



GROSVENOR  
PARK

# EVALUATION REPORT

## GROSVENOR PARK





## The park

Grosvenor park is a Grade II listed landscape, on the English Heritage Register of Historic parks and Gardens. It lies above the River Dee, close to the centre of the historic city of Chester and provides a valuable green link between the two. It opened in 1867 and was a great success with the public and city officials, as the park's creation was entirely funded by the Grosvenor family.

The park consists of an upper area of open lawns, defined by a strong network of footpaths, with accompanying shrub and flowerbeds and a lower area of rockeries and quarry gardens occupying the slopes down towards the river front. As an open space close to the city centre, Grosvenor park serves the recreational and social needs of a wide range of people of all ages. The mix of formal and informal spaces are used for walking, playing, promenading, sitting, watching, gathering, exploring and picnicking. There are a number of pedestrian access points connecting the key routes through the park, with the main access being adjacent to The Lodge on Grosvenor park Road.

The heritage significance of the park relates to the landscape as an intact example of the work of Victorian landscape architect Edward Kemp, with characteristic contrasting of the formal and the picturesque, in exploiting views, and using planting to create various moods. The Cheshire architect John Douglas played an

important role, the park Lodge being his first use of the black and white style launched in Chester by TM Penson in 1857. The park has significant archaeological potential particularly of the Roman and medieval periods. The history of 'promenading' both along the Groves and within the park is of national significance. The wealth of folk tales and associations such as the story of Billy Hobby, together with personal reminiscences and the role of the





park in providing an important home for commemorative memorials and other features, is locally significant.

Grosvenor park is designated a Site of Nature Conservation Value (SNCV) by the Council for its large garden areas and mature trees, with hart's tongue fern being a particularly important local species. The River Dee is an important wildlife corridor, part of the broader River Dee Area of Nature Conservation Value and a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area for Conservation (SAC).

## Project Motivation

The motivations for the project were wide ranging. Over time the condition of the park had declined and surveys highlighted the need for significant remedial works to the fabric of many of the original features of the park for both heritage and Health and Safety reasons. Consultation had revealed that there was a real need to restore the park and improve the facilities within it, most significantly was the desire for a café, improved toilets and community meeting and event space.

Other drivers came from outside the park. The wider historic quarter had been identified as a corporate priority for Cheshire West and Chester Council and key to the overall regeneration of the City. The restoration and improvement of facilities in Grosvenor park was seen as a key part of the first phase of the regeneration of public realm in this area.



Furthermore, there was a need to strengthen community engagement for the park. The Friends of Grosvenor park was established in 2008 and by 2011 the group had grown their membership and become more actively involved in the running of Grosvenor park. However, the way in which The Friends supported park management were not formalised and capacity was lacking to deliver the community empowerment and engagement possible for the park.

A holistic approach was needed and the extent of the restoration and development required necessitated an external funding source.

## Project Aims

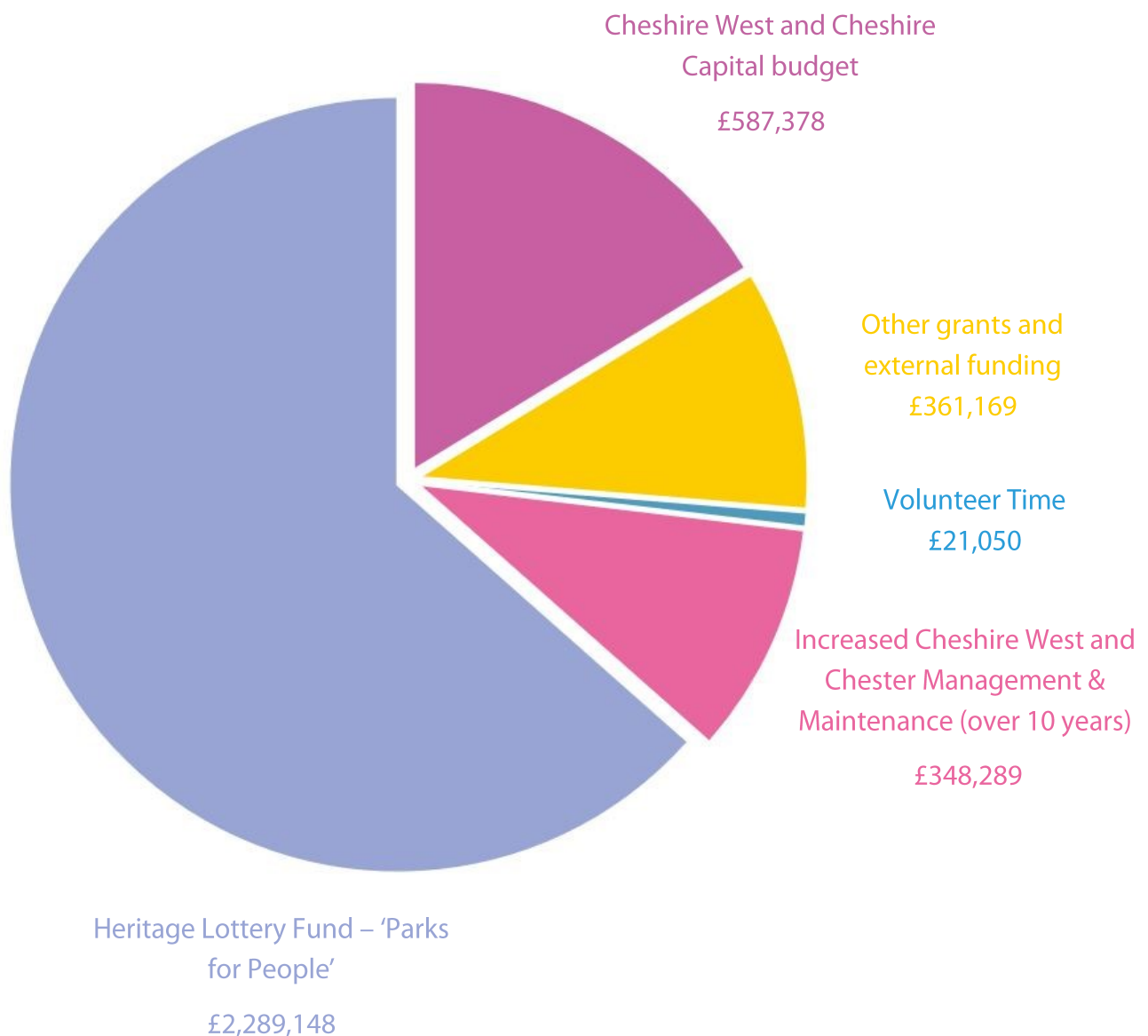
1. To improve the facilities and offer an extensive programme of activities to attract and engage a wide audience of local residents, tourists, community groups, schools, further education and young people.
2. To restore the original Kemp designed park landscape and John Douglas designed Lodge and interpret the park's heritage to visitors. To complete the priority works identified in the structural condition survey to repair the declining fabric of the park.
3. To allow the future management of Grosvenor park to be heavily supported by a range of volunteers including the local community, Friends, colleges and schools.
4. To improve local skills and knowledge through the high-quality training building, offering a range of courses related to public park management.
5. To transform the approach to the management and maintenance of greenspace, delivering a Green Flag standard park with community involvement and engagement exceeding these standards.



