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**Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

**Subject: Parks and Countryside Area Delegation Information for Outer North East**

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## **1 Purpose**

1.1 This document illustrates information relating to the Outer North East area following Executive Board approval in March 2015 to delegate the development and horticultural maintenance of community parks, cemeteries, recreation grounds, urban woodland, natural areas and local green space to community committees.

## **2 Background**

2.1 The Parks and Countryside service provided annual reports to community committees highlighting issues relating to the community green space function, focussed around community parks. The following matters have now also been approved for delegation to community committees and are to be reviewed annually:

- To include the horticultural maintenance of community parks, cemeteries, recreation grounds, urban woodland, natural areas and local green space as part of the area delegation
- To delegate investment decisions on these sites to help achieve and sustain Leeds Quality Park standard
- To delegate resource priorities for these sites using the parks asset register to determine resource requirements and the impact of any proposed changes

2.2 Further information on these matters is now set out in the following sections:

- Scope of delegation
- Delegation of investment decisions
- Delegation of resource priorities

## **3 Scope of delegation**

3.1 The previous scope related specifically to community parks; this remit has now been expanded to include recreation grounds, local green space, nature conservation sites, cemeteries and closed churchyards. Parks and Countryside are also responsible for the maintenance of roundabouts included in scope, many of which have sponsored floral features in support of the 'In Bloom' initiative. This secures an income each year which in turn enables roundabouts to be enhanced with bedding and other landscape features as well as administering the scheme.

## 4 Area Profile of the Service

4.1 The following table summarises community green space assets managed by Parks and Countryside in the Outer North East community committee. It is worth noting that the number of playing pitches refers to those pitches formally marked out, and there may be potential for more provision depending on demand:

Asset	Quantity
Community parks	0
Playing Pitches:	
Football	7
Rugby	0
Bowling greens	1
Playgrounds	11
Skate parks	1

### 4.2 Sports Pitches

4.2.1 Parks and Countryside provide annual pitch hire for sports teams. The table below shows the number of teams with current bookings playing on pitches in the area: *(note this excludes clubs who have a long term lease in place)*

Age Group	No of Teams
Open Age	3
Juniors	9

4.2.2 The current position on the quality of these sites is examined later in this report as is the investment need to attain or sustain the Leeds Quality Park standard.

### 4.3 Functions not included in scope

4.3.1 Many of the service functions within Parks and Countryside are based centrally, or at major parks and therefore cannot be considered at an area dimension. These include the nursery, allotments, bereavement services, forestry, transport and engineering along with technical and administrative functions.

4.3.2 Horticultural maintenance of major city parks would not be included namely at Roundhay, Temple Newsam, Lotherton, Kirkstall Abbey, Middleton Park, Otley Chevin Forest Park and Golden Acre. In addition gardens in the city centre management area would not be included along with golf courses and the 3 crematoria sites in the city.

4.3.3 It is important to note that there is a £3.2 million income target each year for parks development of which around £1 million labour is offset against capital, mainly through landscaping undertaken during the autumn and winter period. In practice this means staff who undertake maintenance tasks during the summer supplement 'extra work' teams in winter to undertake parks development. The work itself can take place anywhere across the city depending on where capital schemes are being delivered, so it is very difficult to determine how this could be apportioned or delegated at an area level other than on an arbitrary basis. For this reason parks development work has been excluded from the scope of delegation.

## 5 Delegation of investment decisions

5.1 The Parks and Green Space Strategy approved at Executive Board in February 2009 sets out the vision and priorities to 2020. One of the key proposals contained in the strategy is the aspiration for all community parks to meet the Green Flag standard for field based assessment by 2020.

5.2 The Leeds Quality Parks scheme is based on the national Green Flag Award which has been developed around the following key criteria as follows;

- **A welcoming place** - how to create a sense that people are positively welcomed in the park
- **Healthy, safe & secure** - how best to ensure that the park is a safe & healthy environment for all users
- **Clean & well maintained** - what people can expect in terms of cleanliness, facilities & maintenance
- **Sustainability** - how a park can be managed in environmentally sensitive ways
- **Conservation & heritage** - the value of conservation & care of historical heritage
- **Community involvement** - ways of encouraging community participation and acknowledging the community's role in a park's success
- **Marketing** - methods of promoting a park successfully

5.3 The Parks and Countryside service reports annual performance under the Leeds Quality Parks scheme based on *'the percentage of Parks and Countryside community parks which meet the Green Flag standard'*.

