



Radipole Park and Gardens project

End-of-Project Evaluation Report



This project was delivered by Weymouth Town Council,



with funding and support from:



This evaluation was commissioned by Weymouth Town Council and has been researched and written by Heritage Insider. Report completed August 2024.

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Front cover image: Local residents enjoying the project celebration event in the new Sensory Garden created by the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens. © Heritage Insider



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Executive summary

Radipole Park and Gardens ('the Park and Gardens') were built in the 1930s on land reclaimed from the tidal estuary at the mouth of the River Wey. Whilst Radipole Park and Gardens are among the youngest in Weymouth, their hidden heritage stretches back as far as the invading Romans. This green space is an important community asset, just a few minutes' walk from the town centre and densely populated areas. Yet the Park and Gardens had been on a gradual decline.

Weymouth Town Council's Parks Department, with the support of the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens, were awarded a major grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards a £1.6m project to rejuvenate and improve the Park and Gardens. The Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens were instrumental in developing the concept for the project and in its delivery.

This project has been successful in realising a 15-year community aspiration and has completely transformed this vital community green space. This has been effective in halting the rapid decline of the Park's condition; restoring the physical fabric to create a new chapter in the history of Radipole Park and Gardens for future generations.

The project has helped to make Radipole Park and Gardens:

Heritage visible – alongside a programme of capital works, an interpretation scheme has helped to bring heritage to the fore – adding to local sense-of-place

Welcoming – New entrance and orientation hubs have helped to make the space more welcoming – signposting places to explore, and the many activities to enjoy in the park

Relevant and attractive – renovated and new sporting areas, a new play facility and nature trail, kiosk and planting throughout have all helped to make Radipole Park and Gardens a place which local residents say they now want to spend time in.

A social space – the addition of the kiosk, seating and overall improvements have made this a space that locals can meet with friends, relatives and neighbours – this will contribute towards reducing social isolation and increasing a feel of community

More accessible – an improved network of pathways and the Sensory Garden a particularly important addition for improving the offer for those with specific access needs, physical or sensory disabilities

A place for more and a wider range of people - an activity programme complemented the capital programme and has also been effective at maintaining engagement with the space and its heritage throughout the build and landscaping processes, and in providing a curated introduction to the Park and Gardens for target audiences.

Early results show that local people feel the improvements have made a significant positive difference to their community. The project is leaving Radipole Park and Gardens in hugely improved condition, its heritage better identified, and with a dedicated cadre of local people who care for and advocate for the space.

This important local heritage asset is now much more fit-for-purpose and will serve its community for many years to come. The challenge for the future is to maintain the quality which has been put in place, and to add to the offer to ensure Radipole Park and Gardens stays relevant and accessible to all.

1. Background

1.1 Radipole Park and Gardens

Radipole Park and Gardens (“the Park and Gardens”) were originally part of a wide tidal estuary at the mouth of the River Wey, known as The Backwater. Here invading Romans once sailed through the river in their galleys, forming a settlement and port in Radipole Village.

In more recent times, Victorian gentry could be seen rowing upstream to visit the old teahouse in Radipole village and the extensive reed beds provided thatching material for many of Dorset’s traditional cottages.

Radipole Park and Gardens were built as part of a scheme to alleviate local unemployment through land reclamation from The Backwater. The new scheme was identified in 1926: the infilling of marshy ground between the new road and the railway embankment to create playing fields, sports grounds and recreation grounds.

Milner Son & White, landscape architects, were employed by Weymouth Council to design a new landscape scheme, with the first phase of gardens complete in 1932. By 1934 tennis courts had been created with plans for a second phase of development on the horizon.

The Park and Gardens only realised part of the imagined scheme but became a valuable community asset. It remains remarkably intact with its original boundaries, sports facilities, structural tree planting and some of the originally designed internal and external views.

Later it had a part to play in World War II when it was requisitioned by British Southern Command. Later in the build-up to the D-Day invasion that departed from Weymouth & Portland, the play park was requisitioned for the US army to store supplies. Some of the older residents recollect rummaging for tins of food dumped by departing American troops.

Whilst Radipole Park and Gardens are among the youngest in Weymouth, their hidden heritage stretches back as far as the invading Romans. This green space also has a story to tell of the people who have visited and enjoyed this urban oasis over the past decades, and their own attachment to it. This history is important to preserve and celebrate, especially as most of the physical clues to the heritage and history have disappeared.



Figure 1 Historic postcard of Radipole Gardens

1.2 A community asset

The Park and Gardens border the village of Radipole and are situated within easy walking distance to the north of Weymouth town centre and to the west of Melcombe Regis. The narrow, linear site is aligned north/south and bound by a main road, Radipole Park Drive and the main London/Weymouth railway.

Radipole Park and Gardens form an important green space in the centre of Weymouth, which has provided services to the local community for nearly a hundred years. It provides much needed recreation and outdoor space in a very densely populated area. Not only is it important to the heritage of Weymouth but it is also a gateway to the town centre.

As a result, it has a wide and diverse catchment, accessible to residents from five urban districts, including 3 Super Output Areas in the top 10% most deprived areas in England, all of which suffer from lack of suitable open space provision in terms of quality and quantity.

Pre-project, the facilities within the Park and Gardens included ornamental gardens, tennis and basketball courts, a play area, a multi-use games area (MUGA), a small skate park, community orchard and a playing field together with expanses of green space used for recreation. Current infrastructure and facilities were tired, in need of repair and therefore underused. Pathways had become inaccessible due to encroaching tree roots and the damp conditions of the gardens; meaning that it was unusable for significant periods of the year. The montage on the following page shows how dilapidated and out-dated the Park had become pre-project.

Despite an evidenced need, there was no structured programme of activity to engage and involve audiences. Similarly, although clear interest in volunteering and supporting the park in the future exists, the lack of management, training and support structure hindered the opportunities for volunteer engagement.

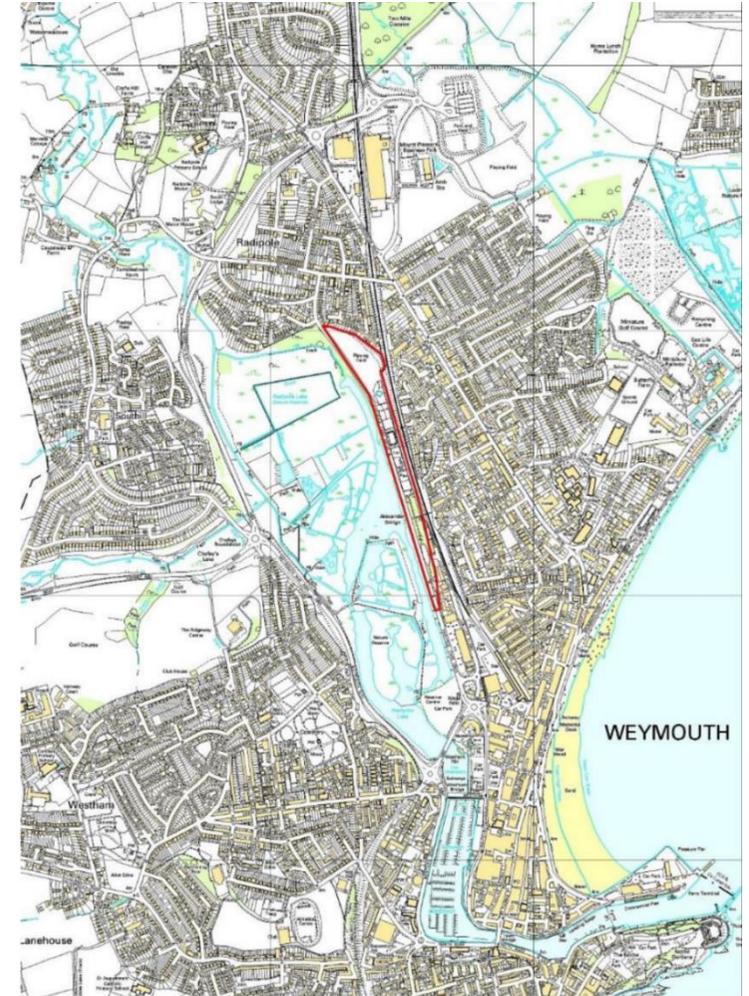


Figure 2 Map showing the location of Radipole Park and Gardens relative to Weymouth town centre and areas of population

Radipole Park and Gardens pre-project



1.3 The project

Over 15 years ago, the Friends of Radipole Park group was formed to work alongside the Council's Parks Department with the intention of improving Radipole Park. During this time a 'wish list' of site improvements was compiled.

