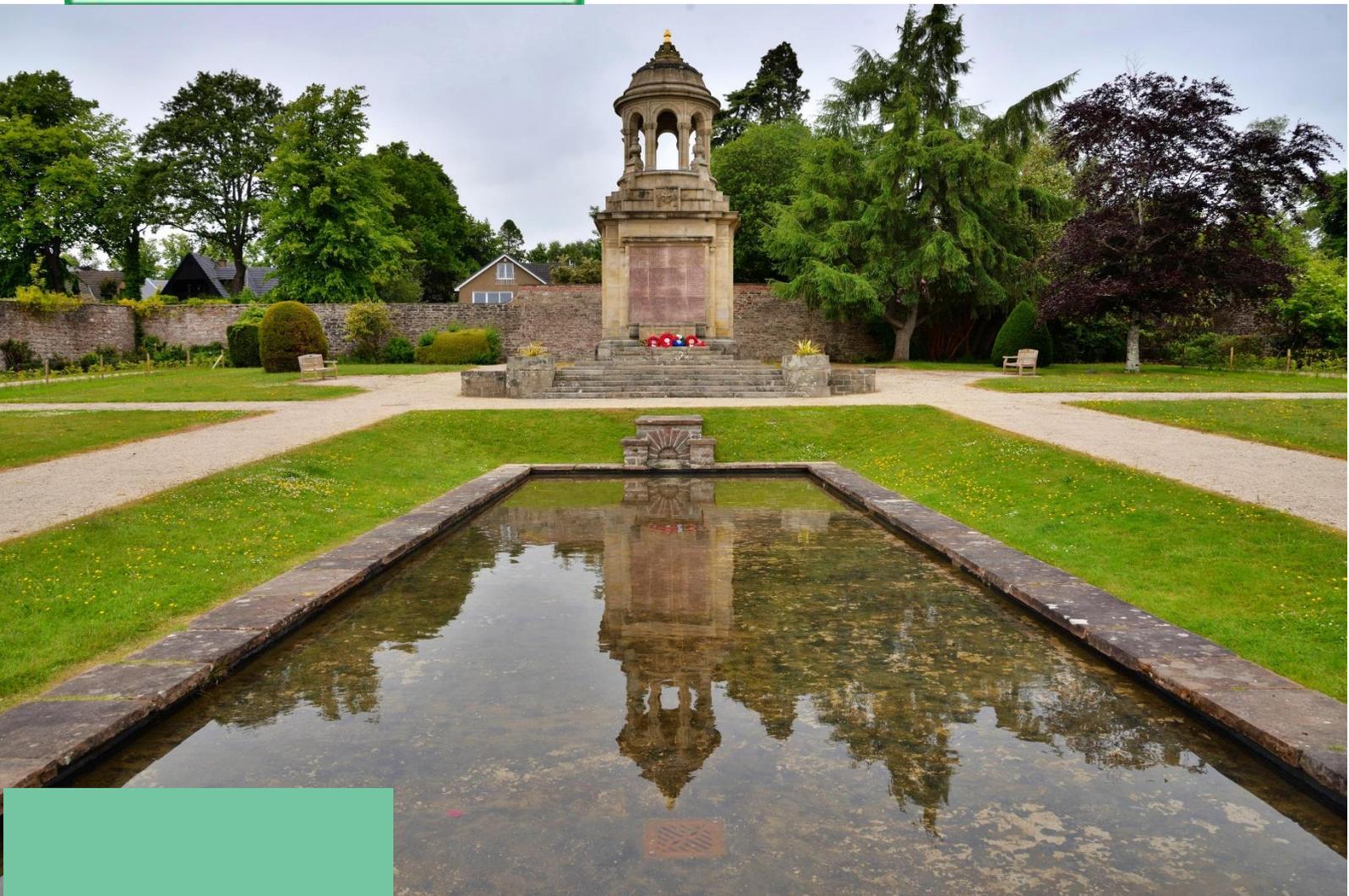




May 2023

Evaluation of the Hermitage Park Heritage-led  
Regeneration  
Report



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There was a widespread consensus amongst those interviewed that the park makes Helensburgh a more attractive place to visit.

*“The park is like night and day from what it was before.”*

*“It works really well as a park.”*



## Executive summary

### Background

This is a final report to evaluate and assess the Hermitage Park heritage-led regeneration for Argyll and Bute Council. The report evaluates the difference the project has made, identifies lessons learnt and how improvements in future delivery could be made.

Hermitage Park is close to the centre of Helensburgh and an important green space for local people and visitors. It had gradually fallen into disrepair as council budgets were cut and usage was declining. This project aimed not just to restore the park but to capitalise on its rich heritage to create a space that would engage people and provide wellbeing and economic benefits to the town.

This project took a bottom-up approach, with extensive community consultation informing the master-planning. A strapline for the park, 'Growing our Park Together' was created to be inclusive and pull in all people and groups. Core funding of a £2,333,300 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) was secured, supplemented by smaller allocations from partners totalling almost £3.9m.

Figure 1 complete and final funding summary

Funder	Amount
Argyll and Bute Council	£380,000
NLHF	£2,382,300
MoD	£253,000
Sustrans	£335,332
War Memorial Trust	£78,550
Section 75	£75,000
Other funders	£105,355
Volunteer Time (in-kind)	£102,090
Management & Maintenance commitment	£47,200
Other Council funding	£173,317
	<b>£3,932,134</b>

### The project aims and objectives

Funding from NLHF was provided to ensure:

- The park and its heritage will be better managed,
- The park and its heritage will be in a better condition,
- The heritage of the park will be better interpreted and explained; and
- The heritage of the park will be better identified and recorded.

As well as providing a sustainable management regime, the key objectives were to:

**Repair and restore the built heritage** and restore Victorian walkways and footbridges, and plantings.

**Replace the derelict pavilion** with a state-of-the-art building containing a café, office, toilets as well as recreational and activities space.

Move and **improve the play area** and create informal spaces for recreation.

**Engage users** with interpretation and signage and through a comprehensive **activity plan**.

Increase **opportunities for volunteering** including training in maintenance skills.

The restoration and regeneration of Hermitage Park aligns with the redevelopment of Helensburgh and enables a better strategic integration of the Park with a rejuvenated town centre.

## What did happen?

The Council and its partners delivered a highly successful heritage-led regeneration project including the hard and soft landscaping, restoration of heritage, and delivering a programme of activity that has doubled footfall. The Council worked closely with a local steering group, which included the *Friends of Hermitage Park*, to design and develop the park. The contract was split into three elements.

- 1) The capital work and restoration of the park, including installation of new signage and interpretation panels
- 2) The building of a Passivhaus Pavilion to house a café and community meeting room.
- 3) The development and delivery of an Activity Plan

The project repaired the built heritage features in Hermitage Park including the 'A'-listed War Memorial and gardens, Japanese Garden, 18<sup>th</sup> century mill remains, Victorian wishing well and rebuilt Victorian walkways and footbridges. Improvements to drainage, paths, walls and

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structure were made and further planting has taken place. The play park was relocated next to the Pavilion. Signage and interpretation panels, incorporating captured spoken memories of the park's heritage, were installed. Importantly, the War Memorial, a focal point of local remembrance ceremonies, which had been identified as "at risk" is no longer on the risk register.

The Pavilion is the main facility for visitors and provides community meeting/training space, toilets, storage, and Park Manager's office. An attractive destination café restaurant within the park generates surplus income to support future park maintenance and meets the needs of day visitors and families. The building was designed to Passivhaus standards, creating an energy-efficient, quiet building suitable for learning and relaxing with superior indoor air quality and comfort.

An activity plan was developed and delivered that brought people from different groups and of all ages and abilities to the park.

## Achievements

All the key objectives have been achieved. The funding has contributed to the park and heritage being in better condition, the heritage better explained and the heritage identified and recorded. The heritage-led regeneration has also led to improved social cohesion as well as a healthier community.

There are notable achievements including:

- Annual visitor numbers have more than doubled<sup>1</sup> to 146,000 since the park was restored.
- The Interpretation strategy and associated works provide the park with interactive, informative signage, not there before the improvements.
- The University of the Highlands and Islands Argyll (UHI), schools and voluntary organisations use the Park as a venue for the practical elements of their training courses.
- The Hermitage Park heritage and community opportunities are promoted through Invest in Argyll ([investinargyllandbute.co.uk](http://investinargyllandbute.co.uk)) and the Argyll and Bute Council website<sup>2</sup>.
- Friends of Hermitage Park (who promote their work through Facebook) channel people interested in becoming involved in volunteering to support future viability of the park
- Receiving a Green Flag Award reflects positively on a park or green space's contribution to the environment. Hermitage Park first received the award in 2020, with two further awards in 2021 and 2022.

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<sup>1</sup> Compared to pre-COVID numbers. Visitor numbers held up well during the pandemic but visiting patterns were not typical.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/hermitage-park>

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- Themed events, horticulture, exercise and floristry classes, outreach workshops and work experience placements.
- Hermitage Primary School have continued to use the Park on an almost daily basis, for PE, outdoor education as well as secondary schools and scouts using the park.

## Challenges

COVID-19 delayed the official opening and restrictions had an impact on project momentum, affecting the whole of the activity plan, the delivery of the two capital contracts, the recruitment of a park manager, and the timing of leasing the café. However, the park played a positive role during the pandemic as a key open-space where people could meet safely and take their exercise. The cafe started operating as a business in May 2021, initially as take away only due to pandemic restrictions and opened for indoor service in November 2021. Some early post-lockdown activities were less-well attended due to people's reluctance to resume social mixing.

Towards the end of the project, The Queen's death affected a planned September harvest event – part of the Dandelion Scotland project – which was cancelled. This was intended as a Park Celebration Event, to highlight the improvements, showcase the park as a vibrant greenspace, and thank funders and contributors. A less formal event was later organised to mark the opening, branded as a Halloween celebration.

Other challenges overcome were the breakdown in relationships with the original *Friends of Hermitage Park* group, and some contractual issues with the company responsible for the Pavilion construction.

## What difference has the project made to people and the community?

Stakeholders interviewed reported improvements made a positive difference to the park and it is used significantly more. The park complements the attractions and amenities available to local people and visitors to the town and it is included in the Helensburgh Tourist Trail app.

Visitors interviewed and stakeholders who use the facilities, agreed the Pavilion offers everything they think it should and enhances the park visit experience.

Schools use the park on a daily basis for education, recreation and fitness. The demonstration garden is of particular interest, where school children undertake a complete food growing cycle from sowing seeds to eating crops. Volunteering opportunities have been provided for people taking part in horticulture, general park maintenance and lime-mortaring courses. A total of 24 attended the latter, were trained in how to use lime mortar to make wall repairs within the park and War Memorial, and most subsequently became volunteers.

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The café operator felt the projections in the Council's business plan had been optimistic but confident of sustaining the operation even although costs and overheads have risen recently.

Through wildlife refuges, re-use of equipment and building materials, local food production, LED lighting and the Passivhaus, a positive contribution is being made to carbon reduction.

Community knowledge of heritage and the environment, including food production, has been improved through the programme of events and voluntary sector organisations' engagement, schools' use of the park, activities such as Magic Torch's comic book exploration of heritage, the Dandelion Scotland project, and 13 horticultural classes all with full attendance.

Investment in furniture and equipment has made the Community Room in the Pavilion more 'hire friendly', suitable for use by a wider range of groups such as University course classes, art classes, craft fairs, art exhibitions and fitness classes.

### **Outcomes delivered and impact**

NLHF outcomes have been achieved as highlighted earlier. The park and heritage is in better condition and better managed. The park's heritage is now better captured and recorded and better interpreted and explained. The park heritage-led regeneration brings additional benefits beyond those outcomes and highlights include:

- increased participation in heritage and environmental activities such as the inter-generational comic book activity and the successful horticultural classes
- increased volunteering opportunities in the park which support maintenance and activity provision for others, such as voluntary sector activity, The Green Gym, gardening and planting including food crops, working with lime mortar and supporting other park events.
- Increased physical activity, including use of the plaza for 'free play' and various outdoor fitness classes
- Improved understanding of the environment and increased knowledge of heritage through events and signage
- Reduced social isolation as people gather and do things with others
- Improved health and wellbeing as people walk and exercise in the park as well as participate in events and activities
- Improved diet as people better understand how food is produced and how to prepare it, and
- Improved skills as people are trained in classes or are mentored by the park supervisor or other volunteers.

### **Economic impact**

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The park heritage-led regeneration is having a positive economic impact, creating jobs during the construction phase as well as attracting visitors and tourists to the area. Most visitors to the park are from Helensburgh, over 70% in our short survey held during a busy Easter period, and probably a higher proportion over the course of a full year. But a significant minority are from outside the town showing it contributes to the appeal of Helensburgh as a destination.

Comparisons though with previous years are difficult because of changes in the way visits are recorded, and the non-typical Covid-19 years. People-counter data suggests the number of visits has doubled since work completed. The economic benefit to the town, and more widely to Scotland, is measured through the direct spend on construction and the additional spend by visitors to the park. Estimates use national survey data and impacts calculated using standard government multipliers. The figures show overall, the impact of visitor spend each year is:

**Economic impact £2.97 million in 2021**

**Supporting 45.6 FTE jobs**

The construction phase of the project incurred expenditure of nearly £3.4 million which would support 47 full time equivalent jobs for one year.

