

*Donaldson Environmental Consultants,
Flat 3/2, 170 Wilton Street, Glasgow G20 6BS
Tel: 0141 946 3987
Email: donenvironmental@aol.com*



**Participatory Appraisal
on the development and future
management
of
Duchess of Hamilton Park,
Motherwell**

*FINAL REPORT
FOR
North Lanarkshire Council and Friends
of Duchess of Hamilton Park*

January 2005

Neil Donaldson and Alistair Hackston

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1. INTRODUCTION & STUDY REMIT

In the spring of 2003, North Lanarkshire Council carried out a postal consultation exercise in the communities surrounding several Town Parks:

- ❖ Burngreen Park and Recreation Ground, Kilsyth
- ❖ Cumbernauld House Park, Cumbernauld
- ❖ Belhaven Park, Wishaw
- ❖ Duchess of Hamilton Park, Motherwell
- ❖ West End Park, Coatbridge
- ❖ Centenary and West End Park, Airdrie

In addition to the range of information gained, a further outcome of the consultation was the formation of Friends Groups for each Park.

Donaldson Environmental Consultants were commissioned in September 2004 to carry out a Participatory Appraisal study designed to consult a wider cross section of the community living possibly slightly further away from the parks. DEC led a team including other consultancy colleagues and volunteers from the Friends of the Park Group in carrying out six separate Participatory Appraisal exercises from September 2004 through to February 2005.

2. AIMS OF COMMISSION

1. To identify opportunities to enhance the value of the Parks as a multi-benefit urban park to serve the needs of the local communities.
2. To consult a wide cross section of local people for their opinion on:
 - Facilities
 - Activities
 - Future improvements/ideas for developing the Park into a valuable and sustainable resource.
3. To establish the level of interest of consultees in becoming involved in the ongoing improvement discussions for the parks.
4. To present a series of options arising from the consultation, and make recommendations on the achievement of the study aims.

3. METHODOLOGY USED

Stage 1 - Start-up and Scoping

An initial meeting with Council Officers and key members of the Friends Groups covered the following:

- o Objectives of the stakeholder consultation;
- o Discussed the first stage consultation and highlighted any issues relevant to each Park;
- o Identified most likely stakeholders and user groups;
- o Agreed the method of consultation with different stakeholders and the key questions for each;
- o Agreed timescales and key outputs;
- o Outlined post consultation feedback.

Familiarisation visits were held at each park, to discuss with Council Officers the key management issues affecting each park.

Key documents such as the Phase 1 postal survey results were reviewed, to ensure that the project design is built around the Council's priorities. At this stage we researched good practice elsewhere in the world. Among other well-tried research methods, the "Project for Public Spaces" (www.pps.org) provided a good model to work with. This process that has been tried and tested in urban parks in America, suggests that four parameters contribute to making a park a great place:

- ❖ Sociability;
- ❖ Uses and Activities;
- ❖ Access and Linkages;
- ❖ Comfort and Image.

See Appendix 2 for summary

We have used these headings as a guide throughout this study.

A draft questionnaire was produced to collect comparative data and a database was built. The questionnaire reflected the above PPS theory on PLACE.

The Council's Urban Parks Team dealt with all publicity for each park.

Stage 2 – Data gathering

Facilitator Training

An evening briefing session was held in Cumbernauld for all those who volunteered to help with the PA. All members of each Parks' steering group were contacted to check if they would volunteer with the process. The session clarified the study remit, the role of the questioner and techniques for undertaking interviews.

Outreach – in the field

Interviewers spent 2 days in and around each park speaking to members of the local community. DEC staff and volunteers spoke to members of the local community in a variety of places:

- ❖ In the park;
- ❖ In the surrounding streets and estates;
- ❖ In the town centre;
- ❖ Outside local supermarkets and shops;
- ❖ In pubs and cafes.

The questionnaire used can be found in Appendix 1.

Visits were arranged with local Primary and Secondary schools, either in the form of a joint ‘pupil council’ meeting (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth), or as separate visits to primary and secondary classes. Where possible visits were arranged with Higher Geography classes, who already had understanding of questioning skills as part of their curriculum. A variety of techniques were used with the young people:

- ❖ ‘H’ form – likes / dislikes and improvement ideas;
- ❖ With secondary pupils we discussed how they use their time and what interests they had. This provided a feel for the level of interest they had for the facilities in the park.

Where possible visits were arranged with local youth clubs. Similar techniques were used as with the schools.

Outreach – in a drop - in venue

In each park a marquee was used as a drop-in venue. This was well publicised as a place where local individuals and groups could come and discuss issues. The marquees also held exhibitions on the study and local biodiversity initiatives.

Focus Group meetings with invited individuals and agencies

All people contacted during the consultation were asked if they would like to be kept informed of progress with the project. They were invited to one of a series of specific feedback workshops held towards the end of November. These workshops had 3 aims:

- ❖ Provide feedback to the community on the consultation;
- ❖ Confirm an identity and vision for the Park;
- ❖ Identify and agree short and long term improvement ideas.

Stage 3 – Evaluation and draft report

Results of the Participatory Appraisal and workshop session were collated into a draft report that was sent to the Friends Groups for comment.