However, it soon became clear that without financial support, these aspirations would be undeliverable due to the magnitude of the work, which was too vast to be addressed from either the Parks Department budget or general fund raising.

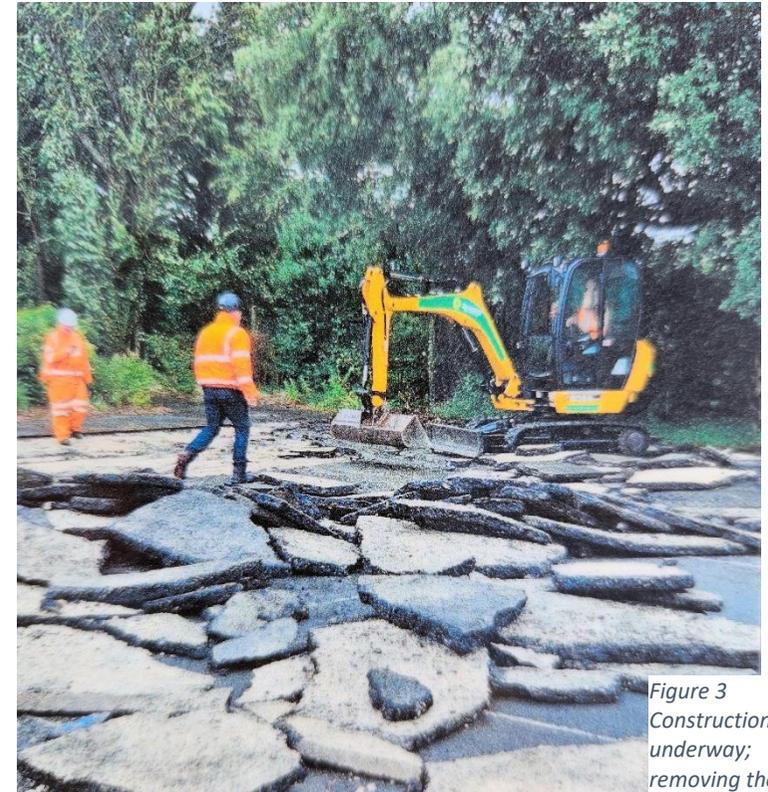
In 2017, Weymouth Town Council's Parks Department, with the support of the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens, applied to the National Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to draw-up plans to renovate and improve Radipole Park and Gardens.

The application was successful and £78,000 was granted to prepare further, more detailed plans for a Stage 2 application. A Parks Development Officer and a Project Manager worked alongside the Friends of Radipole Park to find out what people valued about Radipole Park, how they engaged with it and what improvements and additions they wanted to see.

The planning process added further detail to the list of areas for improvement in the Park and Gardens, and identified a real opportunity to increase interest and use of the park. If this project did not go ahead there was a real risk that momentum would be lost and support for the park and improving it for the future would likely fade away.

A project was designed to deliver a package of capital works which aimed to bring the green space into a good state of repair and make it more accessible and fit for the future, whilst an accompanying activity programme aimed to engage local people with heritage and get more people using and benefitting from the space.

'It's always been run down and we appreciate the investment.' Local resident



*Figure 3
Construction works
underway;
removing the old
tarmac from one
of the courts.
Photo courtesy of
the Friends of
Radipole Park and
Gardens*

2. Methodology

2.1 Why evaluate?

Both monitoring and evaluation are part of the Big Lottery funding requirements. They can be used to demonstrate what the project delivered, what difference it made and to gather lessons learnt to inform future projects and programmes.

Heritage Insider was appointed partway through delivery to support this aspect of the project.



2.2 What does this evaluation process seek to find out?

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) help to define the scope of the evaluation, guide the data collection and frame the final report. The Project Manager and Heritage Insider used these questions to assess the overall success of the project during the end of project evaluation. Below are the agreed Key Evaluation Questions for the project¹:

Project delivery

1. Has the project achieved its intended outputs and outcomes? [See Section 4](#)
2. What has worked well and why? [See Section 5](#)
3. What was challenging and what could have been improved? [See Section 5](#)

Outcomes achieved

¹ Adapted from those set out in the Radipole Park and Gardens Activity Plan, 2018.

4. How has the project enabled local communities to feel an increased connectivity to the heritage of the Parks? [See Section 4](#)
5. To what extent has the project helped focus investment on Radipole park and Gardens for the benefit of the local community? How have local people benefitted? [See Section 4](#)
6. Who is now using the Park, and how are they using it? How has this changed compared to pre-project usage? [See Section 4](#)
7. How has the project helped to increase the diversity of volunteers and capacity for volunteer support of the Radipole Park and Gardens? [See Section 4](#)

Legacy and ongoing benefits management

8. What are the longer-term impacts of the project likely to be, and is the project leaving behind a green space that is in better condition and better managed with facilities that benefit the community? [See Section 5](#)
9. What lessons have been learnt from the project that can be used to inform future capital investment and engagement projects and the management of greenspaces in Weymouth? [See Section 5](#)

2.3 How was the evaluation undertaken?

A range of data collected by the Project team has been drawn upon, in addition to independent data collected by the evaluator. This has allowed triangulation² of data to create a robust and rounded view of the project's journey, including what has been delivered (outputs) and what difference it has made (outcomes and impact). This approach also enabled investigation

² Triangulation is a technique which facilitates the validation of data with the use of multiple sources

into the extent to which the aims and objectives have been met, and the success of key project activities.

Data collection methods are listed below:

1. Review of original project plans and documents
2. Review of monitoring reports and data collected against outputs and Approved Purposes for the project
3. Event mini survey cards³ (see Appendix 2 for results) and visitor survey⁴, see Appendix 3 for summary of results
4. Event and activity leader self-reflection forms⁵, see Appendix 1 for template and list of events for which feedback was gathered
5. Key informant telephone interviews, see Appendix 1 for Interview Framework and list of interviewees⁶
6. Reflective practice Project Learning Review sessions with the Project Team⁷ and with the Friends of Radipole Park⁸, see Appendix 1 for question framework
7. Onsite visit⁹ to undertake professional review of finished facilities and observe visitors.

This evidence has been analysed and synthesized together. This has then been cross-referenced with the project's anticipated outputs and outcomes. The report also explores challenges the project encountered and the opportunities it created.

³ N=72

⁴ Original baseline survey undertaken during Development Stage. End-of-Project survey undertaken May-July 2024 N=54

⁵ N=8

⁶ N=6

2.4 Limitations

There are always factors which limit an evaluation. Evaluators work to minimise the impact of limitations and bias on the evaluation process and findings. Examples of limitations for the evaluation of this project are:

Resource for evaluation - The evaluation had only a small budget ring-fenced for evaluation. It was therefore important to focus evaluation efforts in a pragmatic way. For example, the sample size for telephone interviews had to be small compared with the length and reach of the project and onsite data collection limited.

'Back-ended' evaluation – The External Evaluator was not appointed until part-way through the project and was therefore not on-board for development or the first half of project delivery. Furthermore, no formal evaluation was undertaken before the External Evaluator was appointed. These factors combined limit the evaluator's visibility into the early parts of the project.

However, the impact of this on the completeness of the evaluation has been somewhat mitigated by the Project Manager providing additional information about the project delivery and how it adapted and changed – allowing this report to reflect how the project has evolved over-time and early activity. The final visitor survey also attracted responses from a range of people – 11% of whom considered themselves to have a disability or long-term illness and the

⁷ Virtual session facilitated by Kate Measures of Heritage Insider on 28th February 2024

⁸ In-person session undertaken by Wendy Read and Ben Heath on 9 May 2024, attended by Sue Hogben, Dave Cave and Stuart Rowland

⁹ 10 August 2024 during the official opening celebration event

3. Project delivery

3.1 Project management and governance

Weymouth Town Council had oversight of the project via the Consultation Group. This Group met at key design milestones to receive project updates, to review and formally approve plans. Membership of the Consultation Group was:

- Jane Biscombe (Town Clerk and Project Lead)
- Project Manager
- Project Activities Officer
- Tara Williams (Parks and Open Spaces Manager)
- Emily Brown (Parks and Open Spaces Supervisor)
- Mike Goulden (Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens or ‘the Friends’).

