

## **Appendix 3: Highfields Park Activity Plan *Outline Structure***

### **Introduction**

The Stage One *Parks for People* bid for the restoration of Highfields Park was approved by the Heritage Lottery Fund in July 2013 and a Stage Two bid is currently being worked up for submission in July 2013.

This Activity Plan is one of a suite of documents that makes up that submission, sitting alongside the masterplan, restoration proposals, cost plan and management & maintenance plan.

This document sets out how the restoration works and activities both alongside and after the works will develop the park's audience.

### **Highfields Park**

Highfields Park was laid out in the early 1920s as a public park on the initiative of Sir Jesse Boot and to designs by Richard Percy Morley Horder. Its foundation stone was laid in 1922, it opened partly in 1923 and the public was given its full use in 1926. The ownership was transferred to the City Council in 1932. It is one of the first man-made, large-scale public parks of the 20th century.

The excavation of the lake and design of University Boulevard was a considerable demonstration of engineering skill of its time. It is the only public park designed and laid out by Richard Percy Morley Horder, an architect of national stature and retains many of its historic distinguishing features. It is structurally relatively intact, retaining its original vistas and the majority of points of interest, including a series of high quality buildings and architectural features, which are of intrinsic value in themselves and which also form a high quality group related to the University buildings beyond.

Six architectural structures in the park are afforded statutory protection as Grade II Listed buildings, whilst prehistoric rock shelters in the Nottingham Castle Rock Outcrop possess archaeological and educational interest. The park's story forms an important chapter in the social history of Nottingham. Nottingham Croquet Club has been associated with Highfields Park since 1929.

By virtue of its values Highfields Park was included in English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, Grade II - Ref GD 2771. This listing is to be reviewed for uplift by English Heritage in early 2013.

Highfields Park is also an important part of the open spaces network in Nottingham, linking Beeston Sidings Local Nature Reserve, Nottingham University and Wollaton Hall. The site is home to a geological Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) reference 1/152 'University lake old river bluff'. Highfields provides valuable scrub and woodland habitat for breeding birds such as robin, sparrow and blue tit. The additional diversity of habitats provides important foraging and breeding opportunities for invertebrates and mammals. The Tottle Brook runs

through Highfields Park, providing a complimentary wetland habitat to compliment the open water of Highfields Lake. Highfields Lake is one of the largest water bodies in the City of Nottingham and The Highfields Fault is registered as a Site of Special Geological Interest.

### **Existing Audiences**

Highfields is a destination park with a range of high quality attractions which offers opportunities to visitors from both the city and wider county to experience and enjoy and has both multi faceted on site features and facilities of which conservation , preservation and heritage is considered a priority. For these reasons Highfields Park has been designated under the City's hierarchy as a destination park with a 5 km access buffer and above 70% quality standards.

The park has strong accessibility links serving local residents who use its footpaths, bowling and putting greens, croquet lawn and the boating lake. Notably the putting green and boating lake are the only existing ones within our city's parks. The park already serves the many students and international visitors that the university itself attracts to the site. Also located on the Highfields site is the Lakeside Arts Centre and cafe, a unique public arts centre presenting an eclectic programme of music, dance, theatre, visual art and family events all year round alongside.

The park itself sits within the city ward of Wollaton East & Lenton Abbey. Although the ward itself is not an area of high deprivation, it sits very closely on the boundary of and serves the neighbouring ward of Dunkirk and Lenton. This ward is ranked within the Index of Multiple Deprivation tables as falling within the worst 10% Super Output Area (SOA) level measure of multiple deprivation nationally around crime & disorder, children / young people (education, skills & training), health deprivation, income deprivation affecting both children and older people and outdoors living environment (Source: Communities and Local Government - Indices of Deprivation (ID) 2010).

Highfields Park serves a surrounding 88,937 city residential properties which lie within the 5km city boundary buffer zone around the park. This equates to an estimated 210,000 residents out of the city's population of 300,800 (source: 2001 Census) . In addition the park serves residents from neighbouring local authority boundaries and wider Nottinghamshire.

