

Walton Hall Gardens

Management Plan

2011 to 2016



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Walton Hall Gardens – Higher Walton Warrington

Management Plan 2011 - 2016

Date: January 2011

Location: Off Walton Lea Road OS Explorer map 275 & 276

Management Plan written by:

Ian Johnson

In partnership with;-

- The Friends of Walton Estate
- Walton Estate Advisory Group
- Walton Parish Council via
Walton Estate Advisory Group
(WEAG)
- Cheshire Police



First edition written in January 2011.

A 5 year Management Plan for 2011 – 2016.

The Management Plan Aims & Objectives and Annual Work Programme will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. To be fully reviewed in 2016.

Availability of the Management Plan

Further copies of this plan are available from the following:-

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What is a Management Plan?

A Management Plan for a public open space is a published written document, prepared by the managers, which outlines the aims and objectives of the Gardens Visitors, the Community and the Managers in relation to the Gardens. It therefore enables the open space users to monitor the manager's success in achieving these aims and objectives.

Purpose of this Management Plan

- The purpose of the Walton Hall Gardens Management Plan is:-
- To guide future managers, so ensuring continuity of management.
- To explain to visitors how decisions affecting the enjoyment of the Gardens are made.
- To ensure clear management objectives are laid down.
- To identify future requirements.
- To promote interest in and support of the Gardens.
- To encourage community involvement.
- To help managers to react positively to a changing world.
- To ensure that the Gardens are properly described, and that its historical importance is well documented.
- To monitor and assess changes that occur.

1.0 Introduction

Environment & Public Protection Services Mission Statement

**WORKING TO PROVIDE A CLEAN, GREEN, HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT
THROUGHOUT WARRINGTON**

Environment & Public Protection Services are committed to maintaining and improving environment and the health of the people of Warrington. With our partners we provide sustainable, quality, public services & facilities, which are accessible to all and meet the needs and priorities of our local communities.

- 1.1 This Management Plan has been produced to document and shape the future development of Walton Hall Gardens. It builds on many years of community & user engagement, beginning in April 2001.


This was followed by a public open day at Walton Hall in 2002 where the vision for Walton Hall Gardens was the focus. This event was attended by over 600 people, and lead to the creation of The Friends Of Walton Estate.

Website: Fowe.btck.co.uk
Email: fowe@hotmail.co.uk

Many consultation exercises have been undertaken at Walton Hall Gardens, to ensure that service provision is delivered to public expectation and desire.



2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.1 Walton Hall Gardens is managed by the Council which maintain the Gardens, the Historic Hall and the Golf Course as one management team.
- 2.2 For the purposes of Green Flag, the Hall and Golf Course are excluded from this application.
- 2.3 The Gardens attract an estimated 500,000 visitors per year including regular local dog walkers and visitors, families visiting for a day, horticultural enthusiasts (some seasonal for Rhododendron/Azalea shows in spring etc.), relaxation and those wishing to have exercise in fresh air, quietness and beautiful surroundings. Visitors including casual and organised groups are drawn to the children's zoo, outdoor games, bowls and a great variety of events of which some are managed fully by the Estate - some are in partnership - and some are outside organisations on the site with Estate approval, operating to agreed good practice.
- 
- 2.4 Walton Hall Gardens were partners in a year long promotion with many other "Gardens of Distinction" for the Cheshire Year of the Garden. Working with other sites and drawing on expertise in a variety of areas in the planning stage during 2007, for the year of events and promotion – 2008, and indeed since has proved highly valuable to raising the sites profile.
- 2.5 Others visit for weddings/christenings and other functions in the Hall – making great use of the picturesque locations of the pond area, formal gardens and other locations for photographs. We also have attendance by couples who have not held their special day at Walton Hall, arriving for the photographs after to have a fantastic backdrop on treasured memories.
- 2.6 Recently, Granada TV filmed the local evening weather forecast from Walton Gardens which gave good exposure to the Gardens and was novelty for those present at the time. There really is something for everyone at Walton Hall, Gardens and Golf Course.
- 2.7 The Friends of Walton Estate, Warrington Borough Council, The Walton Estate Advisory Group (WEAG is made up of Friends, Parish Council, Borough Councillors, Walton Lea Project, Local Neighbourhood Board representatives and other key stakeholders) are key partners. Cheshire Police work with us too in developing and operating the Gardens for the benefit of all existing and prospective visitors.
- 2.8 Increasing bio diversity in and around the Gardens, building upon excellence such as the Red Squirrel breeding project, critical habitats and traditional events, and looking for new ways to add to the site for improved visitor experience in a sustainable way, are key aims. We now have a local bee keeper onsite, which gives added interest.

2.9 We are proud of our past Green Flag Award successes, visitor comments and the fact that the visitor numbers are positive, and continue to adopt the National Green Flag Criteria in managing these great Gardens for all. We will ensure Walton Hall Gardens are:

- A welcoming place
- Healthy, safe and secure
- Well maintained and clean
- Sustainable
- Conservation and heritage focussed
- Encouraging and supportive of Community involvement
- Marketed effectively
- Managed positively & enthusiastically, looking forward

2.10 This Management Plan gives consideration to the Gardens future management and development to achieve the targets set within the Green Flag criteria and to help deliver corporate objectives.

2.11 The plan recognises the importance of addressing the needs of the Community, producing aims that will co-ordinate the development of the Gardens whilst ensuring that a balance is reached between the needs of different user groups and the environment. The plan will be updated annually.

2.12 The layout, history and development of Walton Hall Gardens is described in the early sections of the Management Plan.

2.13 The main part of the document then identifies the various aspects of current service provision; details future management aims, and explains how these will be achieved.

2.14 Proposed actions have been developed from stakeholder / partner forums and visitor feedback.

2.15 Identified actions contribute to service objectives, which in turn, have been developed to meet corporate priorities.

2.16 With the ongoing debates with the Walton Estate Advisory Group running concurrently with tightening of budgets across the Council, a much more detailed plan of the direction of the Gardens and significant timescales for these shall be known for the 2012 update.



3.0 Site Details

3.1 Walton Hall Gardens

**Walton Hall Gardens
Rangers Office
Walton Lea Road
Higher Walton
Warrington
WA4 6SN**

Email: waltonhall@warrington.gov.uk

Web: www.warrington.gov.uk/waltongardens

How to find us :

Two miles north of Junction 11 on the M56

By Car: (Pay and Display system in operation)

Take the A56 out of Warrington, turning left at the Walton Arms Public House.

By Bus: Monday to Saturday – Arriva X30 or Halton Transport 62 from Warrington or Runcorn to the Walton Arms, a 5 minute walk from the Gardens.

For details, contact Travel Line on 0871 200 2233 or Telephone Rangers Office at Walton Gardens - 01925 601617

3.2 Walton Hall Gardens is a public Open Space and visitor attraction of regional importance and includes 30 hectares of mature parkland and ornamental gardens and is situated on Walton Lea Road, Higher Walton, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 6SN

3.2.1 It is managed as 3 component units which in many areas work jointly with aims and delivery of the positive visitor experience, as one management team.

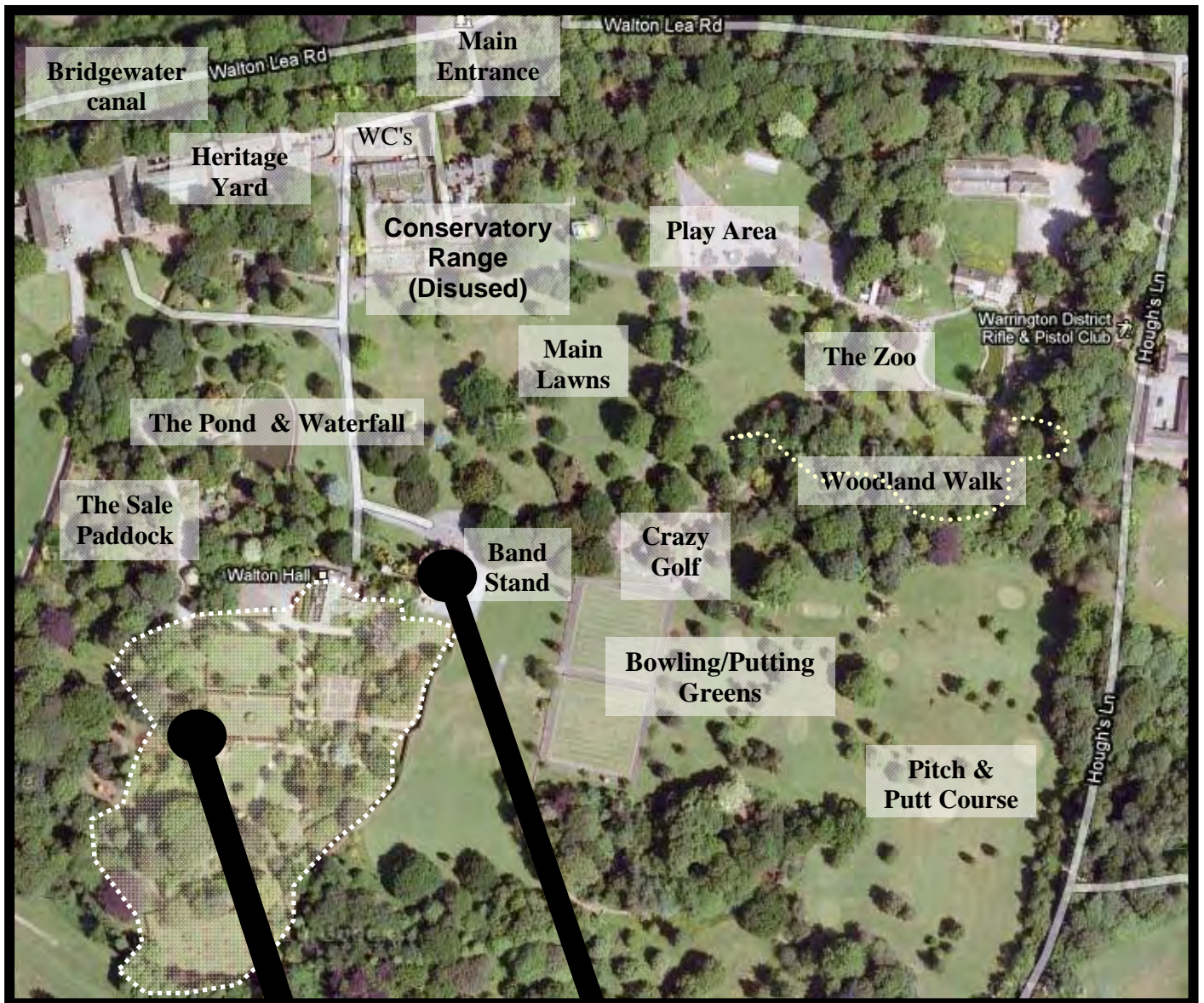
3.2.2 With the Estate (Gardens and wider old historic estate), the Friends of Walton Estate are hugely supportive in many ways, from work party support on the ground, assistance with events, being an ear and voice for good two way communications, for fund raising and to work with management on funding bids, many of which have been successful and delivered significant benefits on the ground for many to enjoy well into the future.

