



**5-Year Management and Maintenance Plan**

**2010 – 2015**

**Medway Council**



## Contents

|                   |                                               |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Section A:</b> | Executive Summary                             |
| <b>Part 1</b>     | <b>Where are we now?</b>                      |
| <b>Section 1:</b> | Introduction                                  |
| <b>Section 2:</b> | Policy Context                                |
| <b>Section 3:</b> | Site Description                              |
| <b>Part 2</b>     | <b>Where do we want to get to?</b>            |
| <b>Section 4:</b> | Vision                                        |
| <b>Section 5:</b> | Assessment and Analysis                       |
| <b>Section 6:</b> | Aims                                          |
| <b>Part 3</b>     | <b>How will we get there?</b>                 |
| <b>Section 7:</b> | Action Plan                                   |
| <b>Part 4</b>     | <b>How will we know when we have arrived?</b> |
| <b>Section 8:</b> | Monitoring and review                         |

### Appendices to Management and Maintenance Plan (on CD)

|             |                                                                               |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Appendix 1  | Other Local Facilities                                                        |
| Appendix 2  | Policy Context                                                                |
| Appendix 3  | Playbuilder play area improvements                                            |
| Appendix 4  | Woodland management compartments                                              |
| Appendix 5  | Walking and cycling route maps                                                |
| Appendix 6  | Health and Safety – Risk assessments, Emergency Plan, Site Safety Inspections |
| Appendix 7  | Work Plan 2009-10                                                             |
| Appendix 8  | Volunteer activity                                                            |
| Appendix 9  | Ranger charter and core staff duties                                          |
| Appendix 10 | Grounds Maintenance Contract and Service Output Standards                     |
| Appendix 11 | National BAP Species list                                                     |
| Appendix 12 | Community Engagement – Volunteers, site user survey                           |
| Appendix 13 | Site Marketing                                                                |
| Appendix 14 | Work Experience                                                               |
| Appendix 15 | Job Descriptions                                                              |
| Appendix 16 | GGKM Capstone-Bredhurst Cluster Study                                         |

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|----------------|------------------|----------------|
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| 0.02           | 09 December 2010 | Year 2 update  |

## **Section A. Executive Summary**

### **A1 Overview**

Capstone Farm Country Park is a large-scale site (114 hectare) strategically positioned as a Gateway to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Thames Gateway Parklands and the Medway towns.

The site provides residents of, and visitors to Medway with an opportunity to explore managed meadows, woodlands, orchards and lake environments and enjoy spectacular views. These natural assets, formal play facilities, visitor centre, cafe and toilets together with permanent site staff running year round education and event programmes have seen the site evolve into a valued recreational and educational resource visited by over 250,000 people annually.

The park is designated as Country Park, and 'Area of Local Landscape Importance' within Medway's Local Plan (2003). The site has also been identified as a key strategic link within the green infrastructure of Medway with a long-term landscape and access project being to connect the MedwayTowns to the Downs with the park at the centre of the network which will bring ecological and sustainable access improvements beyond the sites existing links through public rights of way.

Park management has been identified as being of a high standard with 80% satisfaction levels reported in a Medway wide Citizen Panel survey in 2006. Feedback from site based satisfaction surveys and User Forum meetings support this high level of satisfaction with the management of the park.

### **A2 Challenges**

Whist a relatively new park Capstone Farm Country Park faces key challenges:

1. Improving maintenance standards
2. Securing inward investment
3. Building and diversifying community engagement
4. Meeting the needs of projected population growth
5. Strategic development of the site to realise its potential within the Thames Gateway as a sub-regional recreational and educational resource.
6. Balancing development with the sites existing significant features and character.

This management plan draws together these challenges and provides a structured framework for the future development of Capstone Farm Country Park.

### **A3 Meeting the Challenge**

With experienced management and established maintenance standards, the park is already well positioned to ensure that ongoing services and future investment are secure and sustained. Whilst financial investment is key the investment of people's time both staff and the wider community is of equal value.

The future of the park, hand in hand with both financial investment and community engagement, will only be secured through partnership working at all levels that is sustained through a measured framework for delivery.

Adoption of this Management and Maintenance Plan will continue to drive service improvements in addition to recent investments secured on the basis of recognition of the sites significance. .

1. Secured £100,000 of Playbuilder funding to refurbish and extend the sites 2 play areas (2010)
2. Secured £100,000 of investment from Local Transport Plan 2 and Medway 2012 Olympic Team (2010-11)
3. Secured 2,685 volunteer work hours in the park-an increase of 20% on previous year- together with 412 hours of work experience placements
4. Delivery of 50 events ranging from After School Ranger club for 20 children to the 'Kites Over Capstone' event and 'Race for Life' with Cancer Research UK, with further planned Sport Relief mile in March 2010.
5. Delivered £40,000 of investment in CCTV, intruder and fire security systems (2010).
6. Secured £10,000 of funding from the Environment Agency to enhance Access for All to the fishing lake (2010).
7. Secured £82,000 of internal (member priority) investment in the park visitor centre, educational and interpretational facilities (2010/11).
8. Secured £37,500 of investment from the Public Rights of Way team for creation of new bridleways linking existing paths across the park (2010/11).

The Capstone Farm Country Park Management and Maintenance Plan is underpinned by the following Vision Statement that has been drafted in conjunction with key partners and reflects the aspirations of Medway Council and its partners for the future management and development of the park.

#### **A4 Vision and Aims**

##### ***'Capstone Farm Country Park: Gateway to the Towns and Downs'***

***"Capstone Farm Country Park is unique in its location and facilities in Medway where the downs meet the towns. The park will offer an actively managed farm landscape in a safe, secure environment managed to the benefit of wildlife, community interaction, learning and recreation.***

***The Management and Maintenance Plan will enhance wildlife habitat, encouraging and preserving native flora and fauna. It will foster public interest and ownership through improved access, allowing the development of recreation, interpretation and education and training. It will foster improved consultation and liaison with support groups, the police and the local community."***

To drive this Vision Green Flag Award Criteria have been adopted and this Management and Maintenance plan will be delivered against the following eight **aims** :

1. **Positively welcome people** to the park, in terms of physical, intellectual and social access.
2. Ensure a **healthy, safe and secure** experience for park users.
3. Provide a **well-maintained and clean** park.
4. Improve the **environmental quality** and **sustainability** of practices carried out in the park.
5. Maintain and develop the **ecological and conservation value** of the full range of wildlife habitats and landscape value of the park, whilst ensuring access and provision for park users.
6. Provide opportunities to **increase community use and involvement**, particularly within the parks management and development, through events, education and interpretation.
7. Ensure **effective promotion** of the park as a strategic green space and as a community resource.
8. Ensure all those involved in the management and maintenance of Capstone Farm Country Park **effectively use the Management Plan** as a working document.



## **Part 1           Where are we now?**

### **Section 1       Introduction**

#### **1.1 Overview of the Management and Maintenance Plan**

The 5 year Management and Maintenance Plan (MMP) for Capstone Farm Country Park has been prepared by Greenspace Services, Medway Council to act as a single reference point for the future development of the site to secure continuous improvement. The plan set out herein has been completed following detailed assessment of the Green Flag Award criteria and a comprehensive internal review of the Management Plan format based on CABI space guidance for Management Plan production.

As part of the evolution of the plan, detailed consultation has taken place with Greenspace Services officers, site staff, maintenance staff, other officers within the council and a number of stakeholders who have cause to directly or indirectly determine or influence activities within the park. This has informed the development of the plan and ensured that proposals meet specific identified local needs. It is intended that officers and members, stakeholder groups, park users and the general public will use the plan. It is made up of 2 principal documents: The Management and Maintenance Plan and the Appendices, containing various plans and documentation that illustrate and support the plan.

#### **1.2 Purpose of the Management and Maintenance Plan**

The purpose of the MMP is to:

1. Set out policy and direction for the park within the context of Medway Council's vision and corporate priorities
2. Identify all issues that affect the management and maintenance of the park and assist with their resolution
3. Provide a clear vision and cultural setting for the park and its development
4. Ensure ongoing member, stakeholder and community involvement in the park
5. Raise the profile of the park and develop audiences
6. Guide future management and ensure continuity of development
7. Develop a sense of achievement and pride in the park
8. Provide a basis for identifying priorities within the park
9. Establish the resources required to achieve and sustain improvement

In order to be a user-friendly and a useful reference document, this plan will:

1. Be accessible and easy to understand, written in plain English
2. Ensure clear objectives are set and include an action plan with specific and measurable targets
3. Establish the resources required to achieve and sustain improvement
4. Include timescales which allow progress to be monitored
5. Allow flexibility in its approach and evolve with time

The plan has been prepared within the guidelines of CABI Space's recommended framework for the development of management plans. This approach has enabled the development of a comprehensive and useable plan, which will provide then focus for work planning by Greenspace Services and ensure production of a best practice MMP. The Action Plan in **Section 7** shows the key actions that have been extrapolated from the vision statement and issues analysis and will allow Greenspace Services and local people to work together towards a sustainable future for the park.

### **1.3 Evaluation Mechanism and Review Process**

It is intended that the plan will be reviewed annually and amended to take account of future developments and opportunities and address feedback from Green Flag judges. A key role for Greenspace Services will be to implement, review and update the plan to ensure that it remains a valid and contemporary document for the effective management of the park throughout its lifespan. The Action Plan in **Section 7** identifies the necessary actions and the resources required to deliver them; it also indicates the method for monitoring the outcomes. In this manner, each of the actions contained within the plan will be monitored against a pre-determined anticipated outcome.

### **1.4 Consultation and Engagement**

In producing this MMP, workshops were held with strategic partners including Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway, and Natural England. Community engagement took place with the Capstone Park Volunteers in the form of a workshop event. A summary of proposed actions was displayed in the visitor centre to enable feedback with this display being advertised around the park. Several proposals included in the management plan have been transferred from previous plans for the park together with capturing actions highlighted in the Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway (GGKM) Capstone - Bredhurst cluster study of 2008.

It is however recognised that further and more focussed consultation needs to be achieved and this will be delivered at 2 levels - strategically through driving the delivery of the Capstone – Bredhurst Cluster Study with GGKM utilising a steering group formed of users and stakeholders; and operationally through the park user forum discussing specific projects and site issues. To build wider engagement outside of these we have introduced a park newsletter.

### **1.5 Site Overview**

#### Site Information

Capstone Farm Country Park, Capstone Road, Gillingham ME7 3JG

|                   |                                                     |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Ownership:        | Medway Council                                      |
| Management:       | Medway Council                                      |
| Site Area:        | Approx. 114 hectares                                |
| Grid reference:   | TQ 779 653 (park visitor centre)                    |
| Ward:             | Lordswood and Capstone                              |
| Councillors:      | Councillor Alan Jarrett and Councillor David Wildey |
| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor Howard Doe                               |
| Community Forum:  | Capstone Park Volunteers                            |

Owned by Medway Council Capstone Farm Country Park was formally opened in 1984. The site is managed by Greenspace Services through a dedicated site based Ranger Team.

Key facilities provided at Capstone Farm Country Park are:

- 1 A visitor centre with toilets, classroom and nature conservation displays
- 2 Cafe building with toilets
- 3 Free parking
- 4 2 play areas
- 5 Way-marked walking trails and orienteering course
- 6 Ranger led activities for schools and organised groups through out the year.
- 7 Annual calendar of events and activities
- 8 Camping field for use by organised groups with toilet and shower facilities
- 9 Fishing lake run in conjunction with Medway Valley Fisheries
- 10 Public rights of way and permissive bridle and cycle routes
- 11 Event field

Managed by a dedicated Ranger Team the park provides a range of informal recreational activities with a central hub of a Visitor Centre that is open seven days a week. More information is available on the internet at:

Medway Council

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/index/environment/greenspace/countryside/2178.html>

Fishing lake information

[http://www.go-fish.co.uk/venue\\_2231.htm](http://www.go-fish.co.uk/venue_2231.htm)

Kent County Council – Explore Kent

[http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure\\_and\\_culture/countryside\\_and\\_coast/parks\\_and\\_open\\_spaces/country\\_parks/capstone\\_farm\\_country\\_park.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/countryside_and_coast/parks_and_open_spaces/country_parks/capstone_farm_country_park.aspx)

Visit Britain

<http://search.visitbritain.com/en-EN/Details.aspx?ContentID=136259>

Viewing the park as a metropolitan open space in the context of Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards the park has a catchment area of 3.2km. Within this catchment there is a population of approximately 100,000 people which at 40% of the Medway population highlights the importance of the site for recreation as well as biodiversity further reflected in visitor numbers (based on car counter readings) of 250,000 annually.

