

Managing Powys Parks, Playgrounds and Open Spaces

APSE Wales – Parks Forum

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Powys



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The county of Powys

- Powys covers a quarter of Wales and is the most sparsely populated county in England and Wales, with just 26 persons per square kilometre (Wales 148).
- It takes 3 hours to drive from the south of the county in Ystradgynlais to the northern border.
- Powys had an estimated population of 132,952 in mid 2012.
- Tourism contributes £720 million in income per annum.
- 81% of residents agree that Powys is a safe place for children to play outside.
- Woodlands cover 15% of the county.
- 80 sites of special scientific interest.



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Outdoor Recreation in Powys – what do we manage?

- Parks & Commons – 13, from formal town centres to large open areas and 1 village green
- Playgrounds – The Service currently manages a total of 53 playgrounds in Powys. Of those, 37 are on land owned by the Housing Service.
- Sports Facilities – 10 Bowling Greens, 3 Cricket Pitches, 10 sport playing fields. PCC has no maintenance responsibility only as landlord where leases apply.
- Open Spaces - 135 acres of public land across Powys.
- Woodlands – 6 Large woodland areas
- Tree Management – thousands of trees!



Outdoor Recreation in Powys

A story of 'Doing more with less!'

The Service has faced decreasing budgets for the last 8 years.

Year	Working Budget
2010/11	1,006,000
2012/13	895,000
2014/15	724,000
2016/17	557,000
2018/19	376,930



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How the Service has achieved the efficiency savings

- Fine Turf Removal – 2011/13
- Removal of Winter Sports – 2013/15
- Mid term savings 2016/19
- Reduction in grass cuts
- Devolvement and Transfer of sites
- External Delivery / Contractors
- Increasing use of Volunteers



Grounds Maintenance

- What worked well?
- Hay Meadows
- Bulb Planting
- Working with Town & Community Councils

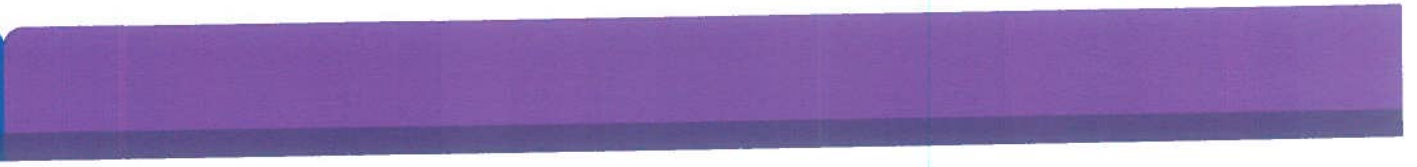


Cllr Graham Brown, Cabinet Member for Outdoor Recreation, said: *“The majority of our open spaces are subjected to regular grass-cutting regimes. But the financial pressures we’re facing means that we are going to have to look at different ways at maintaining these open spaces.”*

“I’m delighted with the results of this trial, which has boosted the biodiversity of the Lower Common in such a short space of time. The results of this trial will certainly help us consider how we approach the management of our open spaces in the future.”

Darylle Hardy, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust’s Project Officer has been surveying the common over the summer with the help of volunteers as part of a project funded by The Co-operative. She said: *“The meadow has been blooming amazing and far more abundant than I expected with flowers including milkmaid, selfheal, knapweed and devil’s-bit scabious. It’s been buzzing with wildlife with bumblebees, hoverflies and butterflies all summer and we have enjoyed exploring it.”*





Grounds Maintenance in 2018

- ODR commissions grass cutting across a large % of the land under its control. The budget for this has been significantly slashed over recent years. 87 acres of land receive regular cuts (either 6 or 10 cuts per annum depending on site usage), currently delivered through a SLA with HTR at a cost of approx. £74,500.
- A trial reduction to 2 cuts
- Delivered by External Partners / Highways Contract
- Expectations – Dry weather & monthly cuts



Parks and Playgrounds

- No replacement policy on playground equipment
- Make use of external grants, mostly last minute – have projects ready to go
- C&ODR will provide / refurbish a new play item if a transfer is requested



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Tree Management



- ODR officers have a 3-year inspection regime for 2,588 trees on service managed land, these are the trees identified as in locations close to public access and are therefore of higher risk. There are tens of thousands of other trees across the land managed by the Service that also need management and works as and when required.