## Project Costs

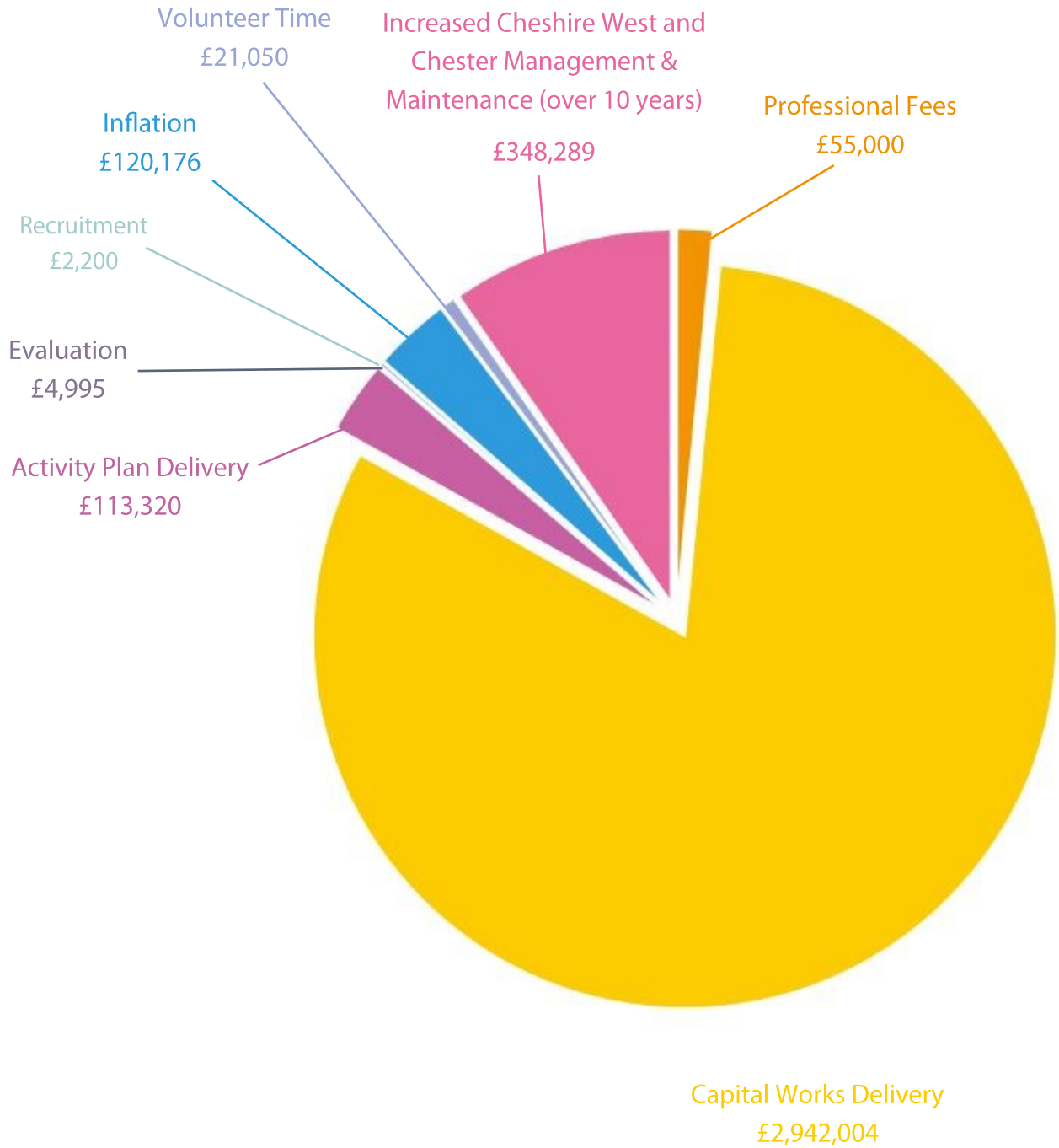
In August 2011 Cheshire West and Chester Council made a delivery phase application to the parks for People Programme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Community Fund (formerly Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund). In December 2011 the application was approved and a grant of £2.3 million was awarded covering 63% of the estimated £3.6 million project cost. The funding sources, project costs and project timeline are shown below.