The population of Lordswood and Capstone in 2001 was 9,495 of which 49.41% were economically active (full-time) 16-70 year olds, 13.54% in part-time employment with unemployment at 3.06%. 83.45% of households owned or had a mortgage on their property suggesting a stable population. 72% of residents considered themselves to be in good health. In terms of age profile, 30% was under 20 years of age making the Ward slightly younger than Medway where the overall percentage of the population aged 0-20 was 28%. The age ranges 20-29, 30-39, 40-49 and 50-59 all made up between 13% and 16% of the population with 11%



being over 60. Christian was the main religion stated at 75% with other religions totalling 2%. 94.4% of the population was of White British ethnicity.

### **1.6 Previous Studies**

A number of previous studies/reports on Capstone Farm Country Park have contributed to the development of this Management and Maintenance Plan:

- 1987 Feasibility Study into the creation of a Capstone Farm Activity Centre.
- 1990 Capstone Farm – Its potential as an interpretive resource
- 1993 Redevelopment of Capstone Farm
- 1996 A study into the long-term development of Capstone Farm Country Park
- 2008 Capstone – Bredhurst Cluster Study

Recommendations and opportunities highlighted in these reports are included within the action plan of this MMP in particular the actions from the Cluster Study to improve linkage between the Medway Towns and the North Downs, recreating a working 'farm' in the park, improved interpretation and engagement of young people in the management of the site.

Informal species sitings are posted in the visitor centre and are being translated into a site species list to inform visitors of what they are likely to see in different areas of the park at different times of the year. It is recognised within the action plan that a higher level of survey work is required in areas of the park to include plant transects in order to inform longer term management regimes.

### **1.7 Other Local Facilities**

#### **Greenspaces**

Other Greenspaces within 2km of Capstone Farm Country Park are illustrated in **Figure 1** (and detailed in **Appendix 1**) which also provides context for the site location. Whilst there are a significant number, the largest of these is Luton Banks/Barnfield Recreation Ground at 20 hectares. This highlights the considerable value of Capstone for landscape, ecology and recreation in the context of the Medway towns.

#### **Community Centres**

Lordswood Community healthy living centre  
White Road Community Centre  
Hook Meadow Community Centre

#### **Schools**

Hempstead Junior School  
Wayfield Community, Primary and Nursery School  
Horsted Infant and Junior  
Lordwood Junior  
Lordswood infant  
Kingfisher  
Luton Junior School  
Luton Infant School  
Greenacre School

Chatham South School  
Chatham Grammar School for Boys  
Chatham Grammar School for Girls

**Religious centres**

Christ Church, Luton  
The Church of Christ the King  
St Davids Church  
Lordswood Fellowship Centre  
New life community church  
Kent Islamic Centre Mosque  
Masjid-ul-Abraar Mosque

**Other**

Youth hostel – located opposite the main entrance to the park  
Ski centre – located at the bottom of Drow Hill entrance to the park  
Lordswood Leisure Centre

Further details on all institutions can also be found on MOLE – Medway Organisation List for Everyone on the Medway Council website [www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk)

## **Section 2 Policy Context**

### **2.1 Management Plan Policy Drivers**

The increasing concern with Central Government for the future of parks and open spaces is reflected in more than a decade of policy making. A number of discussion papers and conferences have focused attention on the state and importance of urban parks and green spaces for the health of individuals and communities.

The following national, regional and local policy documents have been reviewed and consulted during the drafting of this management plan – further details on key documents can be found in **Appendix 2** of this Management and Maintenance Plan:

#### **National**

Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS 9), ODPM, August 2005

Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15), DOE, September 1994

Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16), DOE, November 1990

Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG 17), ODPM, July 2002

Green Spaces, Better Places (DTLR, 2002)

Living Places - Cleaner, Safer, Greener (ODPM, October 2002)

Green Flag Award Scheme

Towards a Country Parks Renaissance (A report prepared for the Countryside Agency by the Urban Parks Forum and The Garden History Society 2004)

CABE- Grey to Green

#### **Regional**

Creating Sustainable Communities: Greening the Gateway- A Greenspace Strategy for Thames Gateway (ODPM, 2004)

Thames Gateway Interim Plan: Policy Framework (DCLG, November 2006)

New Things Happen: A Guide to the future Thames Gateway (CABE, November 2006)

GGKM Green Grid Cluster Study – Capstone Farm (2008)

Thames Gateway Core Vision

South East Plan

#### **Local**

Farrell Vision for Medway

The Community Plan – More to Medway 2007-10. Emerging 'Sustainable Communities Plan'

Medway Local Plan, Adopted May 2003

Medway Local Development Framework

Medway Community Safety Partnership Plan 2008-11

Transport - Medway Council's second Local Transport Plan 2 2006-2011

Emerging Local Transport Plan 3 priorities

Sport and Recreation- Sports Development Strategy 2005-2010

Rights of Way Improvement Plan (Medway Council. 2007)

Wildlife, Countryside and Open Space Strategy for Medway – 2008-2016 (Medway Council, 2008)



### **Section 3. Site Description**

#### **3.1 History of Capstone Farm Country Park**

The earliest reference to Capstone was in the Gillingham Chronicle which quotes the 'Records of the Keeper of the Peace', Rochester 1316. A reference of 1390 documents that Falco de Sharstead owned land in the area which would have in all likelihood included part of the area on which the park now stands. The land was held as part of Sharstead Manor until 1376 when Robert Belknapp was forced to give the manor to the Prior and Convent of Rochester to make amends to King Edward III for certain misdemeanours. The land then remained in the ownership of the church, latterly the Church Commissioners in Canterbury, until 1928. During this time the land was rented out to local farmers, including the Crittendens, but the woodlands were managed by the Church Commissioners.

Within the park stand the ruins of two cottages known as Upper Sharstead Farm (sometimes spelt Shawstead). The name may come from Sharstead – place of the shards – suggesting that it was a site where broken pieces of pottery were found or Shawstead – place in the woods. The latter is more likely. These cottages were occupied until 1950 when they were considered unsafe possibly because of bomb damage in 1941. A map dated 1657 shows it as a single house but by 1781 there were two houses on the same site.

The area which now contains the lake, and several of the fields further along Capstone Road were used for growing hops. Unlike other Kentish hop gardens which were picked by hoppers from London, the two main hop farms in this area were picked by local people from Luton, Chatham and Gillingham. The youth hostel and a building opposite the Drow Hill entrance to the park are both original oast houses which served these gardens.

Opposite the foot of the ski slope is a house set back from the road with a long avenue of rose arches. This house was owned by Mr John Harris, who was responsible for setting out the hop fields. He also made charcoal from local timber up in the Capstone woods to be used in the oast houses along Capstone Road. Charcoal was a big business in Kent because of all the oast houses and coppice woodlands like the ones we will see later were common.

In 1928 the land was sold to Chatham Council but continued to be leased to a local farmer until 1984 when it was opened as a Country Park. Part of the site continues to be farmed to this day by the Wills family who took on the agricultural tenancy in 1951. Prior to opening in 1984, the building which is now the Volunteer/Camping block was constructed and the lake created together with creation of car parks and roadways into the site. Freehold on part of the site was sold to create the riding stables/pet corner. The proposed budget for the site in its first year of operation including staffing was £12,670.

In 1985 the history of tipping on the Shawstead landfill site which started in 1937 came to an end with plans for establishment of new recreational space on the site by the early 1990s. The final stage of the first phase of the park's development came in 1986 with the construction of warden accommodation and lake toilet facility with refreshment kiosk. When the ski slope was opened on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1986 it was the longest artificial slope in Britain. Ironically it was closed again shortly after for a period of time because heavy snow fall made it unusable! In 1999 a dry toboggan run was added which, at 550m, is the longest in Britain.

Small scale investment took place in 1989 with the construction of the woodland play area on the site but by 1992-3 a wish to maximize the value of the park as a recreational and ecological space saw the production of a development plan and investment in the creation of a reptile garden, wildlife garden and horse routes. Car park refurbishment in 1995 was followed in 1996 by the creation of the lower play area, conversion of the farm oast house to a Youth Hostel facility and in 1997 the creation of a visitor centre and classroom facility from the wardens cottage and expansion of the lakeside catering facility.

In 2008, 10 years after the formation of Medway Council, Greening the Gateway Kent & Medway commissioned a series of landscape scale studies to secure positive future land and access management of areas of the Thames Gateway in North Kent. The Capstone-Bredhurst study reconfirmed the importance of Capstone Farm Country Park as a gateway to the Medway Towns and the North Downs and has seen an increased interest in the site for investment.

### **3.2 Anecdotal history**

An old smugglers' track existed from the shore beyond Gillingham across country, past Capstone and down to the Medway upstream from Rochester near Borstal to avoid the Customs Officers at Rochester. One old cottage in Capstone Road was traditionally known as the smuggler's cottage. When it was knocked down, a secret room was found but the owner never said what was found inside. Local rumour says it contained brandy casks.

A party of French prisoners of war escaped in this area while working in the woods of Capstone. They broke into the nearby Sharstead Manor House that night and stole jewellery and plate. When they were recaptured shortly afterwards they had not got the treasure. They said they had buried it in the woodland but unfortunately they either could not or would not find the spot. The prisoners were shot for escaping and the treasure has never been found.

It has been suggested based on documents which have now been destroyed that the farm was used by the army in the 16<sup>th</sup> century for cavalry manoeuvres. The horses were stabled along Capstone Road and grazed the fields. There is supposed to have been a signalling post on the hill which formed part of a warning chain to the Dockyard.

Individuals have reported seeing a white witch in the orchard car park practicing witchcraft using one of the picnic tables as an altar.

On June 6<sup>th</sup> 1951 two youths were shot at while walking near the rubbish tip. They called the police and a police van with a sergeant and two constables responded. The gunman fired at the police. As the Sergeant got out to walk towards the area where the gunman was, he crept round behind the van and shot Constable Baxter who was sitting in the van. The constable was rushed to St Bartholomew's Hospital but died the following day.

The gunman was identified as Alan Derek Poole, an army deserter and weapons fanatic who had been hiding out in the woods with two girls who had escaped from a remand home. After an extensive manhunt involving the police, army and naval personnel, Poole was surrounded at his parent's home in Symons Avenue, Chatham. During an exchange of gunfire he was shot dead by a police marksman.

### **3.3 Chronology**

**1376** – Land of Sharstead Manor once owned by Falco de Sharstead passes to Prior and Convent of Rochester from Robert Belknapp owing to misdemeanours. Church holds the land until 1928.

**16<sup>th</sup> century** – Beacon on the site for military warning and use for cavalry maneuvers

**1657** – Record of building on site of ruin of Sharstead Farm

**1781** – Site of Sharstead Farm ruin contains 2 buildings

**1928** – Chatham Council take ownership of the site but continuation of farming

**1937** – First record of tipping on Shawstead site

**1950** – Sharstead cottages abandoned

**1951** – Wills agricultural tenancy on the site first established - continues to this day

**1984** – Investment to create lake, volunteer block and car parking and opening of Country Park. Land for riding centre sold

**1985** – Shawstead tip closed

**1986** – Ski centre opened, wardens cottage built and catering outlet with toilets opened

**1989** – Construction of the 2 play areas on site

**1995** – Car park refurbishment

**1996** – Lower play area constructed, farm oast converted to Youth Hostel facility and revised agricultural tenancy holding

**1997** – Warden cottage converted into visitor centre and expansion of catering facilities

**2008** – GGKM Cluster Study published highlighting importance of Capstone as a Gateway to Medway Towns and the North Downs

**2010** – Refurbishment of the 2 play areas through Playbuilder funding

**2010** – Award of Green Flag

**2011** – Improvements and enhancements to visitor centre and site bridleway network.



### 3.4 Character Areas

**Figure 2** provides an aerial image of Capstone Farm Country Park and its surrounding area taken in 2008. **Figure 3** translates this aerial image into 11 character areas for the park which are described below and illustrate the diversity of the park from grassland meadow, coppice woodland, historic orchard, native scrubland and freshwater lake to play areas, informal activity spaces, bridleways, cycle tracks, and walking routes.

#### 1. Core Area

Situated at the northern end of the park, this area is the recreational centre for the site and is accessed through a car park on Capstone Road. The main car park has space for 85 cars and 3 coaches. An overflow parking area has capacity for a further 95 cars. A narrow tree screen borders the car park and on passing through this the rolling nature of the Capstone landscape greets the visitor. Remnant orchard trees still exist within the amenity grass areas but the core is dominated by the 1 acre artificial fishing lake managed in partnership with Medway Valley Fisheries around which a level surfaced path runs along which can be found interpretation panels, benches and waste bins. The lake has 18 fishing stances for general coarse fishing including 8 for disabled users of which a large level platform which provides 4 of these and is used for children's fishing teach-in events.

