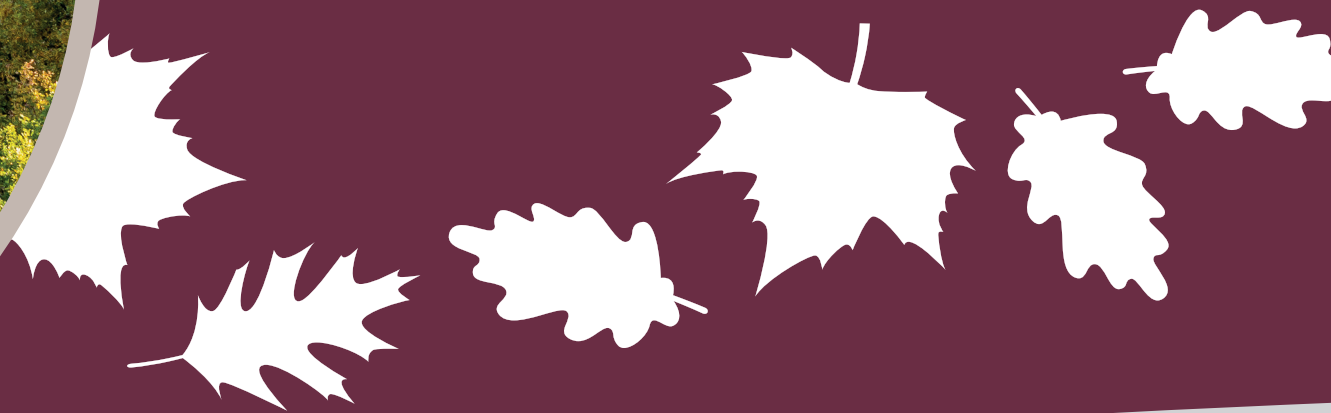




Wepre Park Management Plan

2022 - 2027



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Green and wild spaces give people respite and opportunities to breathe freely

Part One

1.1 Introduction

Wepre Park is one of Flintshire's finest parks and contains some of the most beautiful, culturally rich park land in the region, important to thousands of visitors each year. Greenspaces have seldom been higher in the public and political consciousness. Green and wild spaces give people respite and opportunities to breathe freely. However they have also been placed under great pressure, and sadly abused by some. We must - through Management Plans and the actions that flow from them

- enable visitors to have world-class experiences while ensuring the special qualities we seek to protect are not damaged. The interests of local communities, businesses and land managers must also be at the forefront of our minds. Balancing these interests and priorities requires genuinely collaborative approaches, and this plan has been developed with key stakeholders and the Friends of Wepre Park and staff from Flintshire County Council's Access & Natural Environment Service.



1.2 Context of the Plan

The purpose of this Management Plan is to present a management framework and associated actions for the successful collaborative management and development of Wepre Park.

This revised Management Plan for Wepre Park supersedes the 2016-21 plan and sets the strategic direction for the park in line with current policy and legislation



1.3 Policy Setting

There are a number of National and local plans, policies and strategies which highlight the importance of green space, green infrastructure and recreational areas and seek to both protect and enhance them. The work at Wepre Park is supported by the following;

National;

The Environment (Wales) Act (2016) - Improves and protects the environment in Wales including a duty on Local Authorities to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and to promote the resilience of ecosystems in terms of their diversity, condition and connectivity.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) places a duty on public bodies to ensure sustainable development and sets out seven well-being goals which Local Authorities must achieve. Protecting and enhancing Flintshire's Green spaces and infrastructure, including Wepre Park makes a significant contribution towards achieving these goals.

Future Wales -- The National Plan (2040) - The protection and enhancement of green spaces is a fundamental principle of strategic place making which is reflected in the requirement in Future Wales.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW11) sets out the land use planning policies and includes a range of policies to maintain and enhance biodiversity, promote the resilience of ecosystems and to maximise the provision of green infrastructure. PPW11 states that recreational spaces are vital for our health, well-being and contribute to our quality of life.

Local;

Flintshire Local Development Plan 2015 - 2030 (LDP) is the planning framework for the County, it sets the direction for new development and safeguards green infrastructure and recreational spaces such as Wepre Park. Strategic Policy STR13 Natural and Built Environment, Green Networks and infrastructure from the LDP seeks to;

- Promote opportunities to enhance biodiversity and ensure resilience;
- Maintain, enhance, and contribute to green infrastructure;
- Create and protect green spaces and open space / play environments that encourage and support good health, well-being, and equality
- Protect playing fields and open space from development



1.3 Policy Setting *(continued...)*

The **Council Plan 2023-2028** sets out the priorities for Flintshire. The Green Society and Environment theme seeks to;

- Enhance and increase biodiversity and trees to deliver multiple benefits for people, wildlife and the environment.
- The promotion, good management and protection of our green spaces to deliver multiple benefits to the environment and our residents and visitors.