Upon approval of funding in 2020, Weymouth Town Council (‘the Council’) advertised and recruited a staff team to manage the project and procured a team of supporting consultants resulting in the following project team:

Weymouth Town Council:

- Project Lead – Jane Biscombe (Town Clerk)
- Project Manager – Crystal Johnson
- Activities Officer – Rosie Osborne

External companies:

- Building Architect – Crickmay Stark Architects – Rachel Osborne
- Landscape Architect - Aileen Shackell Landscape Design – Aileen Shackell

- Quantity Surveying - Peter Gunning & Partners – Ray Stevens
- Structural Engineer – Dencher Limited – Mike Dencher
- Principal Designer – Wills Design Partnership – Gareth Wills
- Drainage Consultant – GAP Ltd – James Watling.

The project was impacted by turnover in the staff team. The original Project Manager and Activities Officer left the project. When this happened, the decision was made to bring the management of the project within the Parks and Open Spaces team of the Council. Ben Heath took over as Project Manager from February 2022, and Wendy Read as Project Activities Officer from June 2023 – June 2024.

It was initially anticipated that the main contract appointments would be made in Spring 2022, with a view to starting work on site in late Spring and the works on site being completed by the end of 2022, with full project completion by May 2023. This timeline proved to be unachievable; with the Covid-19 pandemic creating major challenges, [see further discussion in Section 3.4.](#)

This will result in the NLHF grant end date being moved to December 2024¹¹ to ensure the small number of works remaining to be delivered are fully completed.

Procurement for the main contractor was completed in September 2022. However, a major issue from the procurement exercise was all the tender submissions were a lot higher than the original project budget costings. This

¹¹ Still to be officially confirmed at time of writing

was due to very high inflation rates following the pandemic. Ground Control were chosen as the preferred contractor appointed as the main contractor.

3.2 Partnership working

As previously mentioned, Weymouth Town Council worked with the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens to secure funding and to realise the project. This is a group of people passionate about their local park who work together in a variety of ways. The group aims to make sure that their green space and its facilities are available to everyone.

The desire to obtain funding to make improvements was an ambition of the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens for more than 10 years and was the driver for the group forming.

'...without the Friends, there probably wouldn't have been a project and the Park would have continued to deteriorate.' Volunteer

The Friends were involved in all aspects of the project; including attendance at bi-weekly meetings to ensure they were aware of how the project was progressing and had opportunity to ask questions, and input to project development.

'At some point during the consultation stage of the project, it was recognised that communication between the council and the Friends needed to improve. Regular meetings were set up from then on in.' Volunteer

The volunteers have given a huge amount of time to the project, as well as their passion and expertise, [see Section 4, Outcome 8](#) for further details.

This partnership working approach has been vital to ensure local buy-in to the project and that it continues to respond to local need.

In addition to this key strategic partnership, the project formed a number of less formal delivery partnerships with organisations and businesses operating locally. The aim was to build strong partnerships and sustainable relationships offering volunteering/training opportunities, providing specialist advice and supporting the future management and maintenance of the site.



Figure 5 Members of the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens who helped to officially open the rejuvenated space at the celebration event on 10th August 2024.

There is already evidence that partnerships of this kind will extend post-project into the use of the new facilities, for example, in association with the Southern Counties Pétanque Association. The Friends of Radipole Park will also continue to be active in the promotion and care for the Park and Gardens, and the activity programme within it.

3.3 Resourcing

The Friends of Radipole Park submitted the first-round application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund as the lead applicant. The funder approved the Stage 1 application, however advised that Weymouth Town Council should take on the lead role for the Stage 2 development phase and full grant application and that this should be done by working closely with the Friends Group for all elements of the project. The subsequent Stage 2 application was successful, and the project was awarded £1,013,400 by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in June 2020. This was match funded, including by Weymouth Town Council, fundraising by the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens, and a significant contribution of volunteer time¹².

The original total project budget was £1.4m¹³. However, during delivery phase, the project budget increased due to a number of factors including the post-pandemic economic impact and inflation, and Brexit-related construction cost increases.

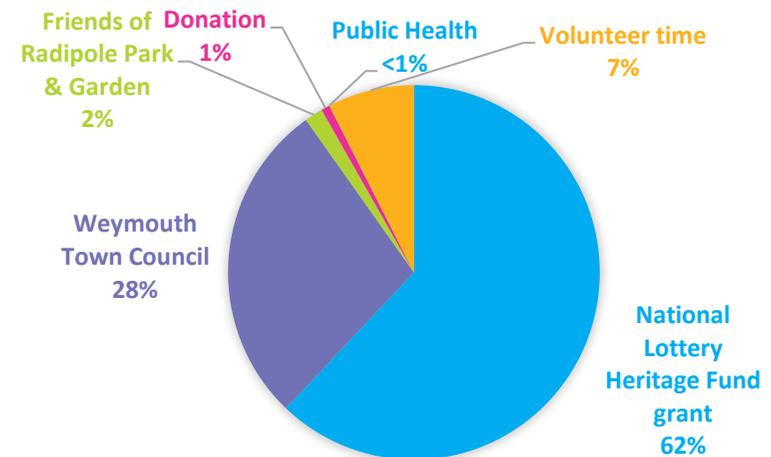
During the procurement process, Weymouth Town Council and the project team entered into discussions with the preferred capital contractor; Ground Control. Through this process, the team worked through the whole project

¹² Calculated using the National Lottery Heritage Fund standard

¹³ £1,441,401

scope to identify areas that could be value engineered or delivered in a different way to reduce the overall cost (see Section 3.4 for further details of the impact of this process on project delivery). This was done in liaison with the funder and with the context of ensuring the overall outcomes of the project were unaffected.

The original construction budget was £952,470, with the additional funding allocated and moving budget allocations from contingency, inflation and new staff the construction budget increased to £1,200,200. The final project cost was just over £1.6m¹⁴. A breakdown of project cost is provided in the pie chart below:



OVERVIEW OF PROJECT INCOME

Figure 6 Pie chart providing a percentage overview of cash income and equivalent time contributions to the project

¹⁴ £1,632,401

There were small increases in the overall budget available due to the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens increasing their funding target, and a donation to the Friends towards the cost of installing a path from the Park to neighbouring Coronation Road.

However, most of the necessary increases were made via £150,000 additional funding from Weymouth Town Council's Community Infrastructure Levy. Contingency and inflationary allocations in the original project budget were also released for spending, alongside some reallocations of spend from the 'new staff' budget line. These actions combined helped to close the funding gap.

3.4 What the project delivered

The project set out to redevelop and make improvements to Radipole Park and Gardens, to bring the heritage to the fore, and to ensure it is a valued resource for everyone in the local community.

In order to achieve this, a programme of capital works was developed alongside an events, activities and volunteering programme.

The capital works programme has been extensive and has included reimagining the sports facilities, path networks and play equipment, as well as adding new facilities including the installation of a new heritage kiosk, toilets and a sensory garden – the latter was funded and delivered by the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens, in collaboration with Weymouth Town Council.



Figure 7 Site works in progress - volunteers begin to plant out the new Sensory Garden whilst construction of the new kiosk continues behind them.

The project has delivered much needed improvements to the fabric of Radipole Park and Gardens, as well as facility upgrades. These are already in use by the community. The improvements included:

- New wooden play area
- A catering kiosk with person who runs it
- Improved paths around the park
- Two new tennis courts with the addition of Pickleball lines to allow both sports to be played on the same court
- A newly surfaced adult full-sized basketball court and a new MUGA with goals and basketball hoops (lower level hoops)
- A new car park with permeable surfacing to help drainage
- Two new external table tennis table installed
- A pétanque terrain installed
- A Sensory Garden
- New trees and planting to help increase biodiversity in the park¹⁵
- A new welcome, orientation and interpretation scheme.

Facilitating works were also undertaken to make the above possible, for example, the removal of a number of large poplar trees from the railway edge of the Park and Gardens where they had become too large for their location and caused damage to the sports courts.

