

Beach Gardens Sports Park Green Flag Management Plan 2024



Beach Gardens Sports Park

Established 1930

Swanage Town Council owns and manages a wide variety of green spaces that everyone can be proud of. They include Local Nature Reserve, play areas, parks and gardens, woodlands, sports parks, playing fields, cemeteries, allotments, and wetlands.

The importance of these spaces for people to enjoy nature, exercise, relax and take part in recreation cannot be over-estimated and their importance to our wellbeing is paramount.

Beach Gardens is one of these special places and Swanage Town Council considers that the Green Flag award process is a key step in positively developing our green spaces as part of a strategic partnership with the community.

This plan sets out how we work in positive partnerships with others to achieve the idyllic and unique place that is Beach Gardens and sets out our vision, priorities and objectives for improving and maintaining this space for years to come.

In 2023 we were successful in achieving our first Green Flag Award.





INTRODUCTION

This management plan has been developed by Swanage Town Council for Beach Gardens with full regard to the Green Flag Award criteria. It sets out the general principles for the management of Beach Gardens now and over the next 3 years and includes an action plan for specific developments and improvements. The plan follows the categories measured for the Green Flag award which represents best practice for public green open space management while allowing and encouraging the individuality of each space to flourish.





SITE INFORMATION

Name: Beach Gardens Sports Park

Address: Cauldon Avenue, Swanage, BH19 1PG

Phone: 01929 766018

Website: swanage.gov.uk

Email: welcome@swanage.gov.uk

Ownership: Swanage Town Council

First Green Flag awarded in 2023



Size: 1.65 Hectares

Access: The park is not locked and is therefore freely accessible

Local Facilities:

18 hole putting course, 6 Tennis Courts, Lawn Bowling Green, Basketball Court, Table Tennis

Café - Tea on the Green, Toilets and Showers.

Directions:

By Public Transport

The nearest national train station is Wareham and this is located on the main line from Waterloo to Weymouth.

The number 40 bus run by More Bus leaves at 8 minutes past the hour from Wareham Train Station to Swanage Interchange. A 10-15 minute walk on level ground will take you to Beach Gardens. Upon leaving the Bus interchange turn left on to Station Road and shortly after this the road turns into Rempstone Road. Proceed straight on to the junction of Victoria Avenue. Turn right onto Victoria Avenue and then left in to De Moulham Road. Follow the road and Beach Gardens entrance is on the corner of the 4th left which is Beach Gardens road.