5.4 The indicator includes an assessment of each community park which has particular relevance to community committee engagement. The scheme is known as the Leeds Quality Park (LQP) standard. The following table provides a current profile of these assessments for the Outer North East community committee. An average score of 7 for each criterion will allow the park to achieve a pass. To illustrate each park's strengths and weaknesses, scores below 7 have been shaded to indicate where improvements are needed.

Site	Year Assessed	Welcoming Place	Healthy, Safe, Secure	Clean, Well Maintained	Sustainability	Conservation / Heritage	Community Involvement	Marketing	Meets Standard?
Adel Woods	2012	4.3	6.6	6.3	6.8	7.0	5.0	3.3	N
Cranmer Bank Recreation Ground	2014	2.5	6.0	5.0	6.0	3.0	5.0	2.0	N
Lotherton Hall Estate	2011	7.3	8.0	8.0	7.8	7.7	6.5	6.7	Y
Moss Woods	2008	2.5	7.3	4.7	7.0	8.0	6.0	0.7	N
Scotland Wood	2014	2.0	4.0	3.5	7.2	5.7	3.5	2.0	N
The Harland Way	2012	6.3	7.4	7.3	8.6	8.0	7.0	6.7	Y
Wetherby Ings	2012	6.5	8.8	8.7	8.4	7.5	8.0	6.7	Y

5.5 The following table summarises the performance of key green spaces in Outer North East.

Community Committee	Number of Green Spaces	Achieve LQP Standard 2014/15	Percentage
Outer North East	7	3	43%

5.6 Improvements that took place during 2014 are as follows:

- High Ash allotments – Creation of new allotment (£32K)
- Wigton Woods – Improvements to paths & provision of seats and signage (approx. £24k)

5.7 In terms of fixed play, work has been undertaken to set out refurbishment requirements over a 10 year rolling programme in support of the outcomes of the Fixed Play Strategy. The average cost of a new playground is currently about £120k; Multi-use games areas and skate parks are slightly cheaper on average at about £90k each. The table below shows the capital investment required on an ongoing basis to fund the Community committees existing fixed play sites:

Fixed Play Type	No.	Total Replacement Cost £'s	Required Average Annual Spend £'s
Play Areas	11	792,000	132,000
Skate Parks	1	54,000	9000
<b>Totals</b>		<b>846,000</b>	<b>141,000</b>

## 5.8 Capital investment funding

5.8.1 In order to achieve the target for all community parks to reach Leeds Quality Park standard by 2020, it is necessary to identify capital investment for those community parks that do not currently reach the standard. It is also important that some allowance is given to sustain parks at the Leeds Quality Standard for those that have already met this target.

5.8.2 Section 106 (S106) is the main source of capital funding and in most cases these sums have to be spent in the area in which the development took place. Funding includes allocations on a range of improvements including community parks, fixed play, playing pitches and other areas of green space. The following table reflects the position as of May 2015 (it should be noted that the allocation of S106 is dynamic and can vary from month to month as match funded schemes are developed):

Community Committee	S106 Available to Spend as at May 2015 £
Alwoodley	11,458
Harewood	68,644
Wetherby	36,954
<b>Total</b>	<b>117,056</b>

5.8.3 Performance against the LQP standard is largely determined by the level of capital investment available to provide improvements for parks infrastructure. Investment is mainly reliant on S106 funding, although there are other grant funding sources particularly Green

Leeds and in relation to playing pitches, the Football Foundation. There are often constraints associated with these funding sources either in terms of what the capital funds can be spent on, or geographic e.g. in the vicinity of where the development occurred in relation to S106.

5.8.4 As of April 2015, the possibility of securing off-site developer contributions for green space improvements is changing due to the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Further updates shall be provided when information becomes available.

5.8.5 In summary, it has been approved at Executive Board that community committees would determine on an annual basis the priorities for the allocation of investment funds available for the relevant parks and green space in their area.