¹⁵ Some planting is still to be undertaken at time of writing due to seasonality and delays caused by the capital works programme but are due for delivery in autumn/winter 2024



Figure 8 New site map showing the amenities and facilities the project has helped to reinstate or install

As previously mentioned, cost increases and programme delays did impact upon the content of the capital works scheme. The major changes to the scheme delivered compared to the original plans are:

- Additional drainage was originally proposed to be installed under an amenity grass area. This element of the project had to be removed due to increased costs and budget constraints. This also meant that the pipe to drain water from the site into Radipole Lake was also removed
- Due to increased costs and budget constraints the original café building had to be significantly reduced in size to a catering kiosk and decking area
- The storage provision for the Friends Group also had to be relocated to the decked area due to planning constraints
- Due to increased costs and budget constraints the path through the amenity grassed area could not be raised at all
- The play area was adapted and the proposed water play feature removed due to not having the budget, it was replaced with an additional piece of play equipment
- Due to increased costs and budget constraints the project was only able to reinstate two tennis courts out of an originally planned four.

There were also additions to the scheme, including:

- A proper path to be installed into the park from Coronation Road – made possible by a donation to the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens
- One of the two tennis courts which could not be reinstated had the tree roots removed and then capped with limestone dust to make it

usable, and the other court was left and the original tarmac surface has been used to install a new scooter track and games for young children, and picnic benches¹⁶



Figure 9 New games and scooter area for small children on one of the old tarmac tennis courts

¹⁶ Still to be installed at time of writing

Running alongside the construction works, the Activity Officer coordinated a programme of different activities to appeal to a wide range of ages and backgrounds.

Some of the activity programme was delayed due to the pandemic¹⁷, there not being an Activity Officer in post, adverse weather and construction delays.

However, a lively programme was delivered covering events, arts and crafts and sports activities and proved very popular with all the available spaces selling out quickly as soon as they were advertised.



Figure 10 Clay tile workshop for children

¹⁷ Including the in-person launch event



Figure 11 An example event planned run as part of the Activity Plan delivery.

4. What difference did the project make?

A full summary of all activity can be found in the project's quarterly report.

This section provides examples of how the project has delivered against each of its intended outcomes and evidence of the impact of these where it is available, as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund Strategic Funding Framework 2014-2019¹⁸.

The project was designed to deliver 10 out of a possible 11 National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes, arranged under the headings of outcomes for heritage, people and communities.

Outcomes for heritage

Outcome 1 and 2: Heritage is better managed and in better condition

Pre-project this community amenity was in a poor state of repair, with multiple issues concerning both the fabric of the Park, and its facilities. This was a significant issue for not only those using the site, but also for those managing it day-to-day.

The project has delivered a programme of capital works sympathetic to the context of the park ([see Section 3.4](#) for further details).

The project has therefore undoubtedly ensured that Radipole Park and Gardens is easier to manage – making it more efficient and cost-effective.

¹⁸ Superseded by the Strategic Funding Framework 2019-2024, and then latterly Heritage 2033

Post-project management has been taken into account in the design of the new amenities and facilities, and materials used. For example, new planting and layout schemes have been mindful of the ongoing management and maintenance requirements.

Radipole Park and Gardens continues to be managed by the Greenspaces team of Weymouth Town Council, in liaison with the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens. Weymouth Town Council's management plan for the park has been adapted to reflect the ongoing management of the new facilities and engagement with the community. The Greenspaces staff roles have been aligned to ensure these activities fit with the day-to-day management of the park.

The Council's Development Manager role was used to bring project management duties internally within the team (see Section 3.1 for further discussion of project resourcing). The post holder Ben Heath is now the Amenities Manager for Weymouth Town Council. He continues to have oversight of Radipole Park and Gardens and can therefore provide continuity. His new role also allows him to actively transfer lessons learnt and experience from this project to improvement projects for other green spaces in Weymouth.

The original plan was to retain a Parks and Open Spaces Development Officer post-project with clearly defined responsibility to support the future management of the park and ensure all activities are coherent and complimentary to the management master plan. However, through a staff

restructure the Greenspaces Development Officer post was removed. The Greenspaces department will continue to manage the whole park using various staff, this will also be supported by the Council's Community Development Officer, Events Officer and Project Officers.

Relationships with external organisations and groups will be consolidated post-project to create sustainable relationships that will support the delivery of the project outcomes. This includes embedding the Park and Gardens into the day-to-day work of organisations operating locally so that activity is supported through their own work programmes.

Key relationships, for example, with the RSPB who manage the neighbouring Radipole Lake site, will be managed by the Greenspaces Manager.

The new kiosk is being run by two local residents and will circulate money within the local economy. The kiosk is also providing a welcome amenity to visitors and will attract audiences. It is early days for the kiosk holder, but the refreshment venue can also provide a focal point for the delivery of activities programmes in the future and the holder is open to this.

It has not been possible to attain the coveted Green Flag award for the site during the funded project due to the delays to programme; however, this remains an aspiration for the key stakeholders and they continue to work together to achieve this. The application and renewal process will help to quality-assure and recognise the work to rejuvenate Radipole Park and Gardens.

Overall, the improved facilities, better interpretation, and the management of the site will ensure greater resilience for the future. Radipole Park and

Gardens is in a vastly better condition than it was at the outset of planning this project, and this will ensure it is easier and more efficient to manage in the future.



Figure 12 The new kiosk up-and-running and buzzing with customers at the celebration event

Outcome 3: Heritage is better interpreted and explained

A structured interpretation plan was created for Radipole Park and Gardens designed to integrate both welcome and orientation, and interpretative content into new high-quality installations at key entry and hub points. This was designed to be attractive and accessible to a wide audience base, and to covers both historic and environmental themes.

The scheme includes two timeline boards on the kiosk walls (see picture below), a nine-station nature trail with information discs and a trail sheet¹⁹ for families and four main park entrance maps and history panels at the main entrances. Panels are professionally designed, made of good quality



Figure 14 A group of visitors reading one of the new history interpretation panels for the first-time

materials and their design is in-keeping with the overall context of the Park and Gardens. The content is clear, attractively laid out and engaging for those observed using them, and who responded to the local resident survey.

Feedback from residents shows that the interpretation is helping to instil a sense of ownership and reinforce pride in the park, and in the local community, see Outcome 9 for further discussion.

The project also created other interpretation and ways to explore the green space. For example, the Planted Symphony Audio Trail was an interactive audio trail delivered by Activate Performing Arts over three days. Subpacs are a device which lets you feel the bass by immersing the body in low-frequency, high-fidelity physical sound, silent on the outside. These were available for d/Deaf and hard of hearing audiences.



Figure 13 Example of one of the trail discs which help people explore the nature within this revitalised community green space

¹⁹ Available at the refreshment kiosk

Outcome 4 and 5: Heritage is better identified and recorded, and people will have learnt about heritage

Pre-project there was no interpretation within Radipole Park and therefore visitors were largely unaware of its historic heritage or the special qualities of the natural environment.

The Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens have been busy researching the history of the site. Together they have compiled a catalogue of old photographs and images of the park which will be collated and material. Local memories of the park have also been collected. This work has been vital to inform the interpretation content but also formed part of temporary boards displayed at events.



Figure 16 A visitor at the celebration event exploring some of the highlights of the volunteer research into the Park

Initial feedback from residents about the welcome and interpretation is very positive. The interpretation is already helping park visitors to learn about the heritage of Radipole Park and Gardens, from the faltering of the early design stages, to the commandeering of parts of the space for use in World War II preparations.

‘With historical background or cultural value, it can be an important place to learn about local history and culture.’

‘The information panels were interesting to read - I definitely learnt things I didn’t know about the park.’

‘Educational opportunities such as the history of the area and the natural environment are a great addition.’ Local residents



Figure 15 A timeline created giving a chronological overview of the history of Radipole Park and Gardens

70% of people said that the panels concerning the nature and history of Radipole Park and Gardens were interesting and easy-to-read.

The majority of event participants also felt that the event they attended had helped them to take notice of local history or nature²⁰. 18% said that they would go away and find out more about local history and heritage as a result of the event.

All findings from the research process are being shared with Weymouth Museum and partnership projects developed to promote the heritage importance of the park.