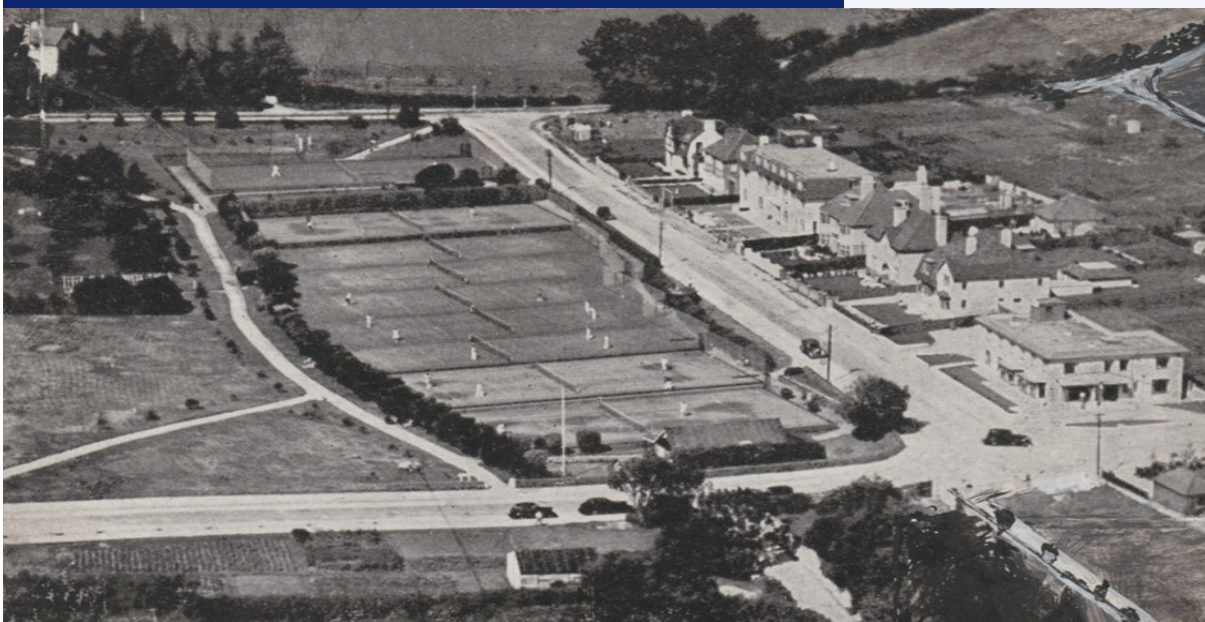


By Car

Enter Swanage on the A351 and follow signs for Main Beach Car Park. Drive past the entrance to Main Beach Car Park and turn left into Northbrook Road. Beach Gardens entrance is on corner of the 3rd right which is Beach Gardens road.

All roads around Beach Gardens are free to park.





HISTORY

The Sports Park was established in 1930 when John Mowlem offered the site to Swanage Town Council and they developed it into a Sports Park which included an 18 hole putting green and 6 tennis courts.

The layout of the putting green was different in those days when the then Swanage Urban District Council operated it. Following the Local Government Act of 1972, the property passed to the newly created Swanage Town Council who made a number of changes.

The old tennis pavilion, situated where the courts are today, was demolished and the present one constructed; the new tennis courts were constructed and the new bowling green laid.

The bowling green and tennis courts were originally located on the hill behind the sea-front and not far from the current bandstand. Then in 1978 the bowling green was "moved" by the council to Beach Gardens where a new green was constructed together with a clubhouse/pavilion which is shared with the Swanage Tennis Club.



A WELCOMING PLACE

Beach Gardens is a true community hub. There are five entrances via well maintained pathways which lead you into the gardens. Parking on all surrounding roads is free of charge and the gardens can be reached on foot from Swanage Main Beach (125m), North Beach Car Park (500m) and Main Beach car park (505m).

Clear signage is provided at each entrance point and all access points are level and free from steps.

The gardens are bordered by well-maintained conifer, griselinia and privet hedges which are managed to ensure clear and effective sight lines whilst retaining a pleasant and secure boundary.

The main entrance on Northbrook Road leads past the bowling green towards 'Tea on the Green' which has sloped access and movable external seating where you can enjoy refreshments, take in the spectacular views across Swanage Bay and hire equipment to enjoy the 18-hole pitch and putt, the permanent table tennis table, the multi-use games area, the tennis courts and the bowling green. Tea on the Green is a certified dementia-friendly cafe that is open Monday-Thursday 10am-5.30pm and Friday-Sunday 9am-5.30pm.



Continuing past this and Beach Gardens pavilion (or accessed more directly via the Cauldon Avenue entrance) is the fully compliant disabled toilet facility and shower which was installed in 2018. Adjacent to this are an additional 6 public conveniences. These are open every day except Christmas Day, 8am-8pm in summer, 8am-6pm in spring and autumn and 8am to 5pm in winter. Tennis and bowls club members and their guests are able to access these conveniences at any time. Access to the disabled facility and shower is also available at all times through the use of a radar key.



Although cycle parking is provided adjacent to the Cauldon Avenue entrance, cycling is not permitted within Beach Gardens, nor are dogs (with the exception of guide dogs/assistance dogs on leads). Park visitors are clearly notified of this by appropriate signage at the entrances. Although the vast majority of Swanage Town Council's parks and gardens do welcome cyclists and dog's, Beach Gardens wishes to provide all visitors the opportunity to enjoy the park and use the sports facilities at their leisure in a location in which they feel comfortable.

The accessible, step free and well-maintained tarmac paths within the gardens lead visitors through areas of formal and informal planting, between a wide range of mature and younger trees, past the café and the putting, bowling, tennis and multi-use game areas with many benches along the way to take a rest or to sit and enjoy the wildlife and the surroundings.