**Total construction spend £3.4 million**

**Supporting 46.9 FTE jobs**

## Lessons learnt and recommendations

Many aspects that worked well have been identified and stakeholders gave some examples they felt worked, such as:

- Having a Park Manager and Park supervisor facilitated the project delivery
- The landscape design and improved drainage works well
- The Pavilion with its facilities is a simple but a popular and strong concept
- The remembrance garden is done well and has brought armed forces personnel support
- The management throughout the park development and council partnership work with the Friends of Hermitage Park has been fantastic
- The UHI horticulture courses delivered in the park are popular locally

- A maintenance manual has been developed and available to support sustainability
- The *Friends of Hermitage Park* are more established and will keep the focus on improvements
- The kitchen/demonstration garden is popular with children and older people, and

Management of the Park is the responsibility of the Council Roads and Infrastructure Service, and they will take on some additional duties when the Project Manager post ends. There have been handover discussions and the Friends will play a role when it comes to events and some other items, and this is set out in a Memorandum of Understanding. The park will implement a plan to:

- Continue providing a safe and attractive space for people to relax and exercise,
- Highlight the climate change and environmental credentials and improvements made in the park through a communication plan
- Promote biodiversity and continue to help mitigate the effects of climate change
- Play an ongoing role in heritage and environment through education and continuing to attract and manage volunteers

More and varied public and themed events could be organised to bring people and generate additional income to the park. Things being done or planned to ensure further improvements include:

- Further integrating and promoting the park with the other regeneration and tourism-led features across Helensburgh
- improved access for disabled people to the raised beds in the demonstration garden
- sponsorship for flower beds, memorial gardens and other areas of the park
- Marketing and communicating facilities in the park to people in Helensburgh and beyond
- Building a larger volunteer base through the Friends group, and
- Adding to the teen area that exists with a space that could accommodate sport activities, and
- A covered bandstand is on the wish list as a future development project.

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## Introduction and background

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### Summary

The heritage-led regeneration project took a bottom-up approach using extensive community consultation to develop the master-plan and funding bids. The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) awarded core funding to support the project, supported by smaller yet significant allocations from partners to ensure the park and heritage is in better condition and better managed. The park's heritage is now better captured and recorded and better interpreted and explained.

- The specific objectives from the NLHF application were to:
    - Carry out physical repair works to the built heritage features in Hermitage Park, including the A-listed War Memorial, Japanese Garden, 18th century mill remains and Victorian wishing well
    - Reintroduce Victorian walkways and footbridges along the burn, with repairs to drystone banking and bank stabilisation work
    - Deliver the new Pavilion building which will act as a hub for the park, incorporating a café, toilets, recreational space and activities space
    - Redesign the recreational areas, creating a multi-use space for formal and informal sports - the children's play area was moved closer to the new Pavilion
    - Install signage, interpretation panels, benches and LED-lighting
    - Deliver a wide range of activities as per the Activity Plan
    - Provide training opportunities (both accredited and non-accredited) for Argyll and Bute Council staff, the *Friends* group, and other volunteers
    - Deliver natural heritage improvements and provide learning opportunities related to natural heritage
    - Recruit a full-time Park Manager, and
    - Implement a new management and maintenance regime to meet and maintain Green Flag standards.
  - The restoration of Hermitage Park fits with the redevelopment of Helensburgh and enables a better strategic integration of the park with a rejuvenated town centre and esplanade bringing benefits to the wider community.
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## Introduction

This is a final evaluation report for the heritage-led regeneration of Hermitage Park for Argyll and Bute Council. The report aims to meet NLHF requirements, to learn what worked and consider ways the park could be further improved.

### Background to the park and location<sup>3</sup>

Hermitage Park covers an area of approximately 3.8 hectares. It was created in 1911, from the grounds of the now demolished Hermitage House and extended in 1919 to include the former Millig Mill. The earliest information about the land that forms Hermitage Park is the reference to Millig Mill in the Blaeu Atlas of Scotland of 1654. The three-storey mill was water-driven via a lade from a pond under what was the tennis courts. At the time, the mill was one of the largest businesses in the town. The mill was demolished but remains still exist, including standing parts, buried remains and artefacts, and three date stones.

Hermitage House and surrounding land was owned by the Cramb family. In 1880 they sold an area of land, on which Hermitage Primary School was built. In 1911 the remainder of the Cramb lands were acquired by the Town Council for use as a public park. Shortly after its acquisition, a rustic timber bandstand was built in the park next to the Millig Burn and was a major attraction. The house was used for several different purposes, including a WWI hospital but was demolished in 1963. Now, only the stone foundations of this exist. The land from the Cramb family, the park and the Millig Mill area became known as Hermitage Park.

Within the park the 'A' Listed war memorial, designed by Alexander Nisbet Patterson, was erected in the walled garden of the house in 1923. This war memorial and gardens hold the annual Remembrance Day parade. This has a special role locally for the large population of armed services personnel and their families who live in and around Helensburgh.

For most of the twentieth century the park was a beautifully cultivated public garden where children could play and visitors (majority arriving from Glasgow on commercial steamships) and residents could relax, play various sports, and listen to music. The park was considered to be an important recreation asset and continued to be used and appreciated locally, although use declined steadily over the years. Hermitage Park was an underused asset with unrealised potential. There was previously no interpretation in the park.

Over time, and with the limited resources Argyll and Bute Council could give, the park had fallen into disrepair. Past and continuing reductions in resources resulted in a neglected and overgrown appearance and poor condition of many of the important heritage sites within the

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<sup>3</sup> Hermitage Park Activity Plan 2015



A strap line for the park, '*Growing our Park Together*' was adopted reflecting the inclusive approach to pull in all people and groups.

**Start date:** 2013 (first round application)

**End Date:** December 2022, after an approved extension

**Programme extension** – an extension to the project was agreed because of Covid-19 restrictions. The Activity Plan was not implemented fully during the Covid period and a further 12-month extension was needed.

## Partners

Core funding (£2,333,300 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund) was secured, supplemented by smaller allocations from other elements such as Sustrans funding to widen the paths to make them more suitable for cycling and for a road crossing. The NLHF core funding was essential in attracting other significant funds from the public, voluntary and private sector.

Figure 3 complete and final funding summary

Funder	Amount
Argyll and Bute Council	£380,000
NLHF	£2,382,300
MoD	£253,000
Sustrans	£335,332
War Memorial Trust	£78,550
Section 75	£75,000
Other funders	£105,355
Volunteer Time (in-kind)	£102,090
Management & Maintenance commitment	£47,200
Other Council funding	£173,317
	<b>£3,932,134</b>

## Approved Purposes of the Grant Award

Funding from NLHF was provided to ensure:

- The park and its heritage will be better managed,
- The park and its heritage will be in a better condition,

- The heritage of the park will be better interpreted and explained, and
- The heritage of the park will be better identified and recorded.

## Aim and objectives

The heritage-led regeneration project was essential in restoring the key green space of Helensburgh and a site of significant local heritage and amenity. The aim of the project was to return Hermitage Park to a central role in the Helensburgh community as a place to relax, exercise, meet and visit by restoring its most attractive and valuable areas of heritage importance and adapting its facilities to meet 21st century requirements. The detailed objectives were to:

- Carry out physical repair works to the built heritage features in Hermitage Park, including the War Memorial, Japanese Garden, 18<sup>th</sup> century mill remains and Victorian wishing well
- Reintroduce Victorian walkways and footbridges along the burn, with repairs to drystone banking and bank stabilisation work
- Deliver the new Pavilion building which will act as a hub for the park, incorporating a café, toilets, recreational space and activities space
- Redesign the recreational areas, creating a multi-use space for formal and informal sports. The children's play area will be moved closer to the new Pavilion
- Install signage, interpretation panels, benches and LED-lighting
- Deliver a wide range of activities as per the Activity Plan
- Provide training opportunities (both accredited and non-accredited) for Argyll and Bute Council staff, the Friends group, and other volunteers
- Deliver natural heritage improvements and provide learning opportunities related to natural heritage
- Recruit a full-time Park Manager
- Implement a new management and maintenance regime to meet Green Flag standards
- Ensure key historic features are preserved for posterity
- Provide people-centred interpretation to bring the park's heritage to life and ensure it is valued, cared for and enjoyed
- Build a new pavilion with a covered deck overhang area for outside tables
- Re-site and reconfigure the Childrens' play area
- Create a demonstration garden growing fruit and vegetables with a bothy space
- Put in place an activity plan and extensive volunteer programme and interventions to communicate and celebrate the park's heritage, and
- Create better management of the plants and the landscape, to promote biodiversity, provide habitats for wildlife and opportunities for learning.

## The park complements other town developments

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Figure 4 Restoration work at Colquhoun Square



The restoration of Hermitage Park fits with the timing of the redevelopment of Helensburgh and enables a better strategic integration of the Park with a rejuvenated town centre and esplanade.

Argyll and Bute Council began a programme to promote regeneration and economic development in five of its waterfront towns of Campbeltown, Helensburgh, Oban, Rothesay and Dunoon (CHORD), in 2008. Over £30

million was allocated to the wider programme.

In Helensburgh's town centre, a project was unveiled which created an Outdoor Museum in Colquhoun Square. The project was designed in response to consultation with the people of Helensburgh during the initial CHORD process. In addition, stepping stones created along the grass area of the esplanade feature the most popular children's names in Helensburgh, over the years.

There has been over £7 million of investment in regenerating Helensburgh town centre, making transformational improvements to the town's public places, including:

- Wider pavements
- Better access to local shops
- New parking bays
- New street furniture, and
- Linking the front and the town centre.

This was delivered along with improvements to the esplanade redesigned in consultation with the community to provide an exciting experience. That project provides facilities like a covered events and performance place, a children's play area, landscaped gardens and an informal grassed area.

Figure 5 Helensburgh Esplanade improvements



The park adds an additional attractive key element of a tourist trail from the esplanade, through Colquhoun Square to the park and then on to Hill House that ties heritage together within Helensburgh, it is included on the *Discover Helensburgh* App.

## Benefits to the community and local organisations

Regenerating the park, restoring the heritage providing the pavilion and the objectives listed earlier was intended provide a neutral space where people can mix across groups including Armed Forces families. People will have things to do and the planned interventions will increase social impact, environmental awareness and sustainability.

The park heritage-led regeneration project gave the council, voluntary organisations, charities and schools the access to space to carry out activities. These activities have stimulated people, improved their wellbeing and increased social cohesion.

The park is used by voluntary organisations and training providers to provide learning activities. The space is used to provide school children with a natural environment to play and learn in; visitors, particularly during COVID where high numbers of people accessed space for physical activity and there is an improved war memorial space to focus remembrance ceremonies within.

## Benefits to volunteers

The Friends of Hermitage Park fully participated with the council in attracting the funds. The Friends group along with the Park Supervisor have been actively engaging with the council and attracting new volunteers to support project activity within the park.

Training, developing and supporting volunteers is key to the long-term plans for the park and is an important element of the Park Supervisor's role. For example, The University of the Highlands and Islands Argyll (UHI), along with the Lime Mortar Training centre provided practical and horticultural skills people can then pass on to others. This experience will help provide in-house training and allow the Friends to continue to develop and train people with

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skills. Partners such as the Alzheimer's Society and Enable also use volunteers to deliver support and horticultural opportunities to their clients within the park.

## Method

The evaluation is based on NLHF guidance and involves a mixed-method approach to data collection in this study. The different data sources referred to in this report are outlined below:

- Visitor interviews: Depth interviews with frequent and infrequent visitors. Sample: 10.
  - Stakeholder interviews: Depth interviews with stakeholders. Sample: 18.
  - Visitor survey: Interviewer led surveys that took place at Hermitage Park 11 to 14 April. Sample: 192
  - E-survey of Friends of Hermitage Park, Sample 27
  - Business interview with Park Pavilion proprietor, Sample 1, and
  - Partner organisation internal data: Internal evaluation data from project partners.
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# The Regeneration of Hermitage Park

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## Summary

The Council successfully managed the project to completion with the project manager and staff working alongside a steering group. The contract was split into three elements.

- a. The capital and restoration work, which included a significant amount of underground work to deal with water run-off issues as well as the more visible objectives.
- b. Building a Passivhaus Pavilion housing a café, toilets and community meeting room.
- c. Develop and deliver an Activity Plan.

- The landscape element of the park restoration repaired built-heritage features
- The play park was moved from a far corner of the park to outside the pavilion
- The new pavilion provides community meeting room, toilets, storage, Park Managers office and a healthy eating café, designed to energy-efficient Passivhaus standards.
- The programme had been well-managed by Argyll and Bute Council.
- Visitor numbers have doubled (to 146,000) since the park was restored.
- The Interpretation strategy and associated works provide the park with informative and inter-active signage.
- UHI, schools and voluntary organisations like Enable continue to use the Park as a venue for training courses.
- The park is promoted through the Argyll and Bute website and on the Discover Helensburgh app
- Hermitage Park first received the Green Flag award in 2020 and has met the high standards required by the award scheme for 2021 and 2022.
- Covid-19 caused complications and delays, holding up construction, recruitment, leasing the café, delivering the activity plan and working with volunteers. It also led to some post-lockdown reluctance to participate in some of the group activities.

