maintenance of restored items and also restorative maintenance works to areas that were not addressed within the project (e.g. The Garden Terraces as referred to earlier in the landscape character area analysis section).

Regular maintenance tasks are included in the action plan.

The Site Attendant is taking on additional horticultural duties to maintain the recently restored and newly created planting beds. However, it would be beneficial for the Site Attendant to undergo additional training in such work.

Objective

Maintain the site whereby litter and animal fouling is kept to a minimum and the grounds maintenance and infrastructure maintenance is to a high standard

5.2.4 Sustainability

Ellesmere Town was a pilot project under the Low Carbon Communities initiative and hence the design for the Boathouse Visitor Information Centre reflected this. Key elements included

- A water source heat pump – a network of pipes on the bed of the Mere provides low level heating and cooling, which is supplemented by electric heaters
- Rain water run off is collected in a tank below ground and is then pumped back to flush the toilets
- Sensors were installed to control lighting only when required in the toilets
- High levels of insulation to reduce heat loss
- Low energy bulbs

Site management also includes

- limited pesticide use (for treatment of Japanese knotweed only)
- no peat is used on site

Whilst these are site specific approaches to sustainability, the site is managed in line with the Outdoor Recreation Service Environmental Policy (Appendix 1)

Objective

Minimise the wider environmental impact of the site management
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5.2.5 Conservation and Heritage

The Conservation Management Plan is the guiding document in this area and should be referred to in order to fully understand the general philosophy of conservation and also the key guiding policies for

- Landscape
- Buildings
- Biodiversity
- Archaeology

The CMP will need to be reviewed to maintain its relevance.

Objective

Protect and enhance the conservation and heritage interest of the site
--

5.2.6 Community Involvement

Community involvement at the Mere includes consultation (and associated awareness raising), volunteering and engagement in decision making. The authority is aware that there is a strong feeling of local ownership but are concerned that this is not translated in to local action.

Consultation

Public consultation was carried out extensively throughout the project development phase which resulted in a general consensus on needs, demands and actions required. Ongoing consultation is in the form of annual user surveys, meetings of the Friends Group and direct feedback to on-site staff.

Volunteering

The emphasis is on the following areas of volunteer work:

- Setting up a ‘Friends of The Mere’ group (see engagement below)
- Recruiting volunteers to deliver horticultural restoration and maintenance. This will provide support for the outstanding restoration work on the Garden Terraces. It will provide opportunities for skills training and awareness raising heritage of the park in terms of designed landscape
- Establishing local wardens for The Mere. This will provide vital support for day to day care and surveillance of the park and provide an opportunity for local ownership
- Supporting and developing Wildlife Watch volunteers. This is important as it provides a unique selling point for the Visitor Centre and great learning opportunities
- Supporting events and guided walks. There is great potential and local support for increased events and activities at The Mere which would provide a draw for local people and tourists and provide learning opportunities. There is scope to recruit and train volunteers who could support on-going events delivery in the park

Engagement

It has been an aspiration for some time to establish a Friends of The Mere group as a way of providing a mechanism for local comment, input and ownership. There already exists a database of over 100 groups and individuals who have contributed to the Mere, attended events or requested volunteer work over recent years which would provide a starting point. The Friends Group will have a representative on the Mere Advisory Board.

Objective
Continue to involve the local community and user groups in the management of The Mere

5.2.7 Marketing

Marketing, promotion and interpretation

The Mere has a Marketing Plan, an Interpretation Plan and an Audience Development plan which drive this whole area of work.

Events

Whilst the site is a venue for regular and one off events there are no formal agreements in place with event organisers. This includes issues such as re-instatement of any damage and an overall charging policy. Also the authority does not gather visitor data from such events – e.g. visitor numbers, distance travelled, method of travel, satisfaction with event, thoughts about the Mere itself, willingness to participate in the future etc.

Visitor information

An important part of measuring the success of the restoration project is audience development and understanding what difference the project has made either to visitor numbers or the range of audiences. The stage 1 audience development plan set out ideas on base line information but there is no comprehensive system in place to measure any of these aspects. There are automated visitor counters on site but these have not been calibrated to establish whole site visitor numbers. This needs to be combined with a comprehensive programme of visitor surveys and analysis to enable the site managers to understand customer needs and to target promotion in the most effective way.