The Wepre Management plan will play a significant role in achieving these Council priorities.

A **Green space Framework Strategy for Flintshire (2013)** has been developed to maintain, promote and enhance publicly accessible green spaces in Flintshire such as Wepre Park.

Urban Tree & Woodland Plan (2018-2033) Flintshire Council have developed a fifteen year plan to increase urban canopy cover from 14.5% to 18% or more by 2033. Woodland at Wepre Park is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its sessile oak woodland.

Flintshire Play Sufficiency Assessment (2022) The aim of this study is to identify barriers that prevent children from accessing their right to play.

Wepre Park is one of Flintshire's finest parks and contains some of the most beautiful, culturally rich park land in the region

Woodland at Wepre Park is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest





1.4 Community Involvement

The Friends of Wepre Park

The Friends of Wepre Park are an active community group who have been in existence for approx. 10 years. The group are keen to take an active interest in many aspects of the parks management and development. From practical tasks around the park to fundraising the group are a valuable resource.

Aims and objectives of the Friends:

- To encourage local people and users of Wepre Park to become Friends.
- To work in partnership with Countryside Team and the Local Authority, and any of their representatives, towards securing funding for the Park.
- To provide a forum for consultation and discussion between the park management, and residents and park users.
- To develop the Friends further to improve funding and increase / improve facilities in the park, working in cooperation with the park management.

The Friends also have an important role in the reviewing, monitoring and updating of the management and maintenance plan. As part of our stakeholder group, they will be involved in reviewing and shaping the plan to ensure it meets the community's needs.



This is an invaluable resource and has a significant contribution to the sites management and maintenance

1.4 Community Involvement

(continued...)

The Wepre Park Stakeholder Group

The Wepre Park Stakeholder Group brings together key organisations and businesses that are involved in arranging events and activities at Wepre Park at bimonthly meetings. The group plays an important role in sharing information, discussing and resolving issues / potential conflicts and joint working. The group membership includes representatives from Flintshire County Council, Flintshire Councillors, FC Nomads Football Club, Connah's Quay Angling Club, Friends of Wepre Park, Old Hall Café and Wepre Parkrun.

Volunteering

The site currently provides community groups and individuals an opportunity for volunteering. This is an invaluable resource and has a significant contribution to the sites management and maintenance. Currently contributing to an additional c.240 days per year, equating to £12,000 of benefit.