### **User Surveys**

Highfields Park user surveys took place in the week commencing 28<sup>th</sup> May 2012 in order to inform the Stage One Lottery bid. 296 valid on site interviews were obtained.

N.B. In the following tables, figures have been rounded up/down to the nearest full percentage point. Where the figures do not add up to 100% this is as a result of computer rounding.

*Table 1: Frequency of visit*

Less than once a year %	Once a year %	2 or 3 times a year %	More often %
1	1	14	84

*Table 2: Mode of travel to Highfields Park*

Bicycle %	Bus %	Car %	On foot %
6	10	47	37

*Table 3: Journey time to park*

Less than 5 minutes %	5-10 minutes %	10-15 minutes %	15-20 minutes %	20-30 minutes %	More than 30 minutes %
10	20	18	20	20	13

*Table 4: Duration of stay*

Less than 30 minutes %	30 minutes-1hour %	1-2 hours %	2-4 hours %	More than 4 hours %
10	27	49	11	3

*Table 5: Overall impression of the park*

Very satisfied %	Satisfied %	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied %	Dissatisfied %	Very dissatisfied %
49	50	1	0	0

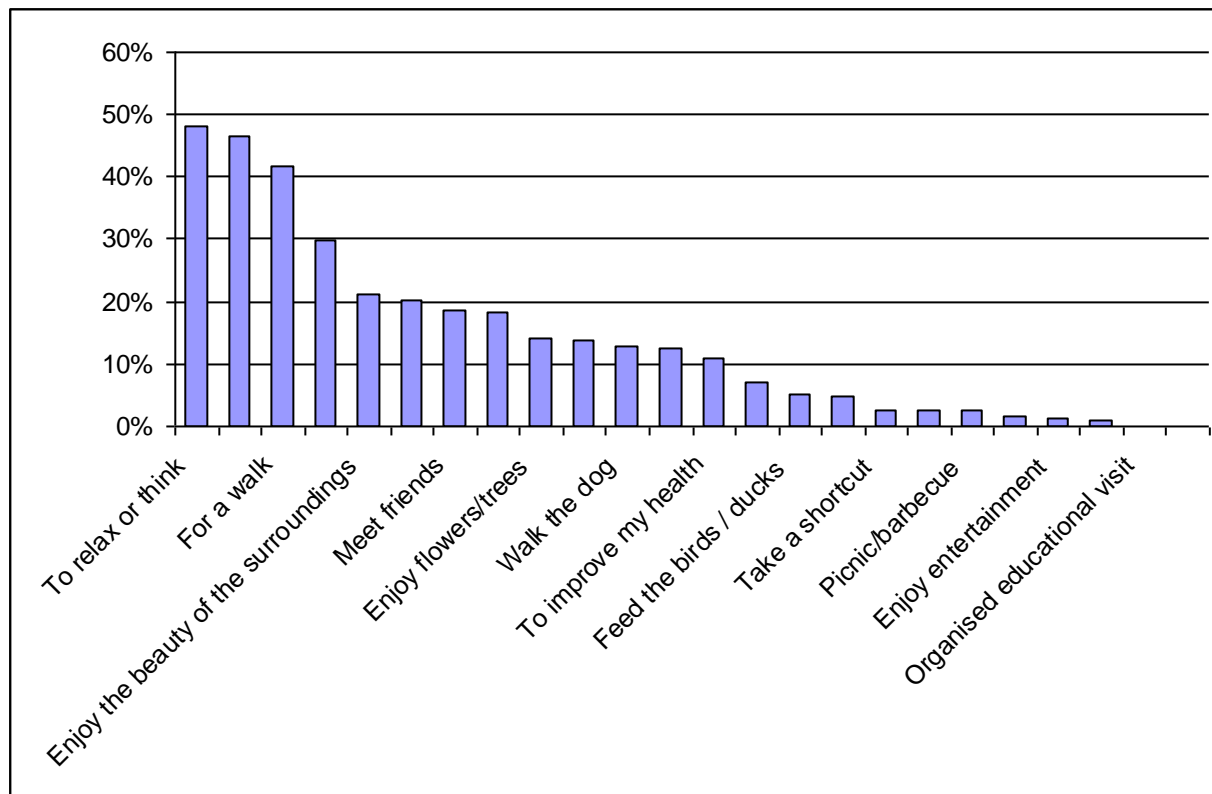
*Table 6: Interviewee age groups*

16 yrs or under %	17-19 yrs	20-29 yrs	30-39 yrs	40-49 yrs	50-59 yrs	60-74 yrs	75 yrs or over
1	8	24	14	11	17	23	2

- A fairly equal split was obtained over the various age groups and of the interviewees 40% were male and 60% were female.
- 9% of interviewees considered themselves to have a disability that would affect their use of the park.
- 87% of interviewees were of a White British ethnic origin. 3% were White & Black Caribbean with other ethnic origins being 2% of interviewees or less;
- 51% of the interviewees lived in the Nottingham City Council area.

Visitors were asked what they normally do when they visit the park or open space, as shown in Figure 1, below.

Figure 1: Visitor activities at Highfields Park



Visitors were asked which from a list were their top 5 priorities for improvements in the park and would encourage them to visit more often or stay longer:

Figure 2: Percentage of Highfields Park respondents citing an improvement as one of the top five priorities for the site to encourage them to visit more often or stay longer

