

**Community Involvement in Wirral's Parks – A Case Study by  
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Wirral Parks and Countryside Service manages over 200 sites including Parks, Country Parks, Nature Reserves, Beaches, Cemeteries and Allotments

**Community Involvement in Wirral's parks**

**Wirral Friends of Parks Network**

Wirral Parks and Countryside Service co-ordinates and works alongside 32 Friends of Parks groups. Through the Friends Network, over 1000 people are involved in consultations and making decisions about how Wirral's parks are managed and developed.

Our Parks provide a natural focus for many communities and are an arena where a huge amount of positive community action takes place in every corner of Wirral.

Wirral Parks and Countryside Service has harnessed the good will of local people by encouraging communities to form their own interest groups. The Friends of Parks Network gives these groups support in many forms. It facilitates communication between the council and people with an interest in their local environment.

**Wirral Friends of Parks Network-**

**Provides a focus for interest in parks and to promote active involvement by all sections of the community**

- **Assists friends and other voluntary groups in their aims of protecting parks and other natural habitats**
- **Provides up to date information and contacts**

**The Wirral Friends Forum**

The Friends Forum is a biannual event where representatives from the Friends meet to share knowledge and best practice and hear from expert speakers on a wide range of park issues.

The Wirral Friends of Parks groups actively engage people in preserving, protecting and enhancing Wirral's cultural heritage by working in partnership with the council's Parks and Countryside Service. Friends Groups take part in decision making on many levels from day to day maintenance issues right up to being involved in large capital grant schemes.

## **Why have a Forum?**

- Provides updates on latest developments in parks
- Gives access to park staff
- Provides information about funding opportunities
- Chance to meet with other friends groups
- Share good practice and ideas
- Have a united voice

## **Support for Friends Groups**

Through the Friends of Parks Groups Network, Friends Groups are given resources and officer support.

Support offered to the network by the Parks and Countryside Service includes:

- Provision of venues to hold meetings
- Attendance at meetings by council officers
- Consultation events
- Administration support
- Legal advice on park issues
- Insurance for approved activities
- Assistance with applying for grants

## **What are the benefits?**

Benefits from the Friends network can include:

- Grants awarded to a variety of projects
- The running of a biannual Forum event
- Production of an annual newsletter
- Nature conservation activities
- Wider ranging events and activities
- Schemes and projects that are better rooted in the community
- More people taking “ownership” of their public space
- Crime reduction

## The Wirral Parks Partnership

An executive committee was formed to lobby for parks in 2006. A Constitution was adopted in 2007 as a Parks Partnership to highlight current strategic issues and pressures our parks face, and to “champion” the importance of parks and green space on Wirral.

The parks Partnership meets every second month and is attended by experienced friends, senior managers, members – local politicians and The Parks Champion, who is currently the Cabinet member for Culture. The Parks Champion was set up about six months ago and allows Friends groups direct access to the political process.

Wirral’s Friends groups are key to our parks’ continued existence and future developments. Friends are great advocates for parks and assist in consultations and fund raising.

Friends groups do help raise the standard.

**If you would like any more information please contact Mike Garbutt:  
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