Objective
Ensure The Mere is an attractive destination for key target groups and that facilities and activities remain relevant.

5.2.8 Management

Staffing and finances

The Mere is managed by Shropshire Council's Outdoor Recreation Service and has a dedicated small team of staff. At present this staffing is part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, however the Outdoor Recreation Service is planning a major restructure which will allow adequate staffing for The Mere to be sustained.

As parts of The Mere are jointly owned with Ellesmere Town Council, a close working relationship exists between the Park Manager and the Town Council clerk. The Mere Advisory Board provides for formal liaison with the town Council and other stakeholders.

Part of The Mere is charitable land and this means that two sets of accounts need to be prepared.

- Charitable Accounts - covers all expenditure and income for the charitable land. This includes below the line costs not previously shown e.g. property maintenance met by the council's Property Services.
- Non-Charitable Accounts - covers all expenditure and income for the land, properties and commercial interests jointly owned by SC and ETC, the Visitor Centre salaries and running costs and retail income, land owned solely by SC and below the line costs not previously shown e.g. property maintenance met by the council's Property Services.

There is also expenditure and income from the Boathouse Restaurant which is accounted for under a separate trading account, with surpluses from trading being transferred to the Non-Charitable account.

It may be advantageous to seek charitable status for the entire site in order to simplify the budgetary arrangements and provide rate savings on the buildings currently outside of the charity. This may also pave the way for the establishment of an independent trust to manage the park outside of the local authority.

Whether the management of The Mere remains within the local authority or part of a separate trust, the key aim is to create sustainable management arrangements that are not reliant on external funding.

Objective
Establish sustainable management arrangements for The Mere

Licences and legal issues

As highlighted earlier there are three areas where legal and licensing issues need to be resolved. Firstly the sale of the bungalow which is currently boarded up and detracts from the site. There are issues relating to access restrictions during major events which may affect the views of prospective purchasers. Secondly the boating licence which is under a 3 year lease with Shropshire Steamboat Company ended on 31st March 2010 and the operator is now effectively ‘holding over’ on the old licence. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the current operator is looking to sell the boat to repay the investors and will not be in a position to continue to run the service. This could be a major asset to the site especially if linked to events and the restaurant. Finally the annual angling licence needs to be reviewed. All of these assets can contribute to the range of activities on offer at The Mere and bring in valuable income to support the ongoing management.

Requests have been made from members of the community to be able to donate towards the planting of a memorial tree or installation of a memorial bench. Currently there is no policy on this nor any proactive marketing of such s a scheme.

Objective
Manage the licenses and leases to provide for the needs of user groups and generate income.

5.2.9 Indicative Green Flag Desk Assessment (carried out by Ian Baggot & Gareth Egarr, two Green Flag judges)

	Criteria	Score
1	Presentation of the management plan	7

2	Health, safety and security	7
3	Maintenance of equipment buildings and landscape	5
4	Litter, cleanliness and vandalism	7
5	Environmental sustainability	8
6	Conservation of nature and heritage	8
7	Community involvement	8
8	Marketing	7
9	Overall management	7
	Total	64
	Average	7.1
	Score (out of 30)	21

Issues that arose out the short desk assessment exercise included

- There is little documentation on dog fouling and how this is dealt with
- The need for an overall document setting out all maintenance works for the site
- Response procedures need to be set out for litter, cleanliness, graffiti, vandalism etc

5.2.10 Indicative Field Assessment

A welcoming park		Score
1	Welcoming	8
2	Good and safe access	8
3	Signage	9
4	Equal access for all	8

Healthy, safe and secure		Score
5	Safe equipment and facilities	8
6	Personal security in park	7
7	Dog fouling	8

8	Appropriate provision of facilities	9
9	Quality of facilities	8

Clean and well maintained		Score
10	Litter and waste management	9
11	Grounds maintenance and horticulture	6
12	Buildings and infrastructure maintenance	6
13	Equipment maintenance	8

Sustainability		Score
14	Environmental sustainability energy & natural resource conservation, pollution	8
15	Pesticides	8
16	Peat use	8
17	Waste minimisation	9
18	Arboriculture and woodland management	6

