

Parks for People Case Study: The Rose Garden, Bushey

This report summarises our findings from Bushey Rose Garden in Hertsmere. The case study has been produced following a telephone interview with the project manager and a review of the project's initial application form and monitoring data. The purpose of the case study is;

- To provide evidence of impact and progress towards the programme outcomes
- To explore what difference the Parks for People funding has had on the park and surrounding community
- To highlight examples of good practice

Introduction

The Bushey Rose Garden is a small site situated in the centre of Bushey in Hertfordshire. The Rose Garden is listed Grade II and was designed by Thomas Mawson in 1912 for the renowned artist Sir Hubert von Herkomer on the site of his famous school of art. The gardens remained in the ownership of the Herkomer family until 1937 when it was acquired by Bushey Urban District Council for use as a public park. The gardens designed by Mawson survive in essence with the structures and hard landscaping mostly intact.

The Rose Garden is a small enclosed garden, divided into two sections consisting of the sunken panel rose garden and the lawn area surrounded by shrub beds. Within the park are a number of Grade II listed structures including the column, which marks the entrance to the former arts school, the monument (fountain) at the centre of the sunken garden and the summer house which straddles the two sections of the garden.

The park was awarded £970k of HLF funding and the capital works are now complete.

Outcome 1: increasing the range of audiences

The project has set out to increase visitor numbers by 30%, from 171,615 to 223,100. It is also attempting to attract twice as many disabled users, to increase their proportion of visits to 10% and to increase satisfaction from 3% to 80%.

To support these ambitions, the Audience Development Plan (ADP) set out a range of activities to support the capital works. These included;

- Education programme for local schools
- Open days for residents
- An event programme for residents
- Horticultural demonstrations
- General interpretive material

The park re-opened in July 2010, which was highly publicised in the local media and the event attracted 8,000 visitors. The project has installed counters at the two park entrances and a data logger that provides data by the hour. This will be a great boost to park management as it will enable the park team to determine peak hours

and understand how best to manage the park based on this. Visitors have also been asked to complete satisfaction questionnaires, which will enable the park team to judge visitors' views on the park.

Efforts to attract a younger audience are underway by linking with schools and efforts to attract disabled users have been made much easier with the improved access made possible by the project. The park is being used by more families and a wide range of ages.

Since opening there have been a range of events to attract a wide audience from story-telling to jazz and performances by local young people. There has also been real support from the local community. The positive feedback from park visitors was summarised by the comment "we used to use this park 7 or 8 years ago, and now can use it again".

The project has seen a significant increase in the number of visitors, counting 8,554 visitors over a 3 month period since reopening. Satisfaction rates have vastly increased, with 99% of visitors satisfied or very satisfied. However, there have been no significant changes to demographics.

Outcome 2: Conserving and improving the heritage value

The project aimed to restore the garden, its Grade II listed buildings and structures, hard landscaping and historic planting. The project wanted to raise awareness of the gardens and develop its potential as a local cultural and educational resource.

Everything in the park has been restored, traditionally and conservatively, ensuring the park maintains its heritage.

The physical restoration work has resulted in;

- The restoration of the summer house, which has been bought back into use
- The restoration of 5 historic features; the fountain, cloister, pergola and rose temple and High Street Gate
- 100% of the paths have been improved

To support greater awareness of the park heritage there is an information office, panels written with help from the museum (which is only a few minutes from the park, and also has a display about the park) around the park, displays about the restoration, leaflets and a website.

Outcome 3: Increasing the range of volunteers

The focus of the park up to July 2010 was to get the park ready for its opening, and so a volunteer programme had not been established. The project is now working to develop volunteering opportunities to help it reach its target of 100 from a baseline of 42. A small number of volunteers helped with planting and dead heading before the garden opened and they are currently running volunteer taster sessions to get more local people involved. Activities include bulb planting, treating benches and helping at events.

The project has 27 volunteers, all members of the Friends group, involved directly in the project; they are supporting management, horticulture, access, marketing and one off events. They have noticed a slight increase in the numbers of volunteers involved in the project since the start.

Outcome 4: Improving skills and knowledge through training

The project aimed to train 3 staff, 20 volunteers and obtain 1 qualification. Staff training has focused on building skills to help them work effectively with volunteers, whilst horticultural and practical training for volunteers has also been delivered, such as rose pruning and treating benches.

The training has gone well, with staff and volunteers reporting an increase in skills and satisfaction with the training.

Outcome 5: Improving management and maintenance

The park does not currently have Green Flag status but plans to apply for it next year. A key step forward in this process has been the improvement in maintenance, with a dedicated person responsible for this, as opposed to previously when a mobile group would come to the park, cut the grass and move on.

Conclusions

This case study is able to demonstrate examples of good practice through:

- A high profile launch event to attract new audiences
- Sensitive conservation work, with a strong regard for how the park has developed through the years
- Employing a dedicated gardener responsible for maintenance



'Before'



'After'