Stage 4 – Final report

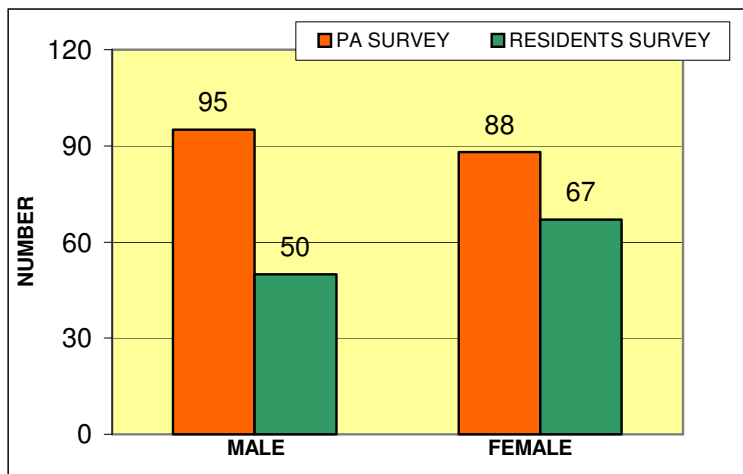
Following feedback from the client and Friends Groups a final report was produced.

4. RESULTS

4.1 RESPONDENTS

More than **300** people were questioned during the Postal Survey and Participatory Appraisal (PA) consultation processes. The make-up of this sample is outlined below:

Gender of all respondents



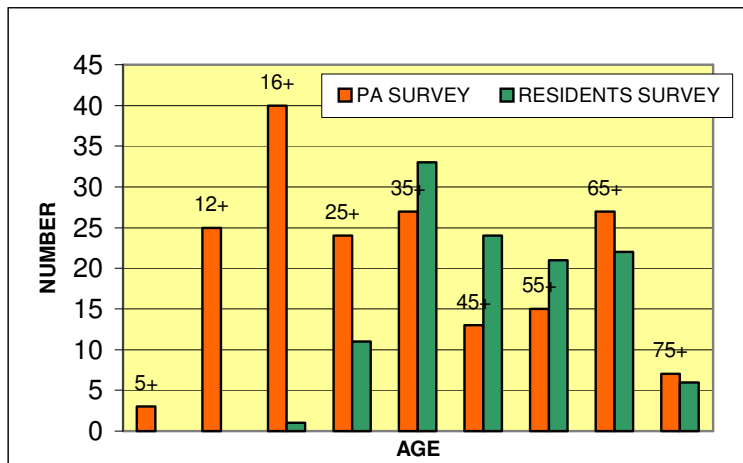
Interestingly the PA Survey made contact with a marginally higher number of males than females.

The trend was the other way round in the residents survey

Sample size:

*Residents survey= 120
PA and School survey =183
TOTAL 303*

Age range of all respondents



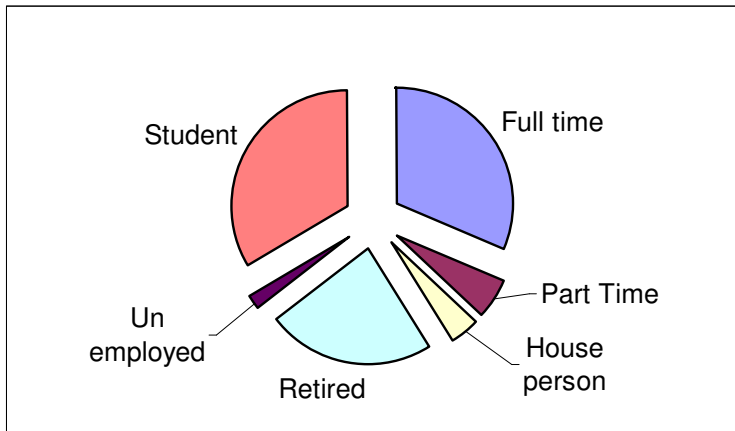
The residents survey did not connect with the 5 – 24 age group

The PA survey through contact with schools collated the views of this group.

Sample size:

*Residents survey= 118
PA survey =181*

Working status of all respondents

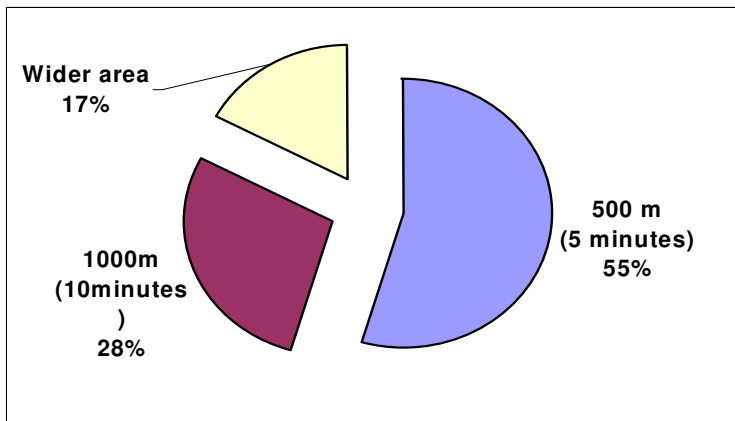


This information was only collected in the PA survey.

High student numbers reflects contact with schools as well as that category encountered during survey.