Conservation and heritage		Score
19	Conservation of natural features, wild fauna and flora	8
20	Conservation of landscape features	9
21	Conservation of buildings and structures	9

Community involvement		Score
22	Community involvement in management and development including outreach work	6
23	Appropriate provision for the community	6

Marketing		Score
24	Marketing and promotion	7
25	Provision of appropriate information	9
26	Provision of appropriate educational interpretation/information	8

Management		Score
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27	Implementation of the management plan	n/a
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	Total	203
	Average (total divided by 26)	7.8
	OUT OF 70 (Average x 7)	55

	Score
Desk Assessment	21
Field Assessment	55
Total	76

C – How Will We Get There?

6. Recommendations - Action Plan

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
Maintain the existing shade free vegetated edges to the mere	Strim the mere edge within the formal part of the Cremorne Gardens 3 x between May & September	Ongoing	PM	SA, Vols / Friends	Nil	
	Check and maintain goose fencing within the water	Ongoing	PM	SA	Nil	
	Cut woody growth from open areas of the mere edge within the woodland and at the Moors every 3 years on a rotation between October and February	Ongoing	PM	SA, Vols / Friends	Nil	
Create new opportunities for marginal vegetation within the woodland and the moors so that approx. 70% of the edge in these areas is open	Remove selected trees and shrubs from the mere edge within the moors and woodland, focussing on surviving stands of marginal vegetation	2012/13	PM	Contractor	c.£5000	
Improve the biodiversity value of Neddy Jebb's Island	Remove selected trees and shrubs from the margins	2012/13	PM	EAC / Contractor	£1000	

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
	Dredge the mere bed between the island and the shore leaving a shallow access for anglers with waders	2011/12	PM	EAC	Nil	
Maintain appropriate recreational use of the mere for angling and boating	Continue to zone water-based recreational activities and confine to the summer months.	Ongoing	PM	EAC	Nil	
	Review the 2009 boating pilot	2010/2011	PM	ETC	Nil	
Explore other appropriate recreational use of the mere such as Open Water Swimming	Determine needs to allow controlled swimming and set up	2010/11	PM	ETC	Nil	May 2010
Boathouse Gardens – Maintain the new landscaping and planting and further improve visual access across the mere	Maintain landscaping	Ongoing	PM	SA / Friends	Nil	
	Clear further scrub to improve visual access across the mere	2011/12	PM	SA, Vols / Friends	Nil	
Promenade – maintain a clean and tidy surface	Promenade – At least weekly surface maintenance and cleaning, twice weekly during moult	Ongoing	PM	SA	Nil	
Ensure that the buildings are in full and appropriate use	Establish a use for Mere Cottage	2010	PM	CDO, Friends, other Comm Groups	Capital Funds to fit out building?	
	Regular monitoring of leased buildings to ensure appropriate use – to include restrictions on unauthorised signage and sundry fixtures	Ongoing	PM	SA	Nil	

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
Ensure that the future maintenance of the buildings is secure and sustainable	Establish responsibilities for building surveys and repair within SC	2010	PM	Property Services ETC	Nil	
	Establish detailed inspection schedule to include adequate funding provision to ensure that maintenance issues are dealt with in a timely way and using appropriate conservation repair materials and methods	2010	PM	Property Services	??	
	Ensure kiosk tenant is clear about maintenance standards and monitor	Ongoing	PM		Nil	
Maintain views across the mere	Clear further trees from the mere edge between the Boathouse and The Moors	2011/12	PM	SA, Vols, Friends	Nil	
	Keep open margins clear of self sown trees every 3 years on a rotation	Ongoing	PM	SA, Friends / Vols	Nil	
Consider further fencing and planting to deter wildfowl	Investigate costs of further fencing for the area between the Boathouse and The Moors	2011/12	PM		??	
Restore the designed landscape of the Garden Terraces	Produce a costed plan for restoring the landscape to Golders' Design on a phased basis, identifying work for volunteers and funding requirements	2010/11	PM	CDO	Nil	