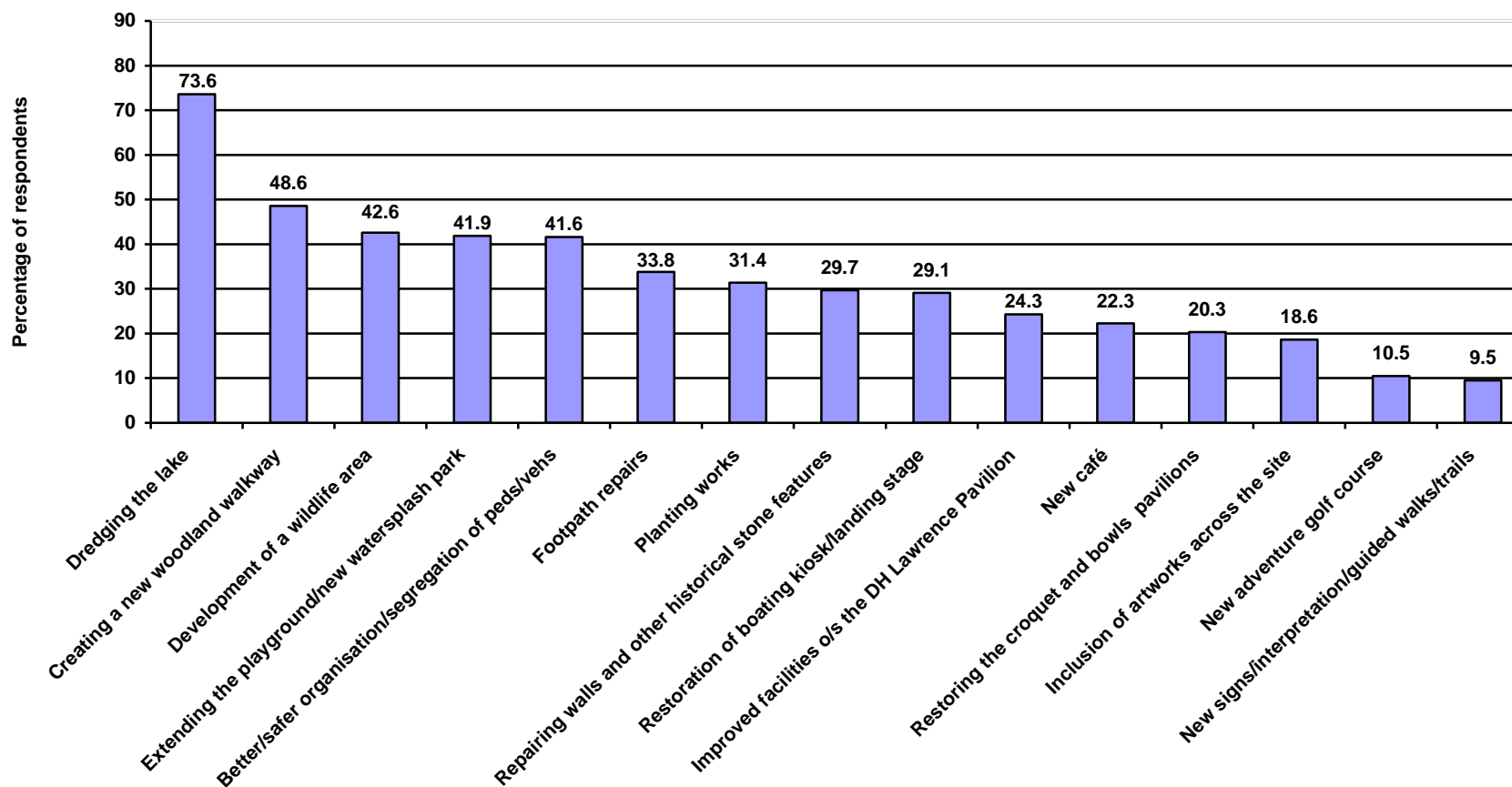


Figure 2 shows the percentage of all respondents citing an improvement as one of the top five priorities for the site to encourage them to visit more often or stay longer. Dredging the lake was clearly the most important priority with 73.6% of respondents ranking it between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Creating a new woodland walkway, the development of a wildlife area, extending the playground with a water splash park to replace the former paddling pool and better and safer organisation and segregation of pedestrians and vehicles / parking spaces followed as the next most important priorities. In terms of the first priority, dredging the lake was again clearly the most important (37.8% of respondents) followed by better and safer organisation of pedestrians and vehicles/parking spaces (11.8%). Footpath repairs were also in the top 5 for the first priority (9.1% of respondents).

A number of conclusions can be drawn from these survey results:

- Whilst the frequency of visits to Highfields Park is high, most visitors stay for less than 2 hours and there is therefore potential to encourage longer visits as would be expected at such a destination site.
- Most visitors travel to the park by car and there is potential to attract new audiences via the tram once complete in late 2014.
- Most visitors' travel time to Highfields Park is less than 30 minutes, suggesting potential to attract more visitors from further afield.
- Figure 2 confirms that the park restoration proposals are those which will encourage visitors to visit more often and/or stay for longer.

N.B. No comparison has been made with the previous year's data for the above as only 15 on site interviews were carried out in 2011.

### **Park Facilities**

Highfields Park includes a range of facilities that mean it is classed as a Destination facility within the City Council's *Breathing Space* strategy. As such, it is expected to attract visitors from across the city and further afield and a 5km radius around the park is used for this hierarchy of space (compared to 1km for city parks, 800m for neighbourhood parks and 600m for local parks).

The park includes:

- The city's only lake with public boating during the summer and a boathouse;
- Putting green;
- Children's play area (significantly refurbished in 2012);
- Croquet lawns and two pavilions;
- Circular walks around the lake;
- Visitor attractions such as the Listed bridges, cascade, rhododendron collections;
- The adjacent Lakeside art gallery, theatre and cafe;
- The nearby University of Nottingham museum and cafe.

Following the restoration works, the park will include a high quality historic landscape as well as new visitor attractions such as an adventure golf course.