Sample size = 183

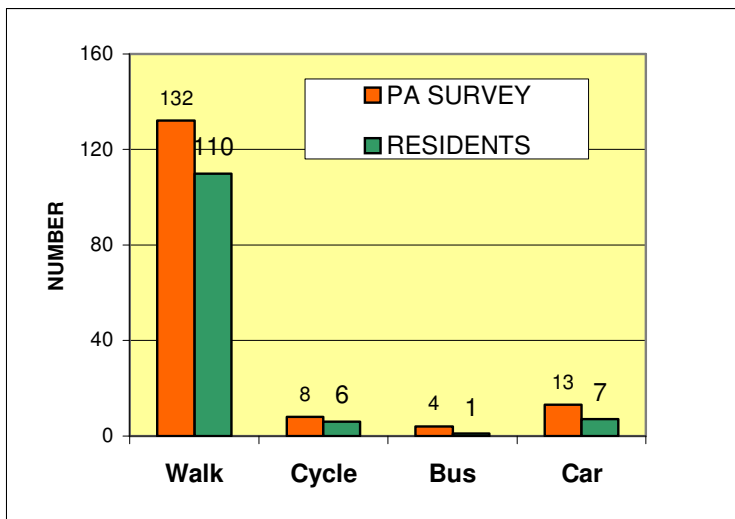
Where do users live in relation to the park



More than half of the users live within 5 minutes walk of the park. A sizeable number of users live more than 1 kilometre from the park (This may reflect both the use made by school pupils and the lunchtime use by town centre workers)

*Sample size:
PA survey = 134*

How do users get to the Park



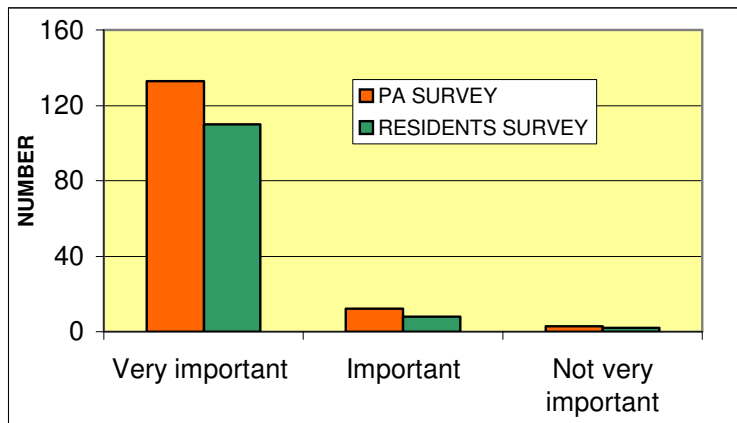
More than 80% of PA respondents walk to the park.

No figures are included for the School survey (30)

As expected 92% of residents respondents walk to the park.

*Sample size:
Pa survey = 157
Residents survey = 124*

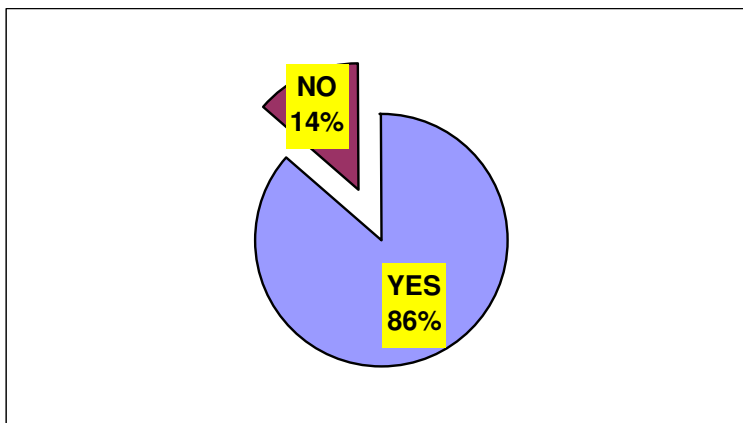
Importance of Duchess of Hamilton Park – all respondents



The majority of respondents in both surveys felt it was very important to have a park in their local area.

Sample size:
PA survey = 148
Residents survey = 120

How many people use the Park?

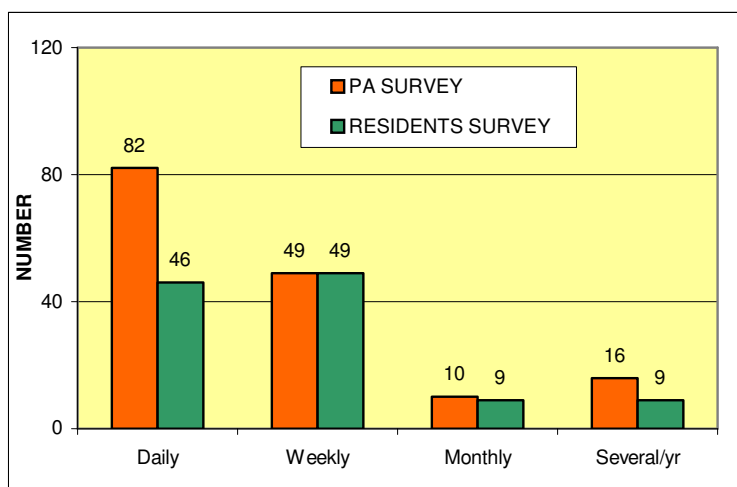


All respondents

86% of respondents (PA survey) said they use the park

Sample size:
PA survey = 183

How often do people use the park?