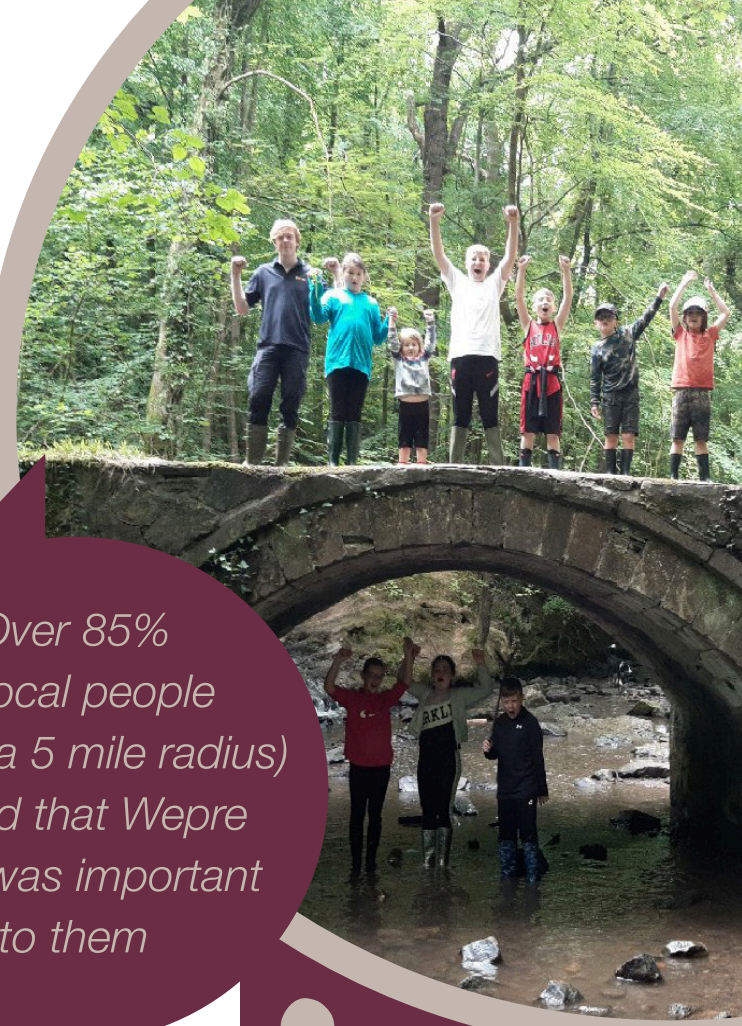
1.5 Consultation Summary

Over the summer of 2021 a public consultation was undertaken to inform the development of the Wepre Park management plan. It showed the importance of the park to local people with over 85% of those responding living within a 5 mile radius. It also clearly demonstrated the contribution the park makes to the health and well-being of the local community through regular outdoor activity with over 50% of people using the park at least once a week. Unsurprisingly walking was the most popular activity undertaken at the park.

The survey found that a high proportion of people ranked the current management of the Park as a multifunctional facility which is safe, clean and able to be enjoyed by everyone, with the special wildlife qualities protected, enhanced and maintained and its heritage is protected, conserved and celebrated as excellent or good. Less than half of respondents felt that the Park performed excellent / good in raising public awareness about the special features of the site, enriched through events, education and interpretation, which is perhaps an area that could be improved in the future.

When asked about people's vision of what they would like to see in ten years' time many noted that they liked the Park as it is and would not like to see any significant changes. Amongst the possible improvements suggested were improving access for disabled users, particularly to Ewloe castle and improvements to disabled car parking. The need for more bins were highlighted and a dog poo bin in the castle area. Tackling anti-social behaviour, together with an increased staff presence and police patrols and improved security were raised. Concerns were noted about increased visitor pressure and path erosion. Improvements for wildlife were suggested, as was improved paths for walks on the further side of the river, a bike pump track, development of the play area, an outdoor splash zone / pool and keeping public access to the Rosie.

Over 85% of local people (within a 5 mile radius) stated that Wepre Park was important to them



1.5 Consultation Summary *(continued...)*

In terms of shorter term improvements seats, better toilets, bins, zip wire/ go ape and CCTV were noted. Other comments received included outdoor cinema, forest school activities for schools, more parking, high ropes, petting zoo, camping at specific times, a seasonal market, path on the further side of the river, better play area, secure area for dog exercise, summer pool, bike trail, running track around the football pitches and a sculpture trail.

The consultation asked for people's views on how the park could secure resources towards its management. The most frequent response was to introduce car parking charges. Other suggestions made were a donation scheme, events including dog walks, runs, treasure hunts, santa walks, car boot sales, cyclo cross, farmers market, business sponsorship, crowd funding to buy land, sponsor a tree/bench, selling wood, gift shop, café improvements, raffle, hiring the fields for events, chargeable education events, celebrity ambassadors, festivals and children's parties. Comments were received that the park should be sufficiently resourced publically and that charges should not be introduced. Others

noted that if car parking charges were imposed a local permit should be introduced.

Climate change is a global challenge which requires local action. People felt that the park could make a positive contribution towards the issue through the planting of trees, a refill water bottle station at the visitor centre, electric car charging points, getting rid of parking, introducing car parking charges, using electric vehicles, stopping the use of plastic, increasing recycling facilities, expanding the park through land purchase, increasing people's awareness, renewable energy generation through solar panels and hydroelectric, increasing the frequency of public transport and cycle links, composting toilet and aim to be carbon neutral.

When asked to rank potential future work areas in terms of their priority people ranked wildlife protection as being the most important followed by path maintenance and community involvement / education. Events and formal sports ranked the lowest.



Part Two

2.1 Vision for the Management Plan

The Wepre Park management plan will present a park that is welcoming, valued and enjoyed whilst protecting its heritage and allowing the wildlife of the site to flourish, whilst contributing towards the county's climate change strategy.

The plan will promote activity which enhances peoples understanding of Wepre Park and create a resource which is valued by the local community and attracts people from the communities living and working around the park making a positive contribution to their physical and mental health and wellbeing as well as attracting visitors from across the region.



Wepre Park management plan will present a park that is welcoming, valued and enjoyed whilst protecting its heritage and allowing the wildlife of the site to flourish

We aim to ensure the special wildlife qualities are protected, enhanced and maintained



2.2 Strategic Aims & Objectives

Protect our natural environment

We aim to ensure the special wildlife qualities are protected, enhanced and maintained and that we balance the needs of the environment with that of the public.

- Work towards SAC/SSSI favourable status through the Sect.16 Management agreement and deliver woodland management plan in partnership with Natural Resources Wales.
- Support Flintshire's Climate change and carbon reduction strategy by becoming net carbon zero by 2030
- Contribute to Flintshire's target to achieve biodiversity net gain.