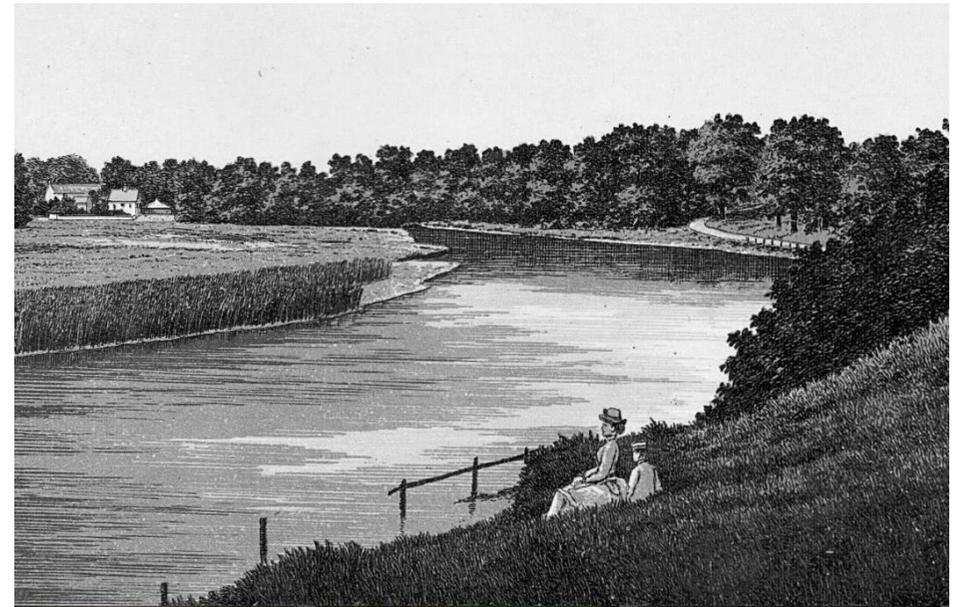


Figure 17 Radipole Lake from the embankment, circa lack 19th century. Copyright Sue Hogden. Taken from Rocks album.

²⁰ Average rating of 4.1 out of 5

Outcomes for people

Outcome 6: People have developed skills

Both staff and volunteers have developed skills in the process of planning and delivering the project, for example, in personal development in areas around practical maintenance, horticulture, environment and interpretation.

Another example is health walk leader training which the Activity Officer and two volunteers undertook. They subsequently went on to deliver four walks starting in the Park with 44 walkers and 18 other participants.

Six of the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens also undertook emergency first aid training in order to be able to support future sensory garden volunteering and events delivery.

The project also provided formal learning opportunities. For example, the project provided the opportunity for a horticultural apprentice²¹ to get on-the-job experience whilst gaining a qualification. The council has now employed the person that completed the apprenticeship on a full-time trainee Gardener position who will be working in the park.

The project also offered other skills development opportunities. For example, Westfield Arts College is a specialist college for children and young people from 4 to 19 with moderate learning difficulties and associated additional needs. 35 students from the College took part in an art project creating hand painted wooden hearts trail in the Gardens. This attracted much positive

feedback from visitors and was an opportunity for the students to be part of a real-world project; contributing towards their local community.



Figure 18 One of the wooden hearts created by the Westfield Arts College students, on display in the gardens for visitors to enjoy

²¹ The apprentice finished their apprenticeship course in November 2022

Events also helped people to learn and try something new, for example, willow weaving or drawing in the Park.

'[I had] Never worked with charcoal before'

'Never drawn trees before.'

'It was fun/sense of achievement'

'[I was surprised by] trying something new'

Event participants



Figure 19 Participants taking part in an Introduction to sketching workshop

Outcome 7: People have volunteered time

The Friends are a voluntary organisation which has been key to delivering the project, and supporting it in the future (see Section 3.2). Additional volunteer roles have provided local residents with more opportunities for active engagement with the Park.

'I have enjoyed how the project has kept me busy for last eight years, have made friends and learnt about the heritage of the Park.' Volunteer

In addition to raising funds for and delivering the new Sensory Garden, they have undertaken planning, support and practical tasks such as weeding the community orchard in advance of new pathway being put in.

In total volunteers have given 556 days to the project.

Alongside the Friends, other volunteers contributed towards the project and there were also corporate volunteer opportunities. For example, two groups of six employees from PGL Osmington came for volunteering sessions to help start planting up the new sensory garden.

The project has supported volunteering with the Friends Group and guided them on best practice with how to recruit and manage volunteers. Increasing the number of active volunteers in the group is a key outcome for the Friends and to attract potential new committee members would be a goal. The new website was developed as part of the project and has a volunteer section with easy contact information for interested people.



Figure 20 Corporate volunteering opportunity with PGL in progress - planting out the sensory garden

Outcomes for community

Outcome 8: More people, and a wider range of people will have engaged

Pre-project, Radipole Park and Gardens was an underused resource.

The following local community needs were identified:

Radipole Park is situated on the border of Melcombe Regis which has a high percentage of residents located in the top 20% nationally for Multiple Deprivation.

Melcombe Regis has been identified as 'hot spot' for risk of loneliness. Weymouth has three areas that are worse than the English average for child obesity

Weymouth has a greater proportion of social care users not having enough social contact, or not involved in valuable activities.

The percentage of people reporting that they have bad health is higher than the national percentage.

In addition, the Weymouth and Portland Borough Council Sports Facilities Strategy²² highlighted the physical and psychological health benefits of sport and physical activity, contributing to reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour, delivering economic benefits and playing an important role in improving social cohesion.

The Development Phase identified that improvements to the site could significantly benefit the local community in terms of:

- Providing free and valuable activities
- Combatting social isolation
- Supporting physical health
- Improving mental wellbeing.

In addition to outcomes for community and individuals, the project aimed to increase visitor numbers and the depth of engagement by visitors to the heritage, activities and green space.

In order to achieve this, the project was designed to make Radipole Park and Gardens more attractive and accessible through provision of improved pathways (both repairs and new routes), planting, modern facilities, and links to local sense-of-place by putting heritage front-and-centre.

'Splendid multi use space for all ages. At the heart of the community.'

Local resident

However, facilities, new paths etc. were only just opening at the time of writing and it is therefore too early to estimate overall visitor numbers and profile.

Early indications are that the improved facilities and profile of the project has helped to attract more, and a wider range of visitors to this green space, as well as provide a better offer for existing visitors.

²² 2014 – 2019

'Upgraded the sports facilities, children's play areas, and rest zones, meeting the needs of a wider range of visitors.'

'I really enjoy Radipole gardens since it has been updated. Thank you for all the hard work!'

'I grew up here and live so close, I have so many memories growing up with friends here and really value such a lovely park and gardens.' Local residents

The local resident survey shows that the Park and Gardens has been successful in attracting members of the surrounding communities, as well as anecdotal evidence of visitors coming from further afield in the local vicinity.

'I do value Radipole park as a Dorchester resident I always love the idea of a new park near us and we visited once opened and we have gone every week.'
Local resident

Crucially, the new spaces and the focus that the project has brought has opened up the Park and Gardens to being used by a wider range of community groups and organisations.

'Through the new event space within the park, our community groups are able to organize more outdoor activities that strengthen the bond between community members'

'I am a regional co-ordinator for a disability sports organisation - this will now be on my list of places to do activities'

'I am the group leader of the Weymouth & Portland U3A petanque group that uses the fine new terrain every Monday and Tuesday morning, and also run

the come and try petanque sessions every Saturday morning. We intend to develop the Saturday sessions into the forming of the Weymouth Petanque Club.'

'We have organized several health and fitness activities, including walking trails, morning yoga classes and more, and the new facilities and improved environment provide the ideal venue for these activities.'
Local residents



Figure 21 Participant on a summer photography workshop

The events and activity programme was curated in order to offer relevant and interesting opportunities for target audiences. For example, seated exercise classes were run in Spring 2021 in partnership with Stepping into Nature²³. A total of 56 attendees took part across nine weekly sessions.

The programme has attracted a mixture of people; both regular park users and people that had never visited the park before. It provided an ‘appointment to visit’ the Park and Gardens for local people with over 20% of event attendees²⁴ never having visited the space before.



Figure 22 Seated exercise class

²³ A Dorset National Landscape project aimed at supporting older adults, people living with dementia and care partners to enjoy nature

The events programme was also constructive in reacquainting local people with what the revitalised Park and Gardens has to offer, and in attracting new audiences. This was demonstrated by 63% of event attendees not having ever attended an event in the Park and Gardens, or not having done so in the last year.

73% of event participants intended to return to the Park and Gardens as a result of the event, and over 50% said they would be telling a friend or family member about it as a result.

The table on the following pages shows the major barriers for audiences engaging with Radipole Park and Gardens identified during the Development Phase, and how the project has worked to mitigate each.