HEALTHY, SAFE AND SECURE

In addition to the grounds, all buildings which include Beach Gardens pavilion, Tea on the Green and the public conveniences are managed by Swanage Town Council who are responsible for the provision, maintenance and monitoring all mandatory inspections and associated health and safety requirements. These include fire detection and alarm systems, emergency lighting, building security systems, electrical testing including portable appliance testing and water hygiene inspection and monitoring. Appropriate records are maintained in respect of these. In addition, the buildings are managed effectively with all responsive repairs and maintenance undertaken either through the use of the in-house team or via external contractors. A full condition survey of the park was undertaken in 2020 which has enabled the development of an asset management plan to ensure all planned maintenance can be budgeted and undertaken proactively.

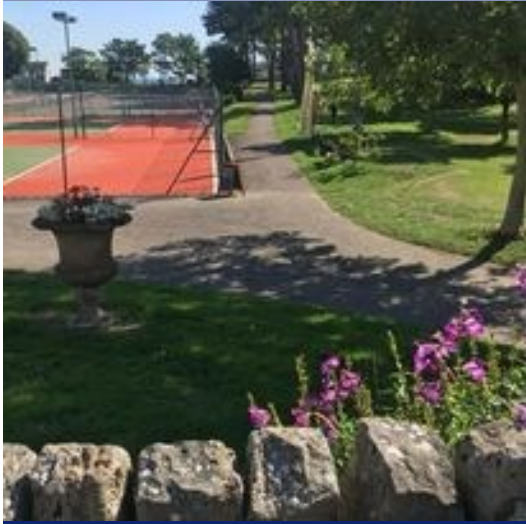
External areas, such as the sports courts, fencing and pathways were also subject to the 2020 condition survey and again this has ensured the development of an asset management plan to ensure that all future planned maintenance is budgeted and undertaken proactively.

In June 2021, seven members of the Council's Operations Team undertook professional training, Lantra Sports Turf Maintenance - Artificial surfaces, in order that the three Astro turf tennis courts could be effectively maintained in house. A weekly, monthly and annual regime of brushing, filling and inspecting the courts is in place using professional equipment owned by the Council.

A further inspection and maintenance regime is in place for the three hard courts, the pathways and the MUGA. This ensures these surfaces are safe, well maintained and routinely cleared of any debris such as leaves or pine needles. The tennis courts and bowling green are locked overnight with the tennis club and the Council holding keys to ensure the area can be used safely. Three of the tennis courts are floodlit however, enabling evening use by tennis club members and the public in a managed way with booking of the tennis courts and bowling green for public use available through Tea on the Green or the Council's Visitor Information Centre. The MUGA is available for users at all times, as is the park itself.

Benches, litter bins, and signage are routinely inspected (daily in main season April to September and three times a week outside of this) to ensure that any repairs can be attended to promptly and any rare cases of vandalism or graffiti dealt with appropriately.





Monitoring of park standards is overseen by the Grounds and Estates Manager and ultimately the Assets and Compliance Manager. Monitoring of Tea on the Green and sports bookings is overseen by the Visitor Information and Business Development Manager. For all aspects of park management, systems are in place to ensure risk assessments are in place and communicated and that full regard is had to Health and Safety legislation in order to maximise safety and minimise risk to the public and employees.

Beach Gardens is also part of the daily walking route for the Council's Seafront Advisors who work seasonally between April and September. Their role is to act as a mobile information service, ensuring that visitors are welcomed and providing advice and guidance so that an enjoyable time can be had by everyone.



The vast majority of Swanage Town Council team members, including those that work at Tea on the Green and the Operations and Seafront Adviser teams, hold Emergency First Aid at Work qualifications with these being routinely refreshed and re-certified by the Council. A Community Defibrillator is permanently housed on the external wall of the pavilion and this training enables the team to be able to use this if required. All Swanage Town Council team members wear uniforms with logos in order that they are easily identified by park users in case of any queries. They also all carry portable radios with permanent radios being situated in Tea on the Green, enabling team members to have contact with each other at all times. These are fitted with emergency alarms in case of any personal security issues and full training is provided along with planned 'drills' being undertaken to ensure team members are aware of the protocols in case of emergency situations. In 2022, team members were also provided with certified Conflict Resolution and Personal Safety Training by an external qualified provider.