The majority of survey respondents use the park on a daily basis, or at least once a week (84%).

The occasional, less frequent users are not significant at only 16%.

Sample size:
PA Survey = 157
Residents survey = 113

How many people do not use the park and why not?

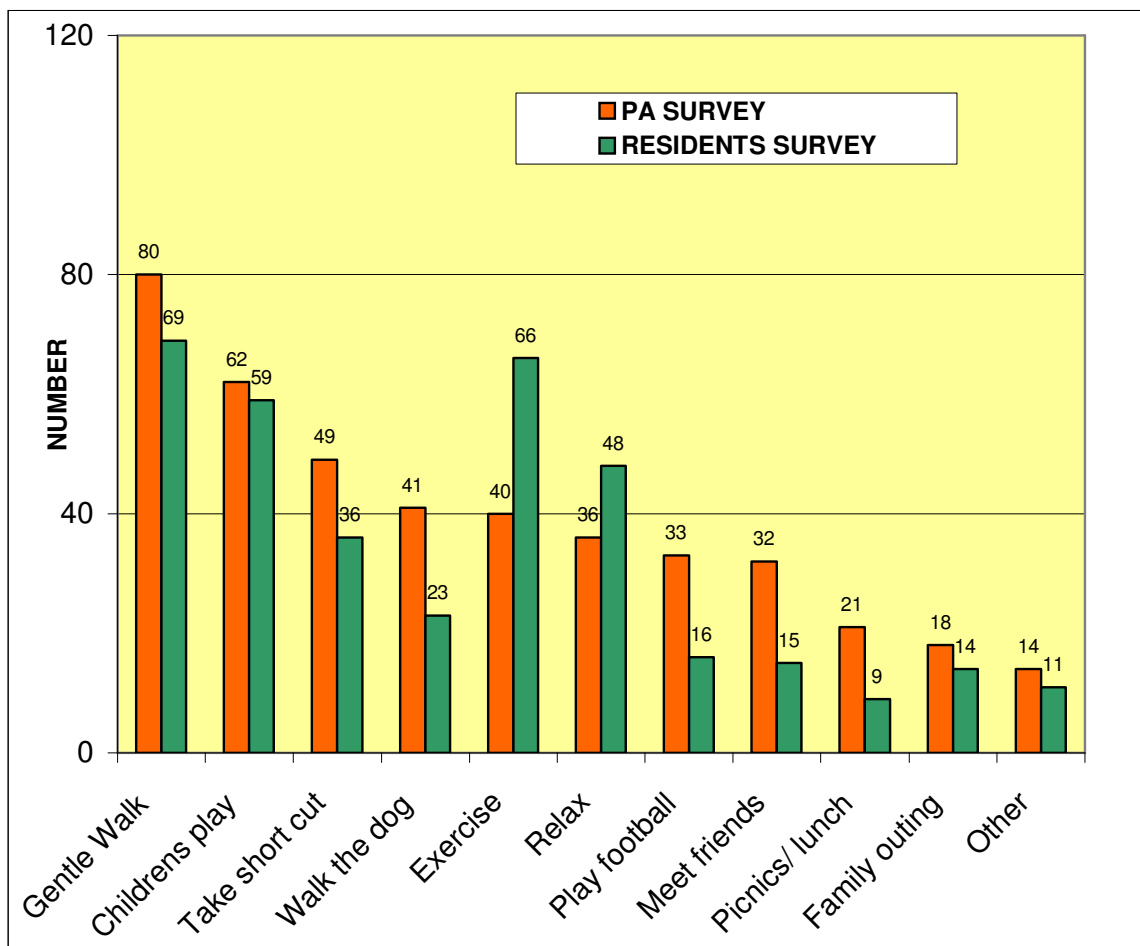
10% (25) of respondents do not use the park. The stated reasons for not using the park are:

- ❖ There is nothing of interest for me in any parks;
- ❖ Parks are for children. I am too old, and my children are grown up;
- ❖ I feel that it is unsafe;
- ❖ I don't know about it.

How many people were interested in being kept informed?

15 people gave their contact details and noted interest in being kept informed.