## **The Parks for People Programme**

Our restoration project for Highfields Park will aim to address all of the outcomes in the Parks for People programme, as set out below. This Activity Plan will focus in particular on those in bold:

- Heritage will be:
  - better managed
  - in better condition
  - **better interpreted and explained**
  - identified/recorded.
- People will have:
  - **developed skills**
  - **learnt about heritage**
  - **volunteered time.**
- Outcomes for communities:
  - your local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit
  - environmental impacts will be reduced
  - **more people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage.**

## **The Restoration Project**

The Highfields Park restoration project consists of:

- a) Restoring the park's heritage including the landscape, buildings and infrastructure and increasing maintenance including a new Head Gardener post to ensure it is managed sustainably in the future;
- b) Training and volunteering opportunities through the capital works, the Probation Service and through working with the community and University as laid out in the activities programme;
- c) Developing new community facilities and new Park Ranger and Volunteer Coordinator posts to engage the community about the park, its heritage, importance, enhanced events programme and business opportunities.

## **Objectives**

The objectives for this Activity Plan are:

- **Increase visitor satisfaction at Highfields Park.**



- **Encourage and support the use of Highfields Park by all sectors of the community.**
- **Welcome and support community involvement at Highfields Park.**
- **Ensure that park users feel welcome and safe at Highfields Park.**
- **Ensure that appropriate facilities are available for the public and marketed to users.**
- **Promote the park through site-based events in partnership with Lakeside and the University of Nottingham.**
- **Train staff and volunteers.**

### **Guiding Principles**

Visitors to Highfields Park seek a destination facility which is worthy of a 2-3 hour visit or more. To create this, the Activity Plan seeks to build on the park's existing strengths, namely:

- Its unique selling points in the city, such as the boating lake and putting / golf.
- The park's significant historic landscape.
- The adjacent facilities at the University of Nottingham, i.e. Lakeside and the museum.
- The park's location near a main gateway into the city and on the city boundary with Broxtowe.
- The future development of the tram and the creation of two new tram stops adjacent to the park under NET Phase Two.

### **Delivery Methods**

A range of activities will be planned for Highfields Park to ensure that as wide a range of audiences as possible are attracted to the park, ranging from traditional on-site interpretation and printed material, events and activities to modern interpretive methods and displays.

### **Implementation (including Partners)**

The principle person responsible for delivering this plan will be the new Park Ranger post, created during the development of the Stage Two bid. This officer will work closely with the following other staff and partners:

- NCC Restoration Project Manager;
- NCC Parks Development Officer;
- NCC Head Gardener (a new post to be filled at Stage Two onwards);
- Highfields User Group;
- Friends of University Park;
- Probation Service;
- Lakeside gallery and arts centre staff;
- Museum staff;

- University of Nottingham staff;
- University students;
- The wider community, including the Colwick Lifeguards and NCC Neighbourhood Development Officer.

## Aims

The table below sets out the aims of the Activity Plan, alongside the responsible person and the delivery method.

AIM	HOW?	WHO?
<b>Increase visitor satisfaction at Highfields Park</b>		
Increase the percentage of visitors that are “very satisfied” by 10% by summer 2017 (from 2012 baseline).	Restoration project Events and activities programme Staff presence on site	Project Manager Park Ranger, Lakeside Park Ranger, Head Gardener
Increase the frequency of visit by Highfields Park users by 5% by summer 2017 (from 2012 baseline)	Restoration project Events and activities programme	Project Manager Park Ranger, Lakeside
Increase the average length of stay at Highfields Park by 20% by summer 2017 (from 2012 baseline)	Restoration Project Events and activities programme On-site interpretation & information	Project Manager Park Ranger, Lakeside Project Manager, Park Ranger, Lakeside
<b>Encourage and support the use of Highfields Park by all sectors of the community.</b>		
Increase visitor numbers at Highfields Park by 10% by summer 2017 (from 2014 baseline)	Restoration project Events and activities programme	Project Manager Park Ranger, Lakeside
Increase number of park users who have not visited the site before by 10% (from 2012 baseline)	Promote travel to park by tram Events and activities programme	Park Ranger, Parks Development Officer Park Ranger, Lakeside
Engage local community groups (including those in Broxtowe Borough) in the park’s restoration and future development	Consultation events User groups Restoration project Events and activities programme	Parks Development Officer, Park Ranger Broxtowe Borough Council
Provide training for Highfields Park volunteers	Volunteer training for conservation activities, event leadership and event management	Park Ranger

