

Chairman's Progress Report June 2020

This has been an exciting year for wellbeing@garonpark, while also being an extremely challenging one.

The excitement is driven by a number of key developments:

- The appointment of Lin Boulter as Site Development Manager and Frazer Clark as Community Relationship Coordinator. These roles will be vital as we seek to engage with the local community and ensure that our operation is safe and well run. We are lucky to have found such enthusiastic and well qualified appointees in Lin and Frazer.
- The opening of the Garon Park Shed. Thanks to the efforts on Ian Bysouth and his band of volunteers the shed is now ready for use. The shed offers great woodworking facilities in a friendly and welcoming environment. This was our first major project and we are proud of the outcome.
- The delivery of the Wellbeing Trail. The trail will be the anchor point for many of the facilities on offer at Garon Park. The path is wheelchair friendly and offers seating areas, vista points and the chance to engage with nature. This has been a demanding project and we thank Clive Shiret for his determination to ensure that it was delivered successfully.
- Delivery of the first phase of our Planting Plan. We are fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Liam King of Writtle College to develop a plan that enhances the beauty and biodiversity of the Garon Park site and reflects national and local government guidelines. The first phase covered planting 930 hedge whips and 100 trees. We plan to plant a further 400 trees in the autumn.

Many organisations and volunteers have helped us with these projects, so many that is difficult to list them all. However, our major supporters have been:

- Big Lottery
- Veolia
- Southend Borough Council
- Hivedome
- EASST
- The Carbon Trust

and we thank them all for their help.

Alongside these important developments we have shaped our plans for the Pergola Walk, Forest School, Sensory Garden, Herbie, Community Pond, Community Garden and Orchard. We hope to raise the funding to make these plans a reality in the very near future. The continued support of Lucy Stanley in shaping and submitting our funding bids will be vital to success in this area.



And what of the challenges? With the delivery of our first facilities we now turn our attention to developing real and lasting engagement with the local community. Without this, the benefits of wellbeing will not become available to local people. This is a key area of focus for us.

Our Board is small but hard working. The need to attract further Trustees to the Board with a variety of complementary skills is a priority moving forward. We also need to ensure the board is more reflective of the Southend community.

We have been fortunate in the support that we have received so far from a variety of funders. However, we need to look at how we ensure that wellbeing@garonpark becomes financially self-sustaining over the coming years. The balance between accessibility for the local community and revenue generation will be difficult to strike but we need to find a way.

Finally, no list of challenges could fail to include the impact of COVID-19. With our other partners that use the Garon Park site we are looking at ways to emerge from the current lockdown fit and ready to serve the local community. Lin Boulter will take the lead on guiding us back to a form of normality.

It is 4 years since wellbeing@garonpark came into being. Together, we have achieved much so far. I am sure that, with your help, we will achieve our aim of “providing sustainable facilities that can be used to improve local health and wellbeing, as well as enhancing the beauty, biodiversity and environmental value of the 30-acre Garon Park site in Southend on Sea” in the years to come.

Andy Badger

Chairman wellbeing@garonpark