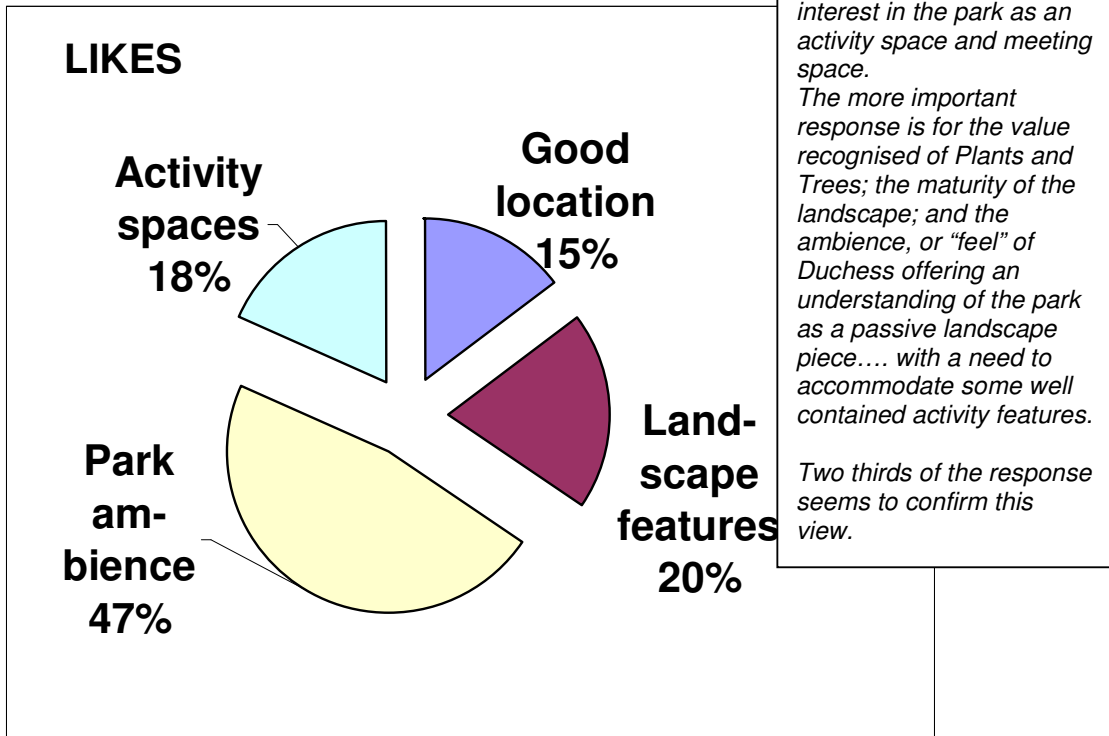
4.2 WHAT TYPE OF **ACTIVITIES** IS THE PARK USED FOR



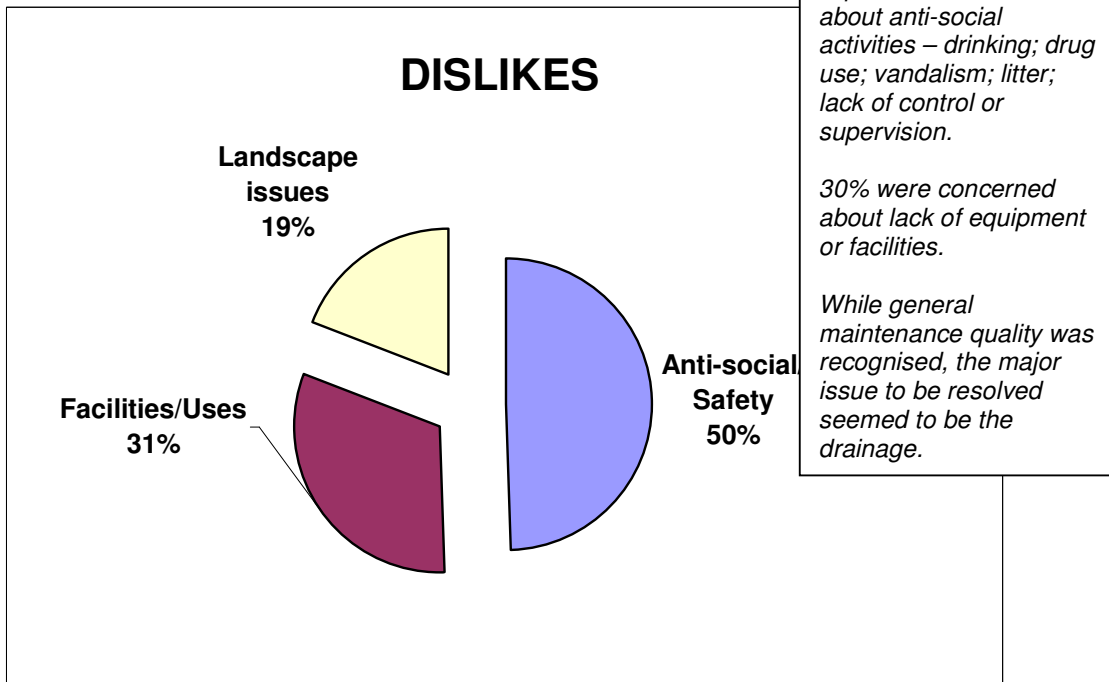
PA survey results are presented in descending ranked order, and can be compared with the results from the Residents survey. This park seems to be seen as an active space albeit that much of the activity is low key, with “gentle” walk; dog walk; relaxing; taking a short cut; and meeting friends being prominent. Residents appear to view the park as a space for gentle walk, relaxation or exercise, and as the location for children’s play.

4.3 VIEWS ON FACILITIES

What do people like about Duchess Park?



What do they Dislike about the park?



These likes and dislikes were used in the workshops to help to ‘define’ the park as seen from the local community perspective. The ‘Likes’ are the positive factors, the characteristics of the park that attract people to it.

These are the strengths that need to be built upon.

