



Green Flag Award 2012/2013

Farthing Down and New Hill, 23rd May 2013

Bandscores

Desk Assessment	0-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-30			
Field Assessment	20-29	30-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-70
Overall score	30-44	45-54	55-59	60-65	66-69	70-74	75-79	80+

Status – Pass

Overall band score - 70-74

Desk Assessment Feedback

Band score 20-24

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
Presentation	Farthing Down Local Plan is a public-facing document which gives an overview of the City Corporation's vision for the site and an outline of management in broad principle. It is well laid out, nicely illustrated, and easy to follow. Greater detail is developed in the draft Biodiversity Conservation Plan, which deals with management of natural habitats, and a Heritage Conservation Plan. There are presumably also written agreements with Higher Level Stewardship and Natural England regarding management of the part of the site which is an SSSI.	It would be helpful if the Local Plan provided links e.g. web links to the documents which develop the main themes in more depth with a document map to understand how all the documents interlink.
Health, Safety & Security	The Local Plan sets out the role of Rangers in patrolling the site and recording of incidents relating to health and safety. The Rangers are required to check entrances regularly, to support and advise visitors and liaise regularly with the local Safer Neighbourhood team. There is also a set of bye laws which may assist with this, notwithstanding some are a little antiquated e.g. no swearing, card playing or fortune telling(!), and the penalties (e.g. £10) unlikely to be prohibitive on their own. None the less it gives the authorities the right to remove a disorderly individual or inappropriate structure.	The Rangers are the best judge of whether the effort and cost involved in updating the byelaws is worthwhile, or whether the language used is sufficiently flexible to respond to 21 st century challenges.

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
	Risk assessments are carried out before major practical work and protective clothing provided as necessary for staff and volunteers.	
Maintenance of equipment, buildings & landscape	Rangers are required to check entrances and other structures as part of their daily patrols. In addition, visitors are encouraged to report issues to the rangers, assisted by an out of hours telephone number.	
Litter, cleanliness, vandalism	There is an agreed time limit on responding to vandalism, dumping (within 24 hours) or litter (twice weekly).	
Environmental Sustainability	The Local Plan notes a commitment to sustainability. An environmental audit is in operation across the City of London's Open Spaces. The use of grazing cattle must save a great deal of energy in mowing the grassland as well as improving floristic diversity.	More detail could be given e.g. on selection and policy on pesticides, types of vehicles e.g. electric or dual energy source, minimising water requirement of public toilets etc. Consider separating waste streams in litter bins.
Conservation of heritage & nature	The approach to biodiversity conservation is excellent. Grazing promotes diversity in the sward encouraging uncommon species such as greater yellow rattle. Scrub is cleared to extend the potential for further areas of species rich grassland, whilst also recognising that a mix of scrub of varying ages is important to nesting birds. The plan gives a clear account of the main features of prehistoric and early historic interest and the approach taken to protecting them.	
Community Involvement	The management clearly aims to foster good links with the local community and recognises that their funding would not support the current quality of management without the input of volunteers. Having permanent rangers on site helps enormously to build good relationship with local people, offering a variety of walks, talks and volunteering opportunities. The Friends Group and Consultative Committee provide opportunities for dialogue.	The volunteers benefit from training to enable them to undertake more ambitious projects. While some may well go on to develop a wider hobby interest or career in conservation, it would be good if the City Corporation could embark on an apprenticeship programme (e.g. as in the Royal Parks) to encourage young people from a wide range of backgrounds to participate.
Marketing Strategy	There is an excellent website with monthly update, an annual newsletter and detailed information boards near the visitor car park. A	

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
	leaflet giving details about the site has been prepared. Educational packs are being prepared to facilitate the use of the site by schools.	
Overall management	The overall approach to management, embracing cultural heritage, landscape, ecology, recreation and education is excellent.	

Additional comments

Field Assessment Feedback

Band score 50-54

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
A Welcoming Place	The site is welcoming with clear wide entrances, City of London signboards and local news boards. There is a well laid out car park near the southern end of the site. There is a network of tracks and informal paths offering access over most of the site except where restrictions are required e.g. to protect breeding cattle.	The traditional City of London signboards seem out of step with the current approach to management. They are very authoritative, and give little impression that you are entering one of the finest stretches of chalk grassland in London, with its amazing array of wild flowers and butterflies, its fascinating historic artefacts, and magnificent airy landscape. Consider having a promotional sign at Coulsdon South Station, to encourage access by public transport.
Healthy, Safe and Secure	The site feels generally safe, partly because it has a well kempt appearance, with a mainly open landscape, but also the regular staff presence makes a huge difference.	There may be one or two places where footpaths could be improved on steep slopes, especially for older people. This needs to be tackled sensitively so as not to distract from the feeling of walking in the countryside, rather than a park, which is one of this site's major charms.
Clean and Well Maintained	The standard of cleanliness seems to be very high. A majority of dog walkers use the dog poo bins, with bags provided by management	

Sustainability	The most important issue for sustainability must be the conservation of the wonderful chalk grassland and restoration of former chalk grassland areas. This is clearly being tackled well.	Future visitor surveys might include an access question to try to find out what proportion of visitors arrive on foot, by bicycle, car, or public transport; then if appropriate seeks ways to promote public transport vs. car
Conservation and Heritage	The grazing regime appears to be working well in encouraging a species rich flora with its associated insect life. Historic and pre-historic features are protected through sensitive management without over-promotion which could lead to damage.	
Community Involvement	There is a good level of community involvement through the Friends Group, events and volunteering.	
Marketing	There is minimal provision of information boards within the site, except for an excellent series of panels near the car park. This is a wise approach given that many people come simply to enjoy being out in the fresh air, enjoying the wonderful open airy landscape.	Explore opportunities for digital information sharing via your web site, which schools or families might use to encourage children to take an interest in wild flowers, butterflies, birds or historic features etc. Consider making the main Farthing Down leaflet available at the car park e.g. on peak sunny days.
Management	The overall approach to management is very good, recognising the site's value as an airy landscape, with fine views over London, whilst conserving the natural interest primarily through grazing.	

Additional Comments

This is a wonderful site and on the whole very well managed.