

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

15 FEBRUARY 2021

FILHAM PARK

Filham Park access road improvements

Members have previously viewed advanced plans of the road and path improvements drawn up by John Grimes Partnership (JGP) on behalf of the Town Council. The final scheme will be funded by s106 monies earmarked for improving access to Filham Park.

By way of updates on the access road improvement scheme, engineers at JGP are currently working out the proportion of the overall path and road improvement scheme that relates directly to The Donkey Sanctuary. This will allow a more informed negotiation between the Town Council and The Donkey Sanctuary, the latter being required to make a 'reasonable contribution' to the cost of any improvements, as set out in a legal agreement between parties.

In terms of works on the ground, the Parks Ranger has been cutting back trees in the vicinity of the height barrier to accommodate the widening of the carriageway to better accommodate pedestrians. This work is of course seasonal, and has been carried out in advance of the main works so as to not disturb nesting birds and other wildlife.

The timescale of the delivery phase of this scheme can be properly set once discussions with The Donkey Sanctuary are complete.

Filham Park master planning exercise

Members will recall that the last Parks Committee meeting was held just as the public consultation exercise for Filham Park was getting underway. The consultation period was the month of November 2020 and in total 932 questionnaire responses were received. The vast majority of these were submitted online via SurveyMonkey, with a small number of paper copies returned to the Town Hall.

Over the last two months, the results have been collated, and a picture is emerging of how the Ivybridge community views Filham Park, including what people like and don't like, and what people would like to see in future.

A summary of the key elements from the community feedback is enclosed. Some clear headlines have emerged, as follows:

Q1. What people appreciate – the park location and free parking score highly, along with a natural place for exercise and to meet others. The pathways and variety of walks score well, and the current limited facilities in the park is reflected in the lower numbers ticking this box.

Q2. How people travelled – encouraging that more people visit on foot than by car, although clearly some people use both methods at times. Limited numbers travelling

to the park by bike may reflect the need to enhance cycle access and parking, but may also reflect that cycling is not formally permitted within Filham Park, other than on the bridleway route.

Q3. Current activities – walking is clearly the most popular activity, and done so on a regular basis. Amongst that, a large number of people listed wildlife watching on their visit. There are increased numbers of people running in the park, and as expected people using the allotments, angling, cricket, and football facilities. A large number of people reported picnicking in the park.

Q4. Satisfaction with facilities – people are generally satisfied with the path network, although drainage is an issue later in the survey. People also like the increase in wildlife conservation measures over the last few years. Fairly large numbers of people would like to see improvements to the bins and benches provision, including picnic benches in future. The highest dissatisfaction rating was for the current recreation facilities, which tend to be around organised sports and recreation pastimes and have limited appeal.

Q5. Top three facility improvements – by far, the most popular improvements would be facilities for children and young people. A café and WC facility also score highly. People would also like to see further landscape and wildlife enhancements in the park, and drainage improvements to the path network. New bins and benches also feature in feedback.

Q6. Single item for improvement – when narrowing down Q5, people focused on path improvements as the single most important thing that would improve their visit to the park. Interestingly, also scoring highly, was a need to improve safety in the park. This takes different forms, from dog safety issues, to litter and vandalism to zoned activity areas and lighting. Café and WCs scored highly again, as did a bike track/skate facility.

Q7. Middle ground area – people were asked for ideas for the so-called middle ground area between the allotments and cadets building. A café scored highest, closely followed by youth facilities (bike/skate) and WCs. Interestingly a community hub was frequently mentioned, including community workshops and a repair shed.

Q8. Climate and biodiversity measures – the Town Council received some interesting ideas on measures that could be incorporated into the management of Filham Park as a response to the Devon Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Declaration. As expected, tree planting and meadow creation scored highly – these are things already underway in the park. Renewable energy was frequently mentioned, as was encouraging people to walk or cycle and not drive to the park.

Q9. Age groups feeding back – most common group responding was 35-49 year olds, closely followed by those aged 50-65. However, younger groups were also well represented.

Q10. Postcode – as expected, the vast majority of those undertaking the survey were from the PL21 area. Park users also come from PL9, PL7 to the west, and TQ10 to the east.

In addition to this excellent response from the broader community, the Town Council is in the process of contacting the individual sports clubs and recreation organisations who use the park, to see if there are any wider issues of parks or facility management not covered in the general survey.

Having assessed these community responses, the next phase will be to start to evaluate the feedback in more detail, and start to map facility and other improvements to create a new masterplan. Members will recall that the Parks & Open Spaces Committee will oversee this process.

It is suggested that this process can begin with a site visit to Filham Park by Members to look at the key elements put forward by the community, and to look at where these can fit into the new design going forward.

Having created a draft Master Plan, the Town Council has committed to going back to the public with the new layout, before implementation begins.

It is **recommended** that the committee delegate officers to produce some draft layouts that are informed by the community response to the consultation and existing tenant feedback. A site visit should be arranged for the committee to consider these drafts on the ground, in compliance with Covid regulations, which may require some flexibility. Officers can then produce a final draft for consideration by this committee.