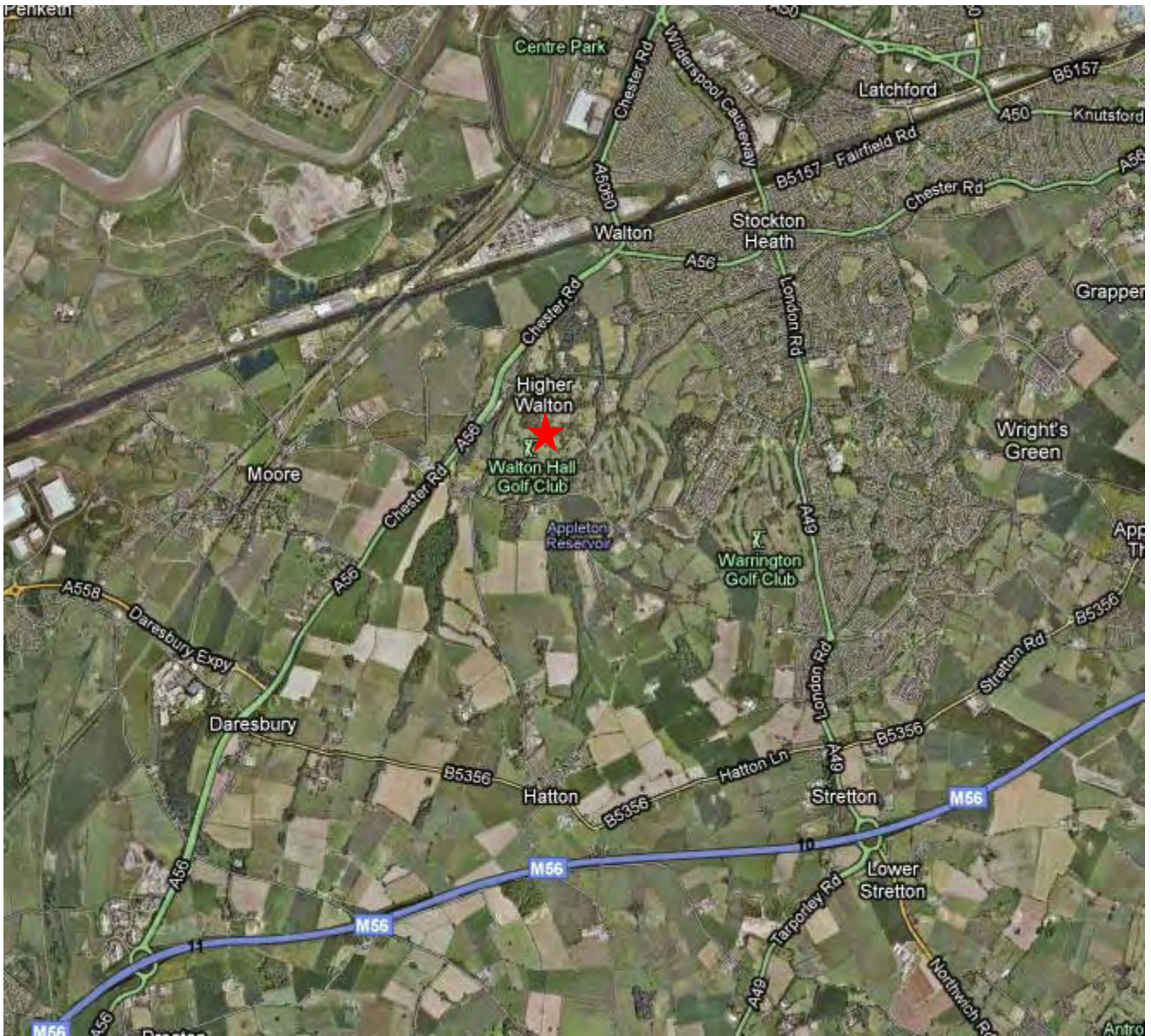
3.3 The Estate includes –

- Walton Hall function and conference centre (The Hall is not directly part of this management plan or Green Flag application) for weddings, christenings, business meetings, etc.
- Public formal gardens and parkland.

- Gardens grounds to the north and east of the Hall, principally lawn areas with terraced area (known as the Flats), with a bandstand. The principal uses are informal public recreation, and open air theatre productions.
- Estate cottages, stabling and outbuildings – all in use for various activities.
- Children's zoo which is 0.8 Ha in size and boasts a diversity of native and exotic animals with enclosures, aviaries and a very well used Visitor centre. Animals include (but in no way a complete list) Bo Bo the donkey (famously on Facebook), ponies, goats, pigs, ducks, peacocks, parakeets/cockatiels/budgies etc., rabbits & guinea pigs which all have animal husbandry buildings associated, and the Red Squirrels of the Breeding programme of which all are very proud.
- Play area – comprising of a fenced area with popular play equipment sited on impact absorbing surfacing, with family seating/picnicking area.
- Pitch & putt/crazy golf/bowling and putting greens which are highly popular and aimed at families, being laid out within the parklands immediately to the east of the Hall and supported by a kiosk.
- Old Coach House – opposite the Heritage yard and operating as a Cycle museum.
- The Piggeries – a large building to the rear of the zoo (currently leased to Warrington Gun Club).
- Walton Hall Golf Course (18 hole championship course) Is generally acknowledged as one of the premier municipal golf courses in the North West of England. Opened in 1971 as a 9 hole facility, the course was extended and redesigned in 1977 by Dave Thomas and Peter Allis and now plays as 6,800 yards par 72 with three par 3's over 200yds long. Recent improvements have increased play and income.
- The Golf Course is not part directly part of this management plan or the Green Flag application.

Walton Hall Gardens





Walton Hall Gardens - Context Map

(See ★)

3.3 Land Ownership

Walton Hall Gardens is owned and managed by Warrington Borough Council. The Council and the Friends of Walton Estate work in partnership for the benefit of the park and the community.



The Friends have assisted with grant applications and in addition have fund raised successfully, donating directly to support schemes such as children's zoo improvements. (Animal Adoption Scheme)

3.4 Walton Hall Gardens

Listed Buildings at Walton Hall Gardens

Listed building status is confirmed for the following structures:-

- Ref 6/60 Walton Hall (The Principal Building)
- Ref 8/61 Retaining wall, balustrades and steps between lawns East of Walton Hall
- Ref 3/82 1 & 2 Bridge House (formerly School House & School Master's House)

3.5 Walton Hall – Function Venue

This facility is currently not within the remit of the Green Flag application, however the management of the Estate is joined up, and many references of the Hall are contained within this document. (Additional public use of the Hall is planned).

The Hall is available for private hire, business conferences and meetings and the like and has just recently re-opened to customers following an extensive refurbishment.

The Hall is open to the public on a limited basis, for special days or events and on sunny days, outdoor catering by the Hall team such as roasts and BBQ's are provided for the public in an area adjacent to the Hall.

3.6 The composition of the site is as follows:-

● Soil

The natural soil cover for the majority of the site is a free draining sandy loam, however since Walton Hall Gardens has a long history of formal gardening, it can be assumed that large amounts of soil have been imported to diversify the range of growing media available.

● Hydrology

Since the underlying bedrock of the majority of the site is sandstone of types, the area is generally well drained. The exception to this is that at the lower corner of the park, adjacent to the Children's Zoo, rainwater does tend to collect to produce very wet ground in the winter period.

● Trees & Woodlands

The Gardens benefit from extensive tree stocks made up of native and exotic species. Many ornamental species were originally established around 60-80 years ago by Lady Daresbury, who had a particular interest in trees. This collection has been enlarged and made even more diverse in recent years and now provide popular and attractive features around the Gardens.

The trees in the Gardens in their various forms, ranging from single specimens, such as the Pocket Handkerchief Tree (*Davidia involurata*) in the formal gardens, to copses and woods around the boundaries of the Gardens are important features of the landscape for recreation and wildlife. The Gardens rich complement of trees have been observed to support a wide range of fungi and invertebrate animals and these in turn support many birds, bats and other animals.

There are two main types of woodland within the park. Semi-natural woodland in fairly small pockets, the chief areas being adjacent to the public car park, and the children's zoo. Areas of mature trees were planted around 100-150 years ago and include a selection of species including oak, ash, horse chestnut, sycamore and holly.

● Flora and Fauna

A broad range of avifauna exists within Walton Hall Gardens including most common garden bird species. There are also significant populations of nuthatch, tree-creeper, Greater spotted woodpecker, pipistrelle bat; heron, grey squirrel, badger, fox, wild rabbit.

3.7 There are the well renowned formal beds, which are planted up with summer bedding to give bright contrasts with both traditional and some trial planting between June and September, and with Spring bedding with some greenery during early winter, but give a vibrant cheerful new start for spring. These include varieties of narcissus, tulip and daffodils.

3.8 The beautiful herbaceous borders give a splendid show throughout mid summer to autumn, soaking up biannual feeds of bonemeal and being protected from weed invasion by periodic mulching, the show is beautiful and cameras are drawn out of

pockets around these borders. The herbaceous borders are a mass of such as Hosta's, Anemone, Asphodeline, Dierama, Penstemon, Aconitum, Bergina, Heuchera, Anthemis, Cimcifuga, Tradescantia and many more.