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
	Implement restoration plan	2011 - 2014	PM	CDO, Friends	??	
	Treat Japanese Knotweed annually until eradicated	Ongoing	PM	SA	Nil	
Maintain and improve the biodiversity interest of the meadows and pond	Continue annual grazing management as per the Countryside Stewardship Scheme	Ongoing	PM	CSM	Nil	
	Investigate possibility of taking a hay cut every 2 - 3 years	2011/12	PM	CSM	Nil	
	Organise botanical survey which should then be part of a review of current management	2012	PM	CSM, CDO	??	
	Organise an ecological survey of the pond in order to inform appropriate management	2012/13	PM	CSM, CDO	??	
Improve the visual and historic character of the Castlefields meadows	Remove redundant boundary above Garden Terraces and ensure new boundary is stockproof	2011/12	PM	SA, Friends, Vols	Nil	
	Remove unnecessary fencing around stands of trees and thin trees to reveal specimens or clumps	2011/12	PM	SA, Vols, Rangers	Nil	
	Remove inappropriate trees in "arboretum" area and open up to establish grazed wood pasture	2011/12	PM	SA, Vols / Friends, Rangers	Nil	

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
	Replace stiles with iron kissing gates	2012/13	PM	Friends	Capital Funds required	
Maintain the access and car park in good condition	Monitor the need for edging to prevent vehicle encroachment around the car park	Ongoing	PM	SA	Nil	
	Monitor car park surfacing and repair as necessary	Ongoing	PM	SA	??	
	Renew car park machines	2009/10	CSM	PCSM	Sites Capital fund	May 2010
	Create new, natural surface path to link Garden Terraces	2012/13	PM	SA, Rangers, Vols	Nil	
Ensure ramparts of the Motte and Bailey remain visible and in favourable condition.	Continue grazing of Mott and Bailey within the Mere boundary.	Ongoing Between July and November	PM	Grazing tenant	Nil	
	Support English Heritage to liaise with the Bowling Club regarding scrub clearance to the ramparts within their ownership	To be determined by English Heritage	PM	English Heritage	Nil	
Ensure sufficient seating in Cremorne Gardens.	Identify sites for additional benches and promote for memorial bench donations	2011/12	PM		Nil	

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
	Purchase and install swing back benches with small memorial plaque	Ongoing as and when donations come forward	PM	Friends of The Mere	Nil	
Maintain and enhance the formal garden nature of Cremorne Gardens	Thin sycamore and rhododendron from around existing specimen trees	Ongoing, one key specimen exposed each year	PM		£500	
	Carry out formative pruning of recently planted replacement specimen trees	2012/13 2015/16 2018/19	PM		Nil	
	Plant additional specimen trees as long term replacements to existing older specimens	2016/17	PM	Friends of the Mere	£500	
	Replace railings in same style as original	2015/16	PM		Will require external funding. Actual costs to be determined.	
Review The Moors Management Plan	Carry out a botanical survey of The Moors and alter plan according to recommendations	2011/12	PM	Consultant Ecologists	c.£1000	
Subject to recommendations from the review, maintain and improve the biodiversity of The Moors	Cut and remove 25% of the marsh vegetation annually in the autumn on rotation	Ongoing	PM	CSM, Vols	Nil	
	Cut and remove ditchside vegetation and chrome out the ditch for one side of a third of the length of the ditch on the west side annually in the autumn	Ongoing	PM	CSM, Vols	Nil	

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
	Coppice 15% of the wet woodland areas annually on a rotation in the winter	Ongoing	PM	CSM, Rangers, Vols	Nil	
	Cut and treat woody growth on either side of the main wet woodland block to maintain open corridors between the mere and the marsh	2011/12, 2016/17	PM	CSM, Rangers, Vols	Nil	
	Investigate the possibility of grazing by cattle from the neighbouring Oteley Estate	2011/12	PM	CSM	Nil	
Ensure the Mere remains a welcoming place with good access for all abilities, and facilities that are appropriate for the target audience.	Install disabled access picnic benches to the grassy area near the Boathouse	2010/11	PM	Access Officer, Disability	£450	July 2010
	Replace parking metre signage	2011/12	PM	SC Parking Services	Funded through SC parking strategy	
	Paint iron railings at Penley Gate entrance	2012/13	PM	Friends of The Mere	£50	
	Remove 'no cycling' sign at Penley Gate entrance	2011/12	PM		Nil	
	Refurbish and extend the play area	2010/11	PM	Shropshire Play Partnership	£90k (£40k BLF, £20K Short Breaks, £30k Playbuilder)	May 2011
Ensure visitors to The Mere are safe and limit the liability to Shropshire Council should an accident occur.	Carry out visual inspection of play area and action repairs	Ongoing – weekly	SA		Nil (repairs funded through site revenue budget)	