Walking anti-clockwise around the lake from the south-east corner, the eastern side is bordered by a tree screen separating the park from Capstone Road. A horse/pedestrian safeway runs through this screen and at its northern end is an entrance to the park off Capstone Road for non-vehicular traffic. The northern boundary is again formed by a tree screen with a fence providing additional delineation with residential property. Along the western edge of the lake is a wider strip of amenity grassland on a slope beyond which is Tangle Wood.

To the south west and overlooking the lake is the three-storey Visitor's Centre with a footprint of approximately 280m<sup>2</sup>. This centre contains a reception desk, interpretation boards, public toilets, ranger's offices and classroom space. The main interpretation space contains information on the park habitats and species together with a nest box camera and childrens game space. The building is fully accessible through the provision of an external ramp with automatic doors, and induction loop.





The centre is open 363 days per year (closed Christmas day and Boxing Day) from 10am-4:30pm. Visitor numbers to the centre average 15,000 people annually with visits being recorded through a counter on the centre main entrance. The centre currently costs approximately £66/m3 annually to operate. 60% of this cost is in staffing the centre 7 days/week. The lower level of the centre houses a boiler and storage space together with disabled toilets. A secure compound behind the centre provides for further storage and maintenance space.

This area also contains a small pond and wildlife garden both of which have been created in support of educational visits to the park.

Immediately south of the lake is a brick building which houses the catering concession for the park and toilet facilities.

A play area is situated to the south-east of the lake. The original play space was constructed in 1996 and is fenced to make it a dog free space. Through securing Playbuilder funding in 2009, the extent and quality of play provision is being enhanced in this area at present and was completed in Spring 2010. **Appendix 3** contains the design brief and schematic for this scheme based on results of public consultation.

The facilities of the core area result in it being the main area of the park used by families year round but in particular at weekends and school holiday periods. Based on car counter numbers, this area of the park receives approximately 55% of the annual 250,000 visitors to the site.

From the core, visitors can access the parks mountain bike trail together with a series of 3 walking trails of varying lengths. These walking routes together with the permissive bridle trail also link onto definitive rights of way and the wider countryside. An orienteering course for the park which is popular with school groups also starts from below the visitor centre.

## **2. Matthews Riding School**

Surrounding the core to the south, this land covering an area of 7.8 hectares was sold in 1984 for the establishment of a riding school. Today there are a number of redundant buildings and use is limited to equine livery. Several of the paddocks are unmanaged owing to their isolation from the main land holding. Within the main holding grass paddocks rise steeply above the buildings to the west with horse grazing managing these areas alongside additional work to control ragwort.

Permissive access is provided around this land holding on unsurfaced routes for both pedestrians and horses which ensures this change in land ownership does not restrict movement of people between areas of Council owned land. These routes also enable visitors to enjoy spectacular views down the Capstone Valley and across to Darland Banks.

## **3. Farm tenancy holding**

Established in 1951 the agricultural tenancy with the Wills family at Capstone has seen significant changes over its history and today the area is used for equine livery with some fields being managed as meadow grassland. All of the fields within the holding are on sloping ground facing either east or west. There is no public access to the 12 hectares of land held within the farm tenancy which again lies to the south of the park core but again public access north-south through the park is not compromised owing to presence of rights of way around the holding.

## **4. Meadow grassland**

The north-south running dry river valley within the park is managed primarily as wildflower meadow with grass paths mowed through these for public access. The meadows are cut for hay in August annually. Skylark and meadow pipit nest within the meadows of the park and the ongoing nutrient reduction on the ground arising from removal of cut material has resulted in pyramidal orchid being recorded in several meadow areas of the park indicating the potential to

restore chalk grassland flora on the site. The most northerly paddock is much wetter than the rest owing to being level in nature and sitting at the foot of the impermeable slopes of the landfill site and northern end of the valley. This area until recently only had intermittent management in small areas and as such small pockets of scrub have developed. Through sustaining management practice it is anticipated that chalk grassland flora will return to the character area as a whole. A programme of formal species surveying is to be established to monitor changes and in particular highlight any differences which exist in the wetland compared to other chalk meadows. The provision of benches along paths enables the visitor not only to rest following the strenuous valley climbing but also to enjoy spectacular views into Chatham. A programme of hedge planting has started around the edge of these fields to create additional habitat and in the long-term remove the need for replacement of timber fence lines. The signed walking, horse riding and cycling routes of the park pass around the outside of the meadows.



## **5. Shawstead landfill site**

At the western extremity of the park lies 12 hectares of flat meadow land with steeply sloping sides to the north and east with scrub vegetation. This area is the site of the Shawstead landfill site which was closed in 1984. Mown grass paths provide access to this land for pedestrians and the mountain bike trail also crosses a portion of the site making use of the slopes. Bee orchid has been recorded within the meadow grass on the plateau.

Beyond cutting of paths key management operations on the area relate to ensuring the sustainability of the site with respect to surrounding land use and groundwater water supplies. As part of its positive work in this respect Medway Council secured a DEFRA grant for 2009-10 to employ consultants to undertake further research on the site to inform possibly further remedial works in subsequent years and the outcome of this study will be included in a review of the MMP at the appropriate time.

Within the boundary shown for the Park a Civic Amenity site operates on the surface of the former landfill operation. This is fully secured from within the park and managed by the Waste Service team of Medway Council.

## 6. Ruin of Sharstead Farm

Dating back to at least the 1650s, this ruin was excavated in the 1990s by the Lower Medway Archaeological Research Group. Their report indicates that the cellar might predate the upper building. From finds made at the site it seems that the residents of the earlier house were quite well off but that, after it was divided into two houses, it was occupied by farm labourers.

As well as the houses, there were lavatories, a wash house, barn and a cattle shed. Rainwater from the roofs went into two large underground tanks. There is also supposed to be a deep well nearby from which water was drawn by horse drawn winch.

The site today is managed to keep it clear of vegetation so it can be viewed by the public but there is little interpretation on this historic feature of the park.

## 7. Reptile garden

Formed at the toe of the former landfill site, this 0.1 hectares area of rock and scrub was created on a easterly facing slope to provide habitat for reptiles. Today the area is managed to control scrub development and a programme of monitoring has identified the area has populations of grass snake, common lizard, slowworm and smooth snake.



## 8. Woodlands

Woodland blocks comprise a total of 7.6 hectares of the park area. The following provides a basic description of the woodland blocks labelled a-g on **Figure 3** with more information on management regimes being provided in **Appendix 4**. Monthly site safety inspections of the park take in all woodland blocks and consider the health of trees alongside access routes with response works being undertaken by Ranger Team.

The age and historic management of the woodland blocks all of which have seen coppicing operations means that spectacular bluebell and wood anemone ground flora appears every year in spring.

**a) Tangle Wood** on the western edge of the parks core covers an area of 0.5 hectares. This has been planted with hazel to create a variation in nature of woodland within the park and for use in educational activities. A small fenced area has been created within this woodland within which beehives are situated.



**b) Millenium Wood.** Covering an area of 0.6 hectares this woodland block was planted in 2 phases in 1997 and 2000 and contains mixed native species including ash, silver birch, blackthorn, spindle and beech. Management of these blocks ensures footpaths which run through the area are kept clear with long-term plan being to coppice in 2 sections leaving standards.

**c) Round Glade Wood** covers an area of 1.2 hectares and the long-term management seeks to maintain the area as oak high wood through coppicing chestnut blocks on an 8 year rotation and remove sycamore. This area has developed since 2007 as the Forest School base for the park and a type 1 surfaced path has been laid through the area to improve access. Path diversions are in place to encourage dog walkers to respect this woodland being designated as a dog free zone owing to use for education.

**d) Orchid Wood** on the western side of the valley has an area of 1.5 hectares and is managed as ancient woodland and woodland management work is solely concerned with ensuring safe public access and ensuring sycamore does not invade. The area is dominated by oak and ash standards.

**e) Drow Hill Wood** is the largest woodland block at 1.4 hectares and is managed as sweet chestnut coppice with standards with coppice operations being repeated on a 15 year cycle. A type 1 surfaced path runs through this woodland to improve access

**f) Capstone Wood** covers 1.9 hectares and is managed on a 15 year coppice rotation as sweet chestnut coppice in compartments with retained standards.

**g) Boundary Wood** is a narrow woodland belt of 0.5 hectares dominated by ash coppice stools on the southern boundary of the park which is being coppiced in 3 phases over successive years starting in 2008

## **9. Old orchard**

Remnant of the agricultural past of the park the old orchards cover 3 hectares. Grass paths provide access to these orchards and grass vegetation is managed as meadow. A project to restore the orchards is currently under development.

## **10. Drow Hill**

Owing to the topography of Capstone a second car park is provided in the southern portion of the

site at the top of Drow Hill to provide easier access to the open meadows and main woodland blocks. This car park has an area of 7000m<sup>2</sup> and space for 70 cars. Popular with dog walkers year round who want to access the large open spaces, this car park is also used by families accessing the upper dog free play area which was renewed in 2010 with Playbuilder investment (see **Appendix 3** for details).



## 11. Event space

Above the steep meadow landscape the park has a plateau area covering 10 hectares which has a toilet and shower block and event storage building on its edge. The provision of a camping field which can be hired adds a further attraction to the site. The plateau area is managed partly as meadow and partly as amenity grassland to balance ecological and recreation use of the space. Major events tend to be held later in the summer to enable the meadow to seed before cutting. Car parking for major events is in the sloping field on the eastern edge of the park and this compartment.



### **3.5 Landscape Features**

#### **Amenity Grass:**

Grass areas are closely mown on a regular basis, particularly around the core area, car parks and part of the event block.

#### **Meadows:**

The park contains extensive grass meadows on chalk in the dry river valley. These and other smaller areas are managed for biodiversity with a single cut taking place in late summer from which all arisings are removed to reduce nutrient.

#### **Scrubland/tree screens:**

Mature scrub made up of native species and is scattered throughout the site, lining footpaths and the slopes of the former landfill site. Management of scrub along paths is concerned with maintaining site lines and access along routes while that lining the landfill site forms part of the restoration landscaping carried out when this closed in 1985. Immature scrub in the wet meadow at the north end of the valley fields is cut on rotation to maintain structural diversity and open grassland.

#### **Trees/Woodland Areas:**

Woodland compartments are described above all have a programme of sycamore control in place alongside routine planned management operations. A programme of works is being developed to restore the old orchard.

#### **Lake and educational pond:**

The main lake has willow and reed beds along its bank the latter of which were planted to protect the liner but now add valuable habitat managed through rotational cutting on a 3 yearly basis. Vegetation on the northern end of the lake acts as a barrier to reduce disturbance to nesting birds and also reduce the risk of individuals falling in the deeper part of the lake.

The education pond by the visitor centre receives ad-hoc intervention management to limit the extent of duck weed on the surface.

### **3.6 Furniture:**

There are benches located throughout the park. The highest concentration is on the path around the lake in the core area. Further picnic tables are provided close to the play area in the Drow Hill area of the park. Park benches are provided at intervals around the valley meadows to enable visitors to stop and enjoy the views. A small scale programme of memorial bench donations has taken place but the preference has been for planting of memorial trees.

A phased programme of replacement of litter and dog waste bins is in progress to ensure that a consistent style exists across the park. These are located across the park and are emptied daily from April through September, and three times a week for the rest of the year.

### **3.7 Interpretation**

Both vehicle entrances to the park have large metal corporate entrance signs indicating to visitors that they are entering Capstone Farm Country Park. From the main car park a series of timber signs guide visitors to the cafe and visitor centre. Noticeboards around the core area and on the event building at Drow Hill provide information to visitors on forthcoming events and the management arrangements for the the lake. Waymarkers and interpretation panels are located at intervals around the park to guide visitors around cycle and walking trails. No pedestrian

entrances into the park have signage indicating you are entering the Country Park.

A programme of interpretation replacement and improvement is currently under development as part of the funding received from Local Transport Plan 2 and the Medway 2012 team. **Appendix 5** contains maps showing the walking and cycling routes to be promoted through this investment.

### **3.8 Infrastructure**

#### **Accessibility:**

There is a hard-surfaced car park with a total of 180 spaces in the core area accessed off Capstone Road. A further hard surfaced car park with 70 spaces is located at the top of Drow Hill. The main car park has designated parking for coaches and both car parks have well marked one way systems in operation to assist with traffic flows. All car parks are free and are open 363 days per year from 8:30-Dusk (5:00pm in winter)

The park has an extensive path network, including:

Approx. 800m of surfaced path (type 1 with dust)

Approx. 8000m of unsurfaced footpath

Approx. 5000m of unsurfaced bridleway / horse trail

Approx 3520m of mountain bike track

The features of the core area are linked by tarmac or type 1 with dust of around 2m in width and provide a high level of accessibility to all visitors including a ramp which zigzags to the visitor centre. Rolled gravel paths have been laid through Drow Hill and Round Glade woods to improve year round access to these for all visitors given the level topography of these woodland blocks. All other paths on the site are unsurfaced but maintained as part of the grounds maintenance contract for the site or by the Ranger Team to minimum standards to ensure access.