Value our heritage

We aim to protect, conserve and celebrate the rich heritage of Wepre Park.

- Work in partnership with Cadw to safeguard Ewloe Castle
- Maintain Old Hall Garden improvements
- Raise awareness of the unique historic features of the site

Supporting recreation and access

We aim to be a multifunctional facility which is safe, clean and able to be enjoyed by everyone.

- Maintain Green Flag status

- Ensure access is free from obstructions and work towards improving standards across the site
- Supporting access for all

Benefit for people


Using Wepre Park's natural assets we aim to provide quality leisure, health and well-being and educational experiences for all.

- Raise public awareness of the important natural and cultural heritage of the site through a rich variety of events, education, and interpretation
- Maximise community involvement through working with the Friends and other volunteers and community groups
- Contribute to the green health initiative by providing a facility of choice for people to use to improve their mental and physical health and wellbeing

Resource confidence

We aim to provide a stable financial footing to achieve the vision.

- Raise income over and above Flintshire core budget
- Maintain appropriate staffing level to deliver the plan



We aim to protect, conserve and celebrate the rich heritage of Wepre Park

2.3 Table of Action for Change

| AIM | ACTION | LEAD | TARGET COMPLETION |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------------|
| Protect our Natural Environment | Phase 2 extension tree planting. | TL | Mar 2024 |
| | Renew the Management Agreement with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to deliver positive improvements to the Special Site of Scientific Interest. | ANEM | April 2023 |
| | Develop and agree new woodland plan with NRW whilst tackling ash dieback. | WO | June 2023 |
| | Complete pilot Hydro-Electric project at the dam, test and evaluate. | Energy Team | Feb 2023 |
| | Establish maintenance regime for phase 1 extension area and old golf course. | CR | June 2023 |
| | Wepre Brook bank stabilisation. | CR | Sept 2023 |

| AIM | ACTION | LEAD | TARGET COMPLETION |
|--------------------|---|-------|-------------------|
| Value our heritage | Work in partnership with Cadw to maintain and protect Ewloe Castle. | TL | Ongoing |
| | Repair Old Hall Garden wall and path repairs. | CR | June 2025 |
| | Re-instate the grills for the arches. | CR | July 2023 |
| | Establish a working fountain. | CR | 2023 |
| | Work with the Friends of Wepre Park to establish a Garden Maintenance Fund. | TL/CR | 2024 |

| AIM | ACTION | LEAD | TARGET COMPLETION |
|----------------------------------|---|------|-------------------|
| Supporting recreation and access | Secure Greenflag award. | CR | Annual |
| | Path improvement project/main trail and new golf course path. | CR | 2026 |
| | Step replacement project – waterfall and castle steps. | CR | 2024 |
| | Parkrun waymarking. | SL | 2023 |
| | Modernise the orienteering course and maps. | CR | 2024 |
| | Review the provision of benches in the park to identify gaps. | CR | 2025 |

| AIM | ACTION | LEAD | TARGET COMPLETION |
|--------------------|--|----------------|-------------------|
| Benefit for people | Agree fishing lease. | V&E/CQ Anglers | Mar 2023 |
| | Volunteer development project. | TL | Sept 2023 |
| | Develop a programme of large events through external providers. | CAO | Jul 2023 |
| | Changing Places toilet facilities. | TL | Mar 2023 |
| | Signage review and consolidation. | CAO | Apr 2023 |
| | Establish a formal waymarked trail network and tree booklet. | CR/Tree Team | Mar 2023 |
| | Investigate resources for park app development, to incorporate route maps of varying difficulties. | CAO | 2023 |
| | Install visitor counter across the park. | TL | Apr 2024 |
| | Review education provision in light of the new curriculum. | CAO | Sept 2023 |
| | Explore a programme of Nordic walking with Aura. | TL | 2025 |
| | Stakeholder terms of reference. | TL | Apr 2023 |
| | Liaise with the Police, CCTV and other partners to manage anti-social behaviour in the Park. | CR | Dec 2023 |

| AIM | ACTION | LEAD | TARGET COMPLETION |
|---------------------|--|-----------|-------------------|
| Resource confidence | Explore street food vendors. | CAO | Mar 2023 |
| | Pilot motorhomes overnight. | TL | Mar 2023 |
| | Explore the potential for the introduction of car parking | ANEM/SS&T | June 2023 |
| | Finalise Café lease. | CAO | Dec 2022 |
| | Define additional hire and fee opportunities eg education area and firewood. | CAO | Sept 2023 |
| | Explore and implement QR code donation opportunities throughout the park. | TL | June 2023 |
| | Run a charitable fun run to support the plan actions. | CR | 2024 |
| | Investigate the potential of memorial donations to fund park infrastructure / management | ANEM | 2024 |