

# SCRUTINY OVERVIEW

## ARTS, LEISURE AND CULTURE SELECT COMMITTEE



# Direct Services: Countryside, Parks & Greenspaces 2010/11

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# Direct Services: Responsibilities for countryside parks & greenspaces (1)

- **Green Infrastructure Countryside and Greenspace Team:**
  - Strategic planning of green infrastructure
  - Project development and delivery
  - Delivering improved green infrastructure through the planning and development process
  - Communications / consultation and community participation
  - Management of trees and woodlands

# Direct Services: Responsibilities for countryside parks & greenspaces (2)

- **Care For Your Area:**
  - Management of Country Parks, Urban Parks, Local Nature Reserves and other greenspaces
  - Public events e.g. guided walks, family activities
  - Education activities
  - Wynyard Planetarium and Observatory

# Key Achievements (Strategy / Partnerships)

- Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy developed in involvement of key partners
- Inter-agency Steering Group established to coordinate delivery of Strategy
- Green infrastructure identified as overarching theme in emerging Environment Development Plan Document
- Effective partnership working at strategic level (e.g. Stockton River Corridors Project and North Tees Natural Network) and with local communities

# Key Achievements (Projects)

- Delivery of schemes under 'Parks Regeneration' and 'Spaces for Play' programmes, including:
  - Opening of new Wynyard Woodland Park play area
  - 8 other play area projects delivered
  - Major improvements at Newham Grange Park and Wynyard Woodland Park
- Thornaby Five Lamps restored and relocated
- High-levels of external project funding secured (£597,000 SBC matched with £2,899,000 external funding between 2008 and present)
- Other projects developed through partnership activity, e.g. Tees Heritage Park, River Routes in Stockton



# Key Achievements (Operational)

- April 2010 to Feb 2011:
  - 80 countryside events (8666 participants)
  - 48 school groups (2158 participants)
  - 55 community groups (977 participants)
  - 3054 volunteer days

# Current performance

- Green Flags for six sites: Ropner Park, Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park, Wynyard Woodland Park, Billingham Beck Valley Country Park, Charltons Pond, Thornaby Cemetery
- Gold Standard in 2010 Entente Florale competition
- GreenSTAT surveys:
  - 2008 to 2009: 79% of park or greenspace users 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'. 10% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (1,947 responses)
  - 2009 to present: 93% of users 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied'. 2% 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' (883 responses)
- National Indicator 197: achieved target of 38% of Local Wildlife Sites in positive management by March 2011



# What has proved more difficult?

- Uncertainty regarding government's Playbuilder funding (used to support Borough's 'Spaces for Play' programme)
- Progressing work to demonstrate compliance with 'Biodiversity Duty' under Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006
- Delivery of Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy

# Emerging issues (1)

- Future development and delivery of projects: reduced 'core' budgets and increased reliance on external funding
- Pressures on revenue funding for management / maintenance of green infrastructure projects
- Need to raise awareness and understanding of green infrastructure - e.g. role in flood risk management and improving health
- Role of green infrastructure in combating climate change, including its contribution to flood risk management

## Emerging issues (2)

- Changes in arboricultural services: reduced staffing for inspection/survey work and operational work transferred to from external contractor to CFYA
- Ranger team reduced in size. No further educational work, but focus on management / maintenance
- Promote / facilitate community participation, and partnership working with other organisations to deliver projects / activities