With regards access for all opportunities within Capstone Farm Country Park, the visitor centre has a disabled toilet and induction loop. There is disabled parking provision separate from the main car park adjacent to the cafe to facilitate access to the core area of the park. The topography of the core area and the surfaced footpaths in this area make this easily accessible. Barriers which have been installed to restrict motorbike access are of a design agreed by both the Medway Cycle Forum and the Medway Access Group. The Drow Hill area of the site has restricted accessibility largely as a result of the topography but more information could be provided to visitors on the nature of this part of the site to enable them to decide which parts they could access.

**Figure 4** shows the Rights of Way network to and through Capstone Farm Country Park together with entrances to the site. **Appendix 5** contains maps showing the walking and cycling routes within the park.

#### **Security:**

Capital funding was secured in 2007 to improve security of the site. Works which have been undertaken with this funding including the installation of CCTV cameras around the visitor centre and park core, provision of new gates at vehicle entrances to the site, and an integrated fire and intruder alarm system incorporating the cafe building and visitor centre.

#### **Utilities:**

The park has electricity and mains water supply to the visitor centre, cafe, and event block.

### Boundaries / Fencing:

The park contains approx. 13,000m of fencing primarily of post and rail type. The vehicle entrances are secured by metal gates and fencing. Wooden palisade fencing is provided around the core area and Drow Hill play area both of which have self-closing gates. The western boundary of the park around the closed landfill site is chainlink in nature. Parts of the southern boundary are protected by post and stockmesh fencing while other parts are indicated through vegetation buffers.

### Access:

There are 5 entrances into Capstone Farm Country Park. The park remains open to pedestrians at all times. Vehicular access to the park is controlled, with the gates to the Drow Hill and main visitor car parks closed after dark until 8.30am daily. All entrances are detailed below and shown on **Figure 4**.

| Map number | Description                                     | Type                                | Features                                                              |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1          | Footpath / horse track track north east of lake | Pedestrian, horse                   | Bollard to stop larger vehicles; horse trail access                   |
| 2          | Capstone Road Main Car Park                     | Pedestrian, Horse, Car, Cycle       | Access gates; horse trail; Site welcome sign and opening times        |
| 3          | Drow Hill car park                              | Vehicular, Pedestrian, Horse, Cycle | Site welcome sign including opening times; access gates; horse trail; |
| 4          | Ruin of Sharsted Farm                           | Pedestrian, Horse                   | Cycle barrier                                                         |
| 5          | South West of Shawstead tip                     | Pedestrian                          | Horse and cycle barriers                                              |

In addition to these formal entrances which cover the 4 sides of the park, users have created an informal entrance point at the point marked **6** on **Figure 4**. This crosses fields to come out onto Capstone Road opposite Luton Recreation Ground therefore negating the need to walk along Capstone Road from Luton. This route however has no legal designation or formal permissive rights in place.

### 3.9 Significance of the Park

The location, habitats and facilities of Capstone Farm Country Park make it a unique location creating a valuable tool for environmental education, conservation of species and landscape.

### Ecological Value:

Whilst the park has no statutory ecological status, its value is not to be underestimated and Natural England have recognised this in welcoming discussions to enter the site in agri-environment schemes to sustain and further enhance current management practices. Chalk grassland meadows, broadleaved woodland traditional orchard and hedgerows are national and local biodiversity action plan priority habitats while the standing open water is included in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats. Species of significance found on site include skylark, song thrush, and pipistrelle bat. Management of the site is undertaken to preserve current habitat diversity and associated species.



**Heritage Value:**

The key feature of value is the landscape itself as a traditionally farmed area. Current management ensures that this landscape does not decline but there are opportunities to restore traditional land management activities and diversify education programmes to reflect land management and man-made features on the landscape in particular the ruin of Sharstead Farm.

**Landscape and Access Value:**

The park offers opportunities for visitors to experience the landscape of the North Downs in a managed environment to enable them to gain confidence and a desire to explore open countryside. The location of the park lends itself to visitors accessing the downs as well as the towns visually and physically making it strategically important within the green infrastructure of Medway with resulting inclusion in the Medway green grid action plan. The park is designated as an 'Area of Local Landscape Importance', 'Country Park' and as open space to be protected within Medway's Local Plan. The level gradients and surfaced paths provided in the core provide accessibility for all while the steep slopes of the valleys provide a challenge to the most athletic. At all levels the park enables visitors to gain health benefits from physical exercise and mental stimulation.



**Part 2            Where do we want to get to?**

**Section 4        Vision**

**4.1 Vision**

The following vision for the park has been identified and agreed through analysis and discussion with stakeholders.

***Capstone Farm Country Park: Gateway to the Towns and Downs'***

*“Capstone Farm Country Park is unique in its location and facilities in Medway where the downs meet the towns. The park will offer an actively managed farm landscape in a safe, secure environment managed to the benefit of wildlife, community interaction, learning and recreation.*

*The Management and Maintenance Plan will enhance wildlife habitat, encouraging and preserving native flora and fauna. It will foster public interest and ownership through improved access, allowing the development of recreation, interpretation and education and training. It will foster improved consultation and liaison with support groups, the police and the local community.”*

## Section 5 Assessment and Analysis

### 5.1 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis

Meetings with the Capstone Park Volunteers, customer feedback forms and Ranger Team and stakeholder input has led to the production of the SWOT analysis below.

#### SWOT Analysis Capstone Farm Country Park

| Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Weaknesses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Variety of habitats and species</p> <p>Education and event programmes including Forest School</p> <p>The staff- welcoming and knowledgeable</p> <p>Free Parking</p> <p>Partnership working</p> <p>Equal access in core area to facilities</p> <p>Walking and cycling trails</p> <p>Active habitat management programme</p> <p>Safe and secure access</p> <p>Blend of landscape, wildlife and recreation</p> <p>Capstone Park Volunteers</p>                                 | <p>Public transport links and connection to Luton</p> <p>Marketing</p> <p>Formal species and visitor surveying</p> <p>On-site and visitor centre interpretation – ‘The Welcome’</p> <p>Degraded condition of Matthews Riding School which is perceived as being part of the park</p> <p>Condition of infrastructure and core features such as the visitor centre</p> |
| Opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Threats                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>Thames Gateway Parklands – connecting Towns and Downs through Green Grid</p> <p>Partnership working – multifunctional use for health, sport, events, education/training etc, joint marketing and creating a farmed landscape</p> <p>Community participation</p> <p>Sustainability – Woodland Enterprise Zone</p> <p>Visitor centre enhancement</p> <p>Audience Development Plan</p> <p>Volunteer ranger programme</p> <p>Higher Level Stewardship Agreement application</p> | <p>Failure to secure capital investment</p> <p>Revenue budget contraction</p> <p>Over popularity</p> <p>Anti-social behaviour</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## 5.2 Criteria based assessment

The following assesses site performance against Green Flag Award Judging Criteria to discuss the findings of the SWOT analysis in more detail and help identify the main issues and concerns confronting Capstone Farm Country Park, allowing for their resolution within the Action Plan.

### 5.2.1 “A Welcoming Place – physical access, intellectual access, visitor centre/ranger base”

#### Good and safe access:

The park is visited by 250,000 people annually (based on car counters) indicating the on-site facilities and landscapes are valued and that individuals feel access is appropriate and safe. Most people however access the park via private vehicle. There is no public transport access to the park so non-vehicular access is by public right of way on foot or horse. Links from the east and west of the park are present but presently the only formal walking route into the park from the north and south is along Capstone Road which is a narrow country lane used by commuters. The desire line access into the park cross-country from Luton Memorial Meadow should be formalised to overcome this issue through working with the landowner.

Movement and access throughout the site is primarily on foot, with the greatest concentration of visitors near the car parks. Cyclists use the mountain bike trail which has been created and horse riders use permissive and definitive bridleways.

Walking routes around the park are separated from horse and cycling routes and main vehicle access routes. Where horse and cycle routes are shared users are informed through signage.

#### Good signage to and around the park:

There is signage to the site in place along main roads. There is presently no signage for pedestrians to the park but there could be potential for this to be included on public rights of way signage

There are information panels around the site to inform visitors of where they are and the route of trails together with trail waymarkers. Outside of the core there is currently limited signage to connect areas and facilities of the park.

There is limited provision of information presently available to the visitor when they are on site in the way of interpretation panels and that which exists is dated in places.

#### Equal access for all members of the community:

The existing Visitor’s Centre which is used by 15,000 people annually allows disabled access and is equipped with a hearing induction loop. Dedicated disabled car parking spaces are available adjacent to the cafe. The lakeside walk is suitable for wheelchairs and access improvements have been made in the southern portion of the park where topography permits access for all. There is however a lack of information for visitors presently on potential barriers to access. In assessing the Playbuilder tender submissions, equality of access both to and the actual equipment provided formed part of qualitative analysis (**Appendix 3**).

There is adequate car parking on the site but access for families without access to a vehicle needs to be reviewed and improved either through provision of public transport or promotion of safe access routes into the park from surrounding areas.

## 5.2.2 “Healthy, Safe and Secure – personal safety and security, health and safety”

### Safe equipment and facilities:

Equipment is formally checked on a monthly basis as part of site safety inspections. Any defects are noted and scheduled for repair. The Playsafe system is presently used as an asset management system for play spaces in Medway. A phased roll-out of this for all Greenspace assets would make this system of safety inspection more efficient.

The play areas undergoes an annual independent inspection together with four weekly contract safety checks and daily cleanse as part of the grounds maintenance contract with Quadron Services. The existing lakeside play area has wetpour safety surfacing with play bark providing this in the Drow Hill play area. Neither play area currently contains detailed safety information in case of incident.

A non-skid surfacing has been applied to the bridge over the lake and this is inspected as part of monthly site safety inspections undertaken by Ranger staff. Safety signage is in place around the lake and life belts are provided in easily accessible locations. The lifebelts are checked on a daily basis

There is a tools inventory for the park, which is updated annually. The Ranger Team have received training to enable them to undertake basic maintenance of power tools. In the interests of health and safety and to ensure tools work efficiently, chainsaws and other power tools are sent for servicing on an annual basis.

**Appendix 6** provides copies of the suite of risk assessments for the site and activities/operations which take place within it. This also contains a copy of the Site Emergency Plan and example of site safety inspection record sheet.

### Personal Security in the park:

A postal survey sent to Medway Citizen’s Panel in March 2006 included questions about Medway’s parks and open spaces. The country parks scored highest, with 8 out of 10 respondents rating them as either good or very good. Respondents identified response times to and levels of vandalism and anti-social behaviour in parks as a major problem in Greenspaces generally.

There have been minor problems with anti-social behaviour in some sections of the park, these have included minor cases of vandalism. Fly tipping is problem in Shawstead Road beyond the boundaries of the park but this may discourage people from accessing the site from this side.

The site is patrolled by the Ranger Team from 08:30-17:00, 363 days of the year. The site is closed to vehicles on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Owing to car park opening hours extending to dusk, the site is locked by the Council Safer Communities team during summer months.

Work has been undertaken to ensure entrances are open and welcoming and monitoring of the Grounds Maintenance Contract with Quadron ensures that at least minimum specification requirements are maintained on footpaths and bridleways around the site to ensure routes do not become enclosed by dense vegetation.

There is extensive coverage of CCTV in the core area of the park which is monitored and recorded 24 hours a day.

### Dog ownership:

Dog owners are a strong and committed user group, making up the majority of current park visitors. Capstone Farm Country Park promotes responsible dog ownership inside the park

through the Ranger Team and site interpretation panels. The park includes dog-free play areas, and requires dogs to be under control so as not to disturb wildlife or other park users. The park is a 'poop-scoop zone'. Dog bins are emptied daily in summer and three times weekly in winter. There is signage to this effect in the park and information is included in the park pamphlet. All ranger staff are now trained in the legislation to issue fixed penalty notices for dog fouling and littering under the Environment Protection Act. Should issues with dog fouling arise within the park Greenspace Services have a FIDO machine which operates Wednesday-Sunday and can respond to issues and clear areas. This machine has a programmed route around sites in Medway including Capstone Farm Country Park

#### Appropriate provision of facilities:

No formal user survey has been undertaken at Capstone Farm Country Park beyond consultation on this MMP. It is therefore difficult to measure the levels of use, the demand for facilities within the park, and the view of the local community. Customer satisfaction surveys are available from the visitor centre and staff undertake a monthly programme of face to face contact to complete surveys. These are assessed and results displayed within the Visitor Centre. These have helped to inform this plan.