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
	Train site attendant to carry out quarterly maintenance inspections	2011/12	PM		??	
	Carry out quarterly maintenance inspections and action repairs	Ongoing – Quarterly	SA		Nil (repairs funded through site revenue budget)	
	Carry out annual risk assessments for buildings and activities	All	PM		Nil	
	Conduct tree safety inspections and action recommended works	Every 2 years from 2010/11	PM	County Arboriculturalist	Nil	
	Carry out site inspections	Ongoing - monthly	PM		Nil	
Maintain the site whereby litter and animal fouling is kept to a minimum and the grounds maintenance and infrastructure maintenance is to a high standard	Carry out annual ongoing maintenance as per the Schedule. This includes litter picking, bins, toilets, horticulture, furniture, paths, signage, play area, strimming.	Ongoing	PM	SA, Friends	Nil	
	Horticultural training for site attendant	2010/11	PM	SA	Revenue from HLF training budget	
	Monitor Grass Cutting Contract	Ongoing	PM	SA	£2000 p.a.	
Minimise the wider environmental impact of the site management	Develop and implement a service wide Environmental Policy	2011/12	CSM		Nil	
	Reuse green waste on site for shrub bed mulching and compost	Ongoing	PM / SA		Nil	

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
	Use local suppliers for tree and plant supplies and site maintenance operations	Ongoing	PM		Nil	
	Source field grown trees and shrubs grown without peat	Ongoing	PM		Nil	
	Use local suppliers where available for the Boathouse Restaurant menu	Ongoing	RM		Nil	
Protect and enhance the conservation and heritage interest of the site	Review the Conservation Management Plan	2015/16	PM	Mere Advisory Board, Conservation and Natural Environment Teams	Nil	
Continue to involve the local community and user groups in the management of The Mere	Establish a Friends of The Mere Group	2010/11	CDO	PM	Nil	November 2010
	Support the Friends of The Mere to open a bank account and apply for external funding	2011/12	CDO	PM	Nil	
	Support the Mere Advisory Board and hold meetings three times per year	Ongoing	PM	Committee Services	Nil	
	Recruit local site wardens to be extra eyes and ears.					
	Use notice boards to display 'You Said, We Did' feedback from survey results	Ongoing	PM	VC staff	Nil	
	Provide site management project for Ellesmere College volunteers	Ongoing – one task per year	PM	CDO	Revenue	

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
	Agree annual work programme with Ellesmere Anglers	Ongoing	PM	EAC	Nil	
	Support Heronwatch Group to hold annual survey and monitoring event	Ongoing	PM	Heronwatch	Income – Heronwatch pay £110 per annum	
Ensure The Mere is an attractive destination for key target groups and that facilities and activities remain relevant.	To deliver actions identified in the Audience Development Plan	2010/11	CDO	PM		
	To deliver actions identified in the Marketing Plan	2010/11	PM			
	To deliver actions identified in the Interpretation Plan	2010/11	PM			
	Conduct annual visitor survey including capturing geo-demographic data from site users					
	Support the delivery of at least 4 community events per year	Ongoing	CDO	Friends		
	Establish an event agreement	2011/12	CDO	PM	Nil	
	Develop a charging policy for events	2011/12	CDO	PCSM	Nil – should bring in income	
	Gather data on event participants	Ongoing	CDO	Event organisers	Nil	
	Calibrate the automated people counters	2011/12	PM	CSM	Nil	