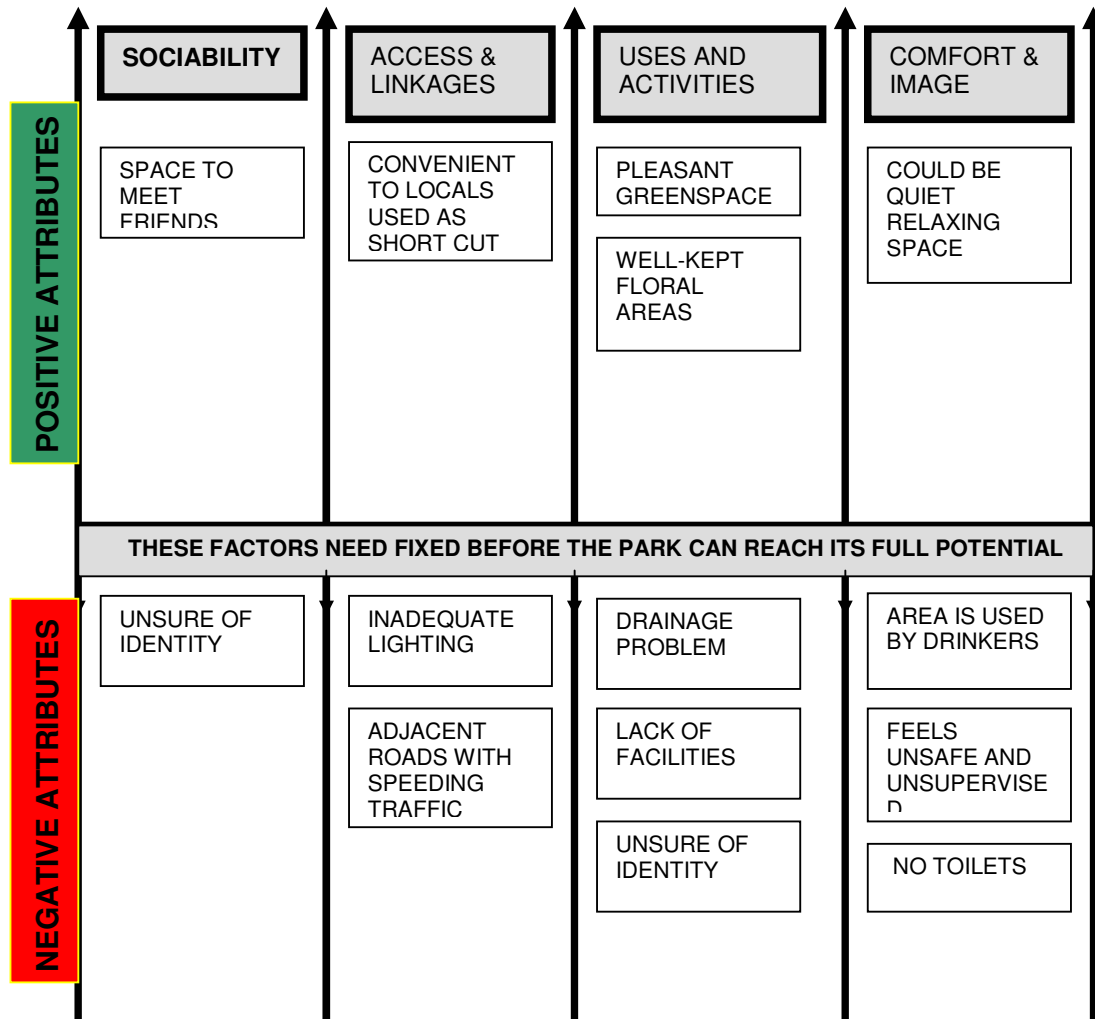
The ‘Dislikes’ highlight areas that detract from the park, these are areas that will reduce people’s enjoyment of the park or perhaps stop people using the resource.

These are the Park’s weaknesses that will need to be addressed before it can reach its full potential.

This relationship, between the park’s positive and negative attributes has been shown in the diagram overleaf. The attributes have been grouped under the 4 headings; Sociability, Access and linkages, Uses and Activities and Comfort and Image.

The ability to generate a high “score” against these key attributes sets the way forward for the creation of a “great place”.

DUCHESS OF HAMILTON PARK HAS THE FOLLOWING ATTRIBUTES:



On the positive side, the current image of the Park is one that is strong on being a decorative landscaped open space, and “once the pride of the town”. It is also very accessible from where people live and work.

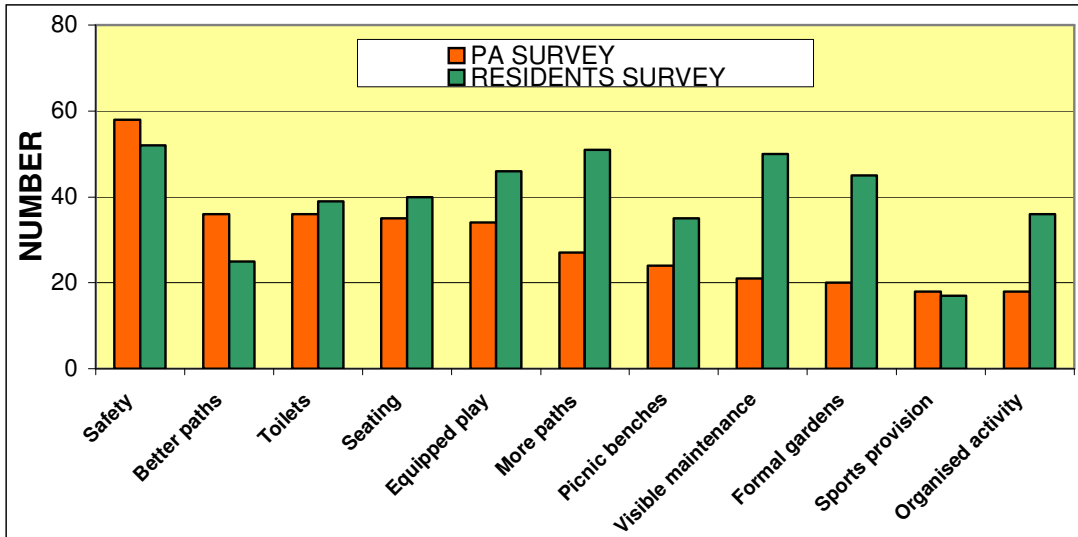
Beyond mid-afternoon, it is not regarded as a sociable or welcoming place. It is seen as a place used by drinkers or drug users; and it is perceived as being poorly serviced, poorly lit, lacking an obvious, safe, focal point and toilets.