## **6 Delegation of resource priorities**

6.1 The Council continues to face serious budget pressures and has experienced cash funding cuts from central government in addition to internal budget pressures that the council faces. This has also impacted on the Parks and Countryside service, with a £2.7 million budget reduction between 2010/11 and 2014/15 which equates to a reduction of 23% with further reductions required in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

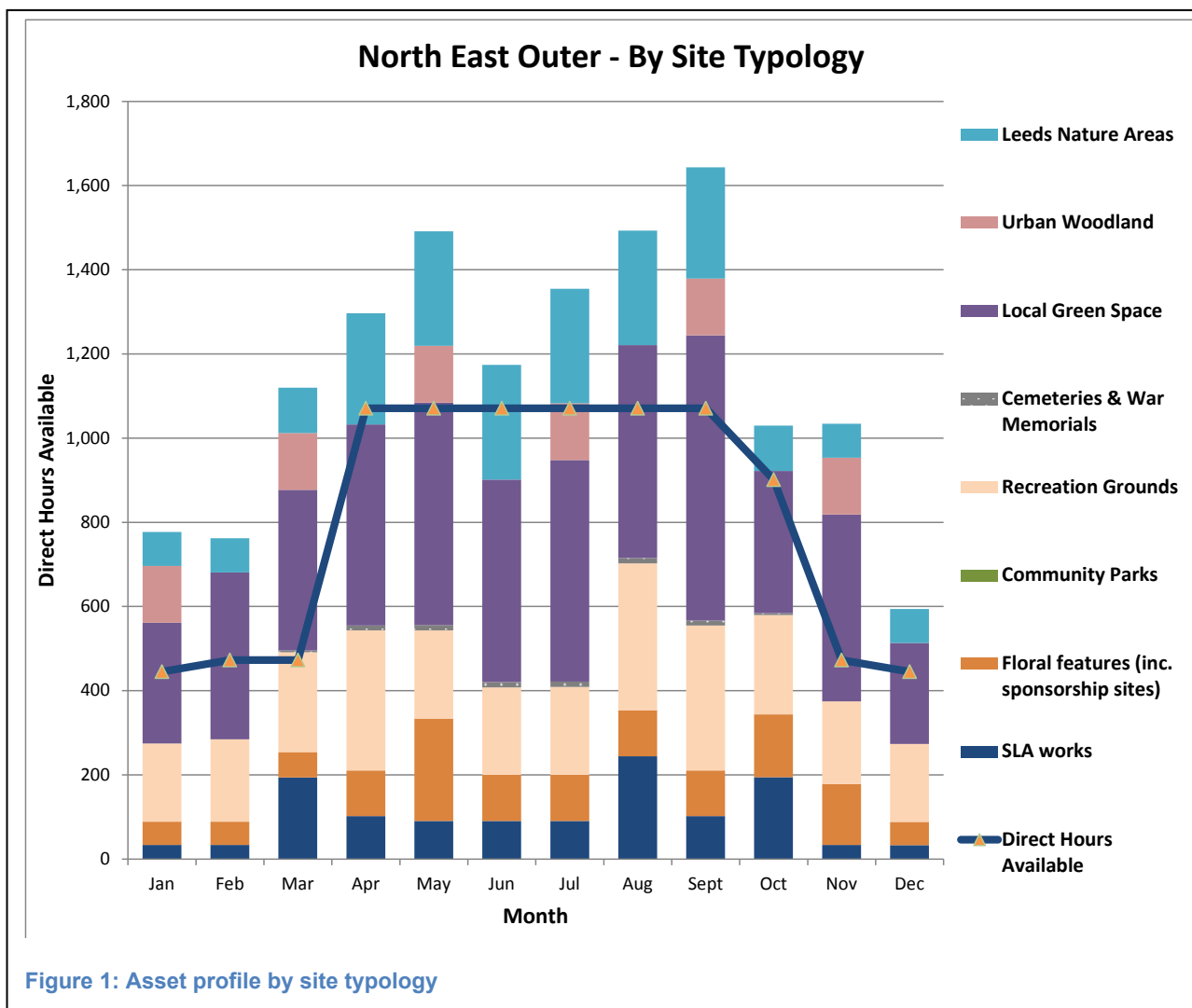
6.2 In meeting these challenging budget targets the service has already undertaken a number of steps, including reducing the number of managers and back office staff as well as price increases, notably for bereavement services and allotment provision. Outdoor bowls has also been reviewed working with representatives from the relevant associations resulting in revised season ticket arrangements that commenced in 2014. In addition, Executive Board recently approved converting Middleton Golf Course to parkland and for Gotts Park Golf Club to operate independently of the Council. The service has also sought to be enterprising and innovative including Tropical World refurbishments, sponsorship, concessions, nursery trading and increasing the level of volunteers.