## Project Funding





## Project Spend





‘A tranquil green space close to the glorious River Dee and surprisingly near to the city centre. The cafe is delightfully housed in a quaint lodge with plenty of outdoor seating.’

TripAdvisor Feedback

## Capital Works

The project saw extensive restoration and improvement to the quality and range of facilities in the park including;

- Restoration of essential infrastructure features within the park including footpaths, edgings and steps using appropriate heritage surfaces and materials.
- Restoration and replacement of park boundaries including walls, railings and gates.
- Removal of the play area from its previous location and provision of a new “natural play” trail with a main area adjacent to the miniature railway, creating a hub for family activities.
- Vegetation management works to restore views to the River Dee and beyond, remove undesirable species and carry out other Arboricultural works to remove hazards and ensure longevity of the historic landscape.
- Appropriate replanting carried out to maintain the style of the Kemp landscape and to restore elements of the original design.
- Restoration of the pond in keeping with original footprint incorporating improved access for educational activities.
- Replacement of existing street furniture with a new palette of heritage seats, bins, signage and interpretation.
- Restoration and conversion of the existing Lodge building to provide a café, Council office and community meetings
- Provision of a new octagonal Activity Zone built in the distinctive John Douglas style -with flexible space, a small kitchen and public toilets along with a Changing Places Facility.

‘There are flowers in bloom, a rose garden, play area for the kids, events area, pavilion and much more. A great place to have a picnic, have a stroll or to just chill with your tunes on!’

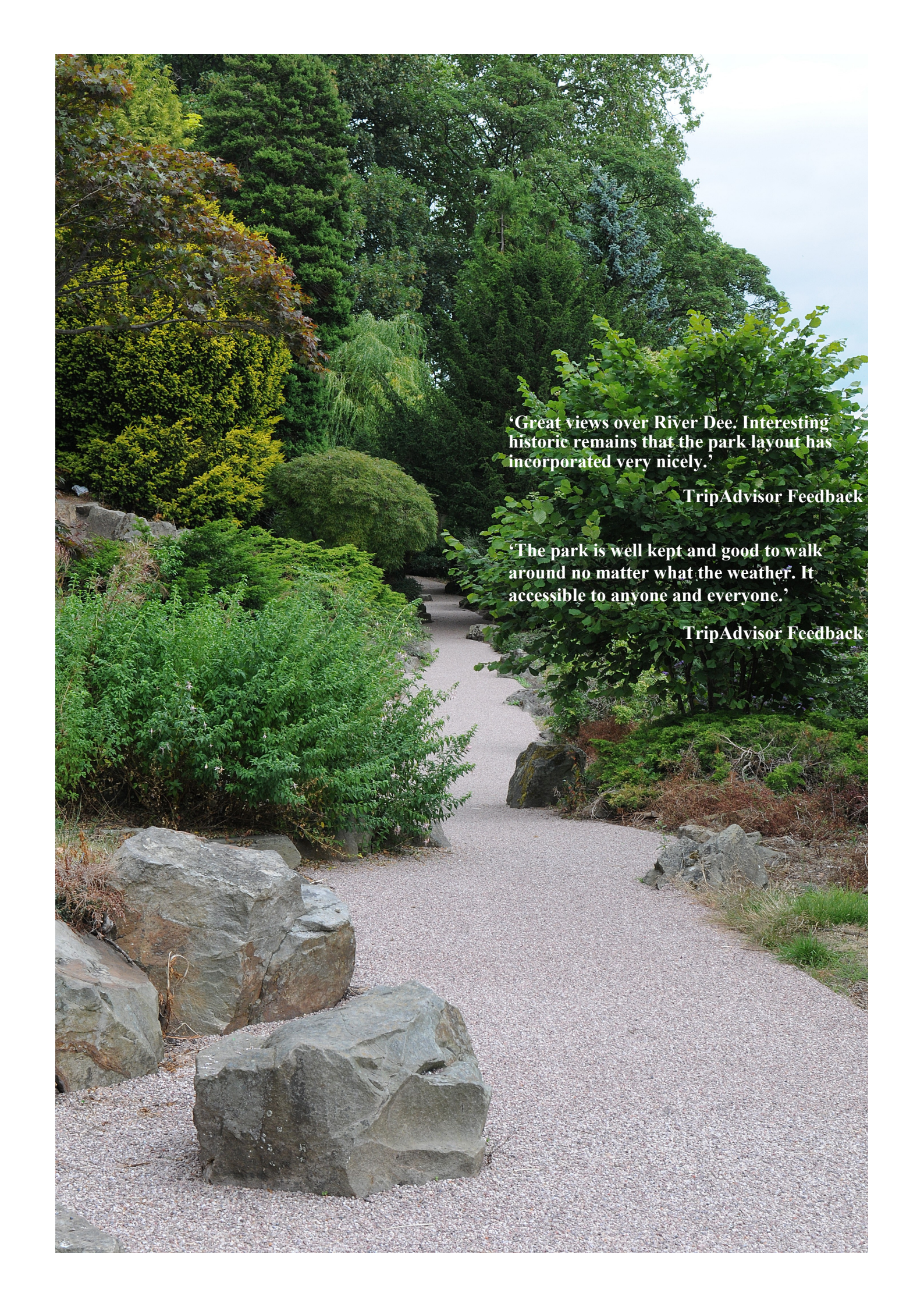
TripAdvisor Feedback

‘Much improved since our last visit a couple of years ago. Lovely play area with secure fence around’

TripAdvisor Feedback





A gravel path winds through a lush garden. Large, grey, angular rocks are scattered along the path. The garden is filled with various green plants, including a large, rounded bush on the left and a weeping tree in the background. The sky is overcast.

