

### Part (2) A – Wharfe Meadows, Titty Bottle and Manor Parks

#### 1. Site Specific Recommendations

The following recommendations follow a comprehensive site inspection by the RoSPA consultant. As discussed earlier in the report the recommendations are made to facilitate LCC in meeting their legal obligations and in particular those items that have been highlighted in Section 4 '*Legal Responsibilities*'.

You will need to have a documented prioritised schedule as to how you propose to implement the control measures raised.

##### 1.1 Summary of Rationale for Recommendations

RoSPA visited the site in the autumn and subsequently came up with a clear solution to the considerable water safety hazard viewed on site, that primarily being the presence of large steep weir that is found within the site, this weir which is 75m long and has a fall of 5-6m on the downstream side is little more than 20m downstream from the wildfowl feeding area that is popular within the park. In any raised water levels this weir would be very dangerous, which lead the consultant to suggest linking up the existing fencing that was onsite. RoSPA would never usually recommend the fencing off of waterways, but due to the presence of such a large and potentially dangerous weir we felt that this time some edge protection was required to stop deliberate access to the weir and protect those that accidentally fall in from being swept over the weir.

The initial suggestion for fencing is for the same hip/waist high 1.1m bow topped ornamental Victorian park fencing that is along the walkway by the children's playground downstream of the weir, together with gates within the design for controlled access to the river. This open design fencing would not preclude the feeding of water fowl nor present such a challenge that youths would endanger themselves by getting over it, any design would need to allow for access and egress at the stepped down area.

Public rescue equipment was felt to be of little effect on this site as it was explained that there had been difficulties in ensuring it was in place when needed and at this site particularly, those untrained in using throws lines and life rings would be particularly at risk themselves when attempting to use them. All too often the, would be rescuer becomes a casualty themselves. The original solution was then one that was clear, simple and unambiguous one that would be effective in times of flood, the edge of the river would be visible, and the strategy for public safety was not reliant on signage and public rescue equipment.

It is very difficult to use the history of the site to always determine the level of risk and so come up with sensible balanced control measures. There is no very recent record of any children drowning at the site and inland water site drownings that repeatedly occur at the same site are very rare, however RoSPA drowning statistics show that between 1989 and 2006 there were 25 fatalities in the River Wharfe of which 6 where in and around Otley. There are more than 350 inland water site related fatalities each year in the UK, that's one a day and the majority will occur at virgin sites i.e. that's the first time its happened here and often then steps are taken to try to prevent further fatalities. A number of people have drowned in the River Wharf both upstream and down stream of the Park and because no records are kept we have no idea of the number of near misses and serious incidents there might have been at this site.

In defending RoSPA's decision we are a water safety department with considerable knowledge and expertise and have visited thousands of inland water sites in the UK and our consultancy advice is backed up by our unrivalled analysis of drowning incidents in the UK. RoSPA with the RLSS and the newly created National Water Safety Forum produce the only reliable drowning data in the UK and so understand fully the issues around water safety.

The difficulty in assessing this site is that the River Wharf, a typical Yorkshire river draining the limestone and in places grit stone Pennines and dales, is subject to substantial variances in flow and height. During the summer in periods of dry settled weather, the flow will be such that relatively only a trickle will be going over the weir and the historical hiring of rowing boats shows that the weir creates almost a pool upstream, which

apart from the depth would be relatively benign. A completely different scenario can be found during the winter when the whole of the lawned area adjacent to the steps can be flooded when the river is running 2m or 3m higher and flowing at up to 10mph or more.

### **Site Visit Observations 8/03/2007**

The river, as a result of the heavy rain of last week end, was running at a medium level but meant that at the base of the steps the river was about 750mm in depth shelving off quite quickly to over 2m and was flowing at about 5 mph and throughout the 3 hours that I there, the park was very popular with parents with young children and toddlers feeding the wildfowl, some parents stayed at the top of the steps some went further down, some parents held their toddlers or kept their children in arms reach, others didn't, reinforcing my opinion that they were not really aware of the hazards on site.