Facilities are adequate to cover the current levels of visitors the park receives and the play improvement projects will add to the quality of visitor experience. The addition of the mountain bike trail in 2008 maximises the use of the sites undulating topography and current promotion of walking and cycling routes which is taking place will promote use of the whole site.

#### Quality of facilities:

Facilities are monitored during monthly site safety inspections (**Appendix 6**). In addition to this, the Medway Council website includes an automated system for reporting on defects and condition of facilities within the Council's countryside and open spaces.

The toilets in the core area of the park are cleaned 7 days a week by contract and park staff respond to reported issues to ensure these are maintained to a safe and clean standard.

#### Health and Safety:

The Ranger Team complete monthly site safety inspection sheets for the site which look at all site assets together with infrastructure and trees. Works are prioritised to remedy any problems found. Accident recording takes place through a Council-wide paper-based system with management investigation and, if necessary, follow up by a health and safety officer. A schedule of risk assessments has been produced for park management and educational and event activities and these are updated annually or as circumstances change. Copies of these are included in **Appendix 6** together with information on the Medway Council Health and Safety Policy and local safety practices.

The annual staff training programme is prioritised to ensure all staff are appropriately trained in the use of all power tools/machinery.

To ensure child welfare the Council has a child protection policy which requires all staff and volunteers working alone with children to have a CRB check which is reviewed every 3 years.

Large events are licensed and prior to the event taking place a site visit is arranged with a member of the Health and Safety promotion team.

Fire alarms are tested on a weekly basis and emergency lighting monthly.

Power tools including chainsaws and brushcutters are serviced off site on an annual basis. Following each use items are to be cleaned down and any defects reported for repair.

Safety warning signs are in place and checked as part of ranger patrolling to ensure they are present and visible.

Contracts in place for play area inspection and maintenance of fire fighting equipment, boilers, fixed and portable electric appliances/cabling at a corporate level. Where contractors are called to undertake one-off/adhoc works insurance details and risk assessments are kept on file in the reception area of the visitor centre. A specification or brief is provided for all construction projects for quotation to be provided.

A Site Emergency Plan is in place and reviewed annually or as circumstances change. A copy is available for all staff at the visitors centre and is included in **Appendix 6**.

Medway Council operates a 24-hour emergency call out service maintained in operation 365 days of the year. Contact phone numbers and named personnel are made available to staff at all times to deal with emergencies arising relevant to grounds maintenance, facilities management, arboriculture, static play equipment and general repairs through information held at reception and the Countryside Manager.

As part of the Medway Council commitment to improving Health and Safety a comprehensive audit of Capstone Farm Country Park was undertaken in 2008 by Corporate Health and Safety. Recommendations arising from this have been acted upon as highlighted in **Appendix 6**.

### **5.2.3 “Well Maintained and Clean – grounds maintenance, landscape, standards of presentation”**

#### Litter and waste management:

Litter bins and dog bins are emptied daily from April through September, and three times per week for the rest of the year. This contractual emptying is supplemented by Ranger staff at peak times to ensure waste does not blow around the core area of the site. There is a commitment to get the site to EPA category B. Arisings from maintenance work are dealt with on site, either left in situ to decompose or removed for burning. Logs from coppice operations are either sold, used to supply firewood for Riverside Country Park woodburner or utilised for path edgings. Hay from meadow cutting is sold for animal feed.

The site has a dedicated recycling facility for all recyclable material produced by the Visitor Centre and the Café. The site is also a bring site for household recycling with this being situated in the main car park.

#### Grounds maintenance:

Grounds maintenance in Capstone Farm Country Park is undertaken by the Ranger Team and Quadron the Council's appointed Grounds Maintenance Contractor. These are considered separately below.

#### **Staff activities**

Staff led grounds maintenance is programmed as part of an Annual Works Programme made up of monthly work targets for rangers supplemented by volunteer support. These works are monitored during monthly site safety inspections, with reactive maintenance projects arising from problems or defects noted. A copy of the Annual Works Program for Capstone Farm Country Park 2009-10 is included within **Appendix 7**.

In addition to this, the Medway Council website includes an automated system for reporting on defects, condition and vegetation within the Council's parks and open spaces.

Landscape management at Capstone Farm Country Park is motivated by biodiversity and aims for maintaining a natural/semi-natural landscape. Ponds are managed for biodiversity and to

maintain balance of emergent and aquatic vegetation. Woodlands are managed by coppicing to maintain good structural diversity and ensure safe public access through them. Meadows are cut in late summer to encourage wildflowers and insects. Scrub is controlled, but retained to provide cover for small animals, nesting sites for birds and complete ecosystems for insects. Where retained this is coppiced to create a more diverse structure.

There is provisional sum allocation with the park cost centre of £11,000 for unscheduled maintenance activities which is used by the Ranger Team on specific improvement projects.

The Ranger Team also programme works for the Capstone Park Volunteers who run tasks every Tuesday and one Sunday every month. Details of volunteer activities are included in **Appendix 8**.

In 2008 a Countryside Ranger Charter was adopted by Medway Council to establish clear service standards. This details that offensive graffiti will be removed within 24 hours of notification and establishes that the site will be maintained to Grade B Standard under Environmental Protection Act categories. The site is litter picked daily with a 24 hour response time for flytipping. A full version of the Charter is included in **Appendix 9** together with details of core staff duties.

### **Quadron Services Ltd**

At present most grounds maintenance operations are undertaken by the Council's appointed grounds maintenance contractor Quadron and the park forms part of corporate grounds maintenance. The contract was awarded in April 2007 for a term of five years with an option to extend for a further two years subject to performance.

Grounds maintenance standards are monitored by the Ranger Team to ensure contract compliance with shortfalls addressed through the rectification and default procedure. The Countryside Manager attends the contract review meetings with Quadron to review performance.

The scheduled grounds maintenance budget for Capstone Farm Country Park is £28,087.89.

### Maintenance Plan

Maintenance tasks for Capstone Farm Country Park are placed into the following categories:

| Grounds Maintenance (Quadron)       | Non Grounds Maintenance (Rangers & Specialist Contractors) |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Playground Inspections              | Graffiti                                                   |
| Litter Cleansing                    | Tree Maintenance                                           |
| Grass Cutting                       | Toilet & Building Cleaning                                 |
| Bridlepath Maintenance              | Opening & Closing of Gates & Visitor Centre                |
| Hedges                              | Hard Landscaping                                           |
| Path Sweeping (Including Car Parks) | Recycling                                                  |
| FIDO cleansing                      | Habitat Surveys                                            |
|                                     | Site Inspections – Health and Safety                       |
|                                     | Emergency Call-Outs                                        |

A separate technical specification that details the Service Output Standards for the above



categories of maintenance is included within **Appendix 10** to this management and maintenance plan together with summary information on Grounds Maintenance Contract works in Capstone Farm Country Park.

#### Buildings and Infrastructure:

Maintenance of site boundaries is generally good as a result of issues being highlighted on safety inspections and resolved and through recent phased replacement. Over time it is intended that fencing within the park be replaced with hedgerows but phased replacement is still required in some areas in the short-term to allow hedgerows to become established. Closer working with the ski centre and riding school is required to enhance these boundaries both aesthetically and for security.

The footpath network sees heavy usage, particularly around the lake core. The park's footpaths are monitored as part of monthly site safety inspections, with any problems or necessary repairs noted and works scheduled to remedy the problem. The desire to improve surfaces has resulted in the park securing £100,000 through Local Transport Plan and 2012 teams of the Council to improve the network. A key issue is improving connecting between the core area of the park and Drow Hill through signage and surfacing.

Hard surface roadways are generally in good condition but investment is required to the Drow Hill driveway and car park surface which is potholing and path repairs are no longer effective.

The buildings on the site are inspected through a Property Management Agreement with Medway Council Design and Surveying team with actions being prioritised for funding from central finances. Whilst the building is safe and services function, its age is now leading to its external appearance deteriorating in quality requiring investment to improve the welcome.

Design and surveying also arrange for boiler servicing, fire alarm, fixed electrical testing and portable appliance testing at required periods. Problems with the building are reported to Design and Surveying for remedial action or passed direct to approved contractors.

Window cleaning takes place in accordance with a contract specification which is managed at corporate level. Sanitary bins within the toilets are emptied according to an agreed contract specification. The Medway Council Pest Control team under an internal Service Level Agreement manages Pest control issues.

Staff undertake weekly fire alarm testing and monthly emergency light testing. Fire extinguishers are tested annually under contract.

#### **5.2.4 “Sustainability –ecology/biodiversity, environmental management”**

##### Sustainability / Recycling:

The Visitor Centre and Café have dedicated paper and cardboard recycling facilities and cans and plastic from the visitor centre are recycled into the bring site in the main car park. Food waste from the visitor centre is composted in a bin in the wildlife garden by the visitor centre or added to the wormery both of which provide educational value together with improving sustainability. There is however an opportunity to expand recycling through the cafe. The new café catering specification requires use of crockery in place of cardboard plates and polystyrene mugs. The cafe has recently entered into supply arrangements with Fair Trade.

The park has become carbon neutral by offsetting on environmental projects delivered by co2balance.com. As part of any investment in the visitor centre, green technology should be incorporated into design, one major opportunity is biomass to replace the current fuel oil boiler system. The park has woodland resources which could support this and there is considerable woodland across Medway which could similarly be harvested as a local fuel source.

Meadow cutting generates significant arisings on an annual basis which are taken off site as hay for livestock feeding. Woodland management work arisings are either burnt on site, or brash chipped onto the surrounding area in a thin layer, with log removal for burning within the Riverside Country Park visitor centre or use by the timber industry for fencing where material is of a suitable age and quality. Logs are also used for footpath edging, fencing and forest school activities. Standing dead wood is retained where appropriate for lichen and fungi.

The Council is looking to develop a Woodland Enterprise Zone with other landowners in the area which would not only potentially fuel a biomass burner in the park but also provide all fencing materials.

In order to promote the sustainability of the Park, 75% of activities undertaken on foot or bike. A low capacity utility vehicle is used to transport materials around the site for tasks.

#### Pesticide/Peat Use:

There is no pesticide or peat use within the park.

#### Woodland Management:

**Appendix 4** provides information on the woodland management compartments which exist within the park. A generic policy is to control the spread of sycamore within woodlands to retain their current character. Outside of woodlands, site safety inspections include identification of dead limbs over paths in order to arrange removal of these. Should fungi appear on trees, specialist advice is sought with regards to the need for management works. Across the park, small quantities of dead wood are left in situ as eco-piles. Where it is safe to do so, standing dead wood is left in the park in order to encourage lichen and fungi.

### **5.2.5 “Conservation and Heritage – character, history, views, setting”**

#### Conservation of natural features, wildlife and flora:

There is no comprehensive ecological assessment of Capstone Farm Country Park. A programme of surveys is to be commenced in Spring 2010 and more comprehensive species information provided for visitors in the visitor centre.

Capstone Farm Country Park contains or is bordered by 5 of 28 Kent Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats being hedgerows, lowland calcareous grassland, standing open water, old orchard and ancient broadleaved woodland. Of these only the standing open water requires little management. The hedgerows, grassland and woodland areas are all presently in active and sustainable management regimes and options for improving the condition of the traditional orchard are being explored.

There is evidence of hedgelaying in the park and this is the preferred management regime in place of flailing to promote density of growth and therefore maximise wildlife value and stock control properties.

Information on woodland management is provided in **Appendix 4**. Where replanting takes place, stock is of local genetic nature and there is a commitment to using specimens grown in peat free conditions.

Management of the lake with Medway Valley Fisheries seeks to ensure a balance between weed and open water to maintain adequate oxygen levels. Reeds around the edge of the lake are managed on a rotational cutting basis and arisings composted.

At present grassland areas are managed through mechanised cutting in late summer and arisings removed. This takes nutrients out of the soil but options for grazing the land to make management more sustainable should be explored. Areas of scrub are managed to stop these

encroaching further into grassland areas while rotational coppicing of these ensures good structural diversity and dense cover for birds and mammals.

**Appendix 11** contains a list of bird, mammal and reptile National Biodiversity Action Plan Species which are resident in or pass through Capstone Farm Country Park. Management works within the Country Park follow best practice for habitats and consider potential impacts on these species.

Conservation of landscape features:

The Country Park falls within an Area of Local Landscape Importance (ALLI) as designated in the Medway Local Plan of 2003. Management of the park considers this designation through preserving the historic woodlands, orchards and open grassland which characterise this ALLI. Where practicable and safe to do so, the park is utilising planted hedgerows to form boundaries in the place of fencelines which will improve the landscape quality. The Capstone Park Volunteers are trained by the Ranger Team to undertake traditional skills including coppicing and hedgelaying to help ensure practices are both understood and can be sustained into the future. The volunteers and other parties who undertake works on site have a crucial role in helping to conserve the landscape alongside works undertaken by the Ranger Team.