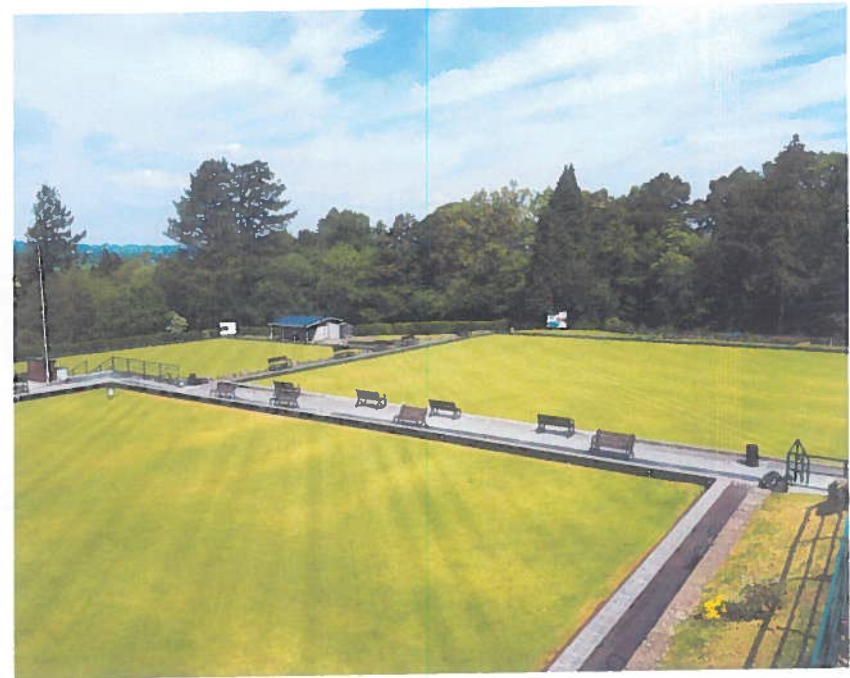


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Community Asset Transfers (CATs)

- Fine Turf / Winter Sports / Pavilions to All Assets
- Process – Legal & property background checks
- Background checks discovered interesting anomalies
- No two leases were alike
- Meetings and discussions with interested parties, clubs etc.
- Ensuring all clubs and associations were constituted
- Expression of Interest (EOI) & Business Case
- Examples of Llandrindod Wells & Talgarth Bowls Clubs



CAT Transfers

- How long does the CAT process take?
- How much did it cost? – Independent Valuations
- Offered capital grants for purchase of equipment etc.
- Improved buildings, sites, grounds and pitches before handing over
- How successful has the process been?



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Volunteers

- Two public areas now have active volunteer groups
- They undertake maintenance, gardening-type tasks and meet weekly
- Process has included:-
 - Recruitment
 - Potential volunteers complete application forms
 - Induction training
 - Depending on work volunteers can either work supervised or unsupervised
 - Officers have completed Site Specific Risk Assessments & Construction Phase Plans as appropriate
 - Recording of works done and the statistics e.g. volunteer hours
 - In 2017 we estimate 1,000 volunteer hours



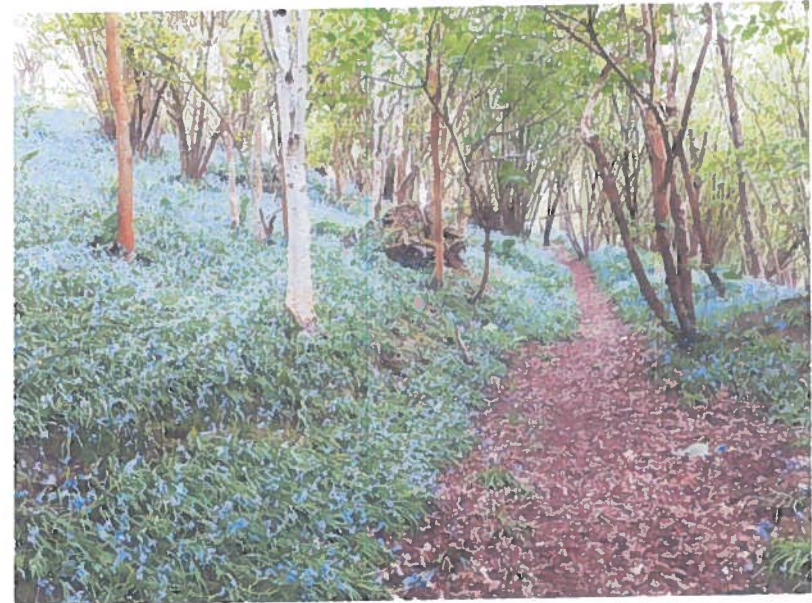
Lessons Learnt

- Importance of Political Support
- Support of Services such as Finance, Legal & Highways is crucial. They work to their own timescales and priorities.
- Importance of aligning with Corporate Objectives e.g. in Powys we have a new *Vision 2025* and a *Towards 2040* Joint Wellbeing Plan with the PSB. Highlight how you meet their priorities i.e. the economy, residents and communities, learning, health and wellbeing etc. If possible provide evidence and statistics.
- Show how align with and deliver on national objectives through Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and others.



Future

- The Service is facing further significant cuts
- Importance of highlighting the risks of further cuts to decision-makers
- Potential implications:-
 1. Closing playgrounds
 2. Reduction in inspections
 3. Greater focus on income generation e.g.
 4. Drone inspections
 5. Offering Tree Inspections to other PCC Services
 6. More work with volunteers
 7. More work with Town and Community Councils & others



Any questions?