## Management and delivery of the project

The *Friends of Hermitage Park* (Friends) was committed to bringing the park back to its former glory and worked with the Council in developing the original approach to the NLHF for funding.

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The application and subsequent delivery of the park renovation was successfully managed by Argyll and Bute Council. The Council set up and worked closely with a local steering group (which included the Friends of Hermitage Park) who contributed to the design and development of the park. This group did some useful work in getting the project up and running and bringing their ideas to the fore.

The appointment of a Park Manager using NLHF funds was key to getting the park developed after the restoration. Continuation funding for this post will be sought when the current funding period expires on 31<sup>st</sup> June 2023. A comprehensive handover plan has been drawn up by the council, setting out responsibilities for the ongoing management and maintenance of the park and activities to ensure a viable, sustainable future.

The Council appointed a Park Supervisor in 2018 to help maintain the park and work with groups using it. This is the only such post in the Council, reflecting its level of commitment to Hermitage Park. Management and maintenance of the park is shared between the Park Manager, the Park Supervisor and staff from the Council's Amenity Services.

## Park regeneration

Figure 6 Millig Mill



The landscape team (Hawthorn Heights Ltd) consolidated the remains of Millig Mill. Also, the war memorial and the memorial garden were restored (see case study).

We reported earlier that importantly, the 'A'-listed War Memorial identified as "at risk" is no longer on the risk register. As stated before, this war memorial and gardens

hold the annual Remembrance Day parade. This has a special role locally for the large population of armed services personnel and their families who live in and around Helensburgh. Many hundreds of people attend this ceremony annually.

The overall path network was transformed. Much of the investment is hidden underground but this park regeneration work brought significant improvement to drainage utilising SuDS (Sustainable Drainage System) and adding lighting to the main paths is a key part of the capital

works. Lucy boxes installed around the park provide flexible opportunities to stage events in the park. Regeneration included the repair of secondary paths and the five foot bridges that cross the burn, the repair and, in places, rebuilding of the drystone banks of the burn together with bank stabilisation works. This brought an unusable path network up to a fantastic standard. Further bank work will form part of future volunteer activities.

The former pleasure ground and gardens were restored, including the Japanese Garden, increasing the biodiversity through adding wildlife-friendly plantings and creating habitat piles. Outside the Pavilion, designed by Hoskins Architects and built by Stewart and Shields, a multi-use lawn was incorporated that can facilitate play and events. This was developed with spectator facilities on a bank of steps around the paved area known as "the plaza." This plaza is a key feature, popular and heavily used for informal play, as an event space, as a learning space and an activity space.

Plans to have fountains on the plaza that could be turned on and off were abandoned due in part to budget restrictions for their ongoing maintenance costs but also because changing standards in water treatment meant it became no longer practically possible to include this feature

The landscape element of the park restoration involved additional physical repair works to the built heritage features in Hermitage Park, as outlined in the second round application. This included the Japanese Garden and Victorian wishing well. The physical regeneration works are complete and all aspects of the build contracts are now signed off. All snagging works highlighted have been completed and also signed off.

One simple element introduced during the restoration work was to lower the height of the hedge by the main road, allowing local people to see into the park, providing a more encouraging and welcoming view.

Figure 7 Previous poor state of path network



Figure 8 Improvements to the burn



## Planting

Planting has taken place in the formal beds in the main plaza area and on the approaches to the Pavilion, although consolidation and maintenance of planting is proving to be a challenge due, in part, to the high levels of use. As part of the design stage, consideration was given to the style and maintenance requirements of planting, to ensure the park could be maintained. The Park Supervisor and park volunteers alleviate this and a final planting programme for the front of the Pavilion and the memorial garden is now complete.

## Play

The Childrens' play area was moved to the main recreational and pavilion area. There was reuse and replacement of play equipment, some of which was designed in partnership with local children and schools. The plaza area and the children's play area are complete and continue to be extremely busy. In tandem with the cafe now being open, the cluster of activities in this area act as a 'honeypot' for the Park.

The large open area on the plaza is extremely popular with cyclists, children learning to cycle, skaters, skateboarders, families, the local schools, and for fitness.

Figure 9 Children's play area at Hermitage Park



## War memorial

Successful improvements were made to the 'A'-listed war memorial itself, gates, paths, walls and gardens under the direction of a specialist heritage conservation architect. There is some final work to be completed on pointing to the west wall. Lime mortar volunteers will repoint the walls and the park can draw on the active involvement of The British Legion volunteers, private sector partners and the MOD who will enable this. For example, staff from Lockheed Martin are helping to maintain some of the flower beds as part of their *Volunteering in the community* programme.

Figure 10 Hermitage Park War Memorial



### Case study - Helensburgh War memorial

The War memorial was designed by Alexander Nisbet Patterson who was a town councillor as well as being one of the Glasgow Boys group of artists. He suggested the old walled garden of Hermitage House, already a public park, as the ideal location. The monument is on a raised platform and in front stretches a long lily-pond, which for Health and Safety reasons has been kept empty for many years.

The garden, which has yew trees, roses, and flower beds, is maintained by Argyll and Bute Council. Repairs to the walls were conducted a few years ago when Helensburgh Heritage Trust obtained a grant from Babcock's at Faslane. The memorial, walls, gate, paths and other elements of the garden were improved during the renovation work. Part of the west wall remains to be re-pointed and fully restored.

Hermitage Park is an important heritage asset to the people of Helensburgh, and the A-Listed war memorial and gardens play a special role in the Remembrance Day ceremony and to the large population of armed services personnel and their families who live in and around Helensburgh. Together Faslane, Coulpport and the Garelochhead Training Camp make up the largest naval base in the UK. This memorial is a central feature during the annual Remembrance Day ceremonies that are attended by up to 600 people. The newly established Helensburgh branch of the British Legion are helpful partners in managing and promoting the War Memorial.

This war memorial could be entered into the *Large Community With Gardens* category of the Legion Scotland best kept war memorial campaign. The primary aim of the Best Kept War Memorial Campaign is to foster public awareness of War Memorials, and to encourage a high standard of continuing maintenance by Local Authorities.

## Passivhaus Pavilion and its objectives

Figure 11 Pavilion incorporating cafe and community rooms



The Pavilion is critical to the future of the park. It will play a key role in helping the council maintain the park and promote heritage. Rental income from the café and renting the community meeting space to UHI, art clubs and others will allow the Park to generate income. An earmarked reserve in the Council budget system ring fences the income. All costs also come out of this ring-fenced budget, and the aim is to generate a small surplus each year which will carry forward across financial years.

The Pavilion will help reduce council repair costs and reduce the environmental impact through the various renewable elements built into the structure.

Figure 12 The old pavilion



Built to Passivhaus standards and housing a community room (available for rent), a café facility (leased to an external operator) and public toilets managed by the café proprietor, the new Pavilion was handed over to Property Services in February 2021. The café facility has been successfully let to

Arran Foods Ltd. who run The Park Pavilion café from it.

The Passivhaus standard is met by including triple glazed windows, a PV array on the roof, an air source heat pump, extensive insulation, and a heat recovery system which capture heat generated within the building (including the café) and then filters and recirculates the heat through the building. The cost of the pavilion, as per the final certificate, was £958,041.

### Case study – Hermitage Park Pavilion

The Pavilion plays a key role in providing a central hub for the park set at the heart of the main recreational facilities and is a much-needed covered space for a variety of activities that will support the Activity Plan and training, learning and event activities.

It provides community meeting room, toilets, storage, bothy, Park Manager's office and a healthy-eating café with fresh produce and healthy eating options for park visitors. The café provides an attractive destination café/restaurant within the park that meets the needs of both day visitors and families looking for a coffee and more formal dining experiences.

There is outdoor seating and having the café in the park attracts many people who otherwise may not visit. The café has capacity to accommodate approximately 42 to 52 people. And there is space for 32 customers outside. It also has a kiosk to serve from and this opened up during COVID lockdown.

The building was designed to Passivhaus standards. The goal of Passive House is to reduce the energy consumption of buildings while maintaining a comfortable and healthy indoor environment. Passive Houses typically use 75-90% less energy for heating and cooling than conventional buildings. Challenges with the building contractor meant that full certification has yet to be achieved.

The community meeting rooms are used for various events and training. The capacity of a community meeting room can vary depending on the layout and purpose of the space. However, if the meeting room is intended for standing-room-only events it could accommodate around 27 to 36 people. Theatre-style it could hold around 36 to 45 people. And if the meeting room is arranged with tables and chairs in a classroom-style layout, then it could accommodate around 22 to 27 people depending on furniture arrangement, presence of additional equipment, and any specific requirements for the event.

Communication and marketing will optimise the potential and income the space can generate for the park.

### How was it delivered?

The Pavilion was designed to Passivhaus standards. This is a building standard that focuses on creating energy-efficient buildings with superior indoor air quality and comfort. The goal of Passivhaus is to reduce the energy consumption of buildings while maintaining a comfortable and healthy indoor environment.

The Passivhaus standard is based on five principles:

Figure 13 Location of pavilion in the park



1. **Super Insulation:** Passivhaus are built with highly insulated walls, roofs, and floors that significantly reduce the amount of heat loss from the building.
2. **Airtightness:** Passivhaus are designed to be extremely airtight, which helps to prevent air leakage and the associated heat loss.
3. **High-performance windows:** Passivhaus use high-performance triple-glazed windows to help reduce heat loss and gain.
4. **Thermal bridge-free construction:** Passivhaus are designed to minimize thermal bridges, which are areas of the building where heat is easily transferred between the interior and exterior.
5. **Mechanical ventilation with heat recovery:** Passivhaus use mechanical ventilation systems with heat recovery to maintain a constant supply of fresh air while recovering the heat from the outgoing air.

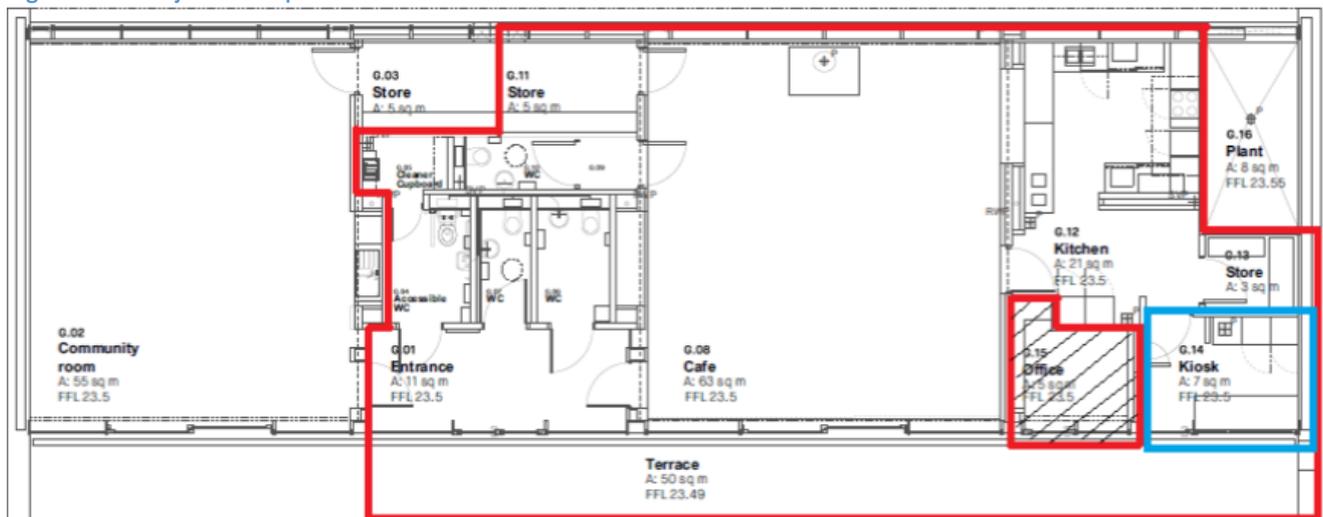
To achieve Passivhaus standard, a building must meet strict energy performance targets, measured by airtightness, energy consumption, and indoor air quality. Passivhaus typically use 75-90% less energy for heating and cooling than conventional buildings, which results in significant energy savings and lower carbon emissions. The Council has received confirmation that the building meets and exceeds Passivhaus specifications and is now progressing the formal accreditation.

## Café within the pavilion

The café was handed over to the operator in April 2021, and started operating as a business in May 2021, initially as take away only due to pandemic restrictions. The first three months were rent free to enable his start up, and the tenant walked into a fully fitted out kitchen with all equipment in place. It then opened for indoor service in November 2021.

The café provides an attractive destination café/restaurant within the park that meets the needs of both day visitors and families looking for a coffee or a more formal dining experience.

Figure 14 Cafe layout within pavilion



There is outdoor seating and having the café in the park attracts many people who otherwise might not visit.