Objective	Action	Financial Year(s)	Lead Officer	Partners	Resource implication	Date Completed
	Conduct site user surveys to monitor satisfaction, visitor demographics and suggestions for improvement	Ongoing – one day per year in August	PM	VC staff	Nil	
Establish sustainable management arrangements	Carry out whole service restructure to align core funded resources to The Mere staffing	2011/12	PCSM		To be determined	
	Review the strengths and weaknesses of creating a single Charitable Trust for the whole site	2011/12	PCSM	PM	Nil	
Manage the licenses and leases to provide for the needs of user groups and generate income	Reburbish the bungalow for rental to create a revenue stream	2012/13	Property Services	Legal Services	Capital costs to be determined	
	Review the boating licence with the owner of the Lady Katherine or seek alternative supplier	2011/12	PM	Estates	Nil	
	Review angling licence	2011/12	PM	Estates	Nil	

Key to abbreviations

Lead officer / partners	
PM	Park Manager

CDO	Community Development Officer
SA	Site Attendant
PCSM	Parks And Countryside Sites Manager
EAC	Ellesmere Angling Club
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust
CSM	Countryside Sites Manager

D – How Will We Know When We Have Arrived?

7. Measures of Success

Currently Shropshire Council has no system of measuring its performance in The Mere. There are, however, a number of baseline indicators that have been developed through the production of this management plan that could be further added to in order to develop a performance management system for the authority.

Given the five outcomes the HLF expects for this programme, these Measures of Success have been set out to provide a direct link to Section E9 of the HLF Application Form.

A range of measures are set out below and link to the other reports produced for Stage 2 and the baseline data submitted to HLF as part of the evaluation of the overall Parks for People programme. Other, local indicators for the Mere have also been added where this is particularly appropriate for the management of this green space.

7.1 Increasing the Range of Audiences

PI Ref	Measure	Baseline	Target	Methodology /actions required	Resources required
A	More people visiting the park.	128,000	150,000	Automated visitor counters throughout the park.	Existing revenue.

7.2 Conserving, and Improving Heritage Value

PI Ref	Measure	Baseline	Target	Methodology /actions required	Resources required
B	Restoration and conservation of the heritage architecture in line with recommendations in the Conservation Management Plan 2005 and Design Report 2007.	n/a	All recommendations delivered.	Set targets for delivery of specific tasks	Existing revenue. Only through external funding. No SC Capital available for next few years.

7.3 Increasing the Range of Volunteers Involved

PI Ref	Measure	Baseline	Target	Methodology /actions required	Resources required
C	To increase the number of volunteers involved in park management, maintenance and promotion.	0	Total of 58 volunteers	Volunteer records system.	Existing revenue.

7.4 Improving Skills and Knowledge through Training

PI Ref	Measure	Baseline	Target	Methodology /actions required	Resources required
D	To improve skills for park staff and volunteers.	Identified in staff appraisals	Training objectives outlined in appendix 5 of training plan are achieved.	Set up and monitor training programme.	Existing revenue.

7.5 Improving Management and Maintenance

PI Ref	Measure	Baseline	Target	Methodology /actions required	Resources required
E	Green Flag Award score		To gain the award in 2012	Annual independent assessment	Existing Revenue

8. Monitoring and Review

The Park Manager will be responsible for leading on monitoring and review of the Management and Maintenance Plan, and specifically its associated action plan. The document will need to be continually reviewed to reflect the changing needs of the park and the local community using the process outlined below.

8.1 Action Plan

In order to respond to political and fiscal changes and feedback from the Green Flag Award process, the Recommendations Action Plan for the park will be monitored on a monthly basis to check progress against targets. It will be reviewed and updated annually as necessary, with the involvement of The Mere Advisory Board and other Parks and Countryside Sites Staff. This approach to management will provide a more flexible and realistic approach to realizing the vision of the plan.

8.2 Management Plan

Where new strategies, opportunities or policies are introduced during the lifetime of the plan these will be noted and incorporated into the management plan if relevant. Changes to the narrative of the plan will be made in year 5 as part of a fundamental review at that time.

The Park Manager will be responsible for leading on a fundamental review of the Management and Maintenance Plan undertaken in year 5. All partners and stakeholders will be consulted and a full evaluation of the plan will be undertaken, outlining achievements and progress, and whether objectives have been met.

Appendix 1.

