

Knowle Park and Gardens Working Group

Report of a meeting held on Tuesday 28th May 2024

Present: Ian Barlow, Kelvin Dent, Ed Dolphin, Di Fuller, Kevin Walker

Apologies: Chris Holland, Ben Cruickshank

1. Update

Ben was continuing to clear Rhododendron Ponticum, to keep the footpath clear and had cut the grass. Friends of the Knowle were meeting on alternate Friday mornings and numbers were gradually increasing with some local residents carrying out work on an ad hoc basis. The work of the volunteers mainly comprised the removal of brambles and weeds.

2. Vision for the Park and Gardens

The Working Group recommend adopting the following vision:

“To restore and maintain the **Gardens**, having regard to their history, for the quiet enjoyment by the public whilst encouraging biodiversity. To manage the **Park** (with the exception of the arena and the carpark) for the benefit of wild flora and fauna whilst keeping vegetation under reasonable control, ensuring the welfare of specimen trees and encouraging public access”.

3. Aims

The Working Group identified the following aims:

- a) To encourage public access particularly by children
- b) To provide interpretation of the Park and Gardens
- c) To open up the Park and Gardens to the public by means of footpaths
- d) To gradually clear invasive vegetation from the Park and Gardens
- e) To explore ways to increase biodiversity

4. Priorities

As well as continuing the current programme of clearance and tidying, the following priorities were identified.

- a) To improve the footpath through the Park from the car-park to the southern access point by applying wood chips or highway scrapings. The path is currently very muddy. *(Kelvin to ask Councillor Stuart Hughes whether scrapings are allowed and available)*
- b) To ask for the padlock to be removed from the double gates opposite the arena in order that one gate can be opened to allow pedestrian access.
- c) To recommend the Tourism and Economy Committee which is responsible for the car-park to provide Interpretation Boards and a litter bin and to arrange for a QR code linked to the Tree Walk on the Visit Sidmouth website to be displayed for the Public to access.
- d) To request a notice board to be provided in the Gardens in order to convey information about the Friends of the Knowle, the work that is being carried out and the reasons.
- e) To identify those shrubs and bushes in the Gardens which are worthy of retention. *(Ed and Kelvin to meet in order to carry out the identification)*

5. The Folly

Members considered whether to ask EDDC's Conservation Team for advice on restoring the listed folly. It was agreed, however, that because of the listed status of the building and the risk of contravening the relevant legislation, no work should be undertaken on the folly. Friends of the Knowle were to be advised accordingly.

6. Dogs

Kelvin reported that Sidmouth Town Council's notices were about to be corrected to indicate that dogs should be under control rather than on leads.

7. Regatta Weekend

Kelvin reported that Friends of the Knowle proposed to hold a Teddy Bears' Picnic with a treasure hunt etc. on 23rd August pm at the start of Regatta Weekend.

8. Risk Assessment

A Risk Assessment of the Park and Gardens had been carried out by Councillor Mike Goodman and this would be studied in due course.

9. Next Meeting

Tuesday 3rd September 2024 at 10am at Redleaf.