- 3.9 The well loved spectacular colourful blooms of azaleas and rhododendrons are a delight in spring, and visitors flock to see them. They are located at various places at Walton Hall Gardens, but in large numbers on approaches to the formal gardens especially to the rear of the Hall. Frances, Lady Daresbury arranged collections of these and many other shrubs and trees from various places throughout the world.
- 3.10 The Greenalls Family private Gardens had occasional public open days in the 1920's and 1930's with crowds of up to 45,000 people attending in just one day. Much of the former character and splendour of the day has been preserved.
- 3.11 The Bridgewater Canal defines a boundary to the Gardens. Named after Francis Egerton – the Third Duke of Bridgewater, and was opened 17 July 1761. (See Appendix 1 & 2)
- 3.12 A formal ornamental pond, originally constructed by the Greenall Family is seen adjacent to the main drive on the approach to Walton Hall itself.



*Bridgewater Canal at Walton
(With Hough's Lane bridge in
the background)*

4.0 The History of Walton Hall Gardens (including the Hall)

- 4.1 Walton Hall Gardens and Estate is a remnant of a much larger country estate, purchased in 1812 by the Greenall Family, famous for their brewing industry. The Hall itself was built in Elizabethan style during the 1830's, designed by Edmund Sharpe of Lancaster, who later became famous for the Gothic revival in Victorian architecture.



Walton Hall was built in the 1830's



Walton Stock was admired internationally

- 4.2 During the 1870's, various extensions were completed including the clock tower and a large Gothic-style wing. Unfortunately, when the building was refurbished some 100 years later, certain sections were considered beyond repair and were demolished, leaving only the East Wing and clock tower.

- 4.3 The Greenall Family at Walton.

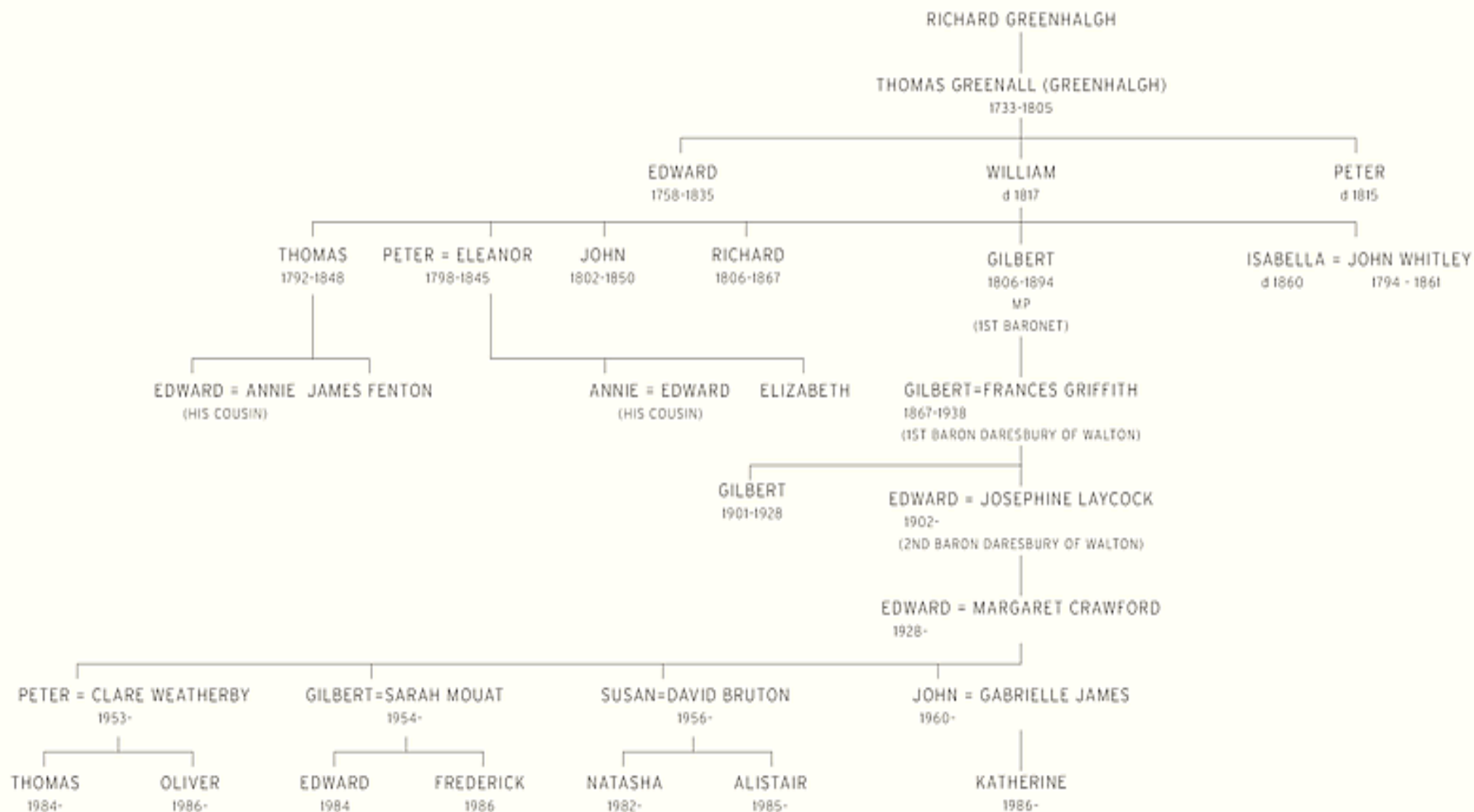
The First Greenall to reside at Walton Hall was Gilbert, grandson of Thomas, founder of the family's first brewery. He is perhaps the best remembered for his long and successful career as Tory MP for Warrington and was awarded a Baronage in 1876 on the recommendation of Sir Benjamin Disraeli.

- 4.4 His only son and heir, another Gilbert, was an expert in the breeding of horses and other livestock. This brought him international admiration and buyers came from America, Germany, Russia, Australia, Africa and many other countries to purchase Walton stock. He also helped to found the Royal International Horse Show at Olympia and was a respected judge at all levels in various classes. In addition, he was District Commissioner of the Cheshire Pony Club. With the Royal Agricultural Show facing insolvency, he was largely responsible for its rescue and remained its Honorary Director for 27 years.

His efforts contributed greatly to the revival of British livestock after the First World War and in 1927 the family was admitted to the peerage, Sir Gilbert becoming the first Lord Daresbury.

- 4.5 Often judged by Lord and Lady Daresbury, the Walton Show – managed by Warrington and District Agricultural Society was a mini Royal Show. Classes included:-
- Dairy Cattle
 - Hunters
 - Shires
 - Many foods including local cheeses
 - A large variety of other classes, which brought competitors and visitors from a distance.
- 4.6 During the 1930's there were up to seventeen stable lads keeping the horses exercised, healthy and in pristine condition, with the immaculate stables and indoor riding school gleaming like a mirror.
- 4.7.1 Lord Daresbury had a favourite grey pony named bubbles. Upon his passing, he was buried at Walton Hall, beneath the windows of his master's private room.

4.8 Greenalls Family Tree



4.9 Acquisition by Warrington Borough Council

The death of Lord Daresbury in October 1938 left the family owing £500,000 in death duties.

This, together with the atmosphere of uncertainty preceding World War 11, led to the sale of the Estate by auction in December 1941. Much of the farmland was bought by existing tenants, whilst Warrington Council purchased the Hall and the surrounding land which now forms the Gardens and Estate, including the municipal golf course for £19,000

- 4.10 On 19th May 1945, Walton Hall Gardens were opened to the public by Alderman Starkey and it immediately became a popular attraction, providing a delightful recreational facility for Warrington residents.

- 4.11 Despite many changes, much of the Garden's former splendour has been preserved, especially in the wonderful array of trees and shrubs in the formal gardens, the inspiration of the First Lady Daresbury.



- 4.12 In spring the grounds reverberate with the colourful blooms of rhododendrons and azaleas collected from all over the world, whilst offering all year round beauty – being designed as a miniature Kew Gardens.

The walk from the Hall towards the Rose Gardens

- 4.13 Stunning rose garden offers amazing scents throughout the summer, with an ornamental pond in the heart of the gardens which captures the reflection of the Hall beautifully. (An ideal location for weddings and other special photographs, our visitors agree.)

As expected in a setting such as Walton Hall Gardens, a large variety of wildlife in addition to the many birds, butterflies and squirrels are attracted, and the woodland is home to owls, foxes and weasels (See Appendix 4).

5.0 Current Service Provision

5.1 The site is maintained by a total of 10 staff including an Estate Manager, a gardener (with seasonal support), shared clerical assistant (with the Hall), Rangers and Attendants. In addition, the Golf Course team carry out the bulk mowing of large and smaller lawn areas, and maintain the pitch & Putt surfaces, putting green and bowling green (See Appendix 5).

5.1.1 There are no bye-laws affecting the site, which lies 3 miles south of Warrington Town Centre, immediately adjacent to the A56 Chester Road and just 3 miles from the M56 Junction 11 but the Gardens are an alcohol free zone.

5.1.2 A welcoming place

Walton Hall Gardens is a much loved place which offers:

- Beautiful formal gardens, many surrounded by manicured hedges.
- Rose Gardens.
- Children's Zoo, with regular developments including Red Squirrel breeding programme. (free access)
- A children's equipped play area.
- A manned site with Ranger Service/Park Keeper and dedicated gardener.
- Areas for peaceful outdoor recreation – Sale paddock, woodlands etc.
- Outdoor Games (Pitch & Putt, Crazy Golf, Bowling, Putting).
- Walton Hall is bookable for weddings and other private functions plus some public events such as carvery meals, public open days and Disability Awareness Day. The Hall is also used by the community, with school presentations and Friends of Walton Music Society as examples.
- Picnic Areas.
- Ornamental lawns.
- Band Stand and summer performances.
- Ornamental Pond.
- Specimen Trees, many with interpretational signage.
- Coffee Shop and vending.
- Diversity of fauna and Flora.
- Wood sculptures.