## **1.2 Subsequent Recommendations**

### **Edge protection**

Edge protection is required and signage can be used to support water safety. This is an urban site and those that access the site from the playground and downstream expect the path to be a significant distance away from the water and where it is adjacent to the water it is currently fenced, we always strive to be consistent in our approach either there is open access or not, compromises and a mixed approach send out mixed safety messages. Tourists and those not familiar with the site would not be aware that when turning around the bend they would currently be met with an absence of fencing up to and beyond the weir.

A option version for an aesthetically more acceptable design to edge protection, would involve the positioning of fence lines along the existing low wall/coping stone top and encouraging the main pedestrian flow through the park where possible on pathways away from the waters edge. This design would allow for easier egress for canoeists so that they can get out of the river upstream and portage around the weir. There would still be a fence and the main walkway would be back from the river for those who do not want to expose themselves to the river and those that do make a conscious decision to do so by going to the stepped area aware of the hazard. This version would allow emergency and rescue service vehicles and watercraft to access the stepped area.

The specific location and detailing of the fencing and gates can be seen in the annotated photographs and site plans. The fencing would need to be a non-climb design such that already exists on site, the bow topped fencing meets the requirement. It is designed to stop deliberate access from those of 8 years and younger and accidental access by older children and adults.

*The rest of the walkway up to the concrete pad should be protected by urban bow top fencing again with suitable signage (this bow top fencing will link with the existing fencing). This level of fencing should be enhanced by a 2-meter area of unstrimmed vegetation to discourage access to the waters edge up to the white bridge.*

*It is recommended that you verify the condition of the fencing on this bridge, where it crosses the river, and take any necessary remedial measures*

### **Rescue Equipment**

In view of the recommended level of edge protection - urban bow top and the identified likely hood of vandalism to rescue equipment the consultant does not in this case recommend the provision of rescue equipment.

- *All evidence of previous lifesaving (now defunct) equipment including housings and posts should be removed.*

Consideration should be given to enhancing staff training to cover land based rescue techniques, especially if

they are subsequently equipped with throw lines / reach poles.

### **Signage and Information Provision**

Location and distribution as per the LCC risk assessment plan, however signage is now elevated in terms of its priority within the overall water safety strategy and when deciding on the specific location reference should be made to the guidance supplied and that it conforms to the relevant BSI standards. It is essential that adults and those supervising young children are aware of the hazard on site, can make an informed choice and know what to do in an emergency.

- *It is recommended that ‘Multi points’ (see generic recommendations in section 6.3 above) be positioned at either end of the walkway. Positioned so the public can see them as they access the walkway.*
- *Repeat ‘nag sign’s should be positioned at regular intervals along the Urban Bow top fencing. (See recommendations for signage for **safety points** in section 6.3 above, although as previously recommended life saving equipment will not be provided)*
- *In view of the importance of this signage in the implementation of your ‘safety case’ you will need to make specific arrangements to ensure the signs are as vandal proof as possible.*
- *You should make regular inspections of both the signage and the fencing and carry sufficient spares to address any issues identified.*
- *It is important that these inspection visits are documented and any remedial measures with close out actions are recorded.*
- *It is recommended that you provide water safety advice to the fishermen on the annual and day tickets.*

### **Additional Health and Safety Considerations**

The following Health and Safety measures are considered necessary for the overall safety management of the park:

In terms of emergency conditions and incident response it is essential that you liaise with both the Environment Agency, the Emergency Services particularly the Fire and Rescue Service and the Councils own Civil Emergency Planning Department about incident response and planning. This could mean that, as part of your flood contingency planning you might need to develop a procedure to close the park. It would be useful to make these organisations aware of your water safety strategy for Wharfe Meadows Park.