Tea on the Green serves a variety of Fairtrade, local and canned or bottled drinks. It strives to be single use plastic free and therefore no plastic bottles are used. It is also a free water refill point. The most popular items include locally produced ice cream, fruit ice lollies and cakes. All milk and butter is supplied by a local dairy and signage advises visitors of any allergens. All team members hold valid food hygiene certificates.

Equipment that can be hired from Tea on the Green includes tennis racquets, putters, lawn bowls, basketballs and table tennis bats. All are visually inspected daily and renewed as required by this team.



WELL MAINTAINED AND CLEAN

General waste and recycling bins within the park are regularly emptied (seven times a week in the summer and three times a week in winter) by the Council's team. Litter picking of the park is also undertaken at the same frequency. In addition, Seafront Advisers are fully equipped to collect litter on their daily walks through the park.

Public conveniences are cleaned by an external contractor three times per day with signage displaying contact details should interim or emergency cleans be required. Appropriate arrangements are in place for sanitary waste disposal.

Green waste such as lawn clippings, leaves and pine needles are recycled at a separate Council-owned site and wherever possible, such as in cases of leaf mould, used as fertiliser.

The Council will wherever possible recycle and reuse any arisings from tree works. This may include creating and retaining chippings, laying of branches to attract wildlife and collection of leaf mould.

The horticultural management of Beach Gardens is undertaken in house and there is a bespoke plan for the park. Alongside a team of well-trained ground operatives, two of which are currently undertaking RHS Level 2 qualifications, the Council employs a Horticulture Specialist.

HORTICULTURAL MANAGEMENT

Aspect	Regime
Amenity grass	Cut once a week in high season and as required using a mulch mower and strimmers.
Putting Greens	Cut and collect 3 times per week in the spring and summer season. Water when required. Top dress in autumn with a 80:20 loam to sand mix. Feed in spring and autumn with seaweed based feed.
Shrub bed maintenance	Weeding and dead heading as required. Annual pruning. Weed suppressant membrane in situ. Mulch in autumn using wood chippings recycled from tree works.
Summer bedding	Feed beds in spring or autumn with seaweed. Mulch in autumn using wood chippings recycled from tree works. Plant late May and water/deadhead/weed as required.
Ornamental pots	Feed in spring or autumn with seaweed. Mulch in autumn using wood chippings recycled from tree works. Plant late May and water/deadhead/weed as required.
Hedge maintenance	Hedges cut as required and with regard to bird nesting season and bird activity.
Leaf and pine needle clearance	As required on courts and footpaths

ARBORICULTURE MANAGEMENT

Swanage Town Council manages trees in accordance with Dorset Council Tree Policy and Swanage Town Council Tree Strategy. Trees are inspected by a qualified arboriculturist every 3 years who provide detailed information on condition and include recommendations in respect of work that may be required. In addition to the above, the Council will visually inspect trees as part of their day-to-day work, following feedback from third parties regarding a specific tree(s) and following periods of high winds. The Council has and will continue to ensure, a proportion of team members are professionally qualified in pole pruning, cross cutting and felling trees. In addition, the Council will provide appropriate tools, on-going training and health and safety provision to ensure such works are undertaken safely and professionally. Specialist contractors are engaged in cases where tree climbing is required.

The Council has and will continue to commit to a programme of new tree planting annually. This will be undertaken within the context of the Tree Policy and will also take into account the following considerations:

- *Mature height and spread;
- *Retention and extension of canopy;
- *Disease resistance;
- *Increasing the diversity of the Council's tree stock;
- *Climate change, including increased potential for drought conditions;
- *Access to enable early years watering and tending;
- *Vulnerability to wind and vandalism.



Examples of tree species located within Beach Gardens include palms and native trees such as mature pines, oaks and beech. In addition, there are several more recently planted specimen trees which include Crape Myrtle, Liquid Amber, Honey Locust, and Gingko Bilbao. These have been planted with consideration for climate change predictions. A tree nursery of mixed native trees has also been developed in the park and is tended to by the team.



ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY AND HERITAGE

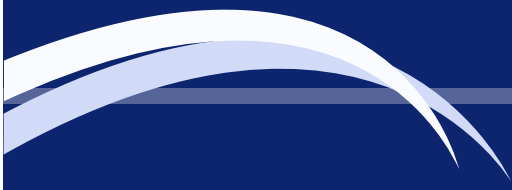
Within the park there is evidence of badgers, foxes and squirrels and a wide range of birds including tawny owls. Birds are attracted through the provision of bird boxes made by the Council using timber off cuts, and bird feeders.

Climate change and benefits to bees and pollinators are key in the selection of perennial planting. One recent change has been to introduce herbs such as sage, thyme and rosemary into the ornamental pots. This provides scented and drought tolerant planting and enables a reduction in the volume of summer bedding which requires greater amounts of watering. Other perennials in the park which favour pollinators and current and predicted climate conditions are eryngium, penstemon, rudbeckia, lavender and monarda.

Peat free compost is used within the park. The only chemical used within the park is Qualgex biocide to treat moss which can occur on the MUGA and the edge of the easternmost tennis court. Application tends to be between October and March in typical years and is essential to prevent slips. Mechanical removal of moss was trialled in this location but caused excessive deterioration of the surface. In addition, glyphosate via a Controlled Droplet Application method, is sometimes used on the putting greens to avoid ball deviation. This is used as a last resort and wherever possible hand digging is used to eradicate any weeds. All applications are undertaken by team members who have received professional training in the use of herbicides.

The Council's vehicle fleet includes 3 electric vehicles and a range of battery-operated equipment such as pole pruners and hedge cutters. When purchases of new equipment are required, full consideration is given to the feasibility of using electric rather than petrol-powered machinery. The Council has declared a climate emergency and is working towards carbon neutrality by 2030. The Carbon Neutral Plan contains a range of interventions which include installation of LED lighting, photovoltaic solar panels and heat pumps. Beach Gardens pavilion is one of the assets scheduled for works within this plan.

In 2022 a Notable Trees of Swanage Tree Trail was compiled by Greening Swanage. This is a subgroup of Sustainable Swanage, a group established as part of the town's ongoing efforts to become a more sustainable community. The Council funds one part-time staff member who facilitates and supports the different projects and campaigns and is the central point of contact. There is a large and growing number of volunteers who work on a variety of projects. The Notable Trees of Swanage trail contains two trees in Beach Gardens, the large Monterey Cypress planted in the 1930's and the Horse Chestnut with a girth measuring 4.5m estimated at over 150 years old, predating the gardens and creating a living link to past land use as it is found on the line of an old field boundary.





PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Swanage Tennis Club and Swanage Bowling Club are integral to the success and community feel of Beach Gardens.

Swanage Bowling Club moved to Beach Gardens in 1978 as a result of a new green being laid and a new pavilion being built by the Council for the bowls and tennis club. In 2019 the Bowling Club agreed a 50-year affordable lease for the green and had it re-laid. A vast amount of work has been completed on the green and surrounds since and the green is now recognised as one of the best nationally, regularly hosting county games, achieved without the use of any chemicals and through a lot of work by the greenkeeper.

The Bowling Club has six rinks, two of which are available to non-members to bring their own bowls or hire equipment from Tea on the Green. The club offers 3 free trials and half-price first year subscription to those interested in taking up the sport. In addition, a Community Open Day is held each May to encourage people to come and have a go as well as open events and tournaments as part of Swanage Carnival week.

Swanage Tennis Club has over 250 members, 25% of which are juniors. The club welcomes new members and offers 3 free trials to those interested in joining. It also offers junior bursaries subsidising 50% of membership and coaching fees to local young people who may be going through difficult times to encourage them to get active and try something new. A Community Open Tournament is held in August coinciding with the competitions and open events held as part of Swanage Carnival week. Other events are held throughout the year including the Swanage Tennis Club Christmas Jumper Tournament.

In 2022 the tennis club undertook significant fundraising to install Astro-turf surfacing onto an additional third court with the Council making a financial contribution and managing the installation. This third all-weather court enables more opportunities to play as well as providing a surface which causes less strain to players' joints, allowing seniors to carry on with sport for longer.

