

Park it!
celebrating people in parks

CASE STUDY

Park It! North East



Mowbray's Maritime Funday

Mowbray Park, 03.09.05



The park

Mowbray Park is situated in the centre of Sunderland. Known locally as 'the People's Park', Mowbray Park was opened in 1857, home to the first municipal museum outside London.

The 7.5 hectares of park, museum and the winter gardens conservatory have received nearly £10 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The park has held a Green Flag award for the past five years. This is a national award scheme which recognises quality parks and green spaces across England and Wales. The active Friends of Mowbray Park work closely with the council and museum.

The event

Sunderland has always been closely connected to the sea and its maritime heritage has held a special place in the hearts of all of its residents. The Friends and the museum were very keen to develop an event which explored and celebrated the park's links to the sea, connecting activities to several monuments within the park. Subsequently, all of the day's activities were closely linked to the sea and maritime heritage, keeping a tight focus to the day.

Music throughout the afternoon featured sailor's jigs by a local dance school, children's folk songs and sea shanties by Sunderland Youth Orchestra, making use of the recently restored park bandstand.

Further activities on the day included a variety of arts and crafts workshops for children, making flags for a procession to the statue of Jack Crawford led by folk songs at the end of the day.

A historical photo collection and guided tours by the Friends group explored the diverse heritage of the park. Activities within the museum included model ship making for children and displays of model boats by Sunderland Model Boat Club.

The community group

The Friends of Mowbray Park are a highly active group who have a good working relationship with the museum and the council, meeting with them regularly and helping to organise events in the park. The Friends see the park and museum as a major asset and are keen to get involved with anything which promotes its use and attracts new people into the space.



It's been a really enjoyable day and it has been wonderful to see so many people using the park. The Hornpipe Dance was a highlight for me, and it was great to see the conductor really putting his heart into it!

Elsie Ronalds,
Chair of the Friends of
Mowbray Park

Feedback

The event was attended by over 1,000 people throughout the afternoon. The majority of people who came along to the event were families. This was the main target audience, and the reason behind the focus on a large number of children's activities.

Over 95% of visitors rated the overall event as 'excellent' or 'good'. 100% of people said they would attend a future event in the park based on their experiences of this event and 100% of people said they would visit the park more often as a result (figures based on a representative survey conducted on the day).

The benefits

The event greatly raised awareness of the Friends of Mowbray Park, with the stall receiving a great deal of interest from visitors. This in particular introduced them to several new contacts and organisations, who are hoping to be involved in the organisation of future events. In particular, the Friends established links with local environmental group CEED, who are subsequently hoping to start volunteer work days in the park and work closely together.

The Friends felt that the event and its organisation demonstrated that they could work well as a team together. They were particularly pleased that some less active members of their group got actively involved on the day, the event providing the focus necessary to get them on board.

As well as being funded from Park It!, the event received additional funding from a local grant, the Small Change Award. The Friends and Tyne & Wear museums put in a successfully grant application specifically for the event, which has given them the confidence and skills to go on and seek further funding and grants to stage additional events in the future. The Friends also developed a new knowledge and awareness of issues such as health and safety legislation and insurance and how central their consideration is to the organisation of events.

The future

The Friends are planning to hold a similar event next summer. They are interested in organising a broad historical event, with a wider focus than that of only maritime heritage, linking up with local heritage organisations. They would aim to do this at a time when the schools are still open, in order to involve them more centrally. They will continue to work closely with Sunderland City Council and the museum on all future projects, being fully involved in the management of the park.



Lessons learnt

- Produce a detailed timetable of critical tasks and areas, equipment and location. This can be used to allocate tasks and manage the event on the day.
- Get as many of the Friends and volunteers CRB police checked as early as possible in order that they can staff stalls and activities with children.
- If you want to involve schools, avoid holding the event throughout the summer holidays or just when the schools go back to term.
- Have a practical work day and preparation meeting with as many volunteers as possible shortly before the event.
- Consider having a tight focus or theme to the event as this can create an identity to the whole day and connect everything together well.

Further information

Elsie Ronald, Friends of Mowbray Park - fosumsec@yahoo.co.uk

Jennie Beale, Tyne and Wear Museums - jennie.beale@twmuseums.org.uk

Links

Park It! – www.park-it.org.uk

GreenSpace – www.green-space.org.uk

Heritage Lottery Fund – www.hlf.org.uk

Tyne & Wear Museums – www.twmuseums.org.uk

Sunderland City Council – www.sunderland.gov.uk