The speed of vehicles on the access roads around the park also cause concern.

In the next section we explore how people feel the park can fill the gaps in the equation and become a better PLACE

4.4 VIEWS ON IMPROVEMENTS

People were asked to choose their top 3 improvement ideas from a list of 22 items. The top 10 improvement ideas from both consultation phases can be seen on the chart below.



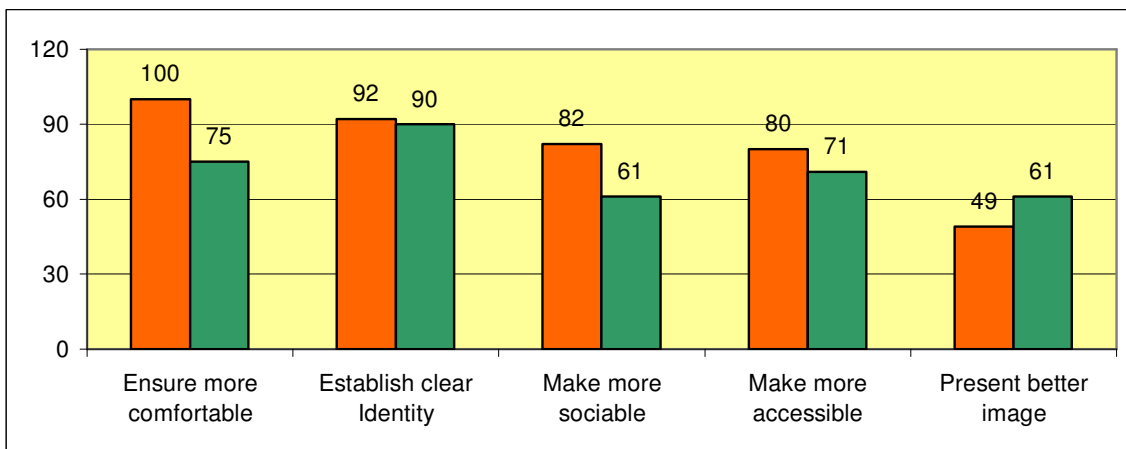
The top improvements suggested are

- ❖ Safety, supervision and lighting
- ❖ Better surfaced paths
- ❖ Provide and supervise toilets
- ❖ Seating and shelter areas
- ❖ Provide and service play equipment
- ❖ More footpaths
- ❖ Create picnic area, benches
- ❖ Be more visible in maintaining the park
- ❖ Develop and present the formal gardens
- ❖ Investigate sports provision
- ❖ Organised summer activities for children

The Residents Survey suggested:

- Safety and supervision measures,
- Create more footpaths
- Better visible maintenance
- Introduce more plant variety and colour
- Improve lighting
- Create play and activity areas
- Enhance the formal gardens
- Provide and supervise toilets
- Organised children's summer activities
- Enhance the grassy spaces

When the individual choices on improvements are viewed as part of the "themed group" a picture emerges of where the major concerns and aspirations lie.



On the following diagram the same information is expressed in another way again. The top 10 improvement ideas have been shown **SHADED**; (figures in the boxes show PA +Residents results and a total) and 'labelled' in one of two ways:

- ❖ Aspirational – long term goals for the park needing further thought and Capital funding;
- ❖ Practical – short and medium term actions mainly of a management (or Revenue fund) nature.

Sociability

ASPIRATIONAL

SCORE 82

1. Community social events
2. Community performance area
3. **Seating/shelter areas**
4. **Picnic benches/areas**

Good access and linkages

PRACTICAL

SCORE 80

5. Cycle paths
6. **Footpaths**
7. **Improved access/good surfaces for buggies and wheelchairs**
8. Car parking
9. Signage

Uses and activities

ASPIRATIONAL

SCORE 92

10. Grassy open spaces
11. **Formal garden area/floral displays**
12. **Equipped play and activity areas**
13. **Club/sports activities**
14. **Organised children's summer activities**

Comfort and image

PRACTICAL

SCORE 149

15. Wide variety of plants/trees and shrubs/year round colour
16. Enhance places for wildlife
17. **Better/visible maintenance**
18. Public art
19. **Safety within the park/ Improved lighting/ Park attendant**
20. Formal gateway to park
21. **Toilet facilities**
22. Dog waste bins

5. OPTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The workshop held in November confirmed the **identity of the park**, and the issues that need to be addressed. The discussion also confirmed the top 10 improvement ideas and how these might be interpreted.