**'Great views over River Dee. Interesting historic remains that the park layout has incorporated very nicely.'**

**TripAdvisor Feedback**

**'The park is well kept and good to walk around no matter what the weather. It accessible to anyone and everyone.'**

**TripAdvisor Feedback**



# Interpretation and Communication

The project has seen the heritage and the current offer of the park better communicated to the public both on and off site.

This was supported by the creation of a new logo and visual identity for the park as well as a portfolio of photography taken over the period of a year to represent all seasons, activities and events and a wide range of users. The park website was upgraded and went live in January 2017. It now provides information about the park's history, the restoration project, events and activities, volunteer opportunities, school and educational information, visitor information and a map.

The project saw the creation of a pre-visit leaflet for the site outlining accessibility and facilities, parking information, opening times and providing an overview of key areas of the park including the Activity Zone, Miniature Rail Experience, Children's Play Area and Open-Air Theatre. A History and Restoration leaflet for the park was created which provides an overview of the history of the park and a map of the park marking the listed features

**WELCOME TO GROSVENOR PARK**  
Grosvenor Park is a Grade II\* registered, Green Flag Award winning public park located just outside the city of Chester's historic walls overlooking the River Dee.

One of the finest examples of Victorian parks in the UK, it has a considerable history and now forms a valuable open space for the local community and visitors to the city, offering a wide variety of activities and events and an all-year round peaceful character and charm.

The higher reaches of the park, towards the city centre, are flat and feature sweeping lawns, ornamental flower beds and formal avenues lined with trees. In contrast, the slopes near the river offer meandering shady paths and the occasional remnant of a medieval building.

The bedding displays are also planted twice yearly to provide a spectacular and colourful display throughout the spring and summer months.

Below you'll find all you need to know when planning your visit to Grosvenor Park including opening times and details of our facilities.

Enjoy your visit!

**Grosvenor Park occupies 16 acres of land - please see the map to discover it all:**

**WHAT'S ON**  
The park has become the focus for a variety of activities and many significant events in the city.

**Activity Zone**  
Our Activity Zone is a stunning community building in the heart of the park, offering an array of activities throughout the year from poetry classes and craft workshops to song writing and Tai Chi.

**Miniature Rail Experience**  
Popular with all ages, the Miniature Rail Experience is one of Chester's top tourist attractions operating steam and diesel hauled trains on a ¼ mile circuit around the pond.

**Children's Play Area**  
Using a range of natural materials, our Children's Play Area is a fun and challenging environment for playing and exploring.

**Open Air Theatre**  
Grosvenor Park is also home to the award-winning Open Air Theatre produced by Story House, the only full time professional open air theatre company outside of London, boasting some of the country's most respected directors, designers and actors. A relaxed and intimate venue with a capacity of 500, the season runs from July-August each year with five major adaptations of children's stories and Shakespeare Classics performed in the round.

and those which have been restored, realigned or introduced as a result of the project, allowing a self-guided heritage tour of the park.

The project has also seen creation of a tree trail which allows people of all ages to discover the 688 trees in the park through self-guided trail highlighting key features and origins of 15 key specimens. Tree Trail signposts guide users around the site and specimen trees have a metal plaque allowing for a rubbing to be taken.





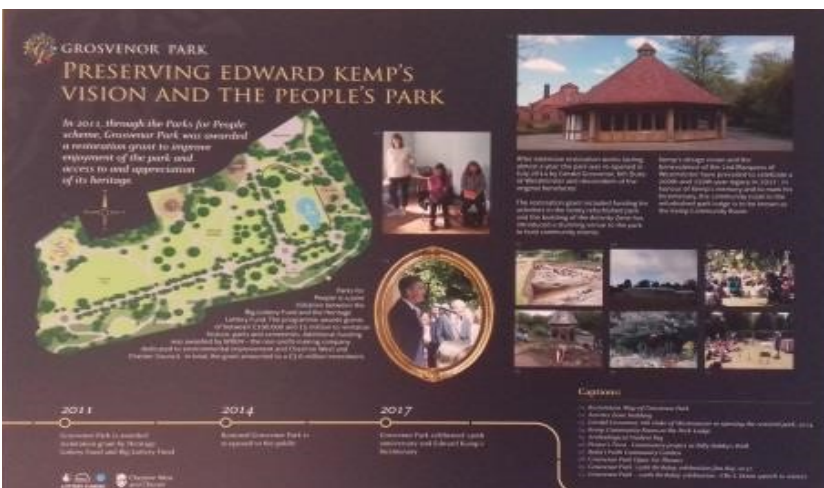


Within the park, three new signs were installed at key entrances providing a map of the site with key features and facilities highlighted and orientation within the park and wider City. Exhibition panels were created to be displayed in the Kemp Community Room within the Lodge, which is used for community group meetings, and outside of these times an informal space for park users to visit.