The café proprietor feels the park's attractive location is of commercial benefit to the café but that trading over the next two years may be a case of *'keeping their heads above water'* because of increases in costs (energy, food).

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## Park improvements and activities

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### Summary

- An Activity Plan was successfully implemented
- Visitors report they have seen a big difference in the park since its restoration
- Visitor numbers have doubled since the work was completed and it was a key asset during Covid
- The park complements the attractions and amenities available to local people and visitors to the town.
- The pavilion offers everything people think it should – a good café and social space
- The outdoor plaza area offers a range of activities
- Educational establishments are key partners
- People were trained in how to use lime mortar essential to make wall repairs
- Volunteers deliver support to community participants and help maintain the park
- Active engagement with various groups to interpret the park particularly young and older people
- The redesigned park is working well
- Through wildlife refuges, re-use of equipment, local food production, LED lighting and the Passivhaus a positive contribution is being made to carbon reduction.

### Activity Plan

The activity plan sought to engage with various groups leading to:

- Local schools using the park regularly
- UHI delivering accredited training in the meeting room and at the park
- Schools having areas in the demonstration garden
- Alzheimer's Scotland using the demonstration garden to grow crops
- The British Legion are heavily involved in supporting the War Memorial
- Completion of a volunteer bothy
- Providing training in horticulture and lime mortar repair to volunteers
- Art club running lessons at the park, and

Many various other activities have taken place including:

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- A Halloween themed event on the 29th of October 2022 was attended by over 500 people
- Hermitage Primary School have continued to use the Park on an almost daily basis, for PE, outdoor education as well as secondary schools and scouts using the park
- A series of art as well as horticulture and floristry classes are run in the community room
- To explore theme of heritage, art and learning, Magic Torch ran outreach workshops on the park's heritage encouraging people to explore the heritage of the park and the wider Helensburgh area through storytelling, narration and comic book art.
- Friends collect memories through the Facebook page
- A young person with learning difficulties had a work placement under the Employability Fund
- Summer holiday events took place
- Regular planting and weeding by the Friends around the park and demonstration garden
- Outdoor classes looking at wildlife in the park
- Tai Chi classes held in the park
- The Green Gym operated in the park
- For a while Fitness classes were delivered by SOS Fitness and Live Argyll continue to use the park
- A lighting and music event was held in March 2022 as part of the ColmCille 1500 celebrations
- A free for all plant giveaway for Dandelion Scotland attracted 300 people to the park in June 2022
- Discover Helensburgh featured the park in their app of themed trails
- As part of the Councils COP26 programme, a number of sustainable craft events were organised in November and December 2021 to run from the Community Room in the Pavilion.
- A young person had work experience for 6 months through the Kickstart scheme.
- The park manager gained a Carbon Literacy qualification and the supervisor attended a working with volunteers course.
- The Park supervisor provided training to volunteers and council staff.

## Management and staff

Generally, with minor exceptions, stakeholders and survey respondents feel the overall programme has been well-managed by Argyll and Bute Council.

The Park Manager was appointed and has been working successfully with the council staff. This NLHF-funded post ends on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023. However, the Park Supervisor, appointed in 2018, will continue working with volunteers and organisations as a key part of the role. The position of Park Supervisor is the only site-dedicated post of its kind within the Council and emphasises its commitment to Hermitage Park's future.

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## Engaging audiences with heritage

Figure 15 Interpretation board



Before the project there were around 62,600 visitors each year to the park. Numbers for 2021 show visits have more than doubled (146,000) since the park was restored.

Mechanically-wound interpretation boards (designed by Campbell and Company) at strategic locations show pictures, text and use recorded voice to tell visitors about the places in the park. These are effective and actively engage the visitor..

There was agreement among those interviewed that signposting within the park was adequate, with references to the signposting being good or "what you would expect in a park".

There was however some criticism of the shortage of external signage, so access to the park can be difficult to find for non-locals. As the park is on a main road into the

town, more and improved signage would encourage drop-in visits.

## Staff training

Numerous opportunities for staff training were undertaken and included the Park Manager attending a course to gain his *Carbon Literacy* qualification, and the Park Supervisor attending a course on *Working with Volunteers*.. The park supervisor has also delivered horticultural training to council staff.

## Communications and promotion

The park is promoted through the Argyll and Bute website, giving information on the facilities, the *Friends of Hermitage Park* group and ways in which people can get involved as volunteers.

Invest in Argyll has a website link to the Hermitage Park Regeneration.<sup>4</sup> The Park Pavilion café has its own dedicated website ([www.theparkpavilion.com](http://www.theparkpavilion.com)).

<sup>4</sup> <https://investinargyllandbute.co.uk/hermitage-park-regeneration/>

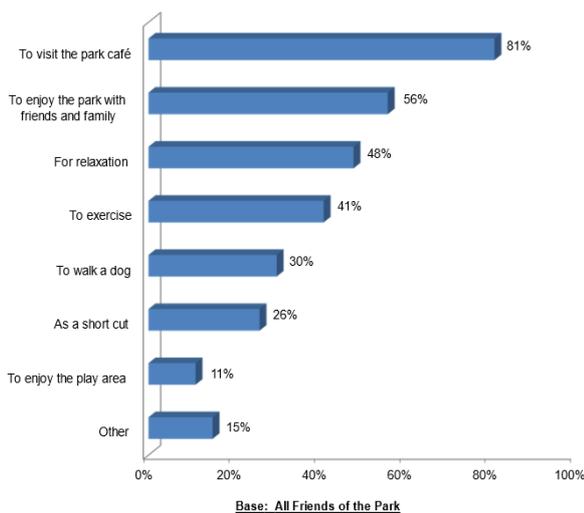
There is also a Friends of Hermitage Park Facebook page where Friends of Hermitage Park took the role of communicating with the general public on project progress. Information on the park development was also provided through articles in The Helensburgh Advertiser.

## Friends of Hermitage Park Group

Friends of Hermitage Park started life in 2011 with a few volunteers and a vision for a restored Hermitage Park fit for the 21st century. Working in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council they helped to achieve the NLHF grant. The original office bearers stood down when this principle aim was achieved and were replaced by new trustees, with fresh impetus to take things forward to the next stage. The current group of Friends has taken on the role of managing activities in the park and stimulating developments and improvements.



Figure 16 Figure 15 What have “Friends “used the park for (n = 25))



Almost all (93%) of the Friends live in Helensburgh and heard about the group either through stories in the local newspapers or through word of mouth. When asked what they use the park for they stated reasons including 'relaxation' and 'exercise', but the most popular use cited is to visit the pavilion café (81%) (see Figure 16 below). The Friends are committed to raising more funds for the long term sustainability of the park and have set up a Hermitage Park Development Fund.<sup>5</sup>

## Green Flag award progress

The Green Flag Award is a recognition given to parks and green spaces that meet certain criteria related to environmental standards, sustainability, and community involvement. The award scheme was launched in the UK in 1996 and has since spread to other countries around the world. To receive a Green Flag Award, a park or green space must meet certain standards related to management, environmental sustainability, community involvement, safety, and access. Parks are assessed by trained judges who evaluate the site based on a set of criteria, and only those that meet a high standard in all areas receive the award.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/friends-hermitage-park>

Receiving a Green Flag Award reflects positively on a park or green space's contribution to the environment because it shows the site is well-managed and maintained to a high standard, with a focus on sustainability and community involvement. Green Flag parks are places where visitors can enjoy the benefits of being in nature while also learning about environmental conservation and sustainability. The award also encourages continuous improvement, as parks must maintain their standards to retain the award.



Hermitage Park first received Green Flag Status in 2020 and maintained the standards required by the scheme to secure consecutive annual awards in 2021 and 2022. Green Flag Status was a condition of the NLHF grant funding though is a useful award to maintain beyond this project.

### **Impact of Covid-19**

The Park was, for many, a lifeline during the pandemic and was extremely busy as people used it for their daily exercise – and re-established itself as a key local asset.

The Pavilion café lease was handed over in April 2021 and it started operating as a business in May 2021, initially as take away only due to pandemic restrictions..

The café seats customers outside and has a kiosk which they opened during restrictions. The Pavilion building was mostly complete before the pandemic but the associated activity plan was delayed. Although the project lost a head of steam, the park was exceptionally busy during Covid-19. The café business was affected by staff sickness or people in isolation.

The previous Park Manager left just before Covid and because of a council-wide recruitment freeze there was a gap until the new park manager was appointed in August 2020. The interim role was taken up by an existing staff member alongside other duties as required during the Covid period.

### **Use of the park**

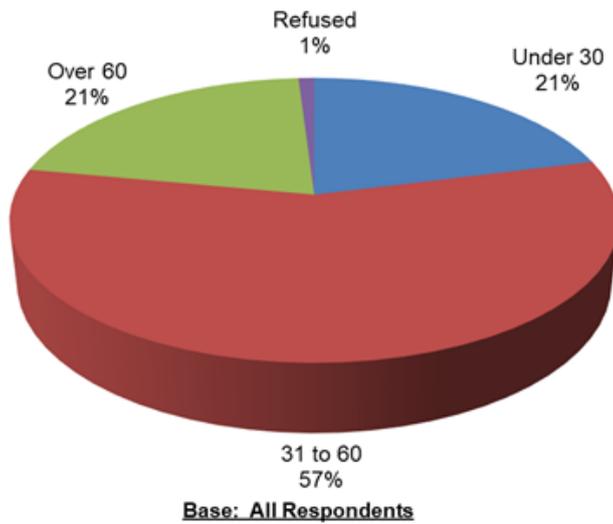
Stakeholders interviewed said the improved park has made a difference to the numbers using it. The path infrastructure is more comfortable for people to navigate. Now it is well used as a vibrant park and a place where people gather. The toilets in the pavilion are essential and ensure more people can use the park than otherwise would do. Stakeholders who deal with dementia sufferers report their clients say that they feel more needed and wanted when participating in events within the park.

*“The difference is like night and day”*

From the visitor survey we identified people come to the park to use the play area and/or to enjoy the park with family and friends. Of those who do come to the park, 63% attend with children.

The largest proportion of users (57%) are aged 31-60.

Figure 17 Age of park users (n:192)



A significant proportion (68%) identify as female. Observation, and stakeholder interviews confirmed parents meet and bring children after school to the park, where children can play while the grown-ups meet at the Pavilion for tea/coffee. The large open area on the plaza is extremely popular, with bikes, skaters, skateboarders, families, the local schools and fitness.

Figure 18 Watching the kids play after school



Over 400 children from Hermitage Primary use the park regularly (weekly) with one teacher interviewed describing it as *“invaluable – almost an extension of the school”*.

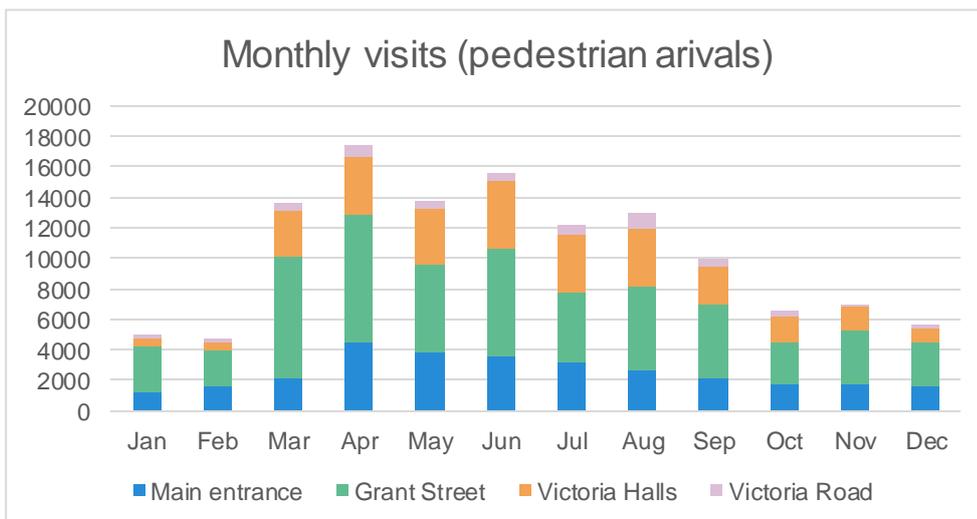
Over the course of the calendar year 2021, a total of 124,676 pedestrian visits were recorded. Park management estimates that another 20% of visitors arrive by car taking the total to

Figure 19 After school in the park



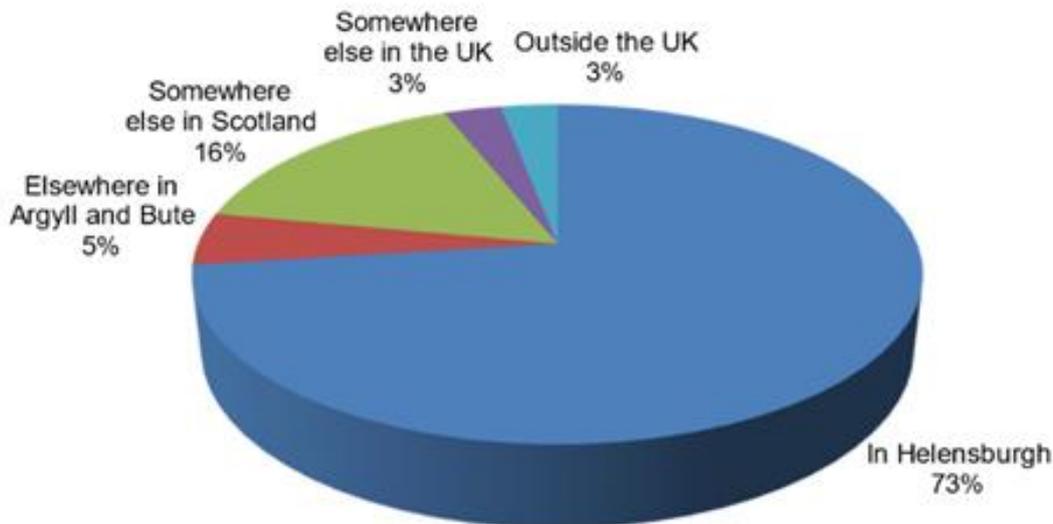
149,611. This is significantly more than the target in the NLHF application of 78,048. Most visitors to the park are white, with 7% from minority ethnic communities in the survey.