- Cycle Museum.
- A thriving well established Friends Group.
- A volunteering culture, with assistance to educational and social skills education in a working natural land based & animal husbandry environment.
- Successful partnership working with the neighbourhood community support officer has kept the Gardens free in the main, of antisocial issues.
- A diverse events programme, including organised walks, seasonal activities, outdoor theatre, Disability Awareness Day, Car/Cycle displays, the well loved "Keeper for the day" and many more. There's something for everyone at Walton Hall Gardens.
- Various concessions activities – Land Train, Bouncy Castle, Trampolines, pottery making and painting as regular, and other occasional visiting extras for added optional variety for the visitor at affordable prices.
- Ice cream sales.
- Community recycling facilities, and a location that takes environmental responsibility and sustainability seriously.
- Links with the Bridgewater Canal, the Walton Lea Project, Warrington Model Railway Club, Walton Hall Golf Club, and many more.
- A large, well maintained Pay & Display Car Park, with an overflow field adjacent for summer use.
- Reduced fees for Leisure Card holders who are residents of Warrington for Games.
- Public Conveniences located by the entrance to the Gardens, with fully fitted Disabled access and mother and baby facilities.
- A welcoming feel to the Gardens, with good directional and information signage and the Jewel in the Crown of Warrington's Public Open Spaces.

5.1.3 Walton Hall Gardens is an extremely welcoming and popular public park that is used and enjoyed by those who visit it.

5.1.4 The Rangers and Games Attendants keep a watchful eye on the Gardens, and are a focal point of contact for information and assistance.

5.1.5 The management ethos is centred on welcoming visitors to the Gardens.

5.1.6 In addition to being proud holders of the Green Flag, Walton Hall Gardens have Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS) accreditation to ensure quality and customer focus.

5.1.7 The ornamental gardens are mainly concentrated at the top corner of the Gardens, and the adjacent Rose Garden has a number of benches in memorial of loved ones for users to use, enjoy and reflect in tranquillity.

5.1.8 Walton Hall Gardens is used by individuals, families, informal and formal groups on a daily basis for wide variety of purposes.

5.1.9 In a morning, there are a number of regulars who visit the Gardens and walk around the site, either by themselves or with a friend/family member and many with a dog. Dogs are welcome onsite, with responsible owners following the dog code. Also, parents, Grandparents and others with young children often visit early in the day after siblings have been taken to nursery or school, and often make use of the play area whilst enjoying the setting (to the sound of birdsong).



Formal Gardens with spring bedding showing clock tower in background

5.1.10 Many visitors to the Gardens arrive during the day, especially at weekends or during school holidays to enjoy many of the various facilities available, and to enjoy the beauty.

5.1.11 There are various licensees operating at the Gardens that offer a diversity to the day or afternoon out. In addition, they bring in valuable income which offsets some of the costs of day to day running of the Gardens by direct income via rents and licences to operate, and indirectly by adding to the visitor experience so greater numbers of visitors are likely. Some direct marketing of these is also of dual benefit, and current operators on the site work well with the Estate management team.

5.1.12 Making good use of the buildings in these ways keeps them managed in reasonable condition and dry. These include:-

- The cycle museum (based at the lower part of the Gardens in the old Coach House, by the Coffee Shop)
- Various children's traditional outdoor amusements – trampolines, bouncy inflatable slide and a land train which completes two small circuits around the lower Gardens, passing by the Children's Zoo and the front of the Hall
- Pottery in the Park – The making and/or painting of a variety of pottery items aimed specifically at children. (See appendix 7)
- Ice cream sales

5.1.13 A condition of operation at the Gardens is that annual agreements are made regarding reasonable charges to visitors. (except the cycle museum which is free), and the pottery has a range of prices for differing activities.

5.2 Access and Signage (current service provision)

5.2.1 The site is signposted from the A56 with brown/cream Tourist Destination signs.

5.2.2 The primary pedestrian and vehicle access point is through the main entrance and adjacent new footbridge on Walton Lea Road. One other recognised pedestrian access point exists via a public right of way from Hough's Lane on the western boundary.

5.2.3 A new bridge has been in place for three years to separate pedestrians from light vehicles at the main entrance off Walton Lea Road. This along with more clearly defined pedestrian routes on the main driveway, has improved safety standards for vehicles and pedestrians alike. The scheme has been funded through a successful WREN (Landfill Tax Credit Scheme) grant, which was submitted as a partnership bid between the Borough Council and Friends of Walton Estate.

5.2.4 The bridge was officially opened by the Mayor of Warrington on 2nd July 2007. A new pedestrian pathway now links the new bridge directly into the park without the need to cross vehicle routes.



*New pedestrian footbridge at main entrance to the Gardens (opened July 2007)
landfill tax funding Obtained in partnership with the Friends of Walton Estate*

5.2.5 There have been improvements made to directional signage on the public highway as part of the major roadwork's scheme carried out a few years ago.

5.2.6 Further signs were installed showing the route for delivery vehicles and Walton Hall Golf Course, as a separate access to general Gardens visitors.

5.2.7 A new cycleway on the A56 has been built as part of the road scheme and a new signed cycle route into Walton Hall Gardens is now identified.

5.2.8 In the past 18 months, additional directional signs have been installed to improve visitor safety and experience. New signs also identify more clearly the waste recycling centre on the car park and further improvements have been made to the large vehicle delivery route, including new Bitmacing, additional speed bumps, and more sign posting (Sale Paddock area). Directional signs were installed to improve visitor safety and experience, which improve information.



Photograph showing additional signs installed at the main entrance, to highlight public parking provision

5.2.9 Access for all

At Walton Hall Gardens, we have endeavoured to open up all areas for everyone. Facilities include:-

- Disabled parking bays (free parking for blue badge holders)
- Fully accessible toilets including hoist and plinth
- Lift in Walton Hall to upper floor
- Easy access gardens
- Most paths have a tarmac surface aiding access for wheelchair users and prams
- Hearing loop systems
- Free wheelchair hire



- 5.3 Healthy, safe and secure (current service provision)
- 5.3.1 Warrington Borough Council's Health and Safety Team are responsible for the preparation and implementation of the Council's Health and Safety Policy, a copy of which is held onsite.
- 5.3.2 Site procedures and risk management documentation are maintained at Walton Hall Gardens. A copy is available on request. Both site staff and contractors carry out Legionella monitoring to comply with legislation and good practice. (See Appendix 6).
- 5.3.3 Consultation carried out at Walton Hall Gardens, indicates that users do generally feel safe and secure whilst using the park and the various manned presence functions and locations assist with this.
- 5.3.4 The alcohol free area designation with signage also assists, and meetings have been held with a working group drawing from areas of experience such as the Gardens Team, Community Support Officers and Neighbourhood Police, Community Safety, Youth Team and enforcement officers.
- 5.3.5 There are quite infrequent gatherings of youths in an evening in the main, especially during warm dry weather with occasional generally minor associated problems.
- 5.3.6 Two important wooden structures onsite (shelter and bandstand) had arson attacks over the past 4 years rendering them unusable, however design, planning and systems are reviewed and are currently successful with monitoring the site. Sadly, these have been caused by a very small number of individuals, and the approach prior to the second incident was occasional periodic operations in association with the police, whereby on agreed dates, authorities enter the Gardens at night from various access points, and take whatever actions are deemed necessary.
- 5.3.7 Landscape maintenance within the Gardens is being carried out in such a way that it designs out crime, with such as hedge reduction and good pruning/shaping of shrubs such as in the car park, which has ensured good visibility wherever possible. There is CCTV in and around the Hall and other buildings, and alarms are fitted.
- 5.3.8 Procedures are in place to protect property and staff, and all locations within the Gardens have an internal telephone system for ease and quick response, including the locations that are outposts.
- 5.3.9 The Gardens is manned by Rangers daily, who remain on site until official closing time (on a sliding scale depending upon daylight). The Gardens are not secure and does not have gates, however the car park barriers are closed when they leave, and traffic control bollards restrict access to vehicles. There are two privately owned properties by the entrance, and often functions in the Hall in evenings, so this is an aid to security.
- 5.3.10 A replacement bandstand is being planned by the Estate management, and the estimated completion timescale is mid June 2011. It will be a metal structure and fit for purpose, whilst keeping in with it's surroundings. Further talks and costing, along with options for the location in addition to extra play facilities, are ongoing. Clearly, the Council's overall finances shall be a factor with decisions of a significant nature onsite.

- 5.3.10 There are various focal points for the public to meet staff or representatives of the Gardens. At major events, the Friends Group assist in a site presence to aid with enquiries and direct people, checking of tickets and seating (outdoor theatre) and hold awareness and activities events.
- 5.3.11 The existing licensees who provide services to visitors (at agreed costs with the Gardens Management) are a further presence, and are often praised for assistance in a range of issues. They are effectively another part of an extended team with common aims, and include amusements operator by the picnic area - with supa slide and trampolines, a land train which completes 2 laps of one of two circular routes (normal route & an alternative for when weddings and functions are taking place).
- 5.3.12 There is also a pottery making and/or painting activity licensee who operates by the children's zoo in good weather, within the confines of the play area. In addition, there are one or two ice cream vans on the site, which all add to a presence. (See Appendix 6 – Pottery in the Park).
- 5.3.13 Most of these activities are located within a few hundred yards of Gardens staff who have both a walkie talkie system and mobile phone.
- 5.3.14 The largest event, Disability Awareness Day (now become effectively Disability Awareness Week) which has grown substantially through the fantastic work of Warrington Disability Partnership (WDP), is held in July annually (SEE APPENDIX 34).

Approximately 50 marshal's are onsite for their major event and the Gardens team assist massively by integrating functions and supervising areas within their round. Up to 30,000 visitors attend the Gardens over the course of the week, with the largest numbers for the main Sunday event.

Training is both thorough and up to date for all at this huge event. It includes evacuation and fire training and procedures, location awareness, structure of organisers on the day, lost children etc. and specialist first aid and parking assistance are employed.

A high quality localised frequency radio system is operated by WDP and Gardens staff carry these too.