Other temporary elements of interpretation have been present in the park across the course of the project. In recognition of the 2018 centenary of the RAF, the project developed a programme of works which involved the community in creating a series Spitfire and poppy sculptures made from willow. The project commissioned local artist Sarah Gallagher-Hayes to run seven free willow weaving workshops with families, veterans and primary school children. They all helped to weave the willow through the sculptures to create the poppies and Spitfires planes which were planted in the central beds of the park

at a special launch event on 5 October 2018. The Council's grounds maintenance staff incorporated floral displays around the sculptures which had bands of red, white blue and gold to mimic the famous spitfire roundel colours.

In Summer 2019 the sculptures were replaced with four willow bird sculptures to mark 130 years of the RSPB. The four birds were chosen by Council Officers in consultation with local RSPB groups. The avocet, hen harrier, little egret and cormorant represent significant birds found on the Dee. As part of this project, the Council's StreetCare teams planted floral displays of yellow marigolds and blue salvia's underneath the sculptures to mimic the water of the Dee running through the Cheshire Plains. In addition to the sculptures, the project commissioned small interpretation signs to be installed in each of the flower beds to provide the park's visitors with some brief information about the birds and the project. An event was held to launch the sculptures on Friday 21 June 2019.



‘Three cheers to all involved at Grosvenor park... The new willow creations and floral displays are beautiful’

Social Media Feedback











## Activity Plan

The Activity Plan for the project has delivered a wide range of events and activities, volunteering, learning and training opportunities. To coordinate its delivery a park Coordination Officer was appointed in March 2014. When this role was vacated in December 2017 delivery was integrated into a role delivering a similar function across the Council. With the agreement of the National Lottery Heritage Fund the Activity Plan ran beyond the planned five-year period until the end of the project in March 2021.

As well as providing a member of staff to coordinate events and activities in the park the project significantly improving the event infrastructure in the park to include the Activity Zone, a Community Room in the Lodge, and three event spaces in the park-a formalised events space, an area by the Lodge and another on the lawn by the miniature railway. The project supported a full and diverse programme of community events, meetings, charity events and other events. A look at the events taking place in June 2019 reveal 62 separate event bookings, 40 within the Activity Zone, 20 in the wider park and two in the Community. Below are just a few examples of the wide range of events and activities taking place.

## Events and Activities

### 'Happy Birthday Grosvenor park' Family Fun Days

In 2017, to celebrate Grosvenor Park's 150th birthday, volunteers, organised through Chester Pride were commissioned to plan and run a series of four family fun days. The days included a Victorian sideshow performer 'Dr Diablo' who demonstrated to the crowd what their distant relatives would have seen at such an event over 100 years ago. Alongside the Victorian sideshow, volunteers organised and ran free popular sideshow games including hook a duck, tin can alley splat the rat and hoopla. There were also a range of other games including croquet, Jenga, boules, giant ten pin bowling, diablos, juggling, giant bubbles and hula hooping and Victorian decoupage. For toddlers and babies, there was also a sand pit and a selection of preschool toys. The local Capoeira Brazilian Dance group volunteered giving a performance and running a workshop at the June event. Local musicians, all volunteering their time, came along to perform in the Activity Zone throughout the day. Local traders were also invited along to have a stall and those present included ice-cream, oven-baked pizza, vintage clothing, face painting, sweets and gifts. The leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council, Councillor Samantha Dixon, was invited along to the July event to say a few words about the history of Grosvenor Park on its birthday,

for which volunteers organised for a large cake to be made featuring the 150 years logo. An estimated 250 people attended each family fun day and feedback was very positive.

*'We absolutely LOVE coming to these events. In my opinion these are the best four events held in Chester throughout the year... Everyone is so friendly and welcoming to all you feel like you can have a relaxing family day. Thank you all for everything you do to provide us with great days!'*



### Annual Archaeological Dig

Since the Activity Zone was built the park has been able to host a long-running annual archaeological dig delivered in partnership between the Council and the University of Chester to explore the landscape surrounding the roman amphitheatre and St John's Church.

For the first month the dig works with students for whom it forms a compulsory work-based learning module for Year 2 students studying single or joint honours Archaeology. A second month is delivered working solely with volunteers. Public engagement is a key element of the dig and on a daily basis student, staff and volunteers show visitors to the park what has been found and explain what they are doing. A site Open Day is held each year and visits are also arranged for schools and other interested groups.

The dig has allowed the heritage of the park to be better identified, recorded and understood. It has found a Roman road, a Saxon ditch assumed to be the boundary of the city and medieval buildings linked to the Church on the site. The volunteer element has been very successful and people travel a long way for the opportunity to gain archaeological experience including sixth form students and recent graduates.

**‘The Activity Zone is an excellent base for us, it provides welfare facilities for those involved and a space to process finds. It’s ideal for engaging the public with our dig due to high footfall and an open feel. The project funded A-frames and posters which informed people them about the work taking place and encouraged them to come and get involved.’-**

**Archaeological Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council**

### Chester Pride

Chester Pride is a committee of volunteers who organise events to celebrate equality and diversity, and bring people together to raise visibility and awareness of LGBT+ minorities (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender+). In May 2018, Chester Pride ran a family fun day in Grosvenor Park which featured activities and entertainment.

The Pride in the Past Exhibition is a pop-up exhibition which explores the history of LGBT+ identities in Cheshire West and Chester from Roman times to the present day. The exhibition could be viewed at the family fun day in the Activity Zone. Child specific activities included inclusive Story Time from Cheshire West libraries using books about LGBT+ families, make a chameleon craft which focused on learning about difference and children’s sporting activities.