6.3 It is also important to note that over 50 gardeners have left the service over recent years who in the interim were replaced by 40 seasonal gardeners over the summer period. However, since April 2014 existing permanent staff have commenced working 41 hours a week in summer and 33 hours on average in winter. This has enabled front line jobs to be protected and allows an 11% increase in productivity with an estimated net saving of £140k due to a reduction in the number of seasonal staff employed. It has also enabled the service to implement a second year apprenticeship programme in 2014 with 6 horticultural apprentices, in addition to 11 recruited in 2013. It is anticipated that 9 apprentices shall be recruited in 2015.

6.4 Staff are multi-skilled and deployed throughout the city as and when seasonal pressures demand. All staff within Parks and Countryside who are Craft Gardener level or above, have been, or will be trained to a National Vocational Qualification Level 2 or equivalent in horticulture, with some staff trained to foundation degree level.

6.5 The parks asset register will be used to determine resource requirements, and this data can be used to assess and align community committee priorities. The parks asset register is a database of features that require horticultural maintenance on an annual basis. All these features are represented on an electronic mapping system linked to the database. This includes grass, shrub and rose beds, flower beds, hedges, fixed play areas, and sports pitches. From these quantities it is possible to determine the estimated resource requirement to conduct routine maintenance, and therefore the impact of alternative maintenance regimes and the impact of changing priorities.

6.6 The following asset profile uses the site typology (e.g. community park, cemetery, recreation ground, local green space, urban woodland) to represent staff resources required and the direct hours available to carry out this work. The community committee would be made aware of any implications that would arise from prioritisation decisions whether financial or operational. An illustration of this approach for the Outer North East area is shown below:

