

WHAT'S BEEN DONE SINCE JULY 2010...?

The initial activities involved in progressing the project included a series of site surveys and investigations. These activities are now complete, having been undertaken by specialist members of the team and reports have been prepared to inform the design proposals. An update on progress since July 2010 is set out below:



FURNITURE SURVEY

A survey of the current style and condition of the furniture within the Gardens (seating, bins, signage and handrails) was undertaken between April and July 2010. A report was prepared which included a site plan together with illustrations and notes of the origin, condition and appropriateness of the furniture. This report has informed the selection type and colour of the furniture within the Gardens. Key findings from the report suggest that furniture is mostly in reasonably good condition, but has been added to and replaced over the years in an 'ad hoc' manner, so lacks unity and consistency in style and quality.

YOUTH CONSULTATION

Schools Packs with information about the Gardens, the project and a lesson plan were distributed to schools across Felixstowe. In addition, a presentation was given to the Youth Forum in October and schools were invited, via their School Councils, to make an input into the project. A separate panel gives more information on the feedback which young people gave.



FURTHER GARDEN HISTORY STUDIES

A specialist garden historian was engaged to conduct detailed research and make site assessments of the Gardens to inform the developing Conservation Management Plan. Following circulation of the first draft and feedback from stakeholders including English Heritage and The Garden History Society a number of gaps in the research were identified and further studies were undertaken with the resulting information shaping the second draft of the Conservation Management Plan.

CONSULTATION WITH ENGLISH HERITAGE

The Felixstowe Seafront Gardens is a nationally important and is included within the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Interest. As such, it was important to consult with English Heritage during the process to develop the Conservation Management Plan – the document which sets out a way forward for the Gardens over the next 25 years. The project team were successful in securing the detailed input of the regional landscape architect from English Heritage who has given written advice on a number of occasions throughout the development process. The involvement of English Heritage is an important achievement for the project as their input shows the significance of the heritage of the Gardens which will be of note to the Heritage Lottery Fund when assessing the application.



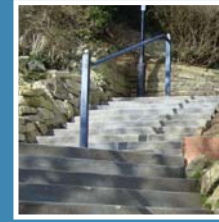
MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE PLAN RESEARCH

Now the scheme proposals have been developed in principle, work has been able to commence to prepare the ten year Management and Maintenance Plan (MMP) for the Gardens. This will consider the issues facing the Gardens, future management needs and resource requirements – and will propose a future maintenance regime. This regime will be described together with the associated management requirements and costs, sufficient to sustain and maintain the Gardens to high standard in future years. The MMP will be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Round 2 application.

ENGINEERING STUDIES

With the scheme of work confirmed in terms of those structures which are going to be restored and new structures proposed, detailed ground condition investigations have been undertaken to inform the design of potential structural elements to be included within the project. This work was undertaken between September and November 2010 and relates to access improvements, buildings, walls and site drainage in particular.

The project team includes structural and geotechnical engineers who have commissioned the site works and managed the contractors whilst on site. Detailed reports resulting from the site investigations are now awaited.



STAKEHOLDER GROUP CONSULTATION

As well as public consultation with residents and users of the Gardens, a number of other stakeholder events have taken place. Briefings have been prepared for Council Members, press releases have been issued at key points throughout the project, and key group's views have been sought on topics such as access, facilities for children and families, site management and maintenance and how the site is used.

Feedback from the consultation exercises has informed the designs both at the early development stage and during the period between July and October when the detailed designs were advanced.

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN RESEARCH

A draft of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) was completed in June. The CMP describes the historic development, current condition and heritage value of the Seafront Gardens and provides a statement of the Gardens historic significance, put into context with the relevant local and national planning policies such as heritage, environment and community strategies. The Plan identifies risks and opportunities for the Garden's future and develops heritage landscape led principles and policies for the future conservation and management of the Gardens. The CMP provides overarching guidance for the restoration, conservation and enhancement of the Grade 2 listed Gardens for the long term. The document is now currently at second draft, awaiting the final outcomes from this consultation process, following which it will finalised.