- *Where staff operate under ‘lone working’ conditions it is recommended that they carry throw lines and radios, and are appropriately trained to use these, and importantly recognise their limitations.*
- *It is recommended that you develop a ‘Special events’ risk assessment for the Boxing Day swim.*

### **1.3 Titty Bottle Park**

- *It is recommended that you take action to cut the trees over hanging the river, which act as a magnet to children to climb over the water.*

### **1.4 Manor Garth Park**

- *It is recommended that you allow for a two-meter area of un-trimmed vegetation at the water edge.*
- *It is recommended that a ‘Safety Point’ (without a life-ring) be positioned at a central location at the waters edge.*

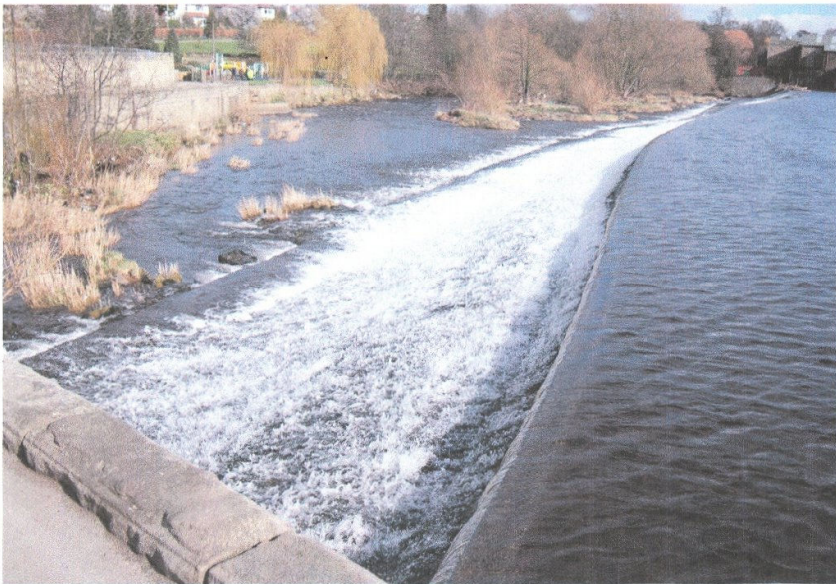


# Titty Bottle Park Fencing



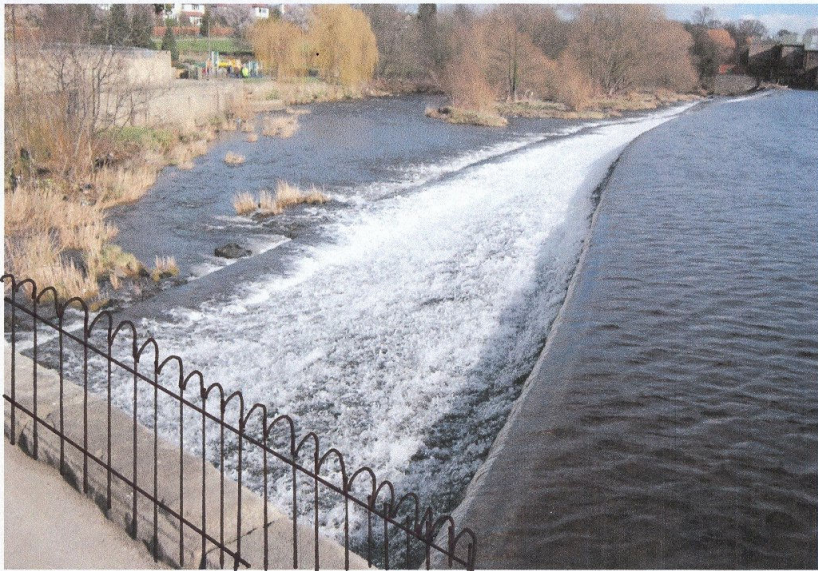


Wharfe Meadows Park Weir in Low and High Water Levels