Keith Rennells – Parks and Open Spaces Consultant

Jonathan Parsons - Town Clerk

Filham Park, Ivybridge

A Community feedback questionnaire for Filham Park

Summary of results

1. What do you particularly appreciate about Filham Park as a community space?
(please tick all that apply)

Results listed in order of appreciation:

1	The location close to Ivybridge (77%)
2	That there is free parking (76%)
3	A place to relax or exercise (69%)
4	Natural areas managed for wildlife (60%)
5	A place to meet others outside (58%)
6	Accessible pathways (44%)
7	The variety of walks available (32%)
8	The facilities and amenities (15%)
9	The Park Ranger service (12%)

2. How do you travel to Filham Park? (Tick all that apply)

Results:

68%	On foot
65%	By car or motorbike
2%	By bicycle
2%	Other (please specify)

3. Please indicate how often you spend time at Filham Park doing the following activities (please tick).

Results not ordered:

	Every day	A few times a week	Several times a month	A few times a year	Never
Allotment gardening	17	95	109	51	522
Organised sport (angling, cricket, football, rugby)	4	63	62	90	587
Running	6	81	95	150	456
Walking (including dog walking)	95	273	334	173	37
Horse riding or cycling on the bridleway	7	37	84	128	538
Picnicking	0	5	61	366	368
Wildlife watching	36	97	130	255	308
Any other activity not listed above					

4. How happy are you with the following? (Please tick)

Results listed in order of satisfaction:

	Satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
Pathways (including the bridleway) within Filham Park	557	237	134
Areas managed for wildlife	529	308	86
Direction signs leading to Filham Park	521	352	56
Information signs within Filham Park	450	382	84
Number and location of benches	407	275	244
Number and location of waste bins	402	311	209
The service provided by the Park Rangers	302	564	34
Recreation facilities on offer	256	387	264

5. Suggest 3 facility improvements you would like to see at Filham Park (please rank as 1st, 2nd, 3rd in order of importance to you)

Results listed from highest to lowest for the % of people who had these in top 3:

1st	Facilities for children/young people (80%)
2nd	Café and/or WCs (58%)
3rd	Landscape and wildlife enhancements (43%)
4th	Path improvements including drainage (40%)
5th	Improved bins/benches and new picnic area (37%)
6th	Lake area (13%)
7th	Other issues – dog areas, maintenance etc (11%)
8th	Outdoor gym (5%)
9th	No changes (5%)
10th	More events (4%)
11th	Cricket improvements (4%)

6. What single change would most improve your visit to Filham Park?

Top ten results listed with the number of people for whom this was their single item for change:

1st	Path improvements (263) – includes access for all and more paths
2nd	WCs (137)
3rd	Park safety/management (105) – includes dog issues (34), litter/vandalism (30), safe zoned areas (29) and lighting (12)
4th	Café (89)
5th	Bike track/skate facility (73)
6th	Landscape and wildlife enhancement (66)
7th	Play area (54)
8th	Lake area improvements (48) – includes hedge maintenance
9th	Seating/benches (39)
10th	Bins (18)
	No change (43)

7. The Town Council is looking at opportunities to use the ground between the allotments and cadet building for new facilities. This includes an area for youth activities (bike and skate) as well as the possibility of community workshops, repair sheds, a café, toilets, etc.

Top ten results listed with the number of people for whom this was their first choice suggestions for the middle ground area:

1st	Café (275) – includes mobile café/eco cafe
2nd	Youth facilities (255) – mostly bike/skate provision
3rd	WCs (226)
4th	Community hub (150) – includes community workshop/repair shed
5th	Children’s facilities (59) – mostly play, including natural play
6th	Nature (43) – includes orchard, forest school and sensory area
7th	Cricket facilities (16) – extended from existing
8th	Outdoor gym (16) – including parkour
9th	Seating (12) – to go alongside cafe
10th	Community growing (10) – including allotment extension
	No change (19)

8. Ivybridge Town Council has signed up to the Devon Climate Declaration and is enhancing biodiversity in its parks and green spaces. Programmes of tree planting and wildflower meadow creation are already underway. The Council would be interested to receive your ideas for Filham Park to help offset the effects of climate change.

Results listed in order of popularity of suggested measures:

1st	Tree planting (222) – including natives and trees that support wildlife
2nd	Meadow creation (135) – including plants for bees
3rd	Renewable energy (67)
4th	Encourage walking and cycling rather than driving (50)
5th	Bird and bat boxes (20) – also bug hotels, etc
6th	Information about climate/wildlife (20)
7th	Activities for children (19)
8th	Recycling bins (18)
9th	Maintenance changes (15) – less mowing and hedge cuts better timed
10th	Community orchard (14)
11th	Compostable WC (10)

12 th	Eco café (10) – no plastics, etc
13 th	Electric car charging point (9)
14 th	Set up Friends Group (9)

9. Please indicate the age range(s) for those for whom you are responding.

Under 12	75 (8%)
12-18	46 (5%)
19-24	47 (5%)
25-34	131 (14%)
35-49	269 (29%)
50-65	227 (24%)
Over 65	135 (15%)

10. Please enter your postal code so that we can identify how far you travel to get to Filham Park.

Postal code	
PL21	851 (91%)
PL7	17 (2%)
TQ10	16 (2%)
PL9	10 (1%)