5.3.15 Manned coffee shop and Toilet facilities

The Gardens have a coffee shop, which is manned often by two or more of the in house catering team which is close to the entrance.

At off peak times, the coffee shop provides vending for hot/cold drinks and snacks, with Rangers near by for assistance.

- 5.3.16 The Toilet facilities have a RADAR scheme, fully accessible unisex disabled toilet/mother and baby area and wash area along with Ladies and Gents facilities, located close to the Gardens entrance, car park and coffee shop.
- 5.3.17 The cleaning of toilets is carried out as appropriate to the usage necessity, with a presence for a large part of the afternoon on busy summer weekends and midweek school holidays. Notices advise on who to contact should they feel this necessary, and any issues that may arise when not continuously manned are dealt with speedily.

5.3.18 Visitor Centre at the Children's Zoo

The children's zoo boasts a visitor centre (with Friends assistance regarding funding), along with washrooms with clear advice to ensure personal hygiene.

Signs and the manned presence deter any unauthorised feeding of the animals, although good contact is promoted, with guidance. The Zoo Rangers operate a "Keeper For The Day" for children to assist in looking after the animals close up, and this is offered at most school holidays.

These are pre booked well in advance and ensure safe manageable numbers. This could often be oversubscribed many times over, and the next available date may provisionally be booked for some children. The public are made aware of feeding times.

5.3.19 Onsite first aid is provided throughout the Gardens during opening hours by qualified staff. Details of how to locate a first aider are displayed on information signs by the main entrance and the Children's zoo. Accident data is forwarded to the Councils Health and Safety section, but in most cases incidents are of the nature of scratches, bruises & minor cuts from play activities.

5.3.20 The car park and main driveway within Walton Gardens are sympathetically lit at dusk, and remain illuminated until all visitors and staff have left the site. A strict 5mph speed limit is in place for safety, and suppliers are requested to make deliveries prior to the Gardens becoming busy, for added safety.

5.3.21 All play equipment on site conforms to the appropriate British and European standards. Details of the inspection and maintenance regime (See Appendix 8).

5.3.22 Apparatus and surrounding surfaces are cleansed during regular site checks throughout the Gardens opening hours.

5.3.23 The Gardens with its facilities, contribute to increasing the quality of

life for those who live both in the immediate area (dog walkers and

general walkers/visitors), residents of Warrington and indeed Halton – as a great many visitors are from Halton area's of Runcorn and Widnes close by, in addition to others from the wider area. (10-50 mile radius is not uncommon - which include some of the largest populations of the North West of England - See Appendix 9).



Extensive Play Area (adj to Children's Zoo)

5.3.24 The Gardens are freely accessible with free access, (including the children's zoo) which enables local people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the diversity of both the site, the flora and fauna and the seasons which is known to provide health benefits such as relieving stress, helping to reduce the risk of strokes and coronary heart disease by exercise, assisting with all sorts of general wellbeing and anxiety and depression type illness.

5.3.25 The Gardens promote healthy lifestyles for all through formal and informal play and games provision, by providing a range of equipment for use by ticketed fee in a safe, fun and diverse environment.

5.3.26 Many schools, both within Warrington and from large towns and cities nearby, nurseries, scouts/guides, sports clubs, charities, and a diverse number of groups from all backgrounds and ages visit Walton Hall Gardens. Many enquire in advance of their visit and arrange food or use of facilities. Some advise the Gardens team for awareness which can assist in tracking groups & lost children issues. Other groups arrive onsite without prior arrangement to enjoy the beauty on the day.

5.3.27 Busses, Coaches, mini busses and smaller vehicles can often be seen and the car park is well set out to cope with these. At exceptionally busy times, there is a manned presence by teams from a car park management company, and the overflow car park which is an adjacent field comes into use.

5.4 Well maintained and clean (current service provision)

5.4.1 Gardening and grounds maintenance is carried out to a high standard by the our long serving highly skilled gardener, who is assisted by seasonal support from other site staff (Rangers, Park Keeper and other attendants) for seasonal bed clearing/preparation/planting out and other significant tasks during the spring, summer and autumn (See Appendix 10).

5.4.2 The main lawn areas, smaller lawns, and most fine turf areas such as the pitch and putt greens and bowling/putting greens are mowed and maintained by the Golf Course team based at the side of the Gardens main public areas (sale paddock).

5.4.3 The bowling greens team of greenkeepers assist during parts of the winter on major tasks such as hedge trimming and shrub bed maintenance, and also with the often unplanned weather related issues such as snow/ice treatments.

5.4.4 The play areas are monitored and maintained by the Facilities Maintenance Team based offsite who ensure that the play area is safe by way of weekly engineering inspections. Daily cleansing of the play area is undertaken by the gardener, with some weekend outside support.

5.4.5 Tree management is carried out by the Councils Arboriculture (Tree) Team.

The management and inspection of all mature tree stock is covered within a five year Cyclical Management Programme. Tree data is recorded and updated using the EzyTreev software system. Where ever possible, standing deadwood is retained for wildlife value where it does not pose a potential threat to public safety. Some is carved as features of public interest, such as the fox and owl adjacent to the main driveway, and also seating such as to enjoy the beautiful view in tranquillity by the rear of the pond.

5.4.6 The day to day cleansing of the Gardens is carried out by the gardener with some support from others onsite. Periodically, the ornamental pond is cleared and occasionally drained, and the zoo pond has routine cleansing and extraction of water to remove soluble residues mainly from the water fowl and run off. Less frequently, the

zoo pond is drained and dug out fully. Refilling is to a low level, and rainfall provides the remainder to appropriate levels, so as to employ good environmental housekeeping.

5.4.7 Site cleansing and waste bin emptying regimes are in place and are programmed to complement seasonal trends in usage and to present a litter free Gardens. Additional bins to those permanently located are placed at appropriate points to take additional capacity on busy days & for events. Areas include the main lawns and the "3 Flats" lawns to the side of the Hall and leading to the public footpath access out onto Hough's Lane.

5.4.8 Litter and site arisings are dealt with considering the least detriment to the environment.

5.4.9 Green waste and some zoo arisings are taken away from the Gardens by a Waste Management company for composting. Council "Blue Bin" collections were actively sought by the Gardens team and after setting up an agreement, these are now collected on the same day as surrounding residents. These take cardboard, paper, plastic, glass and cans as mixed dry recyclables from key areas.

Some general waste, especially during high season does go to landfill, but the aim is to always keep this to a minimum.

5.4.10 Toilet facilities are maintained on a seasonal programme and are cleansed daily. Staff inspect toilet facilities regularly. During summer weekends and all school holidays, a greater frequency of cleansing and inspection occurs. Information signs are in place indicating the standards of cleansing and any issues can be reported via the coffee shop or Rangers.

5.4.11 The Gardens team undertake many repairs including fencing works and other timber works and treatments, repairs to hard surfaces and a variety of infrastructure upkeep tasks.

5.4.12 Specialist repairs including most to buildings are carried out by the Council's Building Maintenance Unit.

5.5 Sustainability (current service provision)

5.5.1 The principles followed in protecting the Gardens environment are to reduce, re-use, recycle or if necessary dispose of waste in a sustainable manner. These principles are adopted by all staff on site and by the Council's workshops (for machinery repairs) and other support Departments. Adoption of such has resulted in actions which deal effectively and safely with environmental issues.

5.5.2 Use of Power and Water are also monitored, and lighting and equipment is turned off when not in use. Water Flow monitors are fitted to some cisterns onsite, and as repairs and replacements occur, more shall be added.

5.5.3 With timber onsite, standing deadwood is left where appropriate to encourage wildlife to thrive, and habitat piles can be useful in providing shelter, habitat and a food source and leaves the timber to the natural decaying processes.

5.5.4 Some bulbs and summer bedding are lifted and taken to the Walton Lea Project, a nearby establishment that aids adults by providing horticultural and associated works (arranging sales including a roaming van, selling organic produce, eggs and the like).

This allows new use and activity, saving our partners cost and saving the Gardens space and transport costs for the green waste recycling contractor.

5.5.5 All staff working at the Gardens have a sound awareness of the need to preserve and protect the environment whilst maintaining or managing diverse areas according to good practice (See Appendix 11).

5.5.6 The Use of Pesticides

Where at all possible, the use of mechanical forms of weed control is adopted. Insecticide or fungicide is only rarely used at the Gardens when other forms of weed control are not feasible. e.g. The management of fine turf areas/lawns. Herbicide application is highly restricted and stock and type of product onsite is very limited.

5.5.7 The active ingredients that provide the best result, but minimum effect to the environment in terms of content and longevity are chosen.

5.5.8 Guidelines have been developed to ensure that pesticides are applied safely and effectively these include:

- Control and application only by NTPC certified staff (PA1, PA6a)
- Storage only within approved pesticide safes, located in designated areas at the Gardens or Golf Course close by.
- Pesticide log maintained by certified staff on site
- Careful selection of the correct product for the job – Biactive if possible
- Timing of application for best effect with minimum usage
- Timing of application to eliminate visitor/wildlife exposure
- Safe disposal of packaging
- Pesticide use within the vicinity of ponds, ditches and streams is strictly controlled and requires prior approval by the Environment Agency.
- Weed Suppression
- Cultural practices such as retention of leaf litter within informal planting and the use of woodchips produced onsite or bark mulch results in a lesser need for weed control – manual or pesticide.
- Careful use of organic fertilisers and manures to beds makes a positive contribution to conservation and the environment, with benefits to soil nutrient content which aids healthy plant growth.
- The Golf Course team are trailing the use of Primo Max growth regulators on turf, which reduce the frequency of mowing, thus saving on fuel usage, and which can also reduce some of the need to irrigate often when warm. This can also “lock in” fungicide products when applied shortly afterwards, especially when grass growth is slowing a little naturally. This makes products used more effective, and last longer.

5.5.9 Green Waste Recycling

Some plant material/soil/leaves generated by maintaining the Gardens is recycled on site where possible. A larger quantity is taken offsite and recycled as part of the Council's Borough wide green waste recycling initiative.