# Fence Details Around 'Holbeck' Sluice & Weir





## Extension to Existing Fencing Around and Leading up to the Children's Playground

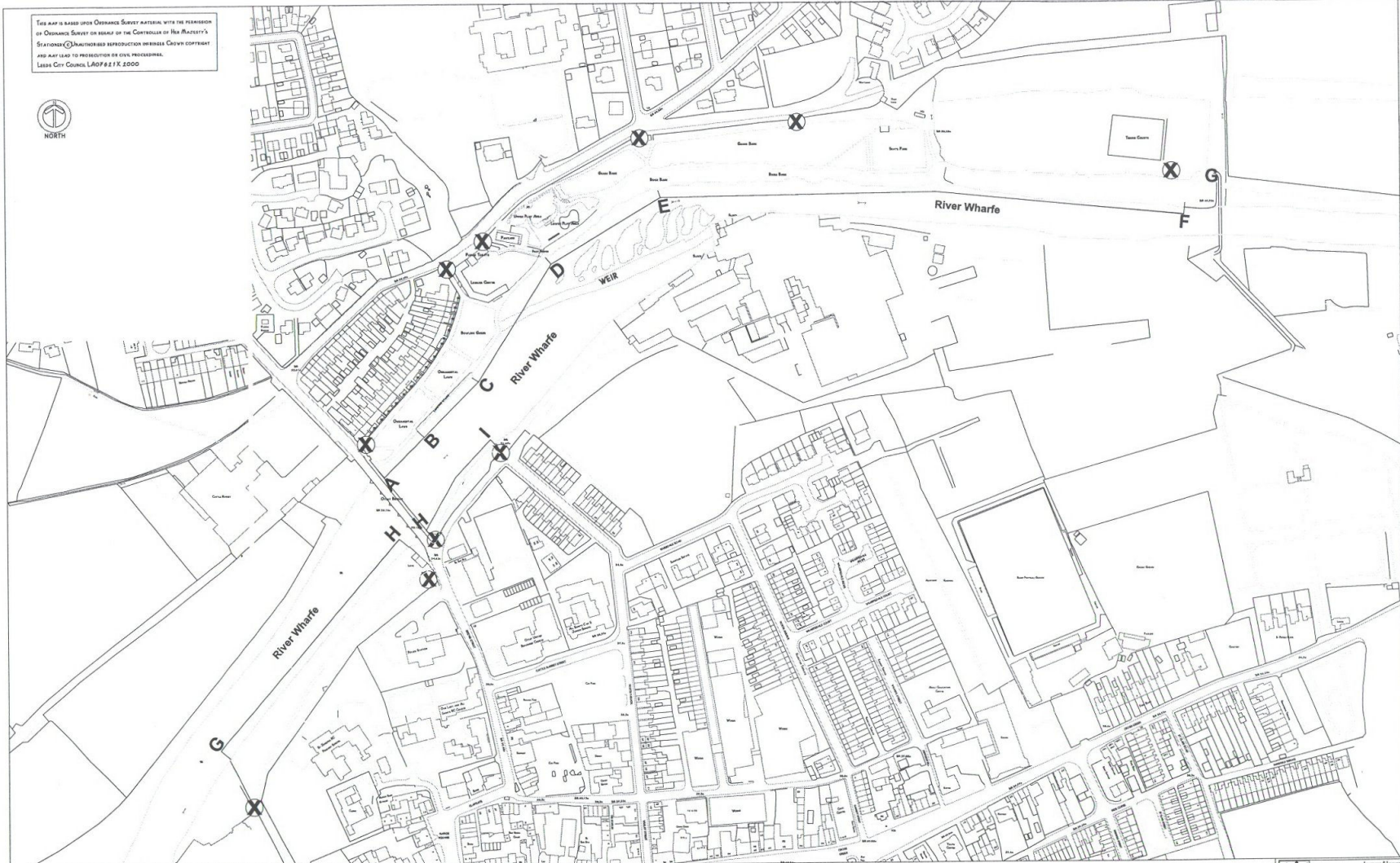








# Site Map



**Wharfemeadows Park**

**KEY**

X Signage

A – H Refers to written risk assessments

Leazes & Levens Park & Countryside Fire Flood War Resilience Team 110 Museum Centre Leeds LS2 9BT			
Wharfemeadows Park			
Title			
Name CAJ	Date HTS	File 04/04/07	Status DBS
Review Date 10/13/05			



## Entrance Sign (1)

# Welcome to Wharfe Meadows Park

**In an emergency please call 999**

**The nearest public phone box  
is on the corner of**

**Location information**

**Please report any damage or incidents to the Leeds City  
Council on 01XX XXX XXXX or email XXX@XXXX.XXX**



## Entrance Sign (2)

Please keep to designated pathways & do not enter the water



*Parents are reminded to supervise their children at all times*



## Nag Sign