Capstone Farm Country Park forms a central part of 1 link in the Medway Green Grid connecting Chatham town centre with the Downs. This strategic importance provides opportunities for investment in landscape protection alongside enhancing public access.



Conservation of buildings and structural features:

Within the publicly accessible areas of the park the ruin of Sharstead Farm is the only feature of local heritage interest. Work has been undertaken to remove vegetation from this and the structure is monitored to ensure stability of remnant features. There are opportunities to better interpret this feature for visitors to the park.

**5.2.6 Community Use and Involvement – user groups, community consultation, conflicts of interest, increasing the audience, sports and recreation, education**

Knowledge of user community, levels and patterns of use:

There is a lengthy group of stakeholders and interest groups associated with Capstone Farm Country Park, appropriate for its size and position as a strategic open space. These include:

| National            | Regional                             | Local                                    |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Environment Agency  | Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway | Medway Council                           |
| Natural England     | Kent Wildlife Trust                  | Wills Family                             |
| Forestry Commission | Kent Bat Group                       | Kent County Council                      |
|                     |                                      | Medway Countryside Forum                 |
|                     |                                      | Local RSPB Group                         |
|                     |                                      | Capstone Park Volunteers                 |
|                     |                                      | Medway Valley Fisheries                  |
|                     |                                      | Medway Bee Keepers                       |
|                     |                                      | Workers Educational Association (WEA)    |
|                     |                                      | School Work Experience Students          |
|                     |                                      | Medway Urban Parks and Greenspaces Forum |
|                     |                                      | Medway Tourism Association               |
|                     |                                      | Cubs and other youth organisations       |
|                     |                                      | Youth Hostel Association                 |
|                     |                                      | John Nike Leisure – Ski centre           |
|                     |                                      | Matthews Riding School                   |

Whilst the primary focus of the Capstone Park Volunteers (which has a membership of 24) is on practical site management tasks which they undertake every Tuesday and one Sunday every month this group also acts as an important conduit for issues to be flagged with the Ranger Team for action. **Appendix 8** includes copies of task lists for the Capstone Park Volunteers which are publicised in noticeboards around the park to encourage new members to join.

Specific discussions have taken place with the group as part of the evolution of this management plan and in particular with regards to the vision and aims of the park and corresponding action plan.

In addition to the information on the park which is obtained through the Capstone Park Volunteers, the Ranger Team are engaged in a programme of actively seeking feedback from visitors using User Survey forms a copy of which is contained within **Appendix 12**. Results from these are reviewed quarterly and information displayed in the visitor centre. These surveys have also helped to identify key issues for site management.

Whilst funding has been secured as a result of opportunities identified in the development of this management plan there is a need to bring together users, internal and external stakeholders to discuss larger development projects on the site in order to raise its profile.

#### Community involvement in management and development:

The Capstone Park Volunteers undertook 2,685 hours of volunteering in 2008-09 financial year. The group currently has 24 members from across the Medway towns demonstrating the wide ranging appeal of the site to the Medway community. The tasks undertaken by the group have a crucial role in managing the site to a high standard alongside Ranger and contractor activities. Engagement in the development of this management plan will ensure the group and wider community will have an active role in the development of the site through consultation both on specific projects and continuing engagement in development planning. A user forum could be trialled to highlight level of interest in regular meetings to discuss operational issues within the park outside of the discussion which can take place through task dates. The importance of the volunteer group is recognised in the Council providing the group with its own space in the building adjacent to the event field.

In addition to Capstone Park Volunteers, in the period April 2008- April 2009 a total of 412 hours of work experience activities were undertaken in the park which contributed to site management.

Whilst primarily intended for learning, Forest School activities, Junior ranger club, and the Capstone Survival Challenge event for families have seen groups undertake practical tasks including woodland management and hedge planting which not only help with site management but give the community greater ownership of the site infrastructure.

Information on events, volunteers and general site facts is provided to visitors through a quarterly site newsletter an example of which is in **Appendix 12**.

#### Provision for the community:

The café and core play area are well used by park visitors. The play area in Drow Hill is less well used but this will benefit from investment of Playbuilder funding and also improved connectivity of the north and south sections of the park.

Toilet facilities within the core area of the park are of reasonable quality and provide for families and are access for all compliant. Whilst there is toilets provided as part of the event block, these are only accessible during major events and by groups hiring the camping field. They are not open to the general public owing to concern for vandalism. As part of future development of the park this status should be reviewed particularly with greater use of the Drow Hill play area by families.

The visitor centre provides information on the park and 363 day opening ensures that visitors have access to park staff. Numbers of people accessing the centre average 15,000 annually indicating an opportunity for greater numbers. Engaging visitors in the development of this building will be crucial to ensuring increased uptake.

The classroom within the visitor centre is primarily used for schools particularly between March and end of July. It is also hired by internal Medway Council departments and community groups. Further work could be done to explore the potential for hiring out space for community events outside of peak educational periods beyond advertising on the Medway Council website. There is also the potential for this to form part of a residential skills training centre in conjunction with the youth hostel.

The event field is a considerable facility but is little used with the major events in 2009 being Kites Over Capstone and Race for Life. In 2010 a Sport Relief mile is planned for the park but there is scope for greater external use of this space. A constraint on this could be access as Drow Hill is a steep single carriageway road.

### **5.2.7 “Marketing Events and Education”**

#### Marketing:

The Medway Council website was updated in 2008 and has numerous links to information about Capstone Farm Country Park. Kent County Council also publicise Capstone Farm Country Park through their website.

Medway Council has produced a leaflet, Capstone Farm Country Park (Autumn 2008) which is distributed around visitor centres and libraries in Medway. The site and its events also feature in the 12,000 print run ‘Greenspaces – Your Guide To Our Events 2010’ and Medway Visitor Guide 2010. Major events are publicised through posters and press releases but more active press contact could take place for other events within the park. **Appendix 13** contains copies of marketing information for the park.

The site is also promoted through provision of brown tourist sites directing visitors to the park from the Hempstead Valley Shopping centre off the M2 and from Chatham Town Centre.

#### Provision of Information to users:

The Visitor Centre contains displays and printed material about the park, its habitats and wildlife. A reception desk is manned by a staff member or volunteer from 09:00-16:30, 363 days of the year.

A series of trails are under development within the park but there is a need to better inform users of the features of the site and in particular better connect north and south sections of the park.

There are a number of information panels around the park which are updated to inform visitors of forthcoming events and activities alongside the quarterly park newsletter.

#### Promotion of appropriate educational interpretation and information:

Greenspace Services delivers an annual programme of events and activities through the ‘Greenspaces – Your Guide To Our Events 2010’. Run from urban and country parks as well as countryside sites across Medway, the programme contains a wide variety of events from large festivals attracting more than 16,000 visitors to small arts and craft sessions for 20 children.

At Capstone Farm Country Park, park staff deliver over 50 events advertised in the “What’s On Guide”. The main headline event is the annual Kites over Capstone held in August/September that attracts audiences of up to 3,000 people. The park also hosts a Race for Life event annually with Cancer Research UK which over 2,000 ladies participate in. In 2010 a Sport Relief mile will

be hosted to further reflect the sporting potential of the site beyond the above and Medway and Maidstone Athletic Club hosting an annual Kent Cross-country league fixture in the park.



The park has started to innovate in delivery of smaller events using the facilities and features of the site. Together with traditional guided walks you can take a mountain bike tour of the site using the trail and the Forest School education programme has been evolved into a 24 hour Capstone Survival Challenge for families where you build your own shelter and cook your own meal. The fishing lake is utilised for events in the form of Childrens fishing teach-ins. Investigation into green tourism or adventure breaks could be considered with partners in the area including farmers, RSPB, Kent Wildlife Trust and Kent County Council. The combination of mountain biking, orienteering, a ski centre and nearby access to the River Medway could create an adventure break based in the Youth Hostel or as an extension to the survival challenge.

Capstone Farm Country Park continues to support the Medway Walking Festival and in 2009 co-ordinated bookings for walks. Building on this the site is being considered as a venue for healthy walk sessions.

The site has significant scope to expand its programme of events utilising the Visitor Centre as a hub and through further partnership working and site hire.

#### Education Activity:

Capstone Farm Country Park covers over 100 hectares of open countryside, encompassing a variety of habitats, including grassland, wetland, woodland and orchard. These provide a wealth of opportunities for hands-on learning for all ages.

Park facilities include:

An education room which can accommodate 50 people,

An established education programme,

Sampling equipment and worksheets,

Toilets,

Picnic areas,

Forest school programme,

Orienteering course

Capstone Farm Country Park was visited by 1,408 students from April – September 2009 with a further 539 children participating in Forest Schools activities between April 2008 – April 2009 students on guided visits with Rangers. In addition to this, there are an unknown number of self-led visits on site. These include groups from pre-school through to university level. Most school visits take place between April and the end July, with a steady decrease in visits up until Christmas. The Forest School programme runs year round however giving groups from schools weekly access to the outdoor classroom.

The park is also committed to providing at least 12 work experience placements annually – information on this is provided in **Appendix 14**.

### **5.2.8 Resources, Skills and Partnership Working**

#### Resources:

Capstone Farm Country Park is managed by Greenspaces and sits within the Ranger Services team which is headed up by a Ranger Services Manager. The structure overleaf shows staff that have a direct input into the management of the park. Park staff includes the following positions:

Ranger Manager x 1, Countryside Officer x 1, Countryside Rangers x4, Full-time receptionist x 1, Part-time receptionist x 1.

Park staff work on a shift system, providing a constant presence in the park from 08:30-17:00, 7 days a week, 363 days a year (the site is closed to vehicle traffic and the visitor centre facilities are closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day).

Full job descriptions for each post are included in **Appendix 15**

#### **Countryside Rangers fulfil the following job functions:**

Habitat management and improvement,

Wildlife monitoring and survey work,

Park maintenance,

Educational programmes for schools including Forest School,

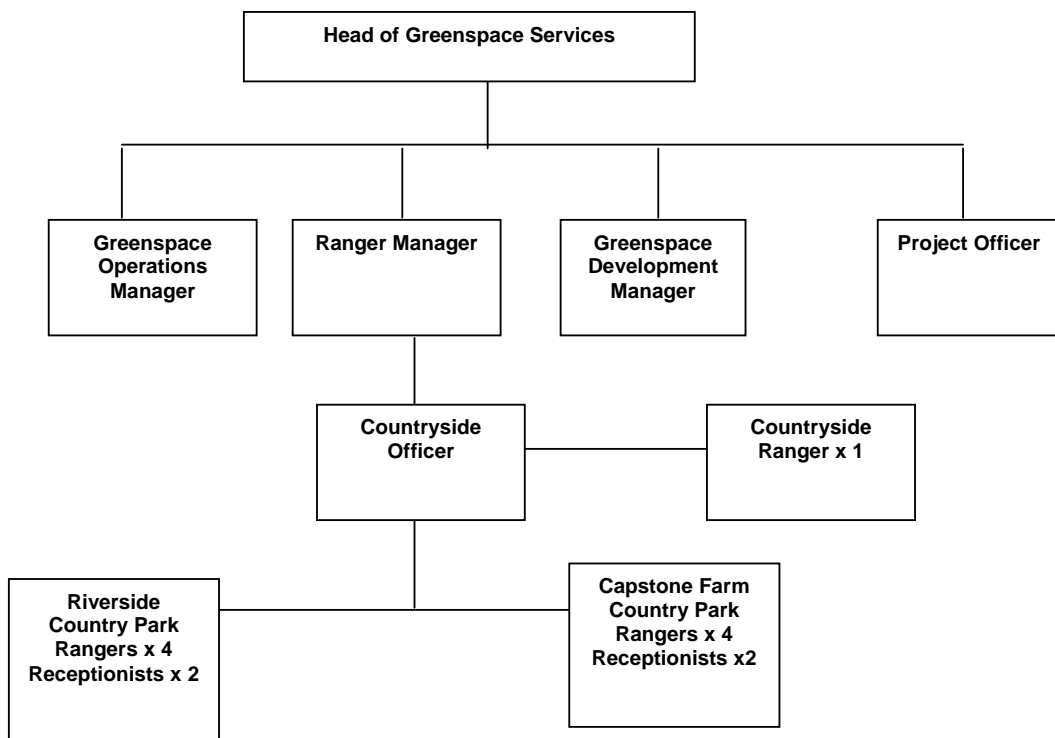
Maintaining a comprehensive programme of events,

Providing training for volunteers,

Patrolling the parks.