Figure 23 Visitors to the Park. Photo taken by Ali McNally as part of the Artwey workshops

²⁴ 22%

Audience barriers identified during planning	Specific issues	Feedback from Development stage consultation	Implication for the project	Example actions taken by the project to address this barrier and associated results
Physical	The park could be better signposted.	<p><i>Didn't know it was there</i></p> <p><i>I don't know which way to go</i></p> <p><i>It's awkwardly situated between a fast-busy road and an industrial area with railway lines</i></p>	<p>Better promotion, including information on how to access the park.</p> <p>Better promote 'Parks Poster' linking all of Weymouth Parks on a map</p>	<p>A welcome and interpretation scheme has been created and installed into Radipole Park and Gardens.</p> <p>The majority of local people responding rated the information and signage as good or very good²⁵.</p>
	The car park is unsuitable for disabled parking and the pathways are not accessible throughout the site.	<p><i>There is no disabled parking or place for a minibus to park or even drop off</i></p> <p><i>Uneven pathways. The gardens are pretty good but towards the playing field end accessibility is not good at all</i></p> <p><i>The gardens are very accessible, but the park is a long way for older people to walk and there's not</i></p>	<p>Improve car park, include designated disabled parking</p> <p>Improve pathways and accessibility to connect all areas of the park</p>	<p>Programme of path and other access upgrades including accessible toilets.</p> <p>84% of people rated the paths, and how easy it is to get around Radipole Park and Gardens as good or very good as a result of the project.</p> <p><i>'Living within walking distance having an open space I can stay and enjoy, the toilets are a great addition to the area, I'm able to enter the park from either end, either stopping or continuing on through the park to the gardens, then over the bridge at Alexander Road, or continue to town. Walking great for mental and physical health, being surrounded by nature I can watch as the seasons change.'</i></p> <p><i>'Access is better, pleased to see new trees planted and improved parking.'</i></p>

²⁵ Average quality rating of 4.3 out of 5

Audience barriers identified during planning	Specific issues	Feedback from Development stage consultation	Implication for the project	Example actions taken by the project to address this barrier and associated results
		<p><i>enough places to rest on the way</i></p> <p><i>Parking can be difficult and no toilets</i></p>		<p style="text-align: right;">Local residents</p>
	Flooding on the field	<p><i>When there is a lot of rain the sports field tends to flood badly</i></p>	Install a drainage system on the field to help improve conditions	<p>This is an area of the project where plans had to be reduced and some not implemented due to cost escalation on the scheme overall. However, improvements have helped to reduce the flooding in some areas of the Park and Gardens. The field is a designated flood zone so at times of heavy rain it is designed to hold water. We are planning to manage it to increase biodiversity and let areas of it to grow longer during the year as well as have a small football area and walking paths mown in. We have planted more trees around this area to help manage the water and more will continue to be planted. Wessex water are going to be flushing out existing drainage to help with water management.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>'It has improved 100%, more welcoming, more accessible all year round, no flooded areas, good solid pathways, just a lovely space for everyone to enjoy.'</i> Local resident</p>
	No café or toilets	<p><i>No toilets, no refreshments</i></p> <p><i>There is no toilet. We can only go for a very short time due to this.</i></p>		<p>A new kiosk and toilets were installed into Radipole Park and Gardens and have created a new hub of activity.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>'Now the public toilets are there it will allow more people to visit the area more comfortably.'</i></p>

Audience barriers identified during planning	Specific issues	Feedback from Development stage consultation	Implication for the project	Example actions taken by the project to address this barrier and associated results
		<p><i>I've got little kids and there's no toilet or café.</i></p>		<p><i>'We've been donating for years to improve the gardens and to swe [sic] them finally coming to fruition is wonderful...The addition finally of loos and cafe will be a real bonus to all using the gardens.'</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Local residents</p> <p>The kiosk had only just opened at the time of writing of this report, so it was too early to collect evaluation data whilst the operator was still snagging. However informal feedback indicates that this is a very welcome facility for visitors and creates a new reason to visit the space, as well as additional provision for those visiting for leisure or sporting activities.</p> <p><i>'We visited the new Mumma Bees cafe today for my Mums birthday. They were so friendly and accommodating. There were balloons and banners out when we arrived. The food was incredible and reasonably priced. Will definitely be back. Lovely new venue with convenient parking. Well done to you all. Our new favourite place.'</i></p> <p><i>'It is an amazing improvement on an already beautiful space. Love there is now somewhere to buy food and watch the world go by.'</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Local resident</p>
	<p>People cycling in the park</p>	<p><i>Do not allow bikes – it's crazy they have a cycle lane along the road on the pavement which is really wide</i></p>	<p>Create more signage about cycling in the park</p>	<p>Cycling is being managed as part of the sustainable transport plan and cycle racks have been installed behind the new kiosk, and adjacent to the main car park. Cycling through the Park and Gardens itself is no longer permitted.</p>

Audience barriers identified during planning	Specific issues	Feedback from Development stage consultation	Implication for the project	Example actions taken by the project to address this barrier and associated results
				<p><i>'Great safe space for young people to play - and easy to cycle to off road.'</i></p> <p><i>'It has something for the whole community welcoming all ages and abilities, level footpaths and the carpark ensures everyone is able to visit, thoughtful planning and ideas added by the community who use this area have been included, bus routes can be accessed from Dorchester Road, to include those who prefer to use public transport, cycle route runs along Radipole Park Drive and cycle racks encourage the use of cycling, and a place to stop and meet other like minded people'</i></p> <p>Local resident</p>
Intellectual	Limited signage and interpretation throughout park.	<p><i>I never knew Radipole had all this history</i></p> <p><i>It would be good to be able to offer walks through the park with volunteers who know more about the plants etc or have notice boards about the plants.</i></p>	Create interesting information panels about park heritage Include informative walks in the activity programme	The project has installed a package of welcome and orientation, and interpretation across Radipole Park and Gardens. <i>'The park has a unique garden design that preserves the local cultural heritage, and visiting the park makes me feel connected to the local history.'</i> Local resident
	Website is difficult to navigate	<i>The pop-up adverts are very annoying</i>	Upgrade website and provide training for Friends Group	As part of the project, Weymouth Town Council has worked with the Friends Group to build a new website that will allow the community to access information about the park and the project. This is now live and providing up-to-date information and resources regarding the Park

Audience barriers identified during planning	Specific issues	Feedback from Development stage consultation	Implication for the project	Example actions taken by the project to address this barrier and associated results
				and Gardens, as well as functioning for recruiting, and managing volunteers.
	No educational resources	<i>It would be great to have printable resources for bug hunting, map of the park, tree names, etc</i>	Create educational resources and upload onto the website	There are a number of educational resources available to access and download on the new Friends website.
	No training plan	<i>I would like some training regarding conservation</i>	Create relevant and valuable training opportunities	See 'Outcome 7 and 8'
Social	Anti-social behaviour	<i>Get rid of the drug dealers</i> <i>I have friends living in the council flats and their kids are always playing up and in trouble because they have nothing to do.</i>	Install a flood light in the car park. Create engaging activity programme which includes activities specifically targeted at youths	The Park and Gardens is now a better maintained, cleaner and safer space in which to spend time. The Council engaged with the local ASB police officers regarding park and kiosk design to mitigate and reduce anti-social behaviour. The kiosk has CCTV coverage and alarm system and PIR lighting to help deter this type of activity. The park is managed by daylight which should naturally encourage people to leave the park as it gets dark. Certain areas of the park have been opened up to increase sight lines and remove confined spaces where anti-social behaviour could take place. <i>'A safe green space for all the community to share.'</i> <i>'I am very pleased with the recent improvements to Radipole Park and Garden. The environment within the park is more pleasant and can provide an ideal place for residents to relax and socialize.'</i> Local residents