Figure 20 Data from people counters over one year 2021



Of users surveyed, 9% stated they have a disability although the figure for people with a disability among the Friends group is higher at 26%. This latter group includes 74% of people who are over 60. 22% of visitors surveyed were from outside Argyll and Bute.

Figure 21 Where people come from (n:192)



### Fit with other regeneration projects in Helensburgh

Hermitage Park forms part of a local green network and sits on a Helensburgh Trail that includes:

- The Pier
- West Bay Esplanade
- Colquhoun Square and the outdoor museum
- Hermitage Park
- Hill House at the top of the hill, and
- John Muir Way (passes nearby)

Among the Friends group, most were aware of the development of Helensburgh Pier. But only 52% were aware of the Helensburgh Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS). This seems quite low considering most Friends are local and may suggest these initiatives haven't been marketed widely or in ways that would be seen by all Friends demographic groups.

We also asked visitors to the park if they were aware of the other regeneration projects in Helensburgh. Of those surveyed, 60% were aware of redevelopment of the West Bay Esplanade and 55% were aware of the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (around

Colquhoun Square). The park sits alongside the John Muir Way running from Helensburgh to Balloch. The trail starts/ends in Helensburgh and runs to his birthplace in Dunbar. The park complements the attractions and amenities available to local people and visitors to the town. So, this makes a visit to Helensburgh a more attractive option for visitors from outside Helensburgh.

## Use of the Pavilion and café

Of visitors interviewed, 72% said they use the café at some point during visits. Responses to the *Friends of Hermitage Park* survey show 81% saying they visit the park café. In terms of regularity of visits to the park, 29% said they visit weekly and over 50% visit monthly. Over the last year, the proprietor reports having experienced increasing costs (ingredients, raw materials and staffing) which has led to prices going up significantly. According to the proprietor, customers appear to understand and accept this as it hasn't yet affected trade. Custom tends to be strongest at the weekends though it is difficult to detect distinct patterns. For example, on a rainy day the park and café could be busy and on a good sunny day business could be slow.

It was anticipated room hire would be marketed by the council. When the Park Manager leaves, it will be important for everyone to be clear who has responsibility for managing the room hires and plans for this are now in place.

## Is the Pavilion meeting its potential?

Of the 10 visitors interviewed in more depth, many stated the Pavilion offers everything they think it should. In particular, specific positives were noted such as:

Figure 22 Children's craft classes in the meeting room



- The pavilion is a “bonus for the park”
- The pavilion is a “great social space”
- It is ideally located beside the play park
- It has comfortable and useful facilities

***“It’s a brilliant asset for the park”***

In addition, catering was praised in terms of the quality of food/drink and prices representing good value for money. Other positives were identified, including:

- The Pavilion being a comfortable and modern building
- The tables outside being ideal for those watching their children, and
- That the Pavilion is used by organisations for a number of purposes

As a result, 94% of respondents believe the pavilion is offering everything they think it should. And are very satisfied with their visit.

### **Impact on council maintenance and sustainability of the park**

It can often be the case that investment in improvements and infrastructure means an increased cost of maintenance. Argyll and Bute Council has agreed an annual maintenance budget to support the Park Supervisor post and programmed maintenance activities throughout the year. This budget is protected from cuts for a period of 10 years, to ensure adequate maintenance and that Green Flag standards can be maintained. Therefore the park regeneration protected the current level of maintenance spend in the Park.

### **Education and Training**

UHI continues to use the Park as a venue for the practical elements of their horticulture course. Local schools also run woodcraft courses within the park. Local schools such as Hermitage Primary boost the park's education and partnership credentials by using it as a resource and venue for education.

The Scottish Lime Centre delivered two Assured Quality courses where 24 people were trained in how to use lime mortar, an essential skill needed to make wall repairs within the park and War Memorial. As a condition of attending the training course, people were asked to help repair the walls in the Park and can pass that knowledge on to others.

### **Volunteering**

Figure 23 Gates to the war memorial garden



**The *Friends of Hermitage Park* attract and work with volunteers to pick litter, plant and maintain the park. Hermitage Park offers a variety of potential volunteer roles in a pleasant and accessible environment such as:**

- Gardening volunteers
- Tour guide volunteers
- Event volunteers
- Groups and schools volunteers
- Historical research
- Administration, marketing and social media, and
- Project volunteers.

Figure 24 Alzheimer's Scotland work on a raised bed



Partner organisations such as Enable and Alzheimer's Scotland bring their clients to the park for art therapy and horticulture, supported by their own volunteers.

The British Legion also brings armed forces personnel to carry out repairs within the war memorial garden.

## Impacts and outcomes

The project and its objectives has evolved over the eight years since the application was made to the NLCF. As the project has developed and evolved, different funders and user groups have been involved. Expectations have also evolved with this dynamic – and ground-up – approach so the project now measures its progress against a set of social, economic and environmental aims. These have been captured in summary in the logic model (fig X)

### A range of heritage, social and economic objectives achieved

The project aimed to address a range of issues, some longstanding, which was putting the park's heritage at risk, and lost opportunities to engage local people, provide social benefits, and contribute to the wider regeneration of Helensburgh.

These objectives are summarised in the broad outcomes agreed for the project:

**Hermitage Park and its Heritage will be better managed**

Appointing dedicated staff to manage the park and ensure it is properly maintained. Any restoration and improvement work will therefore be sustained.

**Hermitage Park's heritage will be in better condition**

Providing adequate maintenance resources over an extended period to ensure management, maintenance and Green Flag accreditation.

Replacing dilapidated visitor facilities with a multi-use pavilion and hub space.

**The heritage will be interpreted and explained**

Addressing the lack of engagement with local people through interpretation and promoting the rich heritage of the park.

**The heritage will be identified and recorded**

Alongside restoration, the heritage will be recorded including a digital plant database, bringing features back to life, including Millig Mill and ongoing recording of the natural heritage in conjunction with schools.

**People will have developed skills**

Staff and volunteers will participate in training to enable sensitive upkeep of the heritage assets and develop a

**People will have learnt about heritage**

longer term skills bank. Apprentices will be a part of the restoration work.

**People will have volunteered time**

Involving local people in heritage, learning, outdoor activities, sports and recreation.

Providing more opportunities for well-managed and rewarding volunteering

Providing more volunteering opportunities particularly associated with gaining new skills and supporting park maintenance.

**The local community will be a better place to live, work and visit**

Making Helensburgh a more attractive place to live and work, helping address declining population, and fewer tourist visits. The project will actively support the Economic Development Action Plan.

**Environmental impacts will be reduced**

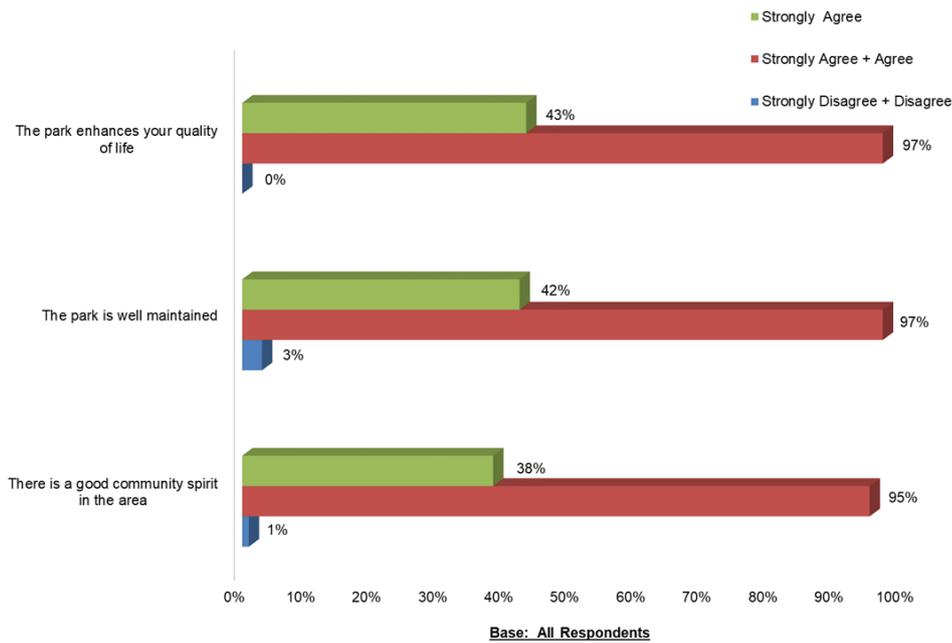
The Passivhaus Pavilion will contribute to a very low carbon footprint, as well as better selection and management of plants to provide habitats.

## The project will improve social cohesion

### More people enjoying green space

The park's facilities provide the opportunity for inter-generational and family-oriented activity, bringing young and older people together. Park visitors and stakeholders report that they mingle and chat around the pavilion and patio/playground area, with 95% saying they feel there is a good community spirit in the area (Figure 25). Through the work of partner organisations including UHI Argyll, Alzheimer's Scotland, British Legion, Enable, and Primary Schools volunteers are delivering various activities and gardening opportunities for many more young and older people.

Figure 25 Community spirit

**Figure 4: How Strongly Do You Agree or Disagree with the Following?**

## Park users will be part of a healthier and more active community

More people attending the park and taking part in activities will lead to a healthier more active community. Figure 26 below shows a significant proportion of users surveyed (75%) felt the park had a 'great impact' on their physical wellbeing.

Local people, particularly young people, are involved in park activities such as the allotments and raised beds. Voluntary organisation groups and schools have reported people now being more appreciate of where their food comes from.

### *Some primary school children believed food came ready wrapped from Sainsburys*

Linked to the outcome above, stakeholders reported people and young children who engaged in activities in the park now show more understanding of how food is produced and are more inclined to try fresh fruit and vegetables.

### *My child said he didn't like strawberries but he ate them in the market garden. I was delighted – I'll buy them in future.*

The outcomes above are short and medium term, delivered as more people participated and enjoyed the park and continue to attend. It can be seen from the Theory of Change that as these outcomes are achieved, they will lead to longer term outcomes.

Figure 26 Impact on physical wellbeing

## Place-Based: Hermitage Park Evaluation



### Improved health and wellbeing

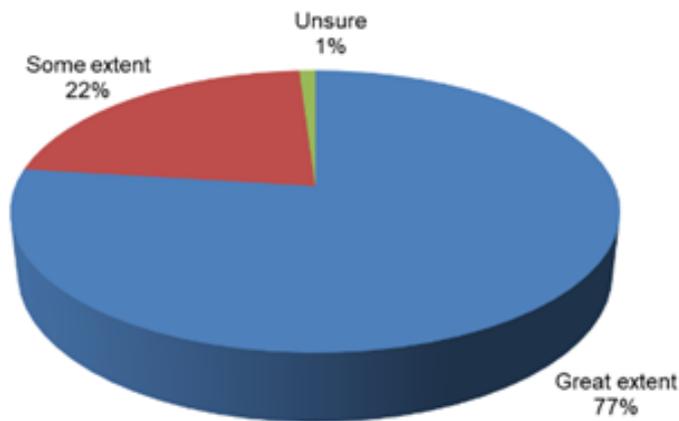
Visits to green spaces, such as park and gardens, have been associated with mental wellbeing benefits. Examples include:

1. Reduced stress and anxiety: Exposure to nature has also been linked to decreased symptoms of anxiety.
2. Improved mood: Being in nature has been shown to boost positive emotions and improve mood.

Three-quarters of visitors to Hermitage Park surveyed (77%) said visits to the park improved their **mental wellbeing** to a 'great extent'. A similar proportion (75%) say it improved their **physical wellbeing** to a 'great extent'.

Of the *Friends of Hermitage Park* survey group, 58% reported visits had 'some impact' while 23% reported it impacted to a 'great extent' on their **physical wellbeing**. Almost half (45%) of the Friends of Hermitage Park surveyed reported their visit impacting to a 'great extent' on their **mental wellbeing** with 47% saying it had to 'some extent'. Visitors reported a greater impact on their physical and mental wellbeing than Friends, but current data doesn't provide any evidence as to why this may be. Future visitor and Friends surveys could explore this further through additional questions and cross-analysis of demographic groups, regularity of visits etc.