5.5.10 Water Supplies

Water pressure within the Gardens is poor. As a result of this, methods of water retention have been developed over time. These include:-

- Cultivation, mulching and ground cover practices, which reduce evaporation of water from the soil.
- Improving the water holding capacity of soils by incorporating organic material. Manufactured water-holding products have also been trailed. When there is a need to irrigate (newly planted bedding, fine turf, shrubs under stress and the like), as early in the day as possible is chosen to get good absorption by the soil and uptake by the plant, to avoid wilting but also to aim to avoid scorch damage. Occasionally, evening staff have had necessity to undertake this too, after the main volume of visitors have left the Gardens.

5.5.11 Paper, Glass, Cardboard, Metal & Plastic Waste Recycling

Waste from some parts of the Gardens is recycled within the council's established recycling process.

5.5.12 Waste bins are available in the Estate Office and Gardeners yard, for the collection of combined dry recyclables - glass, plastic cans, paper & cardboard.

5.5.13 Machinery parts and used oils are collected at Woolston Depot, the main workshops, for reprocessing.

5.5.14 Waste recycling is reviewed annually to reflect Warrington Borough Council policy.

5.6 Conservation and Heritage (current service provision)

5.6.1 All at Walton Hall Gardens are aware of the privileges that they enjoy on a daily basis, working on such a beautiful site of regional importance. Both employees, Friends, volunteers and visitors alike appreciate and value its importance as a large open location with very diverse natural and managed flora and fauna.

5.6.2 Such diversity of the historical nature of the site is well recorded and boasts:-

- Natural and planted gardens and mature parkland
- Copses and woods
- A Grade 2 listed Building – The Hall (not included in this management plan)
- Grade 2 listed former School House and School Master's House – by the entrance to the Gardens.
- Grade 2 listed retaining wall, balustrades and steps to the East of the Hall.
- Wide variety of fauna from the vast populations of wild rabbit's, grey squirrels, badgers, foxes, common garden bird species and less so nuthatch, tree-creeper, Greater spotted woodpecker, pipistrelle bats and herons + a great many more large and mini beast creatures.

5.6.3 An important conservation programme – the Red Squirrel breeding programme (see appendix 12), which joins up with other locations and assists a species in decline.

- 5.6.4 Visitor focus is paramount, with the Zoo Rangers constantly looking to engage with the public and enhance the variety of inhabitants of the Zoo.
- 5.6.5 Our other Ranger and Staff enjoy undertaking a range of duties such as guided walks with interpretation and elements of the history of the site, conservation, habitat and diversity support, working with all ages for their understanding and enjoyment with such as;
- Event planning and on the day management
 - Conservation work including assisting nature in natural areas on the site
 - Upkeep of the site
 - Many more functions to provide a diverse location of destination
- 5.6.6. The Gardens were originally laid out as a private Estate for the Greenall Family. Their style and layout are typical of grand designs of the period and are maintained and sympathetically developed in order to retain their historical value.
- 5.6.7 Our Highly skilled and committed gardener keeps the Gardens in pristine condition, for what is now third generation visitors to enjoy, relax and reflect in their favourite locations. Some remember the Gardens soon after becoming public (open in 1945), whilst others who now have teenagers and younger children remember the period afterwards.
- 5.6.8 There is much supporting material regarding the management of the children's zoo contained in and with this document, and both the Friends (& other volunteers) and the management have high on the agenda, the upkeep and replacement of some zoo buildings as budgets allow. Ring fencing of the Animal Adoption Scheme income for the Zoo is proving very helpful.
- 5.6.9 There is currently work ongoing to look at options regarding the buildings at Walton Hall Gardens, with some material attached to this plan. More shall be known when a report by a group with Friends and public representatives makes its recommendations known in Spring 2011.
- 5.6.10 The continuation of bids for funding as a partnership with the Friends and others is planned, and a pricing evaluation for activities shall look at and make recommendations regarding charges for such as car parking etc. to the Council in winter 2011.
- 5.6.11 There really is something special in terms of Heritage and Conservation for everyone at Walton Hall Gardens, and all the team want as many people as possible to enjoy it and ensure that it is passed on to future generations (See appendix 13 & 14).



A small sample of the beautiful architecture of Walton Hall Gardens (construction of various buildings commenced from the 1830's through to 1920)

- 5.6.12 Many of the buildings have been renovated, and most others are in use and in reasonable repair. Apart from Walton Hall itself, the buildings are used as a coffee shop, a cycle museum, a rangers Office and visitor information area and staff offices/storage areas for activities that take place throughout the seasons.

Due to budget pressures experienced in 2010, the Heritage centre is normally closed and only opened occasionally for major seasonal events.

- 5.6.13 A small paperback book, edited by Jen Darling, published by Alfresco Books with Acknowledgements noted as Walton Hall Rangers and Warrington Museum details Walton Hall and the Greenall Family History. A small number are available for purchase on request.

5.7 Community Involvement (current provision)

- 5.7.1 Walton Hall Gardens is open for all of the community and visitors from far and wide to visit and enjoy. The Friends provide excellent support to the Gardens team, in terms of administrative support (especially with the animal adoption scheme), planning and thought sharing, in undertaking physical works and supportive works such as selling tickets and events marshalling, in assisting with applications for grant funding (Walton Hall Gardens have been very successful with this over recent years, and in fact has a £45K grant at present from WREN which will provide additional play equipment.
- 5.7.2 Open discussions with the Friends are frequent, and the support that they give is to be commended. A huge amount of hours are put into what they do, which all the professional team are aware is their own time. The Friends carry out visitor surveys too, and are happy to assist in formulating and carrying out in partnership with the Gardens team (Appendix 16 & 18).
- 5.7.3 Recent consultation by the Friends Group confirmed that the public would like to have the Heritage Yard open again as a focal point for the Gardens. Following discussions, this was made possible and it shall return to public access in February 2011. This shall provide an additional area of shelter from any passing rain shower, and a location for notices, leaflets and other material to be available and for use with events.
- 5.7.4 The Friends are represented on the Walton Estate Advisory Group (WEAG) group, and Keith Inman the Chair of the Friends and others are doing sterling work in bringing over nine hundred concepts and visions together for informed debate. The clear aim for all is to protect and preserve Walton Hall Gardens for today and for the future.
- 5.7.5 A common interest is evident, and the Gardens management will always work with the Friends and others, seeking to move forward positively in a direction that a majority broadly agree with.
- 5.7.6 Meetings take place with the police, car park management and other agencies regarding the site to ensure that there are few issues to deal with. The team are very proud of the support given with hosting Warrington Disability Partnership's huge successful Disability Awareness Day, which now actually spans five days with small

events prior to the main Sunday Event. It celebrates it's twentieth anniversary in 2011 (See Appendix 34).

5.7.7 The team are also extremely pleased to support many volunteers from a broad spread of organisations and for different purposes. These include students (School, college, university or unemployed looking for experience), working with people with learning difficulties, young offenders and the probation service and many individuals. For good and safe management, there is a need to limit numbers, and the team are fully booked up until September (in January).

5.8 Effective marketing of the Gardens and Estate (current provision)

5.8.1 Web Sites:

Walton Hall Gardens information is available and promoted on various Websites. The development of such is ongoing, working together with the Friends Group and others. The Friends have recently created their own website and the team at Walton Hall Gardens supply updated items of interest for inclusion into this.

5.8.2 Websites directly managed or closely linked to Walton Hall Gardens are:-

www.warrington.gov.uk/waltongardens

www.fowe.btck.co.uk (The new Friends Website)

Facebook at BOBO the Donkey (Over 3,000 Friends recorded)

Potteryinthepark.co.uk

www.waltonhallgolfclub.co.uk

5.8.3 Other websites referring to Walton Hall Gardens can be found with links on the following:-

www.visitBritain.com Via VAQAS accreditation

www.enjoyEngland.com Via VAQAS accreditation

www.information-britain.co.uk

www.warringtondisabilitypartnership.co.uk

References to Walton Gardens and Estate with briefings on DAD

www.chester.com

www.tyingthenot.com

5.8.4 Useful e-mail addresses are :-

e-mail waltonrangers@warrington.gov.uk

e-mail fwhm@talktalk.net Friends Of Walton Hall Music (Norman Cutter)

e-mail informationcentre@warrington.gov.uk Tel 01925 428585

5.8.5 In addition to these websites, the status of Walton Hall Gardens means that there are a number of additional websites detailing the site which are not under the control of the Gardens management or close partners. Some are good, and there is also a very good photograph display showing the Estates assets during various seasons on You Tube.

5.8.6 VAQAS Accreditation – The Rose Marque

VAQAS is a key link between the components of the Marketing Policy for all of the Estate.

Its award gives a Quality Assurance as a Visitor attraction with key advantages such as enhanced promotion on www.visitBritain.com and www.enjoyEngland.com and prioritised involvement in targeted marketed campaigns.

Key benefits include:-

- Accessibility advice
- Quality Guidance Booklet
- Self Assessment toolkit
- Practical aid to plan quality developments
- A detailed full site quality assessment
- An instant One-to-one debrief regarding visit findings with advice
- A report detailing aspects of quality and development issues, to use as an annual reference in planning to innovate and improve and setting milestones in the process.

5.8.7 The Rose Marque can be used without limits, including in local, regional and national tourism guides. At Walton Hall Gardens, we regard the VAQAS accreditation as an integral part of marketing.

5.8.8 Zoo news

The Walton Hall Gardens Zoo news is sent to a distribution list for a large number of visitors including schools and other groups, and is aimed directly at promoting and informing visitors of all current zoo issues.

It is produced twice yearly, and the latest copy is available as (See Appendix 12).

5.8.9 What's on in Warrington's Parks and Green Spaces

The "What's On" pocket sized booklet is produced by the Parks and Woodlands Service, and is displayed on the Council's website and has 10,000 copies produced and distributed to the sites themselves, to community buildings such as Leisure Centres and Libraries, and to community groups across the town.

We have partners at some local hotels who are also pleased to have What's on brochures and occasional more site based or single event promotions available for their guests.

It covers eight sites, giving details of activities such as Family events, Health walks, Guided Walks, Natural history walks and Volunteer community workdays. In addition, all relevant site contact details are given. It has two productions annually, an April to September edition, and an October to March edition (See appendix).