Management Structure:



The Countryside Officer co-ordinates the work programmes of the Ranger Service for both country parks and leads on delivery of specific projects. The Ranger Manager leads on management of the wider Ranger service and the monitoring and review of the Management and Maintenance Plan.

The Council resource for the park is supported by volunteer involvement and maintenance tasks delivered through the grounds maintenance contract. Volunteers perform practical on-site maintenance work. A volunteer programme is in place with tasks taking place on a weekly basis on a Tuesday and monthly basis on a Sunday. The Ranger Team also support at least 12 x 5 day work experience student placements annually. The park also provides opportunities for groups from the probation service to work on various projects again providing individuals with new skills and potentially building a greater interest in their local environment. The Countryside Project Officer oversees all work programming and ensures all staff are aware of who is to do what within the park in terms of contractors, volunteers or staff.

Partnership working:

The regional importance of the site as a Greenspace is reflected in Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway (GGKM) selecting the site and its surrounding area as one of eight Cluster studies they undertook in the North Kent gateway. **Appendix 16** contains a final copy of the document

which was produced by consultants engaged by GGKM following landscape surveys, desktop analysis and workshops with Medway Council departments, Maidstone Borough Council, local landowners, and Kent Wildlife Trust. The site has the potential to deliver a wide range of objectives for Medway Council and partners relating to health, education, play and biodiversity/sustainability. In the past 5 years partnership working has delivered improvements to the site but developing a Development Group for the site should be considered in order to take resolve accessibility to the site and delivery of on-site improvements.

#### Finance:

A budget summary for the park is overleaf

#### Expenditure Overview:

The Ranger Manager salary cost is currently split equally between Riverside and Capstone Farm Country Park cost centres. Allowing for this and 1/3 of the Countryside Officer salary, the total salary cost for the park is approximately £190,000

#### Income Generation:

##### Revenue

Currently, income generated on site, such as profits from the café, are not ring fenced for use at Capstone Farm Country Park and is used to off-set the large core revenue funding provided by the Council for the site.

The park currently generates income from room and field hire for meetings, education activities, events, and caravan clubs. There is an agreement with Medway Valley Fisheries for the lake which pays £5,000 annually to the Council and the Council collects day ticket income. Guided walks, talks, and children's events, together with education visits generate the bulk of the non-rent based income for the site. Council sets fees and charges annually with the minimum level of increase sought being 5%. The Draft Greenspace Event Strategy highlights a need to formally benchmark all fees and charges to ensure these are appropriate. The café lease has just been market tested to ensure best value and let for a further 5 years.

Based on a benchmarking exercise which Bedfordshire County Council ran in 2006-07, Capstone Farm Country Park is in the minority in not charging for car parking given the facilities on offer. Even a small charge based on 250,000 visitors annually would generate considerable income to potentially reduce the Council subsidy of the site or invest in facilities and this option is currently being discussed as part of the Council's annual budget setting process.

Discussions are currently taking place with Natural England with regards to Higher Level Stewardship funding for the site both for habitat management works and potentially to support facility and event development. As part of this support will be sought for establishing a Woodland Enterprise Zone at Capstone Farm Country Park part of which could see current fuel oil heating for the site be replaced with biomass burner for both heat and power.

##### Capital

A total of £210,000 capital and external grant aid has been secured to deliver park improvements during the current and next financial year.

The importance of the park both as a local recreational resource and regional Greenspace will continue to provide opportunities for internal and external funding. Examples of this are Local Transport Plan 3 which is being drafted at present and HCA Single Conversation – in both cases proposals have been presented for investment in Capstone and connectivity to its wider environments based on GGKM cluster and the findings of this MMP.

| Capstone Farm Country Park – Budget Summary                                                                                                             |          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Major locally controlled spend categories                                                                                                               |          |
| Staff - £190,000                                                                                                                                        |          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-time receptionist x 1</li> <li>• Part-time receptionist x 1</li> <li>• Countryside Rangers x 4</li> </ul> |          |
| Building Maintenance - £2,100                                                                                                                           |          |
| Service Costs - £35,000                                                                                                                                 |          |
| Water, Fuel oil, Electric, Building cleaning, Telephone                                                                                                 |          |
| Vehicle hire / Fuel - £8,000                                                                                                                            |          |
| Office Equipment - £1,000                                                                                                                               |          |
| Stationary and photocopier                                                                                                                              |          |
| Grounds Maintenance - £11,000                                                                                                                           |          |
| Education and Events - £2,000                                                                                                                           |          |
| Main events now taken from a Greenspace central budget – local childrens events only                                                                    |          |
| Printing and Advertising                                                                                                                                |          |
| Consultants - £1,600                                                                                                                                    |          |
| Total Income:                                                                                                                                           | £27,000  |
| Total Expenditure:                                                                                                                                      | £296,000 |
| Major Locally Controlled Income Targets                                                                                                                 |          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Café and farm tenancy - £11,000</li> </ul>                                                                     |          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events and education - £7,400</li> </ul>                                                                       |          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility hire - £7,600</li> </ul>                                                                              |          |

## **Section 6: Aims**

To drive delivery of the Vision, Green Flag Award Criteria have been adopted and this Management and Maintenance plan will be delivered against the following eight aims:

- 1 Positively welcome people to the park, in terms of physical, intellectual and social access.
- 2 Ensure a healthy, safe and secure experience for park users.
- 3 Provide a well-maintained and clean park.
- 4 Improve the environmental quality and sustainability of practices carried out in the park.
- 5 Maintain and develop the ecological and conservation value of the full range of wildlife habitats and landscape value of the park, whilst ensuring access and provision for park users.
- 6 Provide opportunities to increase community use and involvement, particularly within the parks management and development, through events, education and interpretation.
- 7 Ensure effective promotion of the park as a strategic green space and as a community resource.
- 8 Ensure all those involved in the management and maintenance of Capstone Farm Country Park effectively use the Management Plan as a working document.

### Part 3 How Will We Get There?

#### Section 7: Action Plan

Based on findings from the analysis, the following action plan identifies the management objectives, how they will be achieved and who is responsible for achieving them. The programme will be reviewed annually, and Action Plan Tasks monitored to ensure timescales have been achieved. Key location-specific projects are cross-referenced with a number to **Figure 5** (x) to indicate where within the park they will occur.

The years indicated in the timescale column are calendar years:

Year 1: 1 January - 31December 2010

Year 2: 1 January - 31December 2011

Year 3: 1 January - 31December 2012

Year 4: 1 January - 31December 2013

Year 5: 1 January - 31December 2014

#### Action Plan

| 1. A Welcoming Place                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |               |       |                                                            |                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Aim: Positively welcome people to the park, in terms of physical, intellectual and social Access                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |               |       |                                                            |                                    |
| Objective                                                                                                                                            | Action Plan Task                                                                                                                                                                                   | Timescale     | Lead  | Resources                                                  | Performance to date (January 2011) |
| Maintain interpretative and directional signage ensuring clear information is available and easily interpreted (with contact details, byelaws, etc.) | Commission and install new/additonal site entrance boards and panels to help guide visitors around the site including safety information                                                           | Year 1 (2010) | CFCPR | £100,000 (capiatl Funding- secured as part of LTP funding) | Project Completed                  |
|                                                                                                                                                      | Update information when necessary and ensure consistency in design- information on forthcoming events put up no later than 2 weeks before the event and remove within 48 hours of the event ending | Year 1 (2010) | CFCPR | Annual Revenue Budget                                      | Ongoing, corporate responsibility  |
| Improve the 2 site car parks                                                                                                                         | Relandscape main car park                                                                                                                                                                          | Year 3 (2012) | GDM   | £20,000 (Capital                                           |                                    |

|                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                    |               |     |                                                            |                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| ensuring pedestrian safety and accessibility for all and maintaining the countryside setting and appearance as much as possible. | in core area (1)                                                                                                   |               |     | Funding- unsecured)                                        |                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                  | Upgrade Drow Hill and associated car park (2)                                                                      | Year 2 (2011) | GDM | £50,000 (capital funding-unsecure)                         |                                                         |
| Improve access and connections to and through the park running North-South                                                       | Instal signage, and surface routes from Core Area to Drow Hill (3)                                                 | Year 1 (2010) | CO  | £100,000 (capital Funding- secured as part of LTP funding) | Completed                                               |
|                                                                                                                                  | Work with landowner to formalise link and entrance from Luton Memorial Meadow (4)                                  | Year 2 (2011) | GDM | To be Quantified                                           |                                                         |
| Improve non-vehicular access to Capstone Farm Country Park                                                                       | Develop Management partnership within Medway Council and neighbouring landowners to tackle barriers to access      | Year 2 (2011) | GDM | Officer time                                               |                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                  | Develop public transport connections to Capstone Farm Country Park                                                 | Ongoing       |     | To be quantified and funding through LTP                   |                                                         |
|                                                                                                                                  | Investigate additional text on PROW signage to signpost Capstone Farm Country Park                                 | Year 1 (2010) | RM  |                                                            | PROW team have upgraded signs to statutory requirements |
| Improve access opportunities for range of recreational purposes                                                                  | complete access improvement project including interpretation for route to connect the site facilities and features | Year 1 (2010) | CO  | £100,000 (Capital Funding- Secured as part of LTP funding) | Completed                                               |
| Ensure that the park is accessible to all and act upon                                                                           | Provide accessibility information as part of                                                                       | Year 1 (2010) | CO  | £100,000 (Capital Funding- Secured as                      | Completed                                               |

|               |                |  |  |                                                          |  |
|---------------|----------------|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------|--|
| the DDA (1995 | interpretation |  |  | part of LTP funding)<br>Update through<br>revenue budget |  |
|---------------|----------------|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------|--|

| 2. Healthy, Safe and Secure                                      |                                                                                                               |                                                                   |               |                                                      |                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Aim: Ensure a healthy, safe and secure experience for park users |                                                                                                               |                                                                   |               |                                                      |                                  |
| Objective                                                        | Action Plan Task                                                                                              | Timescale                                                         | Lead          | Resources                                            | Performance to Date (January 11) |
| Ensure all facilities and equipment are safe to use              | Deliver Playbuilder Playground improvements Programme including play area signage (5)                         | Year 1 (2010)                                                     | GDO           | £110,000 (capital funding- DCSF Playbuilder secured) | Completed                        |
|                                                                  | Monitor all footpaths as part of patrolling to ensure contract specification is met to retain open sites line | Ongoing                                                           | CFCPR         | Officer time                                         |                                  |
|                                                                  | Undertake assessment of risks with ruin of Sharsted Farm building and plan remedial works                     | Year 1 (2010)                                                     | CFCPR         | Revenue Budget                                       | Completed                        |
|                                                                  | Develop a management partnership with neighbours to improve site boundaries                                   | Year 1 (2010)                                                     | GDM           | Officer time                                         | Ongoing securing of boundaries   |
|                                                                  | Roll-out playsafe system to support monitoring of asset condition during site safety inspections              | Year 2 (2011)                                                     | RM            | Officer time and revenue Budget                      |                                  |
|                                                                  | Encourage responsible dog ownership and good practice in the park                                             | Include information about dog control and byelaws on park signage | Year 1 (2010) | CFCPR                                                | Officer time                     |
| Formally adopt complete set of byelaws for the park to           |                                                                                                               | Year 3 (2012)                                                     | RM            | Officer time                                         |                                  |



|                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                        |               |       |                |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------|----------------|-----------|
|                                                                                                                                              | enforce responsible behaviour                                                                                                                                                          |               |       |                |           |
|                                                                                                                                              | Resource FIDO operation to clear hot spots and inform education/enforcement activities                                                                                                 | Ongoing       | CO    | Service budget |           |
| Have procedures in place for emergencies, fire procedures and first aid                                                                      | Review staff emergency action plan training                                                                                                                                            | Year 1 (2010) | CPO   | Officer time   | Completed |
|                                                                                                                                              | Undertake annual review of Emergency Plan and all risks assessments for Capstone Farm Country Park                                                                                     | Ongoing       | RM    | Officer time   |           |
| Increase the sense of safety and security in the park                                                                                        | Meet standards set out in Ranger Charter                                                                                                                                               | Ongoing       | RM    | Officer time   |           |
| Promote the role that Capstone Farm Country Park plays in improving the quality of life of local residents (e.g. health/contact with nature) | Develop Friends group to support increased participation in the development of the site and explore opportunities to promote healthy activities through formal and informal programmes | Year 2 (2011) | CFCPR | Officer Time   |           |