Figure 27 Park impact on mental wellbeing (n:192)



People view the park and access to open green space positively, with 97% of visitors interviewed stating the park enhances their quality of life. When asked how much value they place specifically on Green Space, 89% said 'great value'. This chimes with responses to the survey of the Friends group where 89% 'strongly agree' the park enhances their quality of life and 93% specifically stated they place 'great value' on the park green space.

### The park's heritage will be better managed and environmentally sustainable

Most stakeholders interviewed thought the project was well-run and well-organised by the Council staff, with good community involvement including input from the local steering group, Friends of Hermitage Park, local children, schools and older people.

### Increased understanding of the environment and heritage

More visits are being made allowing people to have the opportunity of experiencing the park environment. Key stakeholders reported bringing groups to the park and engaging them in activities, such as work on the market garden, that allowed people to appreciate the natural environment. The improved signage and events helped people appreciate local heritage and the understanding of the park within the local context.

The park's location close to public transport, and a limited parking area, encourages visits that are environmentally friendly. The survey found that around 80% of visitors access the park on foot, Contributions towards net zero are made through:

- Providing a safe and attractive local place for people in Helensburgh, reducing the numbers of car journeys they might make out of the town.

- Installing wildlife refuges promotes biodiversity and the plants and trees within the park help mitigate the effects of climate change.
- Re-use of play equipment when the playground was relocated.
- Using existing leftover stock of granite sets from the construction of Colquhoun Square at Hermitage Park. During the construction of the patio area outside the pavilion.
- Installing a green moss roof and solar panel on the bothy, reusing materials such as windows and doors, and filtering rainwater into the existing SUDS system .
- Adopting a zero-carbon ethos in training programmes run at the park for schools and others.
- Producing food locally, shortening supply lines.
- Using LED lights in the park to reduce energy consumption
- Reducing electricity needed for the Passivhaus with PVs and an air source heat pump

### More volunteers gaining more skills

There is a core group of Friends which has attracted, and works with, a large number of volunteers (over 50) and park users.

The park provides a range of activities where members of the community – adults, children, organisations, and formal volunteers – can gain valuable skills and experience, for example:

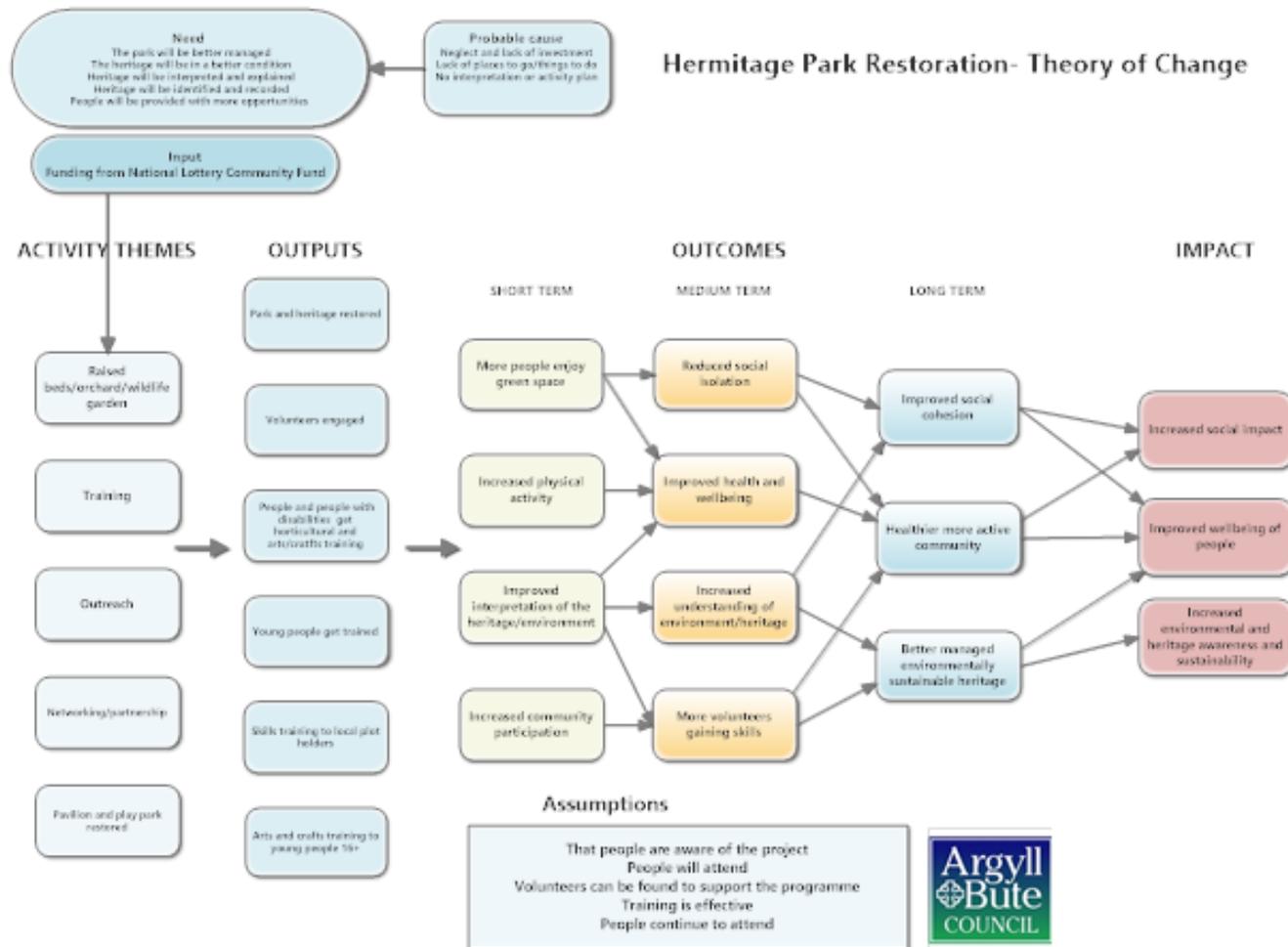
- organising, delivering and managing activities
- training courses such as horticultural skills, lime mortar techniques
- participating in other events/activities (gardening, food production etc)

These opportunities for learning useful skills increase the community's capacity to deliver more events and training, contributing to the ongoing success of the park and the wider community through an active events programme and volunteer base.

Figure 28 Flower arranging class in the community meeting room



Figure 29 Logic Model



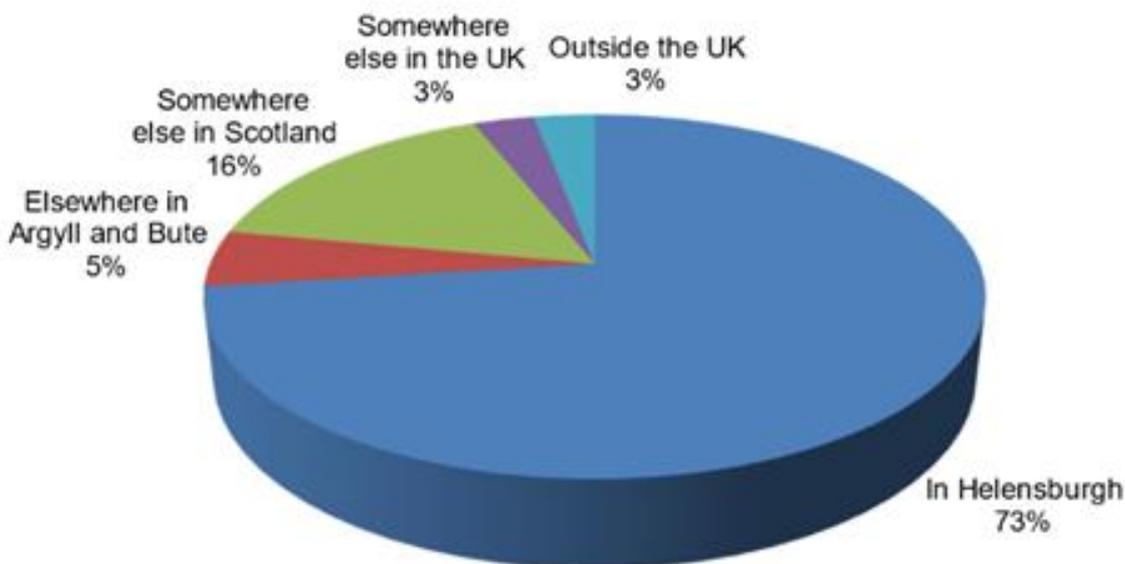
Providing a space and support to try new things and experience the environment stimulates people. Two people moved into employment as a result of the restoration work, over and above the Park Manager post created. One person moved on after training at the park to work at Geilston House (a nearby National Trust for Scotland venue) while another picked up work with the council.

Trainers reported providing taster sessions and introducing people to the park encouraged people to move on to other training programmes. The achievement of these outcomes suggests continued use of the park and participation in the activities within the park will lead to medium term outcomes highlighted in the Logic Model.

## Economic and wider impacts

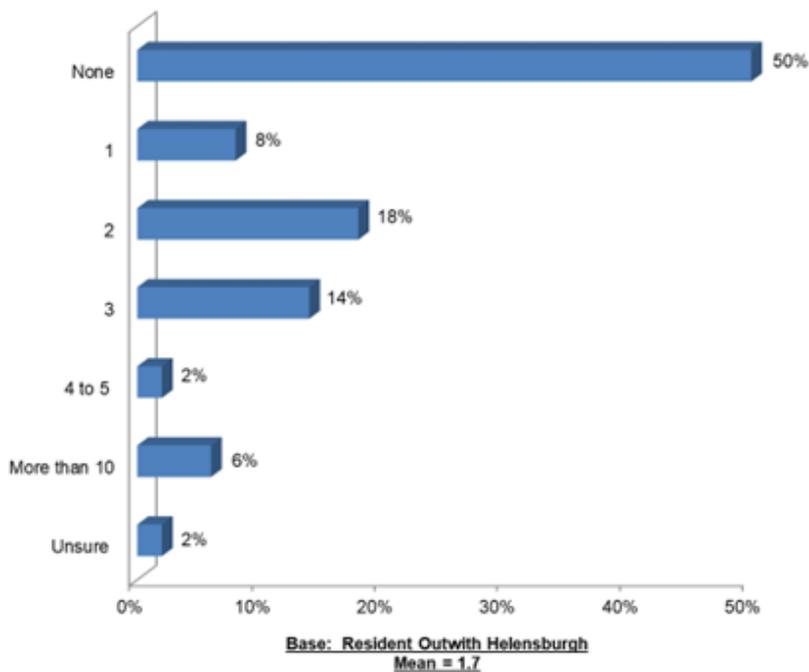
The park refurbishment is having a positive economic impact, creating jobs during the construction phase as well as attracting visitors and tourists to the area. Most visitors to the park are from Helensburgh, 73% in our short survey and probably a higher proportion over the course of a full year. But a significant minority are from outside the town showing it contributes to its destination appeal.

Figure 30 Where do you live? (n:192)



In our snapshot survey over the Easter period in 2023, 25% of people responding were from outside Helensburgh – reflecting a seasonal peak for visiting friends and relatives. Of these visitors, the mean figure for staying in Helensburgh over the course of a year is 1.7 nights.

Figure 31 How many nights would you stay in Helensburgh



Comparisons with previous years are difficult because of changes in the way visits are recorded, and the non-typical COVID years. However, people counter data suggests the number of visits has doubled since work was completed. The economic benefit to the town, and more widely to Scotland, is measured through the direct spend on construction and the additional spend by visitors to the park. Estimates use national survey data and impacts calculated using standard government multipliers.

The economic impact of a restored Hermitage Park has been assessed in three ways:

- the impact on the economy of overall project expenditure: mainly the construction costs;
- the impact on the economy of expenditure resulting from the park operation: mainly involving the spend in the area by visitors to the park; and
- the effect this expenditure has on employment – in effect the number of jobs supported by the additional economic activity.