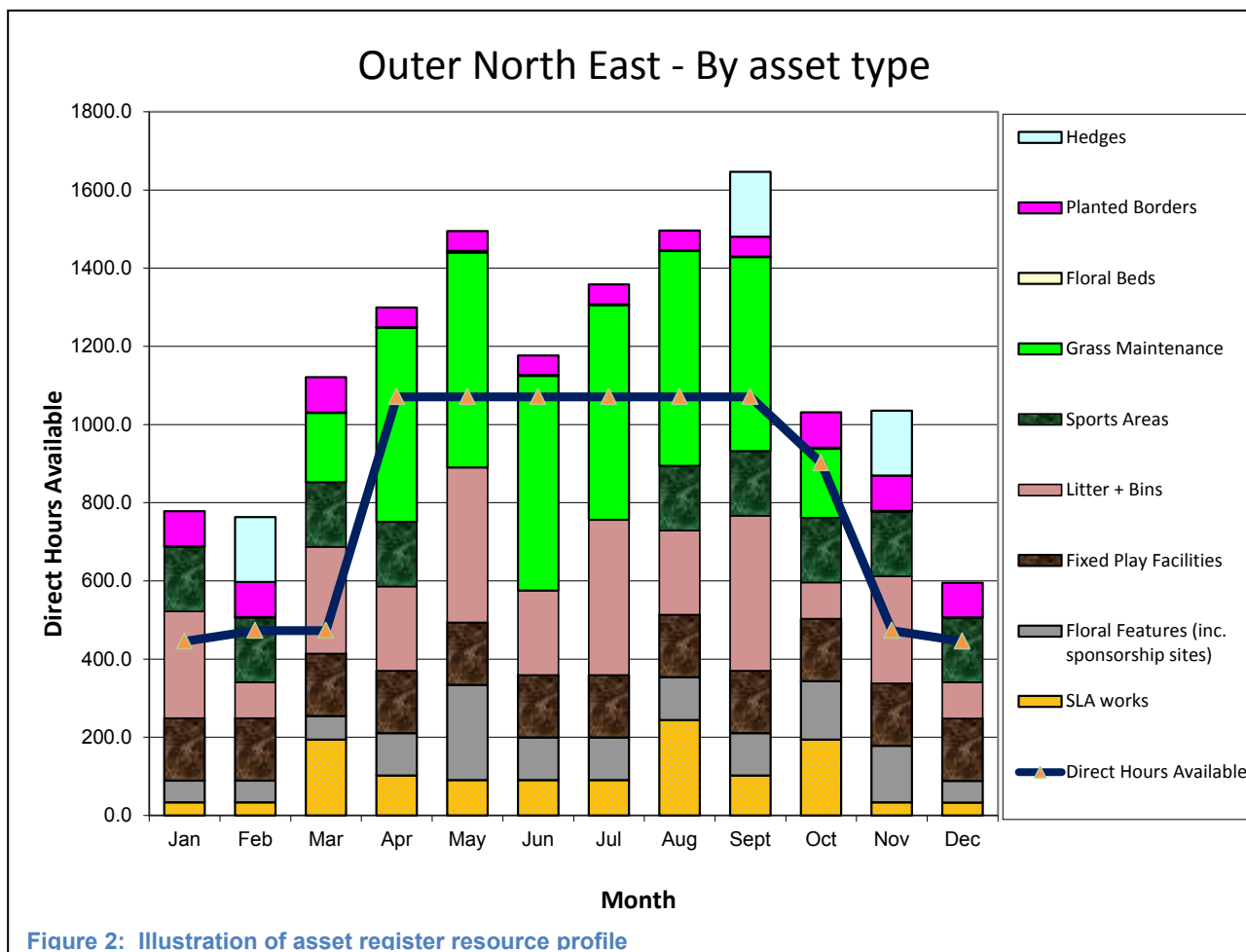


6.7 The table below demonstrates the amount of direct hours required to maintain all assets encompassed within the scope of this delegation, versus the direct hours currently available that are deployed within this community committee:

	<b>Direct Hours Required</b>	<b>Direct Hours Available</b>
Summer	8,470	6,425
Winter	5,323	3,209
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,793</b>	<b>9,634</b>

6.8 From this information it can be noted that the actual staff resource available in terms of direct hours is insufficient to meet the required standards as set out in the asset register. The site typology list is in the current order of priorities (with SLA works the highest priority), which reflects that decision to withdraw from undertaking maintenance duties in urban woodland areas and natural areas, with the primary focus on community parks, recreation areas, cemeteries and local green space.

6.9 The following asset profile diagram provides a perspective on the workload for routine horticultural works. It also demonstrates direct hours available to carry out these tasks taking account of the planned implementation of seasonal working hours and allowing for staff focussing on parks development work in winter.



6.10 It is possible to use the asset register to model options for community committees to determine resource priorities. If for example a community committee wished to undertake litter picking in an area of woodland, then the resource requirement could be calculated in order to determine the impact that this would potentially have on other managed assets or sites. Clearly, unless additional resources were provided, it would be necessary to identify a corresponding reduction in resource requirement for another managed feature.

6.11 For example, when comparing a hectare of woodland to a hectare of a typical community park, the following direct hours would be necessary to carry out horticultural maintenance activities:

Typology	Typical Direct Hours Per Annum For 1 Hectare
Community Park	356.7
Woodland	10.2

6.12 Community committees may wish to consider adopting relaxed mowing where this is appropriate. For illustration, the following table provides a comparison in direct hours for managing amenity grass (typically cut 14 times) compared to managed grassland (cut once a year).

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Typical Direct Hours Per Annum For 1 Hectare</b>
Amenity Grass	37.3
Managed grassland	5.2

6.13 In summary, community committees shall determine resource priorities on an annual basis using the asset register as the basis of allocation.

#### 6.14 **Site based gardeners**

6.14.1 As indicated, staffing budgets are managed and allocated on a city-wide basis by the Parks and Countryside service. There are however 39 full-time equivalent staff who are site based for the majority of time, of which 6 are funded by community committees.