There were a range of activities for the whole family including two cookery along workshops, hula hooping with a skilled instructor, Nordic walking and inclusive rugby taster sessions. A marquee was setup as a performance space and featured local musicians throughout the afternoon. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and Cheshire Police attended bringing along the rainbow fire engine which was popular with children and adults queuing to have their photo taken inside. It was estimated that over the day approximately 1,000 attended. Due to its success, a second Pride Event was held in April 2019.

**‘Celebrating diversity in a fun way for all the family’**

### Celebrating Recovery Event

Fallen Angels Dance Theatre (FADT) exist to support those in recovery from addiction to transform their lives, and to share the recovery journey with the wider public, through dance, performance and creativity. The Chester group used the Activity Zone to meet on a weekly basis. The park location was very important for these meeting as it brings those recovering into a positive space which is freely accessible and where they can return in their own time. Connection with nature is also important in recovery and so the park was used to observe nature, for mindfulness and outdoor movement and expression classes.

**‘What a great positive event. Such a lot of unity and I hope it’s back every year’**

**‘Today I feel blessed’**

In September 2019 the group organised an event for local services, charities and mutual aid groups to celebrate positive and contagious recovery. The event brought together 400 people, those in recovery, their friends and families, and all those who support recovery in Cheshire West and Chester, plus members of the public. There was recovery themed art, face painting, t-shirt printing, live music, activities, information and dance performances by Fallen Angels Dance Theatre. There were special guests from Recovery Connections in Middlesbrough, and CGL recovery service for Halton, St. Helens and Warrington. The event was opened by Lord Lieutenant David Briggs, the Queen’s representative for Cheshire, who gave an inspirational speech outlining the positive benefits of services in the region coming together to work in partnership.





## Volunteering

The project has been successful in increasing volunteer activity in the park. From the start of the project in 2011 to 2019 the number of volunteers engaged had grown exponentially from 24 to 340 individuals and an annual contribution of 4332 hours from 70.

We have taken 2016 as a year indicative of the project period. In this year 63% of volunteer time was contributed doing tasks categorised as 'landscape or maintenance', 27% in 'one off events' and 10% 'improving access' to the park or heritage.

'Landscape or maintenance' volunteering was largely a project which saw a group of eight 16–18-year-olds volunteer in 12 sessions over a two-week period of the summer. The group were from the Prince's Trust Programme and the project was coordinated by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The young people chose Billy Hobby's Well to benefit from their hard work and were given a donation from Barclays Bank to buy materials as well as plants and tools to complete the project. Between them they spent two weeks weeding the area and generally tidying up before planting bedding plants making the area which had become overgrown a more pleasant place to visit and enjoy.

Another volunteer project 'landscape or maintenance' saw the project working with Turning Point, a health and social care organisation to create a community contemplative area in the park. In the first phase volunteers removed overgrown vegetation and created a decorative feature to replicate the route of the old waterfall which flowed through the rock garden. Grass seed and planting was then undertaken to provide a manageable area from which visitors can relax and enjoy views to the river.

'One-off events' saw volunteers helping to organise and deliver events and activities in the park including an Interfaith Peace Walk and Step out for Stroke. Family activities supported by volunteers included a storytelling session, arts and crafts, and festive fun days.

'Improving access volunteering' initiatives included hosting English Conversation Classes in the park whereby volunteers accompanied classes taking place in the Activity Zone and took students out into the wider park to use the natural environment as a basis for discussing topics including trees, plants, surroundings, leisure activities, etc. Another activity in this category saw an individual volunteering supporting the project through the creation of a Photo Orienteering Map for the park. Volunteers helped to promote use of the park through setting up and maintaining a communal Facebook page for the Activity Zone where groups using the venue can list details of activities and events taking place on the park and post photos.

### Vivo Health Care Choices Volunteering

The project has worked closely with Vivo Care Choices who support adults with learning disabilities. In July 2018 the Council worked with Vivo to commission, design and deliver a horticulture training course for a number of their service users who wanted to undertake basic horticulture training, giving them confidence to lead a volunteer group who could undertake flower bed design, rejuvenation and general gardening.

The project commissioned the Council's Total Environment team to create a bespoke programme that was tailored to suit the needs of the service users. The programme took place in Grosvenor Park over a six-week period and gave the group an introduction to horticulture, plant design and maintenance of flower beds. The training was then put into practice redesigning and rejuvenating of the Marquis of Westminster bed.



'The project at Grosvenor Park was a great initiative to help start us on the right track to recognising people's individual abilities and has given our service the recognition and the support that they needed to achieve the things they enjoyed.'

Vivo Team

A celebration event was held for the group on 23 August in Grosvenor Parks Activity Zone building. Attendees consisted of the park's grounds operative staff, the service users and their families, staff from the Total Environment team, the Mayor of Chester, the Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund coordinator. A buffet lunch was provided along with activities for the service users to complete and a graduation awards ceremony at the end.

Vivo staff describe the main benefits of involvement as providing a realm in which individuals can be recognised for the things they enjoy and can achieve, also giving them the belief that they can go out and make a difference within the community. The volunteer work has allowed them to build relationships and developed their independence along the way and it has supported them to develop within the wider community.

The training enabled and encouraged service users to become permanently involved with maintaining the park and the two flower beds they care for now hold plaques of acknowledgement onsite.