In summary, Duchess Park had a history as a well used and highly regarded park, with users travelling some distance to enjoy the formal gardens. The current identity of the park remains one of being a relatively quiet piece of formal town landscape, but with several issues of poor drainage; lesser quality of formal planting and presentation; and little by way of opportunity for informal recreational use of the grassy spaces.

The formal play equipment is not well regarded and the locations of some facilities might be better contained with the landscape framework. The recent installation of the highly visible, (but unwelcoming) galvanised palisade fencing presents an intrusive element into the park's appearance; has closed off some previous entrances; and yet has not remedied the late afternoon and evening anti-social activities of drinking use and vandalism.

A number of factors have been identified by local people, which need to be fixed before the park can reach its real potential and become a 'great place'. These relate to tackling the problems caused by inadequate park drainage (exacerbated either by spring water, or recent adjacent house building); the provision of toilets; and dealing the anti social misuse of the park by introduction of lighting, or greater supervision.

All of the views on improvements appear to build on what exists at present. There seems to be no strong view that Duchess Park should be any other type of park space than its historic and current role as a high quality formal landscaped park. Responses have suggested that where play and activity spaces can be located and further enhanced; or where youth shelter/seating space and public toilets located; that this should be achieved within the context of the landscape and appearance of the decorative park.

The park already has two recognised 'zones', for informal runabout exercise adjacent Dalziel High School; and the "play zone" more towards the south of the park. The park provides a short cut for pupils going to the High School, but safety concerns diminish this use during the afternoons or evening hours.

Responses from both surveys placed the highest priority on giving attention to Safety, Supervision and Lighting, and taking that together with the other major items within the **Comfort and Image** theme, the provision and servicing of toilets; and the higher visibility of maintenance (and staff) says "Let's look after and present, what we have!" These improvements can be classified as '**practical**' responses with the following as priorities:

Better visible maintenance and Safety within the Park

The challenge of dealing with anti-social behaviour is an issue extending well beyond the boundary of the Park. The issue in Duchess Park seems to be the lack of facilities to attract and entertain a teenage audience; the availability of large easily accessed dark spaces relatively free from overview and supervision; with the result being behaviour unacceptable to local residents and possible damage to facilities and features within the park.

Provide, service and supervise toilet facilities

Responses suggested that daytime use by families, especially with young children is discouraged by lack of properly presented toilet facilities. It is possible that with careful siting, a safe, well-lit, and serviced area could provide a daytime and evening meeting place for various categories of user of the park.

The second themed area of interest was that of **Uses and Activities**, where there seems to be a need to clarify the identity, or style of the park. Most of the ideas are 'aspirational' - looking to the longer term - and may, should they be pursued, require Capital funding. The implementation of these ideas would focus on youth provision, and would introduce a stronger element of activity into the park.

Any pre-requisite of improving Duchess Park must tackle the problem of spring water, of disrupted drainage which is causing water-logging of the grassy areas; killing off several areas of trees; flooding on to footpaths; and preventing any positive use of these open spaces by visitors.

Equipped play and activity areas

There is a recognition, from both Residents and PA survey, of additional attention to be directed to the presentation of the play area. We suggest that a way of ensuring regular visitor interest is maintained is to have a couple of 'interchangeable' pieces of equipment which could be 'circulated' between parks.

As for teenage facilities we suggest that local youth groups and youth workers are involved in the design and siting of any new equipment.

Club/Sports activities

A strategic review of alternative clubs and pitches should be carried out before any commitment is made within Duchess Park to large scale sports provision. There may be other more suitable locations for these facilities, but informal opportunities for activity should be examined.

Organised children's summer activities

This provision is one that might be co-ordinated between several of the Council's parks, so that a rolling programme of provision can be made during the 6 weeks of summer holidays. It may be that NLC staff currently provide these activities in other locations

The third main category was to improve the '**sociability**' of Duchess Park. This category is also aspirational in nature, needing time both to organise and secure funds, but also for public response to make the "place" more sociable. This only happens if users are attracted to the space for a purpose, and feel comfortable and well-serviced in doing so. Clearly this is longer term ambition.

The workshop noted that the anti-social elements would need to be dealt with before some of this provision could be implemented, but some elements can be offered as part of the ongoing servicing, and "animation" of the Park. Staff time or that of professional providers needs to be secured.

Community Social events

Given the central location and immediacy of residents, and a secondary school it may be possible to begin to interest the "community" in the development and organisation of such events. Again a well serviced space is a pre-requisite of creating the park as venue.

Seating and shelter areas/picnic benches

There is an opportunity to provide this type of facility in and around the play areas. A separate provision for younger people might work where it was lit and therefore seen as safe. Careful siting needs to be considered, and if possible low cost/locally produced furniture might be used.

The final category noted is '**Good access and linkages**'. These ideas are practical in nature and therefore could be scheduled on a relatively short-term basis.

Footpaths and improved access surfaces

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in employment and in access to goods, services, transport and education. The access arrangements to facilities and the service provided will need to be reviewed in the light of this legislation.

It is therefore a good time to audit the access to facilities to identify barriers. An issue for those who like to take exercise, is the lack of daylight in the winter months. Well-lit walking routes can encourage more people to take exercise. There is undoubtedly an opportunity to create a short well-lit route through the park which would also assist pupils through the darker winter mornings and afternoons.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Appendix 2

What makes a great place?

Project for Public Spaces