<b>Welcome and support community involvement at Highfields Park.</b>		
Increase volunteering at Highfields Park by 20% by summer 2017 (from 2012 baseline)	<p>Work with partners to promote Highfields Park as a site for volunteer work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up 1 regular Volunteer Session per month.</li> <li>• Offer 12 ad hoc volunteering opportunities per year.</li> <li>• Engage with 350 volunteers per year.</li> <li>• Deliver 700 volunteer hours per year (at 5hrs per day = 140 days = £21,000)</li> <li>• Run 12 Junior Ranger Sessions per year.</li> <li>• Set up a Volunteer Database.</li> <li>• Publish all volunteering Opportunities 3 times per year.</li> </ul>	<p>Park Ranger University of Nottingham Probation Service Businesses Other local groups</p>
Provide a quarterly opportunity for the community to feed back about the park	Highfields User Group	<p>Park Ranger, Parks Development Officer Highfields User Group Friends of University Park</p>
Develop and support a social enterprise at Highfields Park	Operation of the boating lake and adventure golf by a voluntary organisation	<p>Parks Development Officer Colwick Lifeguards</p>
Engage the community in the development of Highfields Park information / interpretation proposals	<p>Historical research Use of archived materials Reminiscence workshops Design of on- and off-site information On-site displays at Lakeside / Museum</p>	<p>Park Ranger, Parks Development Officer, Lakeside</p>
<b>Ensure that park users feel welcome and safe at Highfields Park.</b>		
Provide a staff presence on site for at least 5 hours a day, 5 days a week	Staff presence on site	<p>Park Ranger, Head Gardener, Gardeners</p>
Provide welcoming site entrances to the park	Restoration project	<p>Project Manager</p>
Provide appropriate on- and off-site information about Highfields Park and links to relevant partner information	<p>Website Social media On-site signage, interpretation and information</p>	<p>Parks Development Officer, Park Ranger</p>
Ensure that visitors are aware how to report site	Information available on and off site	<p>Park Ranger, Lakeside</p>

issues	Partnership working with Lakeside to act as a park information source	
<b>Ensure that appropriate facilities are available for the public and marketed to users.</b>		
Provide a high quality seasonal boating and golf offer at Highfields park	Restoration project Partnership working with voluntary organisation to	Project Manager Parks Development Officer, Park Ranger
Ensure that the Lakeside offer is closely linked to Highfields Park where possible.	Lakeside as a park information point Shared events and activities Joined-up offers	Park Ranger, Lakeside
Provide a high quality, destination play offer at Highfields Park	Restoration project	Project Manager
<b>Promote the park through site-based events in partnership with Lakeside and the University of Nottingham.</b>		
Provide a year-round events programme at Highfields Park that includes a range of events for all sectors of the community	Annual indoor and outdoor events programme at a range of scales	Park Ranger Lakeside University of Nottingham
<b>Train staff and volunteers</b>		
The Local Education Partnership (LEP) will be responsible for managing the delivery of the capital elements of the project. The LEP provides opportunities for local people and apprentices via a programme to train and skill individuals. This will provide a legacy of appropriate skills training in heritage restoration work.	Linked to the City Council Employer Hub, targets for the number of people to be trained will be formalised in contracts for the capital works.	Local Education Partnership Project Manager
Training opportunities for Probation Service	Projects such as creating new woodland paths and reconstructing the Tottle Brook bridges will be carried out by the Probation Service with materials and designs supplied by the restoration funding. These projects and the ongoing park maintenance	Head Gardener Park Ranger Probation Service

	will provide opportunities for up-skilling individuals on probation, not only around horticulture and woodland management but also around wider flora and tree heritage.	
Training for volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support 20 Work Placements.</li> <li>• Support 5 Work Experience Students.</li> <li>• Deliver 6 skills workshops per year.</li> </ul>	Park Ranger Volunteer Coordinator
NCC Staff Training	On- and off-site training opportunities	Park Ranger Head Gardener Parks Development Officer