Other groups regularly volunteering in the park include Special Needs Care who care for The Jewel Garden, Chester Humanist society who maintain the humanist garden and the Women's Institute who maintain their own garden in the park. All volunteers have access to volunteer training and equipment to carry out their works and follow a detailed 'task sheet' which details where urgent work is needed in the park. Tasks are completed by joint working from the Head Gardener, StreetCare Operations team and volunteers.

The project has worked hard to cultivate a sustainable model of volunteering in the park and this has included cultivating their relationship with the Friends of Grosvenor Park and The Groves (FOGG). The Friends of Grosvenor Park and the Groves consists of local people who are keen to play a role in the management of Grosvenor Park. They hold a number of annual formal meetings usually attended by relevant Cheshire West and Council officers. The group significantly contributes to the management of the park and there are strong communication links with the Green Spaces team. The group also have a new volunteer involvement programme in the park and have been meeting on a regular basis to undertake various light works.

**'The programme aims to move young people into full time employment. By doing this community project it helped them to gain practical experience but also skills in how to project manage and budget.'**

**Team Leader, Nichola**



**'It's been a wonderfully fulfilling experience and I've made lots of new friends!'**

**Hi ...I'm Fiona**

**I'm very pleased to have been able to volunteer in the Grosvenor Park – it's been a privilege to be able to do something to maintain a wonderful public resource which is so loved by the people of Chester and visitors alike.**

**Initially, I responded to a notice posted on the park noticeboard but prior to that I had often walked in the park and thought how great it would be to be able to do a bit of gardening!**

**Having previously had a large garden but now living in town with a very little garden, I was delighted when the team responded and organised for me to be able to come in at times to suit. I've worked on flowerbeds and sweeping up leaves in the park and in the Roman Gardens, sometimes on my own and sometimes with others.**

**The support from parks team has been fantastic both from the management and operational people. I've been encouraged by comments from people passing through the park when I've been weeding or sweeping and I suspect there are lots of other people who would like to be able to help in the park too – so if you're reading this and fancy a go – get stuck in!**



## Training and Learning

Through the project staff have attended three APSE training events covering parks and allotment management and managing events in parks and open spaces.

An education pack for use by school groups was completed through the project which provides pre-visit activities by key stage, all information needed to plan a visit, onsite activity list and worksheets and a trail map – colour-coded to support other activities and uses of the park. The pack is available as a downloadable resource on the website.

The park is now also used by a number of nursery schools for Forest School activity sessions.

The project has worked closely with their neighbouring school Grosvenor Park C of E Academy. Children from the school use the park daily for their Golden Mile daily exercise and classes visit for play time in good weather. The Park and Activity Zone are used for lessons including maths, art, and science.

Their pupils were involved in the 100 years of the RAF commemorative art display taking part in a number of workshops at the Activity Zone where they worked with a local artist to make wicker sculpture planes and poppies which were planted in the flower beds.

They appreciate all the activity that goes on in the park which offers the children a range of opportunities- they were invited to watch the rehearsals of the Story House Open Air Theatre and visit the annual archaeological dig.

**Having a spacious and well-cared for space so close is a huge benefit to the school.'**

**Grosvenor Park C of E**



“Three cheers to all involved at Grosvenor Park... The new willow creations and floral displays are beautiful’

Social Media Feedback



## Delivery of Outcomes

The following section outlines how the project has delivered against the Outcomes of the funding bodies National Lottery Heritage Fund and Community Fund.

### Outcome 1: Increasing the range of audiences using and enjoying the park

The project has increased the range of audiences using the park through improved accessibility of the park with accessible route to the Groves and Riverside, level path and access to the pond, hand rails on stepped access points, tactile paving on the approach to steps, accessible toilet provision, signage and waymarking signage and internal waymarking. The Green Flag Award assessment 2015/16 reflected on the extent to which the project and brought improving access for people with limited mobility, noting it was a big advantage for the park and its users.

The improved visitor experience and range of facilities has increased visitor numbers and average time spent in the park. Following the restoration works visitor numbers to the park increased from 382,546 in 2011/12 to 512,874 in 2016/17, a 37% uplift in annual visits. Visitor surveys conducted demonstrate that over the period of the project the average length of visit has increased with the average visit time increasing from 30 minutes to 1 hour to between one and two hours. While in 2011 only 28% of visits lasted over an hour by 2019 72.9% of people stayed for longer than 60 minutes. Those satisfied or very satisfied with the park remained consistently high with a slight increase from 2011 (84%) to 2019 (88%), more notable was the reduction in dissatisfaction with the park decreasing from 8.3% in 2011 to zero in 2019.

**The restoration saw a 37% uplift in annual visits.**

**After the project 72.9% of visitors stay for over an hour, compared to 28% before**

Improved pre-visit information now allows visitors to make an informed choice about visiting the park, and new leaflets and interpretive panels allow the park to be more easily explored and understood. The new facilities and staff member have also allowed the project to work with groups representing LGBT+ minorities, adults with learning disabilities and those in recovery ensuring the



park is welcoming and valuable for a whole range of audiences.

### Outcome 2: Conserving and enhancing the heritage value of the park

The project has been successful in conserving and enhancing the heritage value of the park. It saw the restoration of the Grade II listed Lodge building and restoration of 10 key historic features. Alongside this, landscape restoration was completed and vistas opened to ensure the park could be viewed as the original design intended. The project has also seen an improvement to interpretation on and offsite that informs visitors about the heritage of the park and the significance of individual features within it.

The natural heritage of the park benefitted from insights gained through water and bat surveys of the park and the park Management and Maintenance Plan was revised to address biodiversity and conservation issues in the park.