| 3. Well Maintained and Clean                                                    |                                                                                                                              |               |      |                  |                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Aim: Provide a well-maintained and clean park                                   |                                                                                                                              |               |      |                  |                                  |
| Objective                                                                       | Action Plan Task                                                                                                             | Timescale     | Lead | Resources        | Performance to Date (January 11) |
| Ensure the park is kept clean and litter free                                   | All parties involved in the management of the park to be aware of and seek to attain EPA B grade for litter                  | Ongoing       | CO   | Officer Time     |                                  |
| Grounds Maintenance to be delivered to the highest standard throughout the Park | Ranger staff to be fully informed of Grounds Maintenance Contract Requirements and to monitor reporting issues for attention | Ongoing       | Co   | Officer Time     |                                  |
| Ensure buildings are maintained to a high quality                               | Carry out all maintenance in accordance with the maintenance schedule                                                        | Ongoing       | RS   | Service Budget   |                                  |
|                                                                                 | Develop project to invest in the Visitor Centre and event block to create eco-pods with biomass heat/power                   | Year 3 (2012) | GDM  | To be Quantified |                                  |
| Maintain consistency in site furniture design                                   | Adopt a design code for Park Furniture                                                                                       | Ongoing       | CO   | Service Budget   |                                  |
| Secure and maintain Green Flag Award for Park                                   | Complete Application                                                                                                         | Annual        | RM   | Officer Time     |                                  |
| Complete all site management tasks as outlined in the site work                 | Produce annual work programme                                                                                                | Ongoing       | RM   | Officer Time     |                                  |

programme

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| 4. Sustainability                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                     |                       |       |                                      |                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Aim: Improve the environmental quality and sustainability of practices carried out in the park.                   |                                                                                                                     |                       |       |                                      |                                  |
| Objective                                                                                                         | Action Plan Task                                                                                                    | Timescale             | Lead  | Resources                            | Performance to Date (January 11) |
| Minimise use of pesticides                                                                                        | Target zero pesticide use and adopted for the site                                                                  | Ongoing               | RM    | Service Budget                       |                                  |
| Encourage Waste Recycling                                                                                         | Establish Recycling Facilities                                                                                      | Ongoing               | CFCPR | Service Budget                       |                                  |
|                                                                                                                   | Develop interpretation about benefits of recycling for park users                                                   | Year 1 (2010)         | CFCPR | Officer time & Waste Contract Budget | Ongoing                          |
| Promote wildlife protection, biodiversity management and environmental education/awareness/ community involvement | Devise and undertake a programme of species surveys to inform visitors and review of management regimes             | Year 1 (2010) onwards | CFCPR | Officer time                         | Ongoing                          |
| Ensure Sustainability in management                                                                               | Investigate employing environmental management systems (EMAS)                                                       | Year 5 (2012)         | GDO   | Development Budget (unsecured)       |                                  |
|                                                                                                                   | Investigate opportunities for transforming the visitor center and event block into eco-pods for learning (6)        | Year 3 (2012)         | GDM   | To be quantified                     |                                  |
|                                                                                                                   | Investigate opportunities for establishing a Woodland Enterprise Zone in Medway based at Capstone Farm Country Park | Year 2 (2011)         | GDM   | To be Quantified                     |                                  |
|                                                                                                                   | Develop partnership to                                                                                              | Year 3 (2012)         | GDM   | To be quantified                     |                                  |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                          |         |    |                             |  |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----|-----------------------------|--|
|  | secure sustainable management of meadow areas (7)                                                                                                                        |         |    |                             |  |
|  | Acquire materials for site works from sustainable sources eg:<br><br>Forestry commission certified timber<br><br>Stone from local suppliers with an environmental policy | Ongoing | CO | Revenue and capital budgets |  |

| 5. Conservation and Heritage                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                          |                  |       |                |                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Aim: Maintain and develop the ecological and conservation value of the full range of wildlife habitats, historic and landscape value of the park, whilst ensuring access and provision for park users. |                                                                                                                                          |                  |       |                |                                  |
| Objective                                                                                                                                                                                              | Action Plan Task                                                                                                                         | Timescale        | Lead  | Resources      | Performance to date (January 11) |
| Maximise opportunities for ecological enhancement                                                                                                                                                      | Review management of old orchard habitat and develop plan for enhancement                                                                | Year 1 (2010)    | CFCPR | Officer time   | Brogdale report received         |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Continue phased planting of hedgerows                                                                                                    | Ongoing          | CFCPR | Service Budget |                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Target removal of sycamore and other non-native species                                                                                  | Ongoing          | CFCPR | Officer Time   |                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Undertake management works to control scrub in reptile garden to retain balance of cover and open ground.                                | Ongoing          | CFCPR | Officer Time   |                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Undertake woodland management works as detailed in <b>Appendix 4</b>                                                                     | Ongoing          | CFCPR | Officer Time   |                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Establish programme of monitoring works for reptiles, bird and plant species within the park including ongoing surveying of reptile area | Year 1 - Ongoing | CFCPR | Officer time   | Ongoing                          |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Continue meadow management operations pending grazing feasibility                                                                        | Ongoing          | CO    | Service Budget |                                  |

|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                      |               |       |                                |         |
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| Actively manage water bodies                             | Monitor pond condition and undertake works as necessary to preserve and enhance                                                                      | Ongoing       | CFCPR | Officer Time & Service Budgets |         |
| Protect the fabric and historical integrity of the park. | Provide interpretation for the ruin of Sharstead Farm as part of history walk for the park and monitor fabric as part of site safety inspections (8) | Ongoing       | CO    | Service budget                 |         |
| Protect the landscape of the Capstone Valley             | Establish management partnership for the park and wider area to secure positive access and land management                                           | Year 1 (2010) | GDM   | Officer Time                   | Ongoing |
|                                                          | Complete assessment of closed Shawstead landfill site and consider any required future management in context of the valley landscape                 | Year 2 (2011) | GDM   | To be quantified               |         |

| 6. Community Use and Involvement                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                          |                             |       |                                              |                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Aim: Provide opportunities to increase community use and involvement particularly within the parks management and development through events, education and interpretation. |                                                                                                          |                             |       |                                              |                                     |
| Objective                                                                                                                                                                   | Action Plan Task                                                                                         | Timescale                   | Lead  | Resources                                    | Performance to date<br>(January 11) |
| Assess the number and profile of users, the pattern of use and user perception of safety and enjoyment.                                                                     | Undertake Visitor Satisfaction Surveys.                                                                  | Monthly                     | CFCPR | Officer Time                                 |                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                             | Consult on and review access to Event Block toilet facilities and staffing of this area more permanently | Year 1<br>(2010)            | RM    | To be quantified                             | Ongoing                             |
| Increase Community Involvement in the park.                                                                                                                                 | Establish a Volunteer Ranger Programme                                                                   | Year 2<br>(2011)            | CFCPR | Officer Time                                 |                                     |
|                                                                                                                                                                             | Produce quarterly newsletter                                                                             | Year 1<br>(2010)<br>onwards | CFCPR | Officer Time/Service Budget                  | Ongoing                             |
| Expand Educational Use of the Site                                                                                                                                          | Develop self-teaching packs for the park.                                                                | Year 3<br>(2013)            | CFCPR | To Be Quantified                             |                                     |
| Expand visitor experience opportunities                                                                                                                                     | Develop Interpretation Framework for the park.                                                           | Year 1<br>(2010)            | CFCPR | £100,000 capital secured from LTP to deliver | Ongoing                             |



|  |                                                                                 |               |     |                  |  |
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|  | Explore opportunities for residential events and training with the Youth Hostel | Year 3 (2012) | GDM | To Be Quantified |  |
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| 7. Marketing and Events                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                 |                       |       |                               |                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Aim: Ensure effective promotion of the park as a strategic green space and as a community resource                 |                                                                                                                                 |                       |       |                               |                                             |
| Objective                                                                                                          | Action Plan Task                                                                                                                | Timescale             | Lead  | Resources                     | Performance to date (January 11)            |
| Ensure information is available and kept up to date (activities, features, ways to get involved)                   | Produce a quarterly newsletter on park activities and developments                                                              | Year 1 (2010) onwards | CFCPR | Officer Time & Service Budget | Ongoing                                     |
|                                                                                                                    | Provide monthly 'what you can see' information in the visitor centre and an annual species list for the park                    | Ongoing               | CFCPR | Officer Time                  |                                             |
| Promote the park as part of the wider network of countryside and open spaces                                       | Development of a strategic partnership with key stakeholders.                                                                   | Year 2 (2011) onwards | GDM   | Officer Time                  |                                             |
| Develop a programme of Headline Events and income generating opportunities to increase and diversify usage levels. | Engage internal event team to develop event programme and review infrastructure requirements to facilitate event delivery       | Year 1 (2010)         | CO/CM | To be quantified              | Completed signed to Service Level Agreement |
| Increase educational use of the park                                                                               | Review market and target schools for Forest Schools. Seek external funding to reduce cost of visit to promote year round uptake | Year 2 (2011) onwards | RM    | Officer time                  |                                             |
| Promotion of unique park events to groups                                                                          | Undertake feasibility study into establishment of 'Survival Challenge' for family groups or                                     | Year 2 (2011)         | CFCPR | Officer time                  |                                             |

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|  | businesses for team building |  |  |  |  |
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| 8. Management                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                   |                           |      |              |                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Aim: Ensure all those involved in the management and maintenance of Capstone Farm Country Park effectively use the Management Plan as a working document. |                                                                                                                                                   |                           |      |              |                                  |
| Objective                                                                                                                                                 | Action Plan Task                                                                                                                                  | Timescale                 | Lead | Resources    | Performance to date (January 11) |
| Ensure all those involved in the management and maintenance of Capstone Farm Country Park effectively use the Management Plan as a working document.      | Make copy available in Visitor Centre                                                                                                             | Year 1 (2010)             | RM   | Officer Time | Completed                        |
|                                                                                                                                                           | Ensure other on-site staff have copies                                                                                                            | Year 1 (2010)             | RM   | Officer Time | Completed                        |
|                                                                                                                                                           | Produce annual report on progress                                                                                                                 | Year 1 (2010)<br>Annually | RM   | Officer Time | Completed                        |
| Ensure effective monitoring of the Management Plan                                                                                                        | Implement monitoring process by meetings between contractor / client / user groups thereby continually reviewing and updating the Management Plan | Ongoing                   | CO   | Officer Time |                                  |

Key to lead

RM Ranger Manager

CO Countryside Project Officer

GDM Greenspace Development Manager

CFCPR Capstone Farm Country Park Ranger

GDO Greenspace Development Officer

RS Reception Staff

## **Part 4            How Will We Know When We Have Arrived?**

### **Section 8:        Monitoring and review**

#### **8.1 Introduction:**

This Management and Maintenance Plan (MMP) includes an action plan which sets out a series of objectives and specific actions, in addition to the aspiration statements contained in section 6 which have informed the action plan. The Ranger Team will be responsible for the delivery of this plan under the leadership of the Ranger Manager. The purpose of this section is to set up the principles of the monitoring and review mechanisms and identify the range of issues, which need to be considered in relation to both monitoring and evaluation – key components to the success of the plan.

#### **8.2 Overview:**

In order to establish an appropriate mechanism for the monitoring and review of the Management and Maintenance Plan for Capstone Farm Country Park, it is necessary to establish the most important considerations for the plan and those that will be indicators of its success, or failure.

There are four broad indicators which can be measured in a variety of ways and which give a sound footing for the development of a monitoring and review methodology. These are:

- Achievement of identified outputs
- Cost and cost management (budgets)
- Quality measures
- Timescale and programme delivery

#### **8.3 Implementation:**

Monitoring and evaluation activities will take place on a daily, weekly, bi-monthly and annual basis. Monitoring and evaluation will take place in two ways.

Certain routine works will be assessed daily and weekly as part of the contract specification to ensure that the standard meets that set out in the contract Service Output Standards. Park rangers will carry out this form of monitoring. Any shortfall between the written standards set and the work carried out on the ground will be discussed and evaluated at that time with the contractor and remedies applied to ensure that it does not reoccur.

The contract quality will be reviewed on a regular basis and an assessment made to see whether overall the contract and on-site works are meeting required standards and expectations. If standards achieved are consistently falling short of those required, then action will be carried out to rectify the problem.

The second form of monitoring that will take place relates to the Action Plan. On a six-monthly basis, the Action Plan will need to be reviewed and updated with new outputs, actions and methods of monitoring evaluation being identified as items are completed. On an annual basis, it is intended that the entire Action Plan will be updated following complete review of the achievements identified and an assessment made of the year's successes and/or failures. Items not completed, or those that through the monitoring were found to be not as successful as first thought, will then be reassessed to see where changes can be made.

In addition to the above, individual action points will be allocated to officers and progress will be monitored at monthly meetings with line managers and formal six-monthly performance appraisal meetings. This will ensure full accountability within the team for implementation and achievement of overall and specific objectives.