Shropshire Council Parks and Countryside Sites

Environmental Policy

This policy sets out how the Parks and Countryside Sites Team aims to minimise the impact of its service provision on the environment.

Tree and Scrub Management

Tree and scrub removal should only take place where there is either a public safety issue or where there is an overall greater benefit for biodiversity, heritage, landscape or recreation. Alternatives to tree and scrub removal should be considered, such as re-routing a path away from a hazardous tree.

To avoid disturbance to nesting birds, tree and scrub works should not take place between 1 March and 15 August unless necessary for public safety.

Staff and contractors must be adequately aware of the potential and signs of bat occupancy at any time of the year.

As far as possible, the arisings from tree and scrub works should be left in situ as habitat. Where possible, standing trunks should also be left as habitat. If there is too much brash or it is not appropriate to leave it, the brash should be chipped and the chippings retained for use on paths or as mulch. If this is not feasible, the chippings can be spread on a nearby path or on the woodland floor (unless it is Rhododendron as it contains growth inhibiting compounds). Brash should only be burnt if access for a chipper is difficult or the brash is not suitable for chipping.

Amenity Grassland Management

The area of grassland which is regularly mown for amenity use should be annually reviewed. Where it is appropriate, wide margins and other suitable areas should be left uncut or cut only once or twice a year with the cuttings removed. This will benefit wildlife and use less fuel.

Use of Pesticides

Pesticide use should be kept to a minimum. Pesticides should only be used if there is no reasonable alternative such as mechanical or biological weed control. Examples would be the use of herbicide to control Bracken where bruising or cutting is not resource-practical, the use of herbicide to control Ragwort where it has become too extensive to be able to pull, stump treatment to prevent regrowth which would be too much to deal with in the future, and weed wiping extensive Birch regeneration which threatens heathland habitat. Only MAFF/MAPP approved pesticides can be used.

Pesticides should only be mixed and applied by a trained and licensed operator. Stump treatment can be carried out under the supervision of a licensed operator.

Pesticides should be stored and transported in accordance with current regulations.

Use of Peat

Peat should not be used anywhere on Countryside Heritage Sites.

Transport

Where possible, staff should be encouraged to cycle to work or share transport.

Cycle racks should be provided at the main sites.

Whilst it is unavoidable to use the vehicles to get to and around the sites, staff should be mindful of making any unnecessary journeys.

When vehicles are replaced, the possibility of LPG, dual fuel, biofuel or even electric should be investigated and encouraged. Fuel efficiency should be an essential criterion in the choice of vehicle.

Vehicles must be regularly checked, maintained and serviced as per the Transport Operations Group Schedule.

Oils for Power Tools

Only biodegradable chain oil should be used with chainsaws.

Litter

All litter collected from sites and generated in the offices and Visitor Centres should be sorted for recycling. This is achieved through a contract with a skip company that carries out such an operation.

Sites should be kept as litter free as possible by regular checks and litter picks. The recruitment of local Volunteer Rangers to aid this process should be encouraged.

Dog Fouling

Dog fouling on sites should be kept to a minimum through the use of a variety of methods.

Bins should be provided at appropriate locations and regularly emptied. Signs should be in place to inform visitors what is expected of them.

Events should be staged to create a positive and cooperative dialogue with dog walkers at key sites. A good relationship with the dog wardens should be maintained to ensure a regular site presence which can be backed up with the issue of fixed penalties if required.

Sites should be regularly monitored for dog fouling and action taken where levels are unacceptable.

Buildings

Any new buildings should be built to the highest environmental standards.

Efficient use of energy, such as heating and lighting, should be part of the normal running of the premises.

Computers and other electrical appliances should not be left on when not being used. Water should be conserved including investigating the possibilities of using rainwater for toilets.

The use of paper should be kept to a minimum and most files and documents stored electronically. Copying should be double sided.

As far as is possible, all waste products should be recycled.

As far as possible, only environmentally friendly cleaning products should be used.

Procurement

Only buy timber which is produced from a sustainable source and is FSC certified.

Use local producers and retailers as far as is possible.

Use recycled products where appropriate.

Encourage the sale of Fairtrade and local produce where food and drink is sold.