### Outcome 3: Increase the range of volunteers involved in the park

The project has increased the range of volunteers participating at Grosvenor Park through development of partnerships with local organisations to support new volunteer involvement supported by staff capacity and improved volunteer facilities.



As outlined above the project has been very successful in increasing volunteer activity in the park. From the start of the project in 2011/12 to 2019 the number of volunteers engaged has grown exponentially from 24 to 340 and hours contributed from 70 to 4332. The project has done well to increase both the activities volunteers are involved with and the diversity of the volunteer profile with an increasingly young and more ethnically diverse profile than prior to the project.

**By 2019 the park had 340 volunteers contributing 4332 hours of their time.**

**In 2016 84% of park volunteers were younger than 44**

Through the initiatives described and other the project has done well to increase the diversity of the volunteers engaged in the site. The 2015/16 volunteer profile showed a focus on engaging younger people with 84% of volunteers younger than 44. In that year 6% of volunteers were also BAME as compared to 100% of volunteers being White British at the beginning of the project.

### Outcome 4: Improve skills and knowledge about parks through learning and training

The project has seen staff trained in parks management and managing events in open spaces. It has put a focus on volunteer training in horticultural skills and as outlined

above this has been both beneficial to participants and secured valued help in maintaining the horticultural features of the park. The project has also provided the Activity Zone which has provided a flexible space for a wide range of activities including a training and community events.

The project has also developed education resources for schools and grown the relationship with local education providers allowing the park to be used regularly for formal and informal education activity.

### Outcome 5: Improving park management and maintenance

Through the project the Management and Maintenance Plan for the park was updated and close working of staff and volunteers to this plan has seen an improvement to the upkeep of the park. This has been reflected by the Green Flag Award being achieved for the first time in 2015/16 and retained thereafter.

**'The investment from Heritage Fund has clearly brought the park back to its former glory and there is clear evidence that the Council is sustaining the impact of this investment, as well as finding innovative solutions to achieve improvement to the remaining parts of the site.'**

**Green Flag Site Assessment 2017**



The 2019 assessment recommended that the park Management and Maintenance Plan was updated again in response to the current plan coming to the end of its lifespan. This has been done and a new plan is in place running until 2025.



## Successes

### A Space for the Whole Community

The project has been successful in making interventions which enhance the heritage of the park while increasing its potential to deliver for the local community. Since works were delivered the park has been better used, with users staying for longer periods and expressing consistently high satisfaction with the site. The project has addressed barriers users previously faced including access issues, lack of facilities including toilets and a café and anti-social behaviour.

The improved infrastructure to support events and activities in the park has allowed the park to become a focus for the whole community. The Activity Zone building especially has offered an affordable, accessible space in a beautiful setting which has supported organisations, many of them charities, to deliver events and activities promoting well-being and social cohesion. The project has allowed the park to become an important focus for many for these organisations, local schools and a growing number of volunteer groups who feel ownership and pride in their involvement with it.

### Volunteer Expansion

The project has seen a huge increase in times volunteer involvement in the park. Volunteers now work closely with the parks team to undertake a multitude of tasks including the rejuvenation and re-design of flower beds, weeding, pruning, planting, leaf collecting and even propagating. The project demonstrated how volunteering can bring benefits for diverse groups including adults with learning disabilities and local families.

The success of the volunteer programme at Grosvenor Park has been so successful it has led to the launch of a borough-wide volunteer programme with VIVO, Cheshire West and Chester's Streetcare Manager and Parks and Open Spaces Commissioner.

Once volunteering in open spaces resumes volunteering in the park will be further developed through a plan to engage local businesses in volunteer to use as part of their Health and Wellbeing Plans. Funding is also being sought to purchase greenhouses and cold frames to create a volunteer gardening hub in the park depot.

## The Future

Although this funding element of the project has now come to an end, we want to continue to develop the park, focussing on delivering a clean, safe and beautiful environment for its visitors.

To do this, we will review the criteria set out by the green

flag award and in conjunction with the action plan identified in the park's management plan, with a clear focus on community volunteering. The success of the National Lottery Heritage Funded volunteer programme led to the launch of a much wider volunteer project with several key community groups who are now key stakeholders in the park, and work side by side with the parks maintenance teams, to help enhance the standard of service delivery. Following the pandemic, volunteering will help play a key part in encouraging outdoor activities which will aid health and wellbeing within our community whilst tackling social isolation.

Friends and volunteers of the park will have the opportunity to identify specific projects in an 'aspiration' section, held within the management plan. This section is important, as it sets out changes that users of the park want to see. For instance, there is a clear acknowledgment for an increase in biodiversity, and volunteers have already requested that funding be sought for an interactive trail through the quarry garden, to educate visitors of the importance of pollination and ecosystems.

The future of Grosvenor Park is reliant on a local voice, working creatively with the Council and external stakeholders, to develop an innovative approach to park management, that continues to remain authentic to the original project objectives.

## Conclusion

Grosvenor Park has seen a significant change in its infrastructure and development since the successful funding bid which delivered the 10-year restoration program. Key milestones were the revival of heritage design principles, renovation of a dilapidated historic building into a community focussed café, a purpose-built activity and events hub and a new modern play area. All these additions have underpinned the development of a well-loved park, which have led to a committed community voice working in partnership with local people and local organisations to ensure Grosvenor Park is a vibrant and welcoming place.

The park will be managed to ensure it continues to be a welcoming area of green space that reflects the ongoing needs of the local community by providing a safe, clean, and attractive environment in which to enjoy their leisure time.