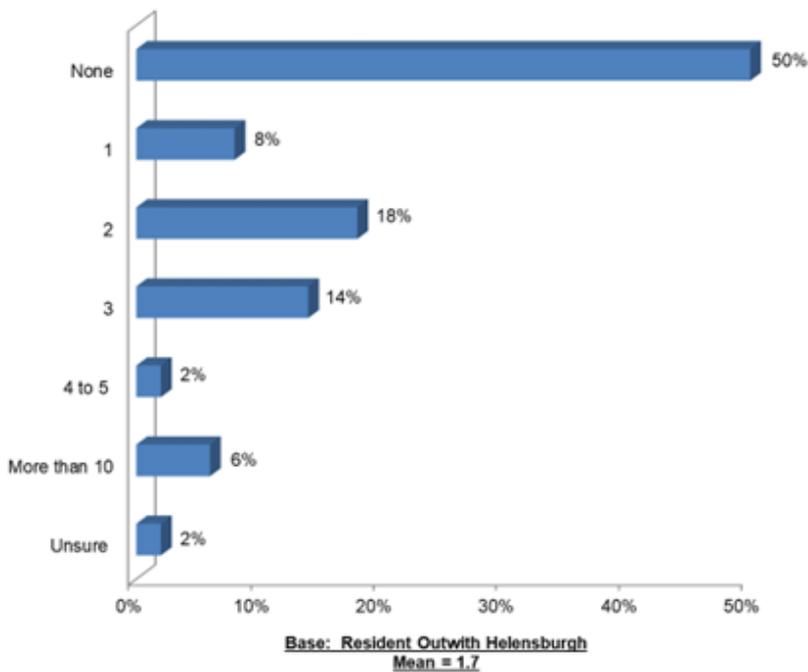
Overall, the impact of visitor spend annually is:

Economic impact £2.97 million in 2021

Supporting 45.6 FTE jobs

Visitor impacts are calculated using data from counters showing annual visits have increased since the project started, alongside the survey conducted for this study in April 2023. However, some of the data we are using needs to be treated with caution because of anomalies caused by COVID. This means data collected between 2020 and 2022 is liable to be skewed by changes in visitor behaviour and the loss of key data sets as research programmes were suspended. We can calculate the effects at Scottish level at this stage.

Figure 32 How many nights would you stay in Helensburgh



## Construction impacts

The construction phase of the project incurred expenditure of nearly £3.4 million and supported 54 full time equivalent jobs for one year.

Total construction spend £3.35 million

Supporting 46.9 FTE jobs

Gross value added (GVA) is an economic productivity metric that measures the contribution of a unit engaged in producing goods or services. As outlined in the Appendix (Economic Impact Data) the Total GVA (including build) for the Hermitage Park restoration project is £9,335,000.

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## Lessons learnt and recommendations

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This section sets out what was successful and how the park and programmes could deliver more effectively. We will also leave a template in the appendix of how further evaluation can be delivered.

### Summary

- The project has been well managed although issues with the builder brought completion complications
- The breakdown of relationships with the original Friends group had an early negative impact although the new Friends group is now positive and collaborative.
- The park refurbishments had a positive economic impact on Helensburgh with jobs created and a GVA of £9.33m
- The landscape design and the remembrance garden is done well
- The training courses are popular locally
- Future clarity on who is responsible for managing tasks is essential and in place
- More public events must be organised to bring people and added income to the park
- Some improvements/changes taking place, planned or on the wish list include improved access for disabled people to the raised beds; more sponsorship, building volunteer base; a teen area for sport activity and a covered bandstand
- The park provides a safe and attractive space for people to relax and exercise, as well as promote biodiversity and help mitigate the effects of climate change.

### Estimate of economic impact of the park

The park refurbishment has had a positive economic impact on Helensburgh. The evidence suggests a good level of economic return which will be sustained into the future, supporting jobs and contributing to tourism spend in the area.

Visitors interviewed and surveyed think Hermitage Park has the potential to boost tourism in future to a greater extent, but only if there is additional and targeted marketing of it to those living outside Helensburgh.

### Examples of good practice and what worked well

When asked specifically what worked well, stakeholder responses include:

- The landscape design and the contractor implementing it were effective
-

- The remembrance garden is done well
- The management has been fantastic
- The UHI horticulture courses are popular locally
- A maintenance manual has been developed
- The Friends of Hermitage Park will keep the focus on improvements
- The kitchen garden is popular with children and older people
- The Pavilion is a simple but strong concept
- Providing steps at the patio area for people to observe activities works well outside the pavilion and playpark
- Rescuing the War Memorial from the risk register, and
- Free parking and toilet availability was welcomed by many.

### *The walled garden is stunning*

The playpark received positive feedback from interviewees, particularly its relocation next to the Pavilion. The Council's own feedback shows that people hold the playpark and Pavilion in high regard and that the plaza is heavily used, appreciated as an open space for young people to learn to cycle, play with remote-control toys, or just use for their own imaginative play.

### **What worked less well**

There were no significant findings from interviewees asked what 'didn't work' or 'could have been improved', which reflects positively on the overall project development and delivery. Some interviewees suggested that the 'breakdown' of relationships with the original Friends group had a negative impact during the early development period. However, the new Friends group is viewed as positive and collaborative.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the complexity of the build specification, some interviewees felt the Pavilion development 'could have been improved' and specifically that it would have benefited from a clearer specification for the contractor at the outset. The building has limited storage space, which some interviewees felt was a design oversight.

There is no space for teens to play ball games within the park and it was felt by some stakeholders interviewed, including those who worked with children, this would be beneficial, particularly for teachers bringing older children to the park.

The Friends group identified some issues with anti-social behaviour which they feel needs addressing, perhaps by providing young people with alternative options either within the park or in partnership with other local community and voluntary organisations. However, visitors interviewed said they had not encountered any antisocial behaviour and thought that this was a measure of the park's good management.

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## What will make a difference over the next three years

1. It is essential there is clarity on who is responsible for park management after the Park Manager post ends: This planning is now in place to ensure:
  - People know who is responsible and how activities and uses in the park are organised and promoted
  - the relationship with the café is managed
  - community meeting rooms can be booked out, and
  - events can be organised and other aspects that allow the park to meet its full potential take place.

A Park Manager would be a positive development to continue the positive impact created by the last manager. Management of the Park has always been the responsibility of the Council Roads and Infrastructure Service, and they will take on some additional duties when the park manager post ends. There have been handover discussions and The Friends will also play a key role when it comes to events and some other activities. This is set out in a (draft) Memorandum of Understanding.

2. More and varied public events could be organised to bring people and income to the park. This could include:
  - Musical shows
  - Fitness groups
  - Theatre (Hamlet in the Hermitage for example)
  - Light shows (making more use of the Lucie boxes around the site)
  - Christmas Fayre, Easter event, Halloween, etc
  - Local produce markets, and
  - Arts and crafts market etc.

Promoting these widely will be important, as well as capitalising – for promotional purposes – on more unusual uses of the park such as the Pavilion's role as a filming location for the BBC's *Annika* drama series.

3. The *Friends*, who are close to the park and its current state, suggest improving access to the raised beds for disabled people.
  4. The Friends could seek sponsorship for flower beds, memorial gardens and other areas of the park from the private sector or commitments to maintain these spaces.
  5. Developing the planting and developing more formal flower beds will add to the splendour of the park.
-

6. A strong volunteer base will allow more robust and sustainable support to address issues in the park, train others, educate people about the heritage and organise community events. Coordinated volunteer management will be an important part of the Park Supervisor's role .
7. Stakeholders who bring young people to the park identified that children 8-16 would benefit from a fenced area within which to play ball games. A Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) could be considered, but would require external funding and a volunteer group to take the plan forward . A potential site for this would be at the South-East corner of the park behind the Victoria Halls.
8. A covered area near the patio and pavilion for outdoor events - a bandstand was suggested., and this is on the park's wish list.

### **The long-term legacy of the project**

If the park is well maintained, there are further opportunities to build on its contribution to a vibrant community where heritage, health and wellbeing is supported. Continuing management arrangements should ensure a high standard of cleanliness (bins and dog waste) and a development programme to capitalise on the ideas put forward in the previous section.

As the Demonstration Garden continues to develop and mature it is hoped produce can be distributed. Groups will use specific beds and are responsible for the management of their own bed and also the use of the produce grown. So any distribution of produce would be down to each individual group but also with guidance from the Park Supervisor.

In addition to protecting and promoting the heritage within the park there are economic benefits. And the park refurbishments have social and environmental benefits for the local community. The park provides a safe and attractive space for people to relax and exercise, as well as promote biodiversity and help mitigate the effects of climate change.

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# Appendices

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## Stakeholders interviewed

<b>Name</b>	<b>Relevance to Park</b>
Jon Simmons	Trustee of Friends Lead designer for park redevelopment Chair of the Helensburgh Tree Trust
Simon Henry	Hermitage Primary School
Charlie Cairns	Hermitage Park Manager
Arlene Cullum	Argyll and Bute Council – overseeing park redevelopment
Tom Murphy	Argyll and Bute Council - Operations Manager, Roads and Amenity Services
Karlynn Marshall	Helensburgh Art Hub (community room user)
Jamie Nicholson	Park Pavilion Café
Angela Smith	Workshop leader
Rebecca Morrow	Alzheimer's Scotland (garden user)
Andrew Garven	UHI
Katrina Sayer	Jean's Bothy (Park user)
Norman Muir	Helensburgh Community Council
Geoff Coles	Helensburgh British Legion
Graham Craig	Steering Group Member and neighbour
Dan Lowe	Hoskins Architects – design and contract management for Pavilion

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## Outputs achieved

Figure 33 Achievements against targets

	Baseline	Target	Actual 2023
<i>Green Flag score</i>	54	75	75-79
<i>New Jobs</i>	0	1	1
<i>Additional income secured</i>	0	£15,000	£65,400
<i>Buildings repaired</i>		1	1
<i>Historic features repaired/restored</i>		10	9
<i>Enhanced landscape features</i>		10,117 m2	10,117m2
<i>Reconstructed lost features</i>		2	2
Improvements to infrastructure		4160 m2	4160 m2
Area of grassland/heathland protected or created		1,787sqm	1,787
Area of woodland protected or created		1,126sqm	1,300
Area of wetland protected or created		150sqm	150
Area of waterbodies protected or created		40sqm	40 sqm
Number of physical, on-site interpretation methods		8	8
Number of events/activities to interpret/explain heritage		17	55
Number of promotional methods or tools used		8	10
Number of learning partnerships formed with other organisations		8	3
Number of staff attending structured training activity		3	3
Number of volunteers attending structured training activity		50	129
Number of people engaging with heritage/learning activities		254	676
Number of volunteer hours		4,761	6552
Visitor numbers	62600	78048	149, 611
Number of volunteers (FTE)	27	80	475

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## Evaluation research matrix

	Initial scoping/visit	Desk research	Survey - Interviews visitors	Interviews Stakeholders
<b>Have the NLHF outcomes been delivered?</b>				
Physical repairs done – War memorial, Japanese Garden, Mill and wishing well	■	■		
Walkways and footbridges	■	■		
Drystone banking/bank stabilisation	■	■		
New pavilion built incl café, toilets, space, activity space	■	■		
Redesigned recreational areas	■	■		
Installed signage, interpretation panels, benches, lighting	■	■		
Activity plan submitted delivered?	■	■		
How many attended		■		
What was their experience like			■	■
Training delivered?	■	■		
Learning opportunities delivered?	■	■		■
Full time manager recruited?	■			■
How did COVID-19 impact the programme?				■
<b>Visitors</b>				
Annual number of visits to the park?	■	■		
What is the pattern of use (counters)?	■	■		
Frequency of visits	■	■		
Age, gender, ethnicity, disability	■	■		
How satisfied are visitors with the park			■	■
How often do they visit the town	■	■	■	
Do they stay overnight/s	■	■	■	
What is your average spend/day	■	■	■	
<b>What have been the commercial benefits?</b>	■	■	■	■
To café	■	■	■	■

Jobs in café (direct/indirect)		■		■
Community space		■		■
Jobs (direct/indirect)		■		■
<b>Is pavilion meeting its potential/ areas for improvement?</b>			■	■
<b>How do people value the greenspace?</b>			■	■
how did they hear about the park			■	
<b>What benefit health/wellbeing; physical activity/social space (use the space)</b>			■	
<b>Are you aware of Pier, CARS, Argyll Loves Local, Colquhoun Sq</b>			■	
<b>How does park impact on council (maintenance/ management?)</b>				■
<b>What is quality of heritage management</b>				■
<b>How actively were the public involved in design or interpretation?</b>				■
<b>What progress towards Green Flag?</b>		■		■
<b>What evidence of carbon reduction is there?</b>		■		■
<b>Data on £ capital; activity elements</b>		■		
<b>How many volunteers have been involved</b>		■		■
how many hours in total?		■		
<b>-- what was volunteers experience</b>			■	■
<b>How many trainees were involved?</b>		■		

## Stakeholder Topic Guide

### Introduction to interviewee

The requirement is to evaluate the National Lottery Heritage Funded Hermitage Park project for Argyll and Bute Council. This evaluation report to be completed by the end of May 2023. It will include project description, lessons learned of what works and the achievement against NLHF outcomes listed in the approved application.

An evaluation report will be produced that can be shared with NLHF, partners, wider stakeholders and the local community.

**Data protection** - Our consultation will be undertaken in line with data protection requirements. Any information you provide will be destroyed at the end of the research in line with our document retention policy. The consultation leader is David Gourlay [david.gourlay@hallaitken.co.uk](mailto:david.gourlay@hallaitken.co.uk). The main Hermitage Park contact is Charlie Cairns [charlie.cairns@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:charlie.cairns@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

### Consent and how this information will be used

Responses will be anonymised however by taking part in this interview you are agreeing for the data and text to be collected, reported and potentially used for policy development and reporting on achievements to the NLHF funder.