Swanage Town Council officers and the Tennis and Bowling Club committees meet regularly to discuss matters regarding the asset management plan and service provision to the pavilion, for example to discuss the annual Fire Risk Assessment, planned maintenance for the year ahead or any service improvements that may be planned. This also enables sharing of plans and developments of the sports clubs themselves alongside any proposals the Council may have regarding developments in the use of the park. There is also a more formal forum with Councillor involvement that meets as required. Working together to achieve an inclusive and accessible park and facilities is the shared goal of all involved.



MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

Beach Gardens is currently promoted digitally via

Visit Dorset

[Swanage Beach Gardens, Putting Green, Tennis and Outdoor Bowls - Visit Dorset \(visit-dorset.com\)](#),

via its own dedicated Facebook page

[Beach Gardens | Swanage | Facebook](#)

and the Town Council's website

[Swanage Town Council - Beach Gardens & 'Tea on the Green'](#).

Both the tennis and bowls clubs have their own dedicated websites

[Swanage Tennis Club / Swanage Tennis Club - Club information](#)

and

[tennis court bookings \(lta.org.uk\)](#)

and

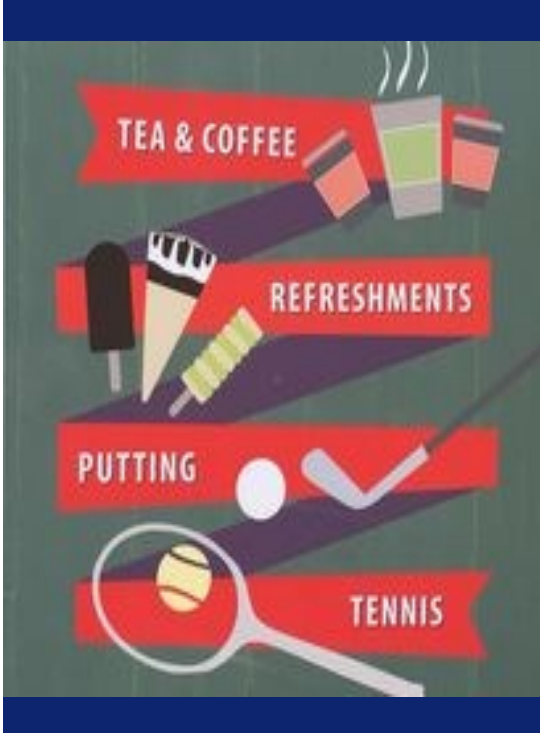
[Swanage Bowling Club – Lawn bowls on the Dorset Coast](#)

Beach Gardens Sports Park also hosts an annual open day on April 1st to launch the start of the season. An advert and voucher for a free hot drink are put in the local Purbeck Gazette. It's always a very popular event.

A questionnaire competition will be run during May and June to obtain useful statistics for the future and support promotion during this relatively quiet period. The prize offered will be a day out at Beach Gardens trying out the putting, tennis and a hamper from the café Tea on the Green including, hot drinks, ice creams, cold drinks, biscuits and snacks.

Swanage Carnival hold their annual putting competition at Beach Gardens. This is a very popular event and brings lots of people to Beach Gardens for the day.

In September The Planet Purbeck Festival will have a guided walk around Beach Gardens. The council's horticulturist will talk about the trees and plants. This is a new event but has had lots of interest already.



SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Achieved Green Flag status in 2023
- High standard of maintenance
- Good quality facilities – café, WC's including disabled facilities, wide variety of sports available, adequate seating
- Staff team engaged in success of park
- Sustainable and good levels of biodiversity
- Asset management plan in place
- Good health and safety regime in place
- Well trained and engaged team
- Well-liked by residents and visitors over generations
- Strong and well-established sports clubs; Tennis and Bowls
- A site specific tree strategy.
- Good range of habitats for wildlife

OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop a Beach Gardens user group
- Arrange a drop in session to engage MUGA users to gain ideas for improvement
- Have more events in park
- Improved links with Sustainable Swanage
- Events for young people (12 and under)
- Install a community notice board
- Expand provisions around different sports, including multi use pitches

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of external directions to site
- Ageing tree stock
- No friends of group
- Lack of engagement with informal MUGA users
- Seasonal use of park (other than tennis and MUGA)
- Café has seasonal opening only
- Not adjacent to public transport links
- No data on barriers to use of the park
- Ageing building stock