### **Implementation**

The methods proposed to deliver the targets in the table above are explained in further detail below:

- Restoration project: the approximately £4m project to restore the park will provide a high quality landscape for visitors to enjoy as well as refreshed or improved facilities such as an extension to the children's play area.
- Events and activities programme: major events such as the Chinese New Year and Children's Festival will be guaranteed to take place for 3 years thanks to the project, however it is important that these are supported by other scale events all year round. For example, the Park Ranger will develop a series of park-based events in line with other events at City parks. These may include events such as mini-beast hunts, pond-dipping and Forest schools. During autumn and winter, the on-site buildings such as the restored pavilions or Lakeside will allow indoor classes and sessions to take place.
- Staff presence on site: the restoration project includes the creation of both a Park Ranger and Head Gardener post for the site. Both of these roles will be site based and will provide an increased staff presence to both deal with queries and issues, as well as an increased perception of safety.
- On-site interpretation & information: the Project Manager will work with other colleagues and partners to design on-site information at the park, which could take the form of traditional interpretation panels and signage and/or QR codes or apps to allow users to interact with and learn about the park via mobile technologies.
- Promote travel to park by tram: the Parks Development Officer will work with the NET team to market the new tram stops on University Boulevard as a gateway to Highfields Park. In particular,
- Consultation events: consultation on the restoration proposals took place in 2012 to ensure that the restored park will meet the community's needs. This will continue throughout 2014 to 'consensus check' the plans and then information provision during the 2015 works will be essential to keep people informed about the project – including both on-site signage and off-site web information and newsletters.
- User groups: the Highfields User Group is the key community group involved in the project, whilst the Friends of University Park will also be a critical consultation group. Other relevant local user groups will also be involved.

- Volunteer training: in addition to putting key work into the project on the ground, volunteers managed by the Park Ranger will be offered training opportunities relating to their involvement in the park. This may include hands-on conservation work or event organisation and management.
- Historical research / Use of archived materials / Reminiscence workshops: in order to develop the on- and off-site information provision for Highfields Park, historical research will need to be undertaken to inform this work. An opportunity to work in partnership with the Museum and University of Nottingham will be explored, in particular the proposed Past Lives project. This research may also present opportunities for temporary displays about the park and its history at Lakeside or the Museum.
- On-site displays at Lakeside / Museum: as mentioned above, the restoration project presents an ideal opportunity to hold displays about the park at the adjacent venues. These could focus on a number of different themes such as the park's history, design, importance, geology, features such as the Maid Marian as well as restoration project itself.
- Website / Social media: Highfields Park will require a stronger web presence in the future to ensure that the restoration is thoroughly communicated to the general public and that the restored park is promoted as a destination venue for both City residents and visitors from further afield. The site works and future events and activities will be promoted online, including through social media, to ensure a wide web presence.
- Partnership working with Lakeside to act as a park information source: the Parks Development Officer and Park Ranger will work closely with partners at Lakeside to ensure that the facility has the necessary information to act as a park information source as and when required – for example, this could include park information leaflets/displays, events timetables or self-led walks around the site.

### **Monitoring**

Many of the targets above will be measured against baseline data:

- 2012 and 2013 GreenSTAT surveys
- 2014 visitor counts

An annual park user (and non-user) survey will continue to be carried out, based on the GreenSTAT questionnaire used in previous years. This will provide the data for the Activity Plan aims monitoring.