Audience barriers identified during planning	Specific issues	Feedback from Development stage consultation	Implication for the project	Example actions taken by the project to address this barrier and associated results
	Not enough engaging or inclusive activities or volunteering opportunities	<i>Any activities that increase confidence in speaking to people, learning new skills and being independent.</i>	Ensure activity programme and volunteer plan has a varied and inclusive opportunities	Local people rated the cleanliness and maintenance of Radipole Park and Gardens as 4.3 out of 5 as a result of the project. In total, a large number of people participated, and events were highly enjoyable ²⁶ . 82% of event participants said that it had helped them to get active outdoors.
Economic	Cost of activities for families	<i>I hope the project will run more events like this. It's nice having something free for a change</i>	Ensure activities have minimal costs for families	Many project activities were offered free or low cost. New play facilities provide a free activity for local families, including a scooter track for younger children. All the new sports courts and facilities are free to access and there is no booking or fee required. There are hire options for pétanque and table tennis equipment at the kiosk for a small fee. The toilet facilities are free to access for all park users regardless of whether they make a purchase from the kiosk or not. <i>'Excellent improvements to the area. Good play equipment for children and nice to have a cafe so parents can relax while their children play. Toilet facilities a bonus too!'</i> <i>'A chance to get outside and enjoy activities a little or no cost (so important during a cost of living crisis)'</i> <i>'Radipole Park is amazing, I will definitely be visiting more often, thank you for a lovely space! The basketball courts are great with lots of</i>

²⁶ Average enjoyability rating of 4.8 out of 5

Audience barriers identified during planning	Specific issues	Feedback from Development stage consultation	Implication for the project	Example actions taken by the project to address this barrier and associated results
				<p><i>space to play and have fun as a family. My young daughter enjoys the scooter area what a great idea.'</i></p> <p><i>'I think it is a excellent place for families to enjoy the outdoors and the fact that it is free to park, excellent. The kiosk and toilet facilities make it a great place to meet friends.'</i></p> <p><i>'A good use of green space with free activities which is so important in this current climate. Love the community orchard.'</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Local residents</p>
Organisational	More training for staff and volunteers	<i>Any accessible and inclusive activities would encourage families to come to Radipole Park and Gardens</i>	Training to ensure project is inclusive and accessible	See 'Outcome 7 and 8'

Outcome 9: The local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit

Pre-project consultation²⁷ activity built strong support for the project. Local people clearly valued the Park but the lack of facilities (refreshments, toilets, disabled parking) and the poor condition of sports provision, infrastructure and play equipment created a very real risk that people would stop visiting. It was also important that it did not duplicate a function or service already provided in the town, or be in competition with existing organisations, facilities or agencies.

To this end, the community have been involved in all aspects of the project development, ensuring that it reflects local needs. It was also hoped that this would engender an enhanced sense of local identity, civic pride and lead to community empowerment and improved cohesion.

Weymouth Town Council have been proactive in communicating progress on the project, and why delays have happened. Since its redevelopment, the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens website has also become a 'go to' place for information about the amenities, volunteering and activity.

'What a fantastic project inclusive for all member of the community, the sensory garden and seating gives a place to relax, reduces isolation many people use the footpaths and often stop and speak to others, I asked two children what they enjoyed climbing frame the other the slides and swings. The kiosk a great addition with plans to open all year with adjustments to

times and days in winter months. Many enjoying the sports facilities and the track for toddlers is fun and colourful.' Local residents



Figure 24 Visitors to Radipole Park and Gardens taking part in a pétanque taster session

²⁷ In addition to consultation events and discussions, an engagement questionnaire was delivered to 1000 properties that surround Radipole Park and

Gardens, which resulted in a 48% return response

Local people felt strongly²⁸ that the project has had a positive impact on the local community. Local people rated the quality of the facilities highly²⁹, with facilities for playing sports and exercising receiving a good rating³⁰.

'The improved park not only retains its natural beauty, but also enhances its connection to the community, becoming a true community hub.'

'Thank you for doing such a great job and honouring the park in such a great way. I really hope it is maintained well and gets enjoyed by the community.'

'Great project. Really excellent. Such an enhancement for the local area.'

'Have spent the morning there today with family. Very impressed. Everyone enjoyed themselves and facilities were lovely.'

'Excellent play park. Beautiful planted area. Excellent improvement to the local area.'

'I grew up coming to Radipole park and it's so exciting seeing the huge improvement that's been made. My boyfriend and I played tennis on the new public courts and was so impressed with the surface and space. All the sensory garden additions are lovely too.'

Local residents

During the end-of-project evaluation, local people reiterated what an important and valued asset for the local community Radipole Park and Gardens is.

'Radipole Park and Gardens is an important gathering place for the community, hosting events and festivals that provide an opportunity for residents to interact, bond and strengthen community cohesion.'

'It's a retreat away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Wonderful area to relax in in the nicer months.'

Local residents

They also talked positively about how the improvements made by the project are helping to bring people together (as individuals and groups) in the community and contribute towards community cohesion and reduction of social isolation.

'The addition of a cafe, seating area and gathering space in the park provides more social places and promotes interaction between the neighbors [sic].'

'The various community events held after the park improvement, such as flower shows, craft markets and concerts, provide us with more opportunities to participate in the community, present ourselves and interact with the community residents.'

Local residents

²⁸ Average impact rating of 4.9 out of 5

²⁹ Average quality rating of 4.4 out of 5

³⁰ Average quality rating of 4.15 out of 5

The evaluation found that many visitors welcome the Park and Gardens for their wellbeing benefits – both physical and mental. There is strong evidence to show that the site is supporting the NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing. The events programme also had a strong wellbeing strand, for example, the All Hallows' Hoolie in partnership with Leonard Cheshire, a charity supporting people with disabilities, and free tennis coaching for adults and children with physical or mental disabilities. A total of 24 participants from local school and disability support organisations were engaged over three weeks.

'Excellent green space calming and a joy to be in.'

'Right on our doorstep. It's either a lovely walk into town, or a place for health wellbeing and activities.'

'I live nearby and I love taking my grandchildren and dogs there to have freedom to run and get fresh air. I also go on my own and I feel better after I have.' Local residents

The new planting, and particularly the Sensory Garden, have added to the aesthetics of this space within the community.

'The gardens look wonderful at anytime of the year, but the added sensory garden and Cafe is a fabulous addition.' Local resident

Finally, the project has contributed towards the regeneration of Weymouth by enhancing its green spaces, increasing its heritage value and providing additional recreational facilities and activities for both residents and visitors. New interpretation, and better facilities are likely to attract more visitors;

enhancing the offer of the town, and supporting strategic initiatives around local distinctiveness, green spaces and heritage.

'A wonderful community space now with a variety of things to do. Something to be proud of in our town.'

'It's lovely to have a green space in our town.' Local residents



Figure 25 A local family enjoying a multi-generational game of table tennis on the new outdoor tables

The letter below from a local resident sums up how the project has helped Weymouth to be a better place to live, work and visit.

'I would like to commend you on the exceptional project you have delivered for the community.'

Since the park's renovations, my family and I have been frequent visitors, enjoying the new amenities you have provided. We particularly appreciate the playground for young children on bikes, the combined football/basketball area, the cafe, gardens, table tennis facilities, and the improved children's play area. The addition of the car park has significantly enhanced accessibility, which is often overlooked.

The project has created a clean, spacious, and inclusive activity area enjoyed by people of all ages and backgrounds. The space feels safe and family-friendly, reminiscent of similar areas I have encountered in Europe.

Having lived in Weymouth for the past eleven years (I was born in the area however moved away briefly after university); I can confidently say that this is one of the most impressive developments I have witnessed since my return.

Thank you and your team for your hard work and dedication in creating a valuable community asset that will be enjoyed for years to come.'

Local resident

Figure 26 New signage within Radipole Park and Gardens showing the range of activities and options available for a visit post-project



Outcome 10: Negative environmental impacts will be reduced

Whilst not the core objective, the project has contributed towards reducing negative environmental impacts and also contributing towards the local natural environment.

The Park and Gardens run alongside the Radipole Lake RSPB nature reserve, one of two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (or SSSI) sites in Weymouth. The site is also covered within the remit of Dorset Wildlife Trust and forms part of an existing ecological network which has significant potential to be strengthened and enhanced. The park is therefore part of, and a buffer to an important natural area, rich in wildlife, in the heart of Weymouth. Improvements made by the project are likely to extend current pockets of biodiversity in the Park and Gardens.

'I love that the park and gardens is a place for wildlife, though I'm also pleased to see the facilities for families and groups as it brings the place to life.' Local resident

For example, new planting, wildflower area and a community orchard have created additional areas in which wildlife can flourish. A biodiversity impact assessment was also carried out during the planning stages in order to inform planning and the project aspiration to enhance overall biodiversity interest.