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-----  
**Date:**

**Name:**

**Role:**

**Individual**  **or** **Organisation**

- 1) If relevant what type of organisation are you? (Business/Voluntary Sector  
Public/Organisation/Other)
  - 2) What area do you operate in? (Local, Argyll and Bute, Scotland, All of UK)
  - 3) What is your organisations relationship with the Hermitage Park? What involvement have you had with the development, funding, management or operation of the park or activities within it?
  - 4) What elements of this project have you been involved with? (Programme design and management, Community engagement, Training/learning opportunities, Volunteering, Business delivery, Other/None)
  - 5) What are your views on using the park facilities or the activities you have been involved in (Training, workshops etc)?
  - 6) What difference do you feel that participating in these activities will make to your life?
-

- 7) How actively were/are the members of the community involved in design or interpretation?
- 8) How did COVID-19 impact on the Park project?
- 9) What have been the commercial benefits to the business in the park and Helensburgh? And how does the park development fit with other regeneration projects going on in Helensburgh (CARS ETC)
- 10) Is the Pavilion and Park meeting its potential? Is it offering everything that you think it should?
- 11) What is the quality of heritage management?
- 12) What was achieved against the following targets:
  - Apprenticeships and training
  - Green Flag
  - Carbon reduction
  - Volunteering
  - More use for physical activity/wellbeing activities
- 13) What specifically worked well? Can you identify any specific examples of good practice?
- 14) What did not work or what could be improved?
- 15) What has the experience of the park development been like for you and how effectively was the overall programme managed?
- 16) What is needed to make a difference in the next 3 years?
- 17) Do you have any further points to make not already covered?

Thanks for your responses. If you think of anything else that you want to add in the next few days please email: [sandie.dent@hallaitken.co.uk](mailto:sandie.dent@hallaitken.co.uk)

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## Survey questions asked of the visitors to the park

These are the questions used during the evaluation, but suggested questions for future evaluation is included in the Evaluation Template that can be adapted to suit future circumstances.

Q1. How did you hear about Hermitage Park?

- Live in Helensburgh
- Through advertising
- Through articles/stories in newspapers or magazines
- Through social media
- Through leaflets/posters
- Through a community/voluntary group
- Through word a mouth
- Other

Q2. How often do you visit Hermitage Park?

- At least once a week
- At least monthly
- Less than monthly
- Not often

Q3. What will you do in the park today and what have you used the park for in the past?

- To walk a dog
- To enjoy the play area
- To enjoy the park with friends and family
- To exercise
- For relaxation
- To visit the park café
- As a short cut
- Other (specify)

Q4. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following? (see A below)

The park is well maintained  
The park enhances your quality of life  
There is a good community spirit in the area

A For each state:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Unsure

Q5. Overall, how satisfied have you been with your visit today, or your visit to the park in the past?

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- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

Q6. What one thing could improve the park experience for you?

Q7. Have you used, or do you intend to use the pavilion where the café is today or have you used it in the past?

- Yes
- No

Q8. How much value do you place on this green space?

- Great value
- Some value
- Little/no value
- Unsure

Q9. To what extent do you think your visit to the park today or visits in the past have had an impact on your ... wellbeing

Q9A. To what extent do you think your visit to the park today or visits in the past have had an impact on your Physical wellbeing

Q9B. To what extent do you think your visit to the park today or visits in the past have had an impact on your Mental wellbeing

Against each state:

- Great Extent
- Some Extent
- Little/No Extent
- Unsure

Q10. How often do you visit Helensburgh?

- Live in Helensburgh
- Most weeks
- Once or twice a month
- Less often
- First time

Q11. As a visitor, how many nights per year would you stay in or close to Helensburgh?

None

- 1
  - 2
-

3 - 4

4-5

6-10

More than 10

Q12. Are you aware of..

The Helensburgh Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme

The redevelopment of the West Bay Esplanade – including Colquhoun Square

Helensburgh Pier

For each state:

— Yes

— No

Q13. Where do you live?

— In Helensburgh

— Elsewhere in Argyll and Bute

— Somewhere else in Scotland

— Somewhere else in the UK

— Outside the UK

Q14. Are there children in your group today?

— Yes

— No

Q15. What would best describe your ethnicity?

— White

— Black

— Asian

— Other ethnic minority group

Q16. Do you belong to the LGBTQ+ community?

— Yes

— No

Q17. Do you have a disability?

— Yes

— No

Q18. What age are you?

— Under 30

— 31 to 60

— Over 60

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— Refused

Q19. Gender

— Male

— Female

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## Visitor survey questions

### Introduction to interviewee

The requirement is to evaluate the National Lottery Heritage Funded Hermitage Park project for Argyll and Bute Council. This evaluation report to be completed by the end of May 2023. It will include project description, lessons learned of what works and the achievement against CRF outcomes listed in the approved application.

An evaluation report will be produced that can be shared with NLHF, partners, wider stakeholders and the local community.

Data protection - Our consultation will be undertaken in line with data protection requirements. Any information you provide will be destroyed at the end of the research in line with our document retention policy. The consultation leader is David Gourlay [david.gourlay@hallaitken.co.uk](mailto:david.gourlay@hallaitken.co.uk). The main Hermitage Park contact is Charlie Cairns [charlie.cairns@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:charlie.cairns@argyll-bute.gov.uk)

### Consent and how this information will be used

Responses will be anonymised however by taking part in this interview you are agreeing for the data and text to be collected, reported and potentially used for policy development and reporting on achievements to the NLHF funder.

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Date:

Name:

1) Are you a:

Local

Argyll and Bute

Scotland

Rest of UK

2) Do you think the park makes Helensburgh a more attractive place to visit, if so why? (such as allowing access to Green Space or getting more physical activity or improves your mental wellbeing?)

3) How did COVID-19 impact on the Park and your use of the park?

4) Is the Pavilion meeting its potential? Is it offering everything that you think it should and if not what more could be done?

5) Is the heritage well signposted and managed, if not how could this be improved?

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- 6) Are you aware of other development projects in Helensburgh such as The Helensburgh Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme; The redevelopment of the West Bay Esplanade – including Colquhoun Square; and Helensburgh Pier. And if so how does the park compare as a boost to tourism?
- 7) What specifically works well? Can you identify any specific examples of good practice of things happening in the park) and what does not work or what could be improved?
- 8) Do you have any further points to make not already covered?

Thanks for your responses. If you think of anything else that you want to add in the next few days please email: [sandie.dent@hallaitken.co.uk](mailto:sandie.dent@hallaitken.co.uk)

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## Contractors

### Phase 1 consultants

Gillespies LLP	Lead consultant / Landscape Architects
Hoskins Architects	Architects
Pick Everard	Engineers
Bryan Byrne Consultants	QS
Campbell and Co	Graphic design / interpretation
Amion Consulting	Business planning
Peter McGowan	Conservation planner
Headland	Archaeologist

### Design Team

JSLA	Lead consultant / Landscape Architects/Project Manager
Hoskins Architects	Architects
Pick Everard	Engineers
Bryan Byrne Consultants	QS
Campbell and Co	Graphic design / interpretation

### Contractors

Hawthorne Heights Ltd	Landscape
Stewart and Shields	Building

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## Economic impact data

Output		Type I		Type II		GVA
		Direct & indirect		Direct, indirect & induced		
Construction	£3,863,134	1.5	£5,794,701	1.7	£6,567,328	£7,339,955
Day visit	£284,216	1.3	£369,481	1.7	£426,324	£426,324
Tourist visit	£1,697,292	1.3	£2,206,479	1.7	£2,545,938	£2,545,938
Employment effect		Jobs (at Scottish level)		Jobs (at Scottish level)		
Construction	£3,863,134	12.3	47.5	14	54.1	
Day visit	£284,216	21	6.0	23	6.5	
Tourist visit	£1,697,292	21	35.6	23	39.0	
Total visitor spend annually						<b>£3,368,563</b>
Supporting FTE jobs						<b>45.6</b>
Total GVA (inc build)						<b>£10,312,216</b>
Annual GVA						£2,545,938

### Notes

- Table uses the latest Scottish IO multipliers - closest fit to industry sectors represented and defined here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/tourism-scotland-economic-contribution-sector/pages/7/>. The tables are here <https://www.gov.scot/publications/input-output-latest/>
- Due to the static nature of the underlying Input-Output model, the multipliers will always return estimates that assume that all the economic activity is 100% additional. They will not take any account of displacement of economic activity from elsewhere in Scotland, the deadweight associated with creating supply where there is already spare capacity to supply elsewhere in the economy and they will also assume that there is the demand to meet that supply.
- Figures are for one year: Construction is the effect of total spend if concentrated into one year. Visitor figures are annual based on 2021 visitor numbers
- Day visit spend is the average of the high/low figures calculated from VisitScotland data <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/about-our-visitors/uk/day-visits-survey> and ASVA <https://asva.co.uk/>

- 
- e) Tourist visit figures are the average of the high/low figures modelled.
  - f) We have assumed for this exercise the park visit is the principal activity undertaken in a day visit to Helensburgh
-

## Progress against activity plan (April 2023)

From reports to the local authority we see that:

1. Schools continue to use the park on a daily basis for education, recreation and fitness. They are particularly involved in the demonstration garden where once again they oversaw the complete food growing cycle from sowing seed, through planting out and tending to plants, to harvesting and eating.
  2. University of the Highland and Islands continued to use the Park for their NC horticulture course until the end of the 2022 academic year, giving the student valuable practical lessons to achieve their learning outcomes, while bringing some maintenance benefits to the Park.
  3. The Green Gym continued to operate in the Park at no further costs to the Park redevelopment programme, The Conservation Volunteers absorbing the cost into a programme supported by NatureScot. In particular they worked very closely with Alzheimer's Scotland, and many of their clients have achieved positive benefits from their volunteering days. They built several raised beds in which they grew some crops.
  4. Positive contact has been made with the new branch of the British Legion who are a very useful conduit to potential work parties from Naval Base Clyde, and several work days have taken place to date.
  5. The volunteer Bothy is virtually complete with some very small final works still required. The green roofs in particular looked stunning in late summer, and it has been a useful venue for schools, students, volunteers and green gym participants.
  6. Volunteering opportunities have been offered in horticulture, general park maintenance, lime mortaring and event running.
  7. A lime mortar course was delivered by the Scottish Lime Centre in August 2022, fully attended by 12 trainees who are now willing volunteers.
  8. Fitness classes were delivered by SOS Fitness in the Park as part of their licence to occupy, until September 2022 when they declined to follow through with a development opportunity at the South West corner of the Park. Their current business model means that the Park is no longer a viable venue for them and they have decided to end the licence agreement. Other fitness providers, including Live Argyll, continue to use the park for fitness lessons on an ad hoc basis.
  9. Weekly Tai Chi classes (Chi in the Park) take place every Monday morning.
-

10. A lighting and music event took place in the Park in March 2022 as part of the Colmcille 1500 celebrations. Colmcille was a joint project shared between venues in Scotland and Ireland to celebrate the 1500th anniversary of the birth of St. Columba.
  11. The Dandelion Scotland project was a national awareness raising and educational programme highlighting potential for gardens and food growing. Hermitage Park was chosen as the venue for a Free for All plant giveaway in June, and a harvest event in September. Although the latter event was cancelled due to the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the Free for All was very popular and attracted some 300 people to the Park on a lovely sunny day.
  12. The aforementioned Dandelion Free Harvest event was also intended to form part of our Park celebration event, to mark the improvements to the Park, to thank funders and contributors and to showcase the Park as a vibrant local greenspace. Again the passing of the Queen forced the cancellation of this event and this was rescheduled as a Halloween event, which will be less formal and a bit more subject specific.
  13. Additional planting was carried out in front of the new Pavilion in March and May 2022. Further planting is planned before the end of the project.
  14. Three free, trial horticultural classes were run in the Spring, delivered by Angela Smith a trained horticulturalist and florist. Trial classes were for Windowsill Allotments, Kokedamas and Floral Crowns. Classes were well attended and well received - feedback forms indicate that charged classes in the future would be popular. Further classes are planned for the Autumn 2023.
  15. To explore our theme of heritage, art and learning, a contract was tendered in July. The winning response was from Magic Torch who propose a series of outreach workshops focussing on the Park heritage and expressing the outcomes through comic book art, dramatic performances and storytelling.
  16. The Activity Plan had indicated that we would seek to create digital trails within the Park. However our colleagues in Active Transport created a wider app called Discover Helensburgh, which features 4 themed trails within Hermitage Park. It was therefore considered unnecessary to create a competing app.
  17. A new webpage for the Park, hosted within the Invest in Argyll pages of the Argyll and Bute Council website, is active.
  18. The park participated in the Kickstart scheme, designed to offer paid employment to young people trying to access the jobs market. A Kickstart employee started with us in March 2022 for a six month period as Park Grounds Assistant. Both the Park and the Kickstart employee profited from this arrangement - the Park through extra maintenance staff, and the Kickstart Employee through workplace experience and training. He now works for the Council.
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19. Hermitage Park successfully gained its third consecutive Green Flag award in July 2022. Maintenance and infrastructure standards were praised within the Report.

20. Following disruption of the previous Friends of Hermitage Park Group, fresh impetus towards establishing a renewed group was undertaken by an elected member and some local enthusiastic supporters of the Park. An AGM took place and a smooth transition has been achieved.

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Argyll and Bute Council

Evaluation of the Hermitage Park  
heritage-led regeneration project

Report

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