5.8.10 Media

The Gardens have formed a good relationship with the local media, which includes Warrington Worldwide, Wire FM, The Warrington Guardian, South Warrington News and a great many more diverse organisations and networks.

Some promotions are purchased for publication or airing in the media, whilst some are in the form of editorials, which are great free promotions and can often tell a longer and more interesting story.

The Zoo, especially at Easter, Birthing times, Christmas or when we have had snowfall is always there as a top cheerful local story.

- 5.8.11 Events such as small charity and group events, Warrington Athletics, Cheshire Cross Country & the Families Reunited Santa Dash promote the Gardens and provide income.

These are encouraged, and often provide their own promotional material. The very large Disability Awareness Day, which has now infact grown to an event with visitors from all corners of the UK, Europe and even further have their own promotions which we provide material to as partners. (Ian Johnson of the Gardens is an all year round representative with Management team meetings with the organisers – Warrington Disability Partnership's DAD Management Board). Some 30,000 visitors attend during the Disability Awareness Week, with most on the main day – Sunday.

- 5.8.12 Continued promotion of the Gardens shall be reviewed, to tap into the massive footfall crossing the bridge with the aim of re-visits and passing on positive image by word of mouth to friends and family. The Gardens team have worked together promoting Outdoor Theatre with signing, for an inclusive audience.

As DAD draws closer, the Councils road network electronic signs, located all around the town advise all road users of the event and Park and Ride details (See appendices 34).

- 5.8.13 A review of events held with customer feedback shall continue to ensure that events are appropriate and what the public want, at times and prices that suite as best possible in addition.

- 5.8.14 The successful Cheshire year of the Garden (2008) and Cheshire Gardens of Distinction promotions worked well in promoting Walton Hall Gardens within Warrington, Cheshire and wider area. There were benefits of shared costs and access to various forms of expertise on many occasions.

- 5.8.15 Working with partners shall be beneficial in difficult budgetary times, but pressures they might face are uncertain.

5.8.16 Very positive promotions brought the regional weather presenter Jo Blythe to Walton Hall Gardens to record the evening weather for the Granada region of broadcast. Being in the eye and visitors having enjoyable experiences lead to more recognition, and the Gardens team intend to continue this trend (See appendix 39).

5.9 Management (Current Provision)

5.9.1 Our Gardener, the Golf Course team (for much of the bulk and fine turf mowing), the Bowls team (for short spells in Winter), seasonal support for bedding out, and assistance from all on the Estate at key times, maintain the gardens, grounds, games areas, water features and hard surfaces to a very high standard.

5.9.2 The Councils Facilities maintenance team inspect and repair play areas, whilst the Arboricultural team plan and execute major tree works.

5.9.3 The Zoo is maintained by our two highly skilled and experienced Zoo Rangers. Our other highly skilled experienced Ranger and Park Keeper undertake seasonal activities, interpretational workshops, events, walks etc. Our Attendants, Cleaners, Car Park management teams and many others also contribute massively to the successful running of the Gardens, and are highly valued.

5.9.10 The help of the Friends of Walton Estate and other volunteers assist in the planning for community workdays and specific projects such as the clean up of the fenced area by the footbridge. All those who help at the Gardens are also highly valued.

5.9.11 Qualifications and experience requirements for all of the Gardens staff have been identified, and regular Performance Review and Development appraisals are conducted. This identifies key requirement and desired skills gaps, training needs and ensures that high quality service standards are met.

5.9.12 The Green Flag five year action plan clearly sets out development projects and actions required for Walton Hall Gardens over single year periods. Achievements are monitored by the Estate Management team. Regular meetings are held with all staff to monitor progress in delivering the management plan objectives. This process helps to measure improvement and effectiveness in the overall management of the site, and build a sense of ownership and pride in the workforce.

5.9.13 Actions identified in the management plan will be delivered from within existing financial resources. It is anticipated that further enhancement and development of the Gardens will be sought through a variety of sources including landfill tax, lottery funding and possible partnerships locally.

5.9.14 Future developments are under consideration by the Walton Estate Advisory Group (WEAG) and a report is planned to be put to the Executive Board of the Council in Spring 2011.

5.9.15 The Gardens are operating to the following Council Strategies:-

- Sustainable Community Strategy - Ambition 2 ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE AND ATTRACTIVE

Where people have good housing, accessible transport and enjoy caring for their environment.

- Sustainable Community Strategy - Ambition 3 EMPOWERED AND SAFE

Where people are active and supportive in their communities, feel safe and live free from crime and anti-social behaviour

- Sustainable Community Strategy - Ambition 5 AMBITIOUS AND ACHIEVING

Where people are inspired and supported to reach their full potential and lead fulfilling lives

5.9.16 The Gardens Management liaises with visitors to ensure they are satisfied with the natural and built environment at Walton Hall Gardens. The Friends of Walton Estate have regular formal and informal meetings with the Gardens management and visitor questionnaires/surveys are regularly undertaken in partnership.

5.9.17 Details of the Walton Hall Gardens management and operational structure can be found in Appendix 1.

6.0 Future Management Aims and Objectives

6.1 A welcoming place

Walton Hall Gardens Aims

- 6.1.2 To continuously develop our provision of accessible, attractive, safe, clean and welcoming environment for the enjoyment of all ages, and to be the Jewel in the Crown of Warrington's Parks and Woodlands.
- 6.1.3 A further extensive site survey is proposed for summer 2011, to ensure that up to date views are known and therefore the management, Friends and others can base future thinking on development based on up to date views.
- 6.1.4 Work schedules for the site are detailed and includes physical work and improvements, policies, working groups, administration and record keeping for the year 2011 until the 2012 Green Flag and VAQAS visits. Additions to those plans will take place, as shall actions in response to any changing circumstances including budget pressures.
- 6.1.5 A focus shall be the:-
 - Children's Zoo (Highlighting its free access to visitors).
 - Conservation and heritage work (inc. guided walks provided by the Rangers – FREE to visitors).
 - Raising awareness of birds and wildlife at Walton Gardens and Estate.
 - Holding quality community based and professional events that people want.
 - Ensure provision of service at the Gardens are affordable for many.
- 6.1.6 The Gardens team will positively project the **“There's something for everyone at Walton Gardens”** brand, and continue to be a professional smiling face of Walton. Continuous improvement, looking at all aspects of the visitor experience shall ensure that all go home with a feeling of wellbeing, having been made welcome and advised on what is available (in various forms).

6.2 Healthy, Safe and Secure (Future Management Aims and Objectives)

- 6.2.1 The Gardens are a place of tranquillity, and provide a spectrum of activities that provide for health and wellbeing. These include:-
 - Guided walks
 - Route plans for casual walking
 - Seating for relaxation
 - Areas for games
 - Locations for various outdoor hobbies such as bird and wildlife watching etc.
- 6.2.2 The future provision of bird breakfast walks and some such as around the Gardens or Walton Village will be continued and the experience developed.

- 6.2.3 The children's zoo shall continue to be maintained and developed, with various working parties being planned in Spring to treat wooden buildings and fences etc. A zoo specific survey shall identify public views, and ensure that this outstanding and free to enter provision continues to thrive.
- 6.2.4 A regular site presence ensures a good feeling of safety for visitors on the site and the team are always looking for innovations for improvements in land management, conservation and with events for the public.
- 6.2.5 The Gardens Management shall continue with site surveys to ensure that a safe feeling is maintained, or that any issues could be realised and dealt with very quickly should there be any occasional concern – however large or small.
- 6.2.6 Meetings shall continue with local agencies including the community support officers and youth service, to ensure that the site remains safe and inviting to enjoy.
- 6.2.7 Site vendors are vetted via the Council's site licensing process, and this shall be reviewed by the Gardens Management as these come up for renewal. Any options shall be discussed with the Friends to ensure that their views on what is appropriate, and staff views shall feed in to the decision making process, as they are onsite over 7 days a week. This includes CRB checks, Health and Safety, Risk Assessments, Insurance and a number of site specific regulations which must be adhered to in order to operate.
- 6.2.8 The Electricity supply to the gardeners area which also feeds to the amusement vendor is being evaluated with plans for future upgrading.
- 6.2.9 The radio system that is used by the Rangers and attendants team and mobile telephones shall be reviewed.
- 6.2.10 The fire and security alarm systems on the site are being reviewed by the Council with a possible rationalisation of systems and providers being the aim. This shall be ongoing during spring 2011.
- 6.2.11 For a list of tasks to be undertaken in the coming twelve to eighteen months, please see appendix 31. Some items on the list overlap between management plan headings, and estimated costs are also attached.
- 6.3 Well Maintained and Clean (Future Management Aims and Objectives)
- 6.3.1 Cleansing regimes shall be reviewed, and ten new litter bins shall be installed at the Gardens during spring 2011. This shall almost complete a changeover of receptacles as a third tranche of purchasing, with the outstanding small number being planned for purchase in 2012. The team evaluated type and ease of use, and manual handling and robustness in construction (along with cost) were significant factors in choice.
- 6.3.2 Periodic mechanical sweeping of hard surfaces shall be undertaken, and pathways are kept clean following horticultural works.
- 6.3.3 Both within the Play area, and around the sides of the Hall are locations that have targeted additional checks and cleansing. This shall increase in Spring 2011 due to

additional bookings for Weddings and other functions increasing after the Hall refurbishment.

- 6.3.4 The Band Stand shall be replaced, ranch style fencing replacement is planned (in phases) around the pitch and putt course, and the Pergola in the Rose Garden shall be replaced – just some of a number of ongoing tasks. A comprehensive list can be found as Appendix 31.