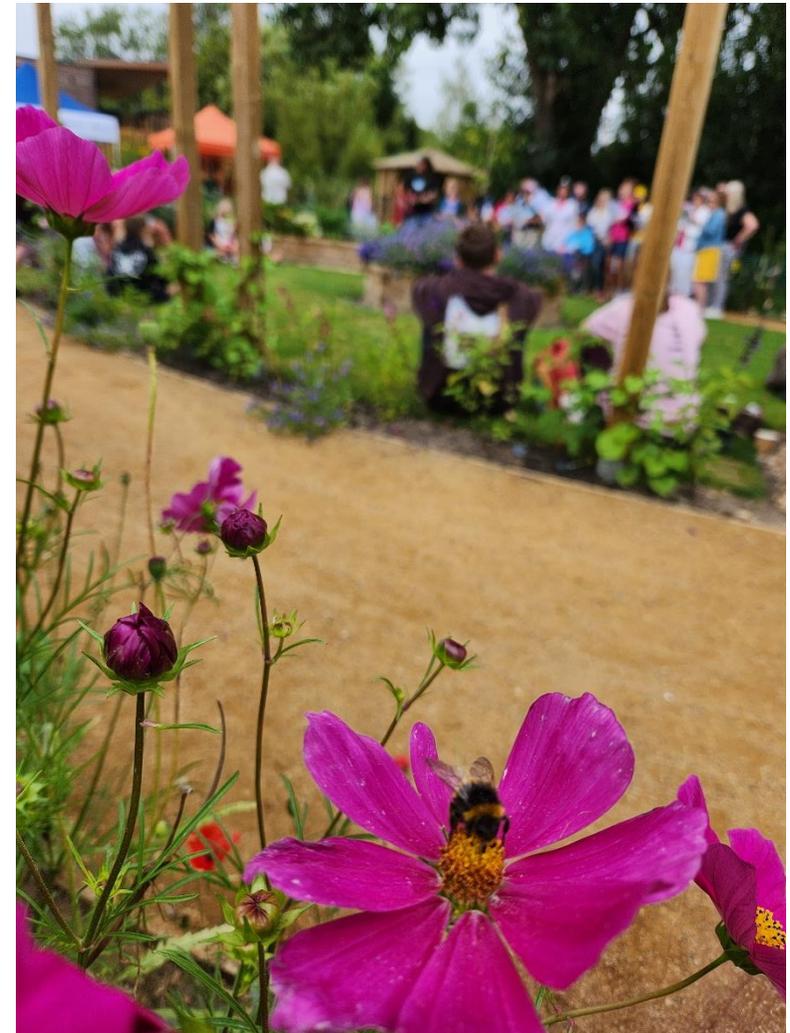


Figure 27 The Sensory Garden has added a new haven for pollinators

Other improvements have also been made for the benefit of nature, for example, in early 2022, bird boxes made and decorated by students at Westfield Arts School and then installed in the Park and Gardens.

The capital works undertaken by the project were planned with reduced environmental impact in mind.

For example:

- Seek alternative uses for resources prior to disposal. – A large proportion of the wood from the felled trees was retained on site either as large logs in the play area or large amounts of chippings which has been used in the plant beds.
- Ensure the work won't contaminate the ground or environment. – The main contractor used and maintained strict environmental procedures to ensure no contamination happened during construction.
- The main contractor used an eco-welfare unit for construction staff and had a site security system that used solar panels.
- Non-petro-chemical and solvent base products will be used wherever possible to protect the natural and historic environment. Only peat free compost/soil products were used in the production of the park. Weymouth Town Council only use peat free products across all their parks and open spaces and this will be maintained in the management of the park.
- Hard surfacing will be from natural or recycled materials wherever possible.
- Public transport will be promoted – Old tarmac surfacing from the park was retained on site and crushed and used as base material for some of the new paths in the park to stop it being removed and disposed of.

The ongoing maintenance of the Park and Gardens will also reduce the environmental impact of the site. For example, a site waste management plan has been developed and implemented, and policies such as not using peat onsite are in place.



Figure 28 Example of one of the bird boxes made and decorated by students at Westfield Arts College

5. Successes, challenges and lessons learned

Every project is a potential learning journey.

The evaluation process provides a tool with which to identify those things that have helped a project along, successes, opportunities it has created and the challenges it has faced. It is important to crystallise lessons learnt from these so that they can inform future working practices, project design and delivery.

This section provides examples of facilitators, successes, challenges and lessons learnt for the project.

'Facilitators' are things that helped the project run smoothly and achieve its outcomes. Stakeholders noted several facilitators and successes ranging from;

An engaging programme

The events and activity programme have provided an accessible 'invitation to visit' for audiences and allowed Weymouth Town Council and the volunteers to curate opportunities which are specifically tailored to target audiences, as well as those with a more general appeal. This programme has attracted a broad range of audiences, and delivered impressive outcomes (see Section 4 for a flavour of these) for people and the community.

Whilst there were periods where there was less activity due to staffing changes, the pandemic, building delays and adverse weather, the programming has been a focal point for keeping local communities interested in the space, and helping them to discover more about its heritage and what

it has to offer them. It has also provided a way to showcase the heritage of Radipole Park and Gardens and help people with new ways of exploring it.

Lesson learnt: The activity programme ran alongside capital works, rather than all being left until after the works were complete. Considering the delays to capital works (see Section 3.4), this has been very fortuitous as it has allowed the people outcomes to be achieved and reduced the risk of not being able to achieve them in a short window at the end of the project once works were finished and snagged.



Figure 29 Participants on a Hidden Histories walk

Capital works delays and alterations to plans

Delays to the capital works were experienced throughout the project for multiple reasons, and alterations had to be made to the scheme mainly as a result of cost escalations, [see Section 3.4](#) for further detail.

For example, the main capital contractor Ground Control started construction in the park in July 2023. The scheduled completion date was 18th December 2023. Delays were experienced with the piling and steel framework for the catering kiosk. From mid-October, the weather also changed and there was regular heavy rain which delayed/stopped some elements of the groundworks.

In close liaison with the project team, Ground Control extended the completion date to 31st March 2024 to allow additional time for completion. However, the very heavy regular rain continued which caused further groundwork issues and delayed various elements of the project and the construction completion date was moved until the 25th May 2024. The project construction was finally completed in July 2024 apart from a few small elements.

For example, the delays to groundworks meant that the bare root plants for the hedging and play area planting could not be lifted before the end of March, this planting will now have to be delayed until autumn 2024.

Lesson learnt: Adaptive management has been an essential tool in order to adapt to overcome the challenges presented to the capital works scheme.

This was underpinned by:

- Proactive risk management

- A good relationship with the contractors and open lines of communication were of paramount importance.

Maintenance regime and further improvements

Whilst the overall feedback from local residents and Park and Garden visitors was very positive, there were some specific areas where they felt the maintenance schedule needed fine-tuning, or that there were opportunities for further improvements. These were notably:

- As park use increases, ensuring the schedule for emptying the litter bins keeps pace to avoid overflowing bins. This detracts from the overall impact and ambience of the revitalised space. Weymouth Town Council manage the bin emptying in their parks so this will be a key consideration of park management moving forward and flexing the emptying to match the higher footfall months of the year.
- Opportunities to improve the accessibility of the play park and its appeal to a wide range of ages and abilities. In particular, those with specific physical access needs, and the under 5's could be better catered for. Additional elements and seating to add to the new equipment installed by the project could be a focus for community fundraising.

'[I] Visited the park with the young boy I care for. He has complex needs and there wasn't anything suitable for him other than the swings.' *Local resident*

'Not enough seating within the play area, always people using the balance beams as nowhere else to sit. Needs swings for older children so they can swing themselves.'

'The play equipment does not have many things that toddlers or under 5s could use and the area is open for all ages.'
Local residents

There is also opportunity for smaller projects which could be undertaken by the community or potentially the Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens, such as labelling the orchard trees.

'I think the trees, in the orchard and near to it should be clearly labelled with what they are, as lots of children in the park might not know what they are and if they are edible.' Local residents

Lesson learnt: Whilst a major investment such as this project can transform a community space, completing the project is not the end of the evolution of the Park and Garden. Additional smaller projects can help add further interest and improve accessibility. Formulating a 'wish list' would be a helpful process in order to be able to direct community efforts and react to funding opportunities when they arise.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Full list of telephone interviewees, question frameworks, list of events and reflection templates

Appendix 2: Event mini survey card responses and dashboard

Appendix 3: Summary of feedback from local people

Appendix 4: Local resident full survey responses

Thank you to everyone who has generously given their time and thoughts to contribute towards this evaluation.