6.14.2 In the community committee area there are currently no site based gardeners. A number of community committees provide additional funding for gardeners to increase site based presence at parks in the area. The site based gardeners increase working relationships with users, local residents and community groups. These site based staff further increase users satisfaction and support the aspiration to increase volunteer groups working within parks.

### 7 **Events & Volunteering**

7.1 Staff are also responsible for supervising volunteers and work placements (around 27,500 volunteer days each year across the city), as well as supervising the safe running of over 720 events each year in liaison with event organisers.

#### 7.2 **Events**

7.2.1 The bookings and licensing team provides assistance in helping community and other groups organise events with particular emphasis on ensuring legal and safety requirements are met but do not deter groups and organisations from organising activities. The table in Appendix 10.1 shows a list of the 23 events held in the Outer North East area in 2014 to date.

#### 7.3 **Ranger led Events & Activities**

7.3.1 Parks & Countryside's ranger team organises a range of events and activities across Leeds. See Appendix 10.2 for the list of events and activities held so far in 2014.

#### 7.4 **Volunteering**

7.4.1 The service continues to focus on increasing the number of volunteers and groups working in the area to achieve the following:

- To increase corporate volunteering working in partnership with Business in the Community and Leeds Ahead
- Continue to improve involvement with the many "in bloom" groups in Leeds.
- It is an ambition to have a volunteer group for every community park where there is a site based gardener.

7.4.2 It is estimated that volunteers across all groups contribute around 7,624 days of voluntary work in the Outer North East area over a 12 month period. The tables below provide details of volunteering in the area since January 2014:



#### 7.4.3 Voluntary work supervised by Parks and Countryside staff

Site	Task	Estimated Volunteer Days
Adel Moor	Bracken bruising	4
Adel Moor	Sapling removal	16
Adel Moor	Vegetation/Scrub Clearance	15
Adel Woods	footpath clearance and boardwalk building	12
Adel Woods	Litterpick and woodland management	1
Adel Woods	Tree thinning	6
Adel Woods	Woodland management	12
Adel Woods	Woodland management	12
Adel Woods	Woodland management	5
Adel Woods and Moor	Nestbox maintenance, scrub removal, pond management, litter pick	30
Collingham Woodland	Footpath	4
Collingham Woodland	Footpath	18
East Keswick Moor Lane	Footpath improvement	4
Eccup Whin	Boardwalk	16
Eccup Whin	Woodland management	7
Eccup Whin	Woodland management	6
Hill Top Moor	Vegetation/Scrub Clearance	12
Lotherton Estate	Boardwalk maintenance	6
Lotherton Hall	Boardwalk	6
Lotherton Hall	General estate management	147
Lotherton Hall	Harvesting orchard apples	15
Scotland Wood	Footpath management	960
Wigton Moor Woods	Litter Pick, woodland management, bulb planting	30
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,344</b>

#### 7.4.4 Volunteer groups working independently

Group	Estimated No Of Group Members	*Estimated Days Practical Work/Year
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Friends of Adel Woods	<b>30</b>	58
Friends of Wigton Moor Woods	<b>20</b>	22
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>

#### 7.4.5 Educational work

<b>Site</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Total Attendees</b>
Adel Woods	Adel Methodist Beavers	Woodland Walk	31
Adel Woods	Adel Methodist Cubs	Woodland Walk	22
Adel Woods	St. Paul's Catholic Primary School	Nature study	36
Adel Woods	St. Paul's Catholic Primary School	Nature study	36
Lotherton Bird Garden	Hoylandswaine Primary School, Sheffield	Evolution and bird biology	36
Lotherton Bird Garden	Ryhill J&I School	Evolution and bird biology	36
Lotherton Estate	Rainbow Free School, Bradford	The Gruffalo Hunt	42
Lotherton Estate	The Froebelian School	The Gruffalo Hunt	61
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>300</b>

#### 7.4.6 Existing in bloom groups

<b>In Bloom Group</b>	<b>Number Of Volunteers</b>	<b>Number Of Volunteer Days</b>
Aberford	3	80
Alwoodley	15	280
Barwick	25	480
Boston Spa	70	1400
Bramham	30	600
Harewood	22	440
Scholes	12	240
Shadwell	15	280
Slaid Hill	20	400
Wetherby	100	2000
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6200</b>