THREATS

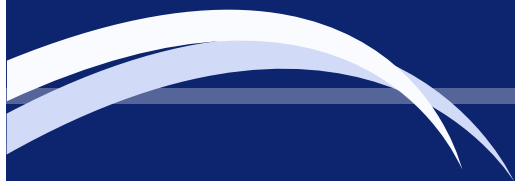
- Decrease in future funding (capital and revenue)
- Reliance on ongoing success of bowls and tennis clubs
- Decrease in visitor numbers and reduced income from putting/refreshments (cost of living crisis etc)
- Impact of climate change on plants, trees and wildlife

ACTIONS

ACTION	TIMESCALE
Engage with young people (MUGA users) to gain feedback on space	Next 12 months
Develop meet the team events	Next 12 months
A community notice board is being installed to show information and advertise events.	Next 12 months
Develop an annual meeting of park users	Next 24 months
Increase the number of public events	Next 24 months
Consider options for external signposting to the park	Next 24 months
A new sign for the entrance at Northbrook Road is being carved out of a large piece of recycled local timber by one of the operations team.	Next 12 months
Solar panels are going to be installed and the lighting in the pavilion is being upgraded to LED.	Next 12 months
We are planning basketball sessions with a qualified coach for young people.	Next 12 months
Tree plaques carved from recycled timber will be placed on all significant trees.	Next 12 months
A further tarmac tennis court is being converted to astro turf to provide greater opportunities for year round use of the courts.	Next 12 months
We are holding two further community engagement sessions with experts on trees and bees.	Next 12 months

UPDATES AND WORKS CARRIED OUT IN 2023

- We were very pleased to win our first Green Flag Award in 2023.
- We had a wonderful summer season. The new decking and outdoor space at Tea on the Green was very popular and visitor numbers increased.
- The gardeners planted wild seed plugs in the banks surrounding the putting greens.
- We have planted a new species of tree—A Handkerchief Tree (*Davidia involucrata*) is a medium-sized tree in the family Nyssaceae.
- Bug houses, bat boxes and willow sculptures have been installed.
- The Swanage Information Centre carried out a survey in the Summer and over 100 people completed it with some brilliant feedback and the consensus was they all loved the new decking.
- We completed a beach gardens tree strategy which sets out how we will manage the trees and sets out future plans which consider maturity, species mix and canopy cover.
- In 2023 additional planting of wildlife friendly plants including a variety of herbs was undertaken.
- Held a community tree identification session with a qualified expert.



MONITORING AND REVIEW

It is proposed that the Beach Gardens Management Plan is updated at least annually and at the time of any significant changes which may impact its implementation.

The annual review will be undertaken in November in order to ensure any recommendations or changes which have financial implications have sufficient time to be considered within the Council's budget setting process. The review will include:

- Meetings with the Bowls and Tennis clubs and other interested parties to gain feedback on the previous year and plans and aspirations for the future;
- A review of the asset management plan and planned capital and one-off significant revenue for the forthcoming financial year;
- A review of visitor numbers and income from the café and use and hire of sports facilities;
- A review of the green space management and any changes or improvements to the tree and plant stock which may be required or suggested;
- A review of the park's success in achieving wider Council objectives such as carbon reduction, increases in recycling, reduction in the use of plastics and the provision of renewable energy;
- A review of the successes and lessons learnt from the previous year to include any suggestions for improvements and ensuring that the SWOT analysis is updated accordingly
- A review and update of the action plan ensuring that common goals are agreed by all involved groups and individuals and promoted to the wider community.

PICTURE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Front cover - Aerial view of Beach Gardens taken by Paul Dimarco Photography

Page 2 - Swanage Information Centre staff member

Page 3 - Swanage Bowling Club and Swanage Information Centre staff member

Page 4 - Swanage Information Centre staff member

Page 5 - Swanage Museum and Heritage Centre

Page 6 - Swanage Information Centre staff member

Page 7 - Tea on the Green Café

Page 8 - Swanage Information Centre staff member

Page 9 - Swanage Information Centre staff member

Page 10 - Swanage Town Council's Operations Team at Beach Gardens

Page 11 - Swanage Information Centre staff member

Page 12 - Swanage Information Centre staff member

Page 13 - Swanage Information Centre staff member