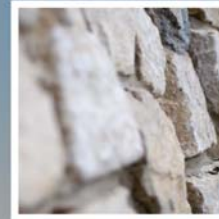


CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT - TOWN HALL GARDENS

An aspiration within the Conservation Management Plan was the re-creation of a shelter within the Town Hall Gardens. As part of the public consultation in July, the need for shelter and the desire for the re-creation of historic structures which had been lost emerged. As a result the project team have been working on plans for two possible options to provide shelter within the Gardens. This aspect of the project is at an earlier stage of development than other aspects proposed at the December consultation, purely because the issue arose out of the community consultation exercises in July. Further information on the options which have been explored is presented within the consultation exhibition. A decision will be taken on the nature of shelter to be included within the Town Hall Gardens following the outcome of the public consultation exercise.

STONE & ROCK IDENTIFICATION

A site survey was undertaken earlier in the project to record the extent and location of the different nature of stone types used within the built features of the Gardens. The objective was to record their condition, type and function. The original source of each stone type was identified, cross-referencing the Directory of Natural Stone. Recommendations for conservation, repair and identification of sources for replacement were included within the report. During the design development period, the guidance given within this report has been used to inform design choices.



HYDROLOGY INVESTIGATION

The project engineers have undertaken investigations in relation to the water within the Gardens in a number of ways. Firstly visual inspections have identified those areas of pooling or drainage problem within the Garden. Additionally, a CCTV survey of the below ground drains was conducted. This identified that there were significant areas of collapsed drain and root damage within the existing drainage network, leading to some problems on paths and surfaces within the Gardens. Finally, chemical analysis of water within the ponds has been undertaken to identify the source of water feeding ponds within the Gardens – whether this is main supply or natural spring water. The detailed analysis results will inform the design finalisation process.

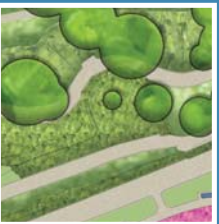


ECOLOGICAL SURVEY

Suffolk Wildlife Trust was engaged as the project's specialist ecological consultant. Survey visits commenced in April and concluded in July with a bat, invertebrate and other survey work including an examination of the flora and fauna across the site. Some interesting findings emerged including confirmation that the Gardens is home to a population of wall lizard – a protected species in Europe. A habitat, ornithological and breeding bird, reptile and amphibian and an evening emergent survey were all undertaken. The findings from the ecological survey have informed the emerging designs, in areas such as the development of proposals for increased ground cover, maintenance of hedging areas and the retention of trees.

DETAILED DESIGNING

Following the public feedback from the consultation exercises undertaken between February and July, the Project Board met to confirm the content of the project informed by consultation outcomes. This has enabled the process of detailed design to progress and the architects, landscape architects and engineering team have worked closely with the project quantity surveyors to ensure that as work progresses, the scheme remains within the overall project budget allocated. More information on the detailed designs which have been undertaken is included elsewhere within the exhibition.



ACTIVITY PLAN DEVELOPMENT

An Activity Plan for the project in accordance with HLF guidance is currently being prepared. This sets out proposals for activity planning within the Gardens and it is designed to meet the HLF's learning, training, volunteering and audience development/participation aims. The Plan has been circulated and will be substantially completed informed by the consultation outcomes, following the December event.

PROJECT COSTING

The project quantity surveyor has worked closely with the design team and the Council since July as the detailed design process has progressed. It has been important at all stages to make sure that the scheme of work being put forward is contained within the original budget allocated for the project. This budget was set by the HLF Round 1 application and provides the framework within which the HLF application is developed. Designs were submitted to the Quantity Surveyor during October and an updated Cost Plan was prepared which showed the scheme broadly in line with the budget set. A further Cost Plan will be prepared in January following the confirmation of scheme designs, these having been updated where necessary following consultation process.



ELECTRICAL & MECHANICAL STUDY

Mechanical and electrical engineers have surveyed the existing lighting and electrical infrastructure within the Gardens. As part of the survey they have analysed the light levels afforded by the existing lighting during a night time study. The findings from this study were reported on, supported by plans and photographs followed by the preparation of a lighting strategy for the Gardens. This has been incorporated within the design proposals as these have developed. Proposals take into account the potential impact of new lighting on residents, wildlife and the general environment.