## 8 Conclusion

8.1 In summary, the horticultural maintenance of cemeteries, recreation grounds, natural areas and local green space is now included as part of the area delegation, in addition to community parks. Investment decisions on community parks, recreation grounds, natural areas and local green space to help achieve and sustain Leeds Quality Park standard are delegated to community committees. Furthermore, resource priorities for each community committee are delegated using the parks asset register to determine resource requirements and the impact of any proposed changes. The environment sub-group shall discuss priorities with Parks and Countryside officers in order to determine recommendations for decision by each community committee. Priorities shall be determined from April of each year and reviewed once in order to plan any changes for the following year.

## **9 Next Steps**

9.1 To work with Parks & Countryside officers to determine future resource priorities based on data from the parks asset register.

## **10 Appendices**

## 10.1 Appendix 1 - Events Information – 2014-2015

Month	Date	Location	Event
May	26th	The Ings	Triathlon
May	30th	Lotherton Hall	Theatre of the Dales
May	4th	Lotherton Hall	Just Dubs Car Rally
May	5th	Lotherton Hall	Summer Bands
Jun	21st & 22nd	Lotherton Hall	RSPB Big Wild Sleep Out
Jun	24th	Adel Woods	X Country - Valley Striders
Jun	25th	Sugarwell Hill	Airienteers
Jun	29th	Lotherton Hall	MG Car Rally
Jun	8th	Lotherton Hall	Summer Bands
Jul	12th & 13th	The Ings	Wetherby Food Festival
Jul	13th	Lotherton Hall	Summer Bands
Jul	20th	Lotherton Hall	Porsche Rally
Jul	26th - 27th	Lotherton Hall	VJMC
Aug	17th	Lotherton Hall	Summer Bands
Aug	31st	The Harland Way	Wetherby Run 10k & Mini Marathon
Sept	14th	Lotherton Hall	Summer Bands
Sept	5th	Lotherton Hall	Arboculertical Rigging Workshop (4th - set up )
Oct	16th - 18th	Lotherton Hall	RSPB Event - Kate Struthers
Oct	25th	Lotherton Hall	RSPB Event - Kate Struthers
Oct	28th	Lotherton Hall	RSPB Event - Kate Struthers
Nov	1st	Wetherby Ings	Wetherby Ings Bonfire
Nov	20th	Lotherton Hall	RSPB Event - Kate Struthers
Dec	6th	Lotherton Hall	RSPB Event - Kate Struthers
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>

## 10.2 Appendix 2 - Ranger led Events & Activities

Site	Event	Total Attendees
Adel Woods	Bird Walk	34
Adel Woods	wildflower walk	20
Lotherton Bird Garden	Bird Box Making Workshop	104
Lotherton Bird Garden	Egg and Feather experiments	60
Lotherton Bird Garden	Seed Planting and Bird Crafts	77
Lotherton Bird Garden	Bird Box Making Workshop	88
Lotherton Bird Garden	Bird Box Making Workshop	65
Lotherton Bird Garden	Nest Builders Extraordinaire	38
Lotherton Bird Garden	Bird Feeder Making	124
Lotherton Bird Garden	Eggs and Chicks Displays/Talks	100

<b>Site</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Total Attendees</b>
Lotherton Bird Garden	Love Your Zoo Week	110
Lotherton Bird Garden	Bird Garden Tour	31
Lotherton Bird Garden	Africa Day!	250
Lotherton Bird Garden	International Owl Day! - Owl Talk	23
Lotherton Bird Garden	International Owl Day! - Meet the Owl Talk	30
Lotherton Bird Garden	International Owl Day! - Owl Craft Workshop	100
Lotherton Bird Garden	Turaco day!	270
Lotherton Bird Garden	Creepy Crafts	130
Lotherton Bird Garden	Bird Garden Tour	15
Lotherton Estate	Guided Garden Tour	18
Lotherton Estate	Public Event	1
Lotherton Estate	Public Event	1
Lotherton Hall Estate	National Tree Week: Tree Walk	25
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,714</b>