6.4 Sustainability (Future Management Aims and Objectives)

- 6.4.1 A continuation of the excellent Red Squirrel breeding programme, whereby young red squirrels were taken to Knowsley Safarri Park from Walton Gardens and Estate's Children's Zoo, shall be ongoing throughout 2011 and beyond. We are expecting new young females in spring 2011 to add to the programme. This programme is well co-ordinated, and gives valuable support to a species in need.
- 6.4.2 The use of the Friends funded incubator shall be an asset for 2011, and other programmes are being considered which includes possibly purchasing rare breed pigs.
- 6.4.3 Warrington Borough Council's environmental policies will be implemented through the delivery of the Environmental Management's Strategic objectives. This will include ensuring contractors and suppliers are aware of the environmental policy and contribute in a positive way to environmental improvements.
- 6.4.4 Where possible the use of mechanical forms of weed control will be encouraged, insecticide or fungicide will be used at the Gardens only when cultural forms of weed control are not feasible, for example in the maintenance of high quality Bowling Greens which require some occasional pesticide input to sustain.
- 6.4.5 To manage and maintain the Gardens in accordance with The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The Act makes it an offence (with exception to species listed) to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, take or destroy an egg of any wild bird, or take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst that nest is in use or being built.

A large number of birds, mammals and other creatures and flora found at Walton Hall Gardens are protected by name, including the Barn Owl (*tyto alba*), Pied wagtail (*motacilla alba*) and Tree creeper (*Certhia tamaris*) and a full schedule can be found within the Act. Effectively, we treat all creatures on the site as being under the Act, but would not harm in any way regardless of the legislation. (only occasional pest control as exception)

Tree works and hedge trimming is not contemplated until July every year and even then, thorough checks are carried out to ensure that there are no nests present or if so, that a second hatch or brood of the summer is not inhabiting.

- 6.4.6 The provision of composting facilities on the Estate is our aim, to minimise transport costs etc. but this also presents some challenges. Further team discussions and consideration will be carried out to expand and develop this.

- 6.4.7 Investigate energy conservation and efficiency projects with our colleagues within the Council. Minimise water usage.
- 6.4.8 Continue to procure peat free bedding plants, composts etc.
- 6.4.9 The Estate team will utilise a vast expertise in environmental and horticultural education to provide a programme of events to continue to demonstrate ongoing improvement of already very high standards.
- 6.4.10 Further develop partnership working with the Walton Lee Project such as with the siting of Farmers Markets (promoting locally produced food) and seasonal events.
- 6.5 Conservation and Heritage (Future Management Aims and Objectives)
- 6.5.1 The evaluation of the condition of the buildings at Walton Hall Gardens has recently been undertaken, and shall be reviewed by the Walton Estate Advisory Group (WEAG) and reported upon in Spring 2011. (Friends are members of WEAG).
- 6.5.2 Conduct wildlife/habitat monitoring and a zoo visitor survey to ensure the native wildlife is protected and obtain feedback from visitors from the children's zoo. (see Walton Hall Gardens in the Spring and Summer).
- 6.5.3 Continue with the excellent work with the Red Squirrel Breeding Programme, and look to extend their living area.
- 6.5.4 Constant review of the use of pesticides to ensure an absolute minimum is used, whilst maintaining quality high amenity areas & Bowling Greens.
- 6.5.4 Continue to manage the mature trees within the Gardens through regular inspections and an ongoing cyclical maintenance programme. (A comprehensive list of planned actions can be found as appendix 31).
- 6.6 Community Involvement (Future Management Aims and Objectives)
- 6.6.1 To work in partnership with the Friends of Walton Estate and partner organisations to identify potential sources of funding to further Gardens development.
- 6.6.2 Assist the Friends with organisation and provision of administration space and provisions, joining up to send material out along with Council customer or visitor schedules to minimise postage and resource use/cost.
- 6.6.3 Assist the Friends with fund raising activities, and provide data as needed to enable them to select projects to fund or part fund. i.e. Income raised by make a Yule log & egg painting etc. during the seasonal events.



- 6.6.4 Work with our friends at The Walton Lea Project, in assisting them wherever possible such as use of plants for potting up when their use has expired at Walton Hall Gardens, and with stalls etc. within the Gardens at busy times of the year.
- 6.6.5 To review and further develop opportunities for environmental interpretation through the provision of events and activities for, community groups and organisations.
- 6.6.6 To appraise partnerships with local schools, colleges, probation service etc. To enhance mutual benefit to both the individual/organisation and the Gardens.
- 6.6.7 Continue working with the Friends of Walton Estate and other volunteers to encourage the community to shape the Gardens to meet their needs and the needs of future generations.
- 6.6.8 To promote a summer fun dog show and events that promote animal welfare at Walton Hall Gardens.
- 6.6.9 Partnership working with charities and community groups with events that support and promote local organisations.

6.7 Marketing (Future Management Aims and Objectives)

- 6.7.1 Reintroduce the Walton Warbler from it's brief absence and seek topics of interest to report upon. Continue production of Zoo News, and look at co-distribution of the two, checking the interest list and organisations wishing to promote at their locations is up to date and relevant.
- 6.7.2 A range of visitor feedback mechanisms will be developed and utilised to build up knowledge of customer satisfaction to aid service development.
- 6.7.3 Develop a programme of activities in order to provide a variety of public events to cater for all sectors of the community. Provision of public events will be reviewed on an annual basis to develop a variety of events for all sectors of the community and promote the Gardens as a community resource as budgets best allow.
- 6.7.4 To further develop and review marketing.
- 6.7.5 Continue to gain and promote a greater understanding and appreciation of Walton Hall Gardens, including its environs and cultural heritage.
- 6.7.6 Develop & promote health and wellbeing programmes, such as guided walks.
- 6.7.7 The Walton Warbler is a newsletter which looks back to recent good news stories and events, and likewise advises of the same in the coming months.

It involves and includes Friends of Walton Estate stories and details of working groups etc. After a brief period out of circulation. the newly resurrected Winter 2011 Walton Warbler contains interesting articles on such as:-

- Red Squirrel update
- Walton Winter Wonderland
- The Friends AGM

- Animal Adoption
- Walton Estate Advisory Group (WEAG) consultation and work
- Paul's news from the cycle museum – of one of his cycles being used for a film enacting John Lennon meeting Paul McCartney.
- A Hall open day.

6.7.8 The Walton Warbler shall continue to be compiled and circulated at six monthly intervals (See appendix 36).

6.7.9 The Garden's plans are to promote heavily, the phrase

“There's something for Everyone at Walton Hall Gardens”

6.7.10A joined up marketing approach is developing well which often links two or all three of the component parts of the Estate together. Many events involve staff and service provision from the other parts of the Estate, Hall and Golf Course, and the needs and expectations of visitors regarding catering and Hall access are being investigated.

6.7.11 Some events will promote the site as a whole, and advertising across the range including flyers/notices/banners by the entrance in addition to larger and more strategic promotion are planned and costs shared as appropriate.

6.7.12 During major events in the town, (including Disability Awareness Day), the recently installed electronic transport advice notices display brief information

for motorists, and are located on all the main routes in and out of Warrington.



Large banner promoting Christmas events including carvery meals served at the Hall

Exploring the use of these as promotion for events at Walton Hall Gardens is under investigation, although cost shall be a factor..

6.7.13 Options of joint promotion with major event providers such as outdoor theatre companies, to share costs. Look at links for ticket sales with the wider Council.

6.7.14 The Gardens team are looking at what opportunities the 2012 Olympic Games may provide in terms of additional visitors to the North West of England. Promotion of Walton shall be assessed, and possible events shall be considered, with things like screening of the Opening Event/Closing event and key finals etc. During the spectacle (possibly in the Hall) are just some under consideration. There may be celebratory events to make the Diamond Anniversary of the Queen's Coronation in addition.

6.7.15 Evaluate the effect of charges at the Gardens for items such as car parking, games, visits, golf and hospitality, and feed back to the Council.

The Garden's do cost money but are a prized possession, a real community asset which is being enjoyed now by third generation Warringtonian's and visitors from further afield.

Ensure that the site remains reasonably priced for service offered, especially car parking fees.

6.7.16 Continue to operate as a full Gardens and Estate team, where all (paid employees, Friends and other volunteers, or trainees/placement or experience assistance) have their views taken seriously and are actively encouraged to develop and provide day to day services.

6.7.17 The full team is invited to be active in developing more significant changes, and being highly committed and fully knowledgeable in different specialism's are key to the Gardens future.

6.7.18 The team give views on what events work and might be trailed at Walton Hall Gardens, drawing on recent past years and knowing their visitors. Appropriate marketing is discussed, as different issues require different approaches – especially in these very challenging budgetary times.

6.8 Management (Future Management Aims and Objectives)

6.8.1 Develop qualitative and quantitative performance data for events, education, volunteers, and groups. Further develop Gardens specific user surveys both similar to previous for comparison purposes i.e. general survey from 2002 which lead to the formation of the Friends (see appendix 20) + AGMA questionnaires which are regular and established, in addition to new and specific ones (see appendix 28).

6.8.2 To work continuously to ensure good environmental practices, preservation of habitat and sustainability in all forms continues and develops.

6.8.3 To work tirelessly in aiming to provide and develop ongoing improvements in the environment (natural and built), and work with the Friends and others to seek grant funding to benefit the site and visitors alike.

6.8.4 Carry out regular reviews of all management operations and projects including hours of operation..

6.8.5 Seek ongoing thoughts of the Friends and visitors for events and activities to further ensure that the Garden's management provide what is reasonably expected.

6.8.6 Continue to apply both Green Flag and VAQAS quality standards, and seek accreditation and continued achievement of both for Walton Hall Gardens.

6.8.7 To integrate staff resources to deliver service needs/priorities.

6.8.8 To continue and develop regular formal and informal meetings between the Gardens Management (including Rangers team) and The Friends of Walton Estate.

6.8.9 Financial risk management procedures shall develop and be monitored to ensure focus in financially sound delivery relating to events. An agreed number of entertainments/events shall be implemented. For 2011, this shall be some Easter entertainment, 4 band performances during the summer, two outdoor theatres in the park, and a measured spend on Christmas events (part with cost to visitors i.e. Santa's

Grotto), to provide a good experience with focus on cost and promotion. These are the baseline, and a number of walks, Disability Awareness Day (which we assist as part of the team) and many others large and small add to this, and the public are made aware via various forms of communication.

- 6.8.10 Risk management information and accident and emergency procedures will be updated and communicated to all staff on an annual basis.
- 6.8.11 The Council's Performance, Review and Development Scheme will be fully implemented and learning agreements developed for all staff annually. i.e. First Aid/Chainsaw training etc.