



**Buxton Civic Association**  
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**BCA Places and Spaces Group response to High Peak Borough Council's Draft Parks Management Strategy and Pavilion Gardens & Serpentine Management Plan. This report concentrates on the Heritage and Community aspects of the two documents.**

Buxton is blessed with several very important parks and public open spaces. Some of these such as Pavilion Gardens and The Slopes were specifically designed to cater for the needs of the communities of Buxton in the past. Others have not been designed as such, but have evolved more haphazardly. Both the historic parks and the other open spaces have evolved and been adapted over time to meet the changing needs of Buxton's people. They have always been important havens within the town for our recreation, contemplation, play and emotional and spiritual wellbeing. This is an ongoing process of change and this strategy and the associated management plans should be designed to facilitate the appropriate safeguarding and evolution of this resource.

The strategy is based on a sensible set of principles but, as with any other strategy, it is the details for implementation that count for most. It and the associated management plans are currently thin on detail. The strategy should be backed up quickly by more detailed plans for implementation.

**Background to BCA's involvement with the Parks in Buxton**

The preservation of the Pavilion Gardens was one of BCA's earliest campaigns, helping to save the historic park from being sold off to an amusement company that sought to turn it into a flamingo park. Buxton Civic Association (BCA) has throughout its 54 years recognised the importance of Buxton's parks and green spaces to the town's history and heritage. The parks, both formal and informal, define much of the town's built environment as well as providing a vital refuge for the natural world demonstrating how both can coexist.

**Heritage Conservation and changing community needs**

BCA fully supports the conservation of the important heritage aspects of Buxton's listed parks and open spaces. They are a very important and distinctive part of our townscape. For instance, the 12 urns that were donated for The Slopes by Lord Burlington are a key part of a grade II listed ensemble which is very important to conserve. There should be detailed plans for how the historic features such as these will be conserved in practice.

However, we believe that the facilities and management in our parks and open spaces need to adapt to the changing needs of the public in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We face a climate emergency (as recognised by HPBC) and an equally important biodiversity crisis, so there must be a balance between preservation and allowing nature to retain a presence right in the heart of our town. There is an increasing body of evidence about the importance of



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contact with nature for people's wellbeing (see the parallel submission by our Biodiversity Group). These were not such critical issues when these parks were created.

BCA believes that heritage conservation can be achieved hand in hand with these new priorities.

The recent excellent work by the Town Team in the Ashwood Park section of the Wye demonstrates how heritage and nature can work together.

### The significance of the trees to the formal landscapes of Buxton's parks

The specimen trees are clearly an important part of the design and heritage of our parks.

We understand there are no TPOs in place for the trees in the Pavilion Gardens and Serpentine because these areas are owned by HPBC. The trees are an integral part of these historic landscapes and a tree management programme needs to strike a satisfactory balance between these historic aesthetic features and other issues. Many of the trees are quite old and their eventual replacement needs to be considered.

### The importance to the community of all green spaces within the town

The Pavilion Gardens is the jewel in the crown and a vital part of Buxton's tourist offer providing employment and entertainment for local people and visitor alike, but we must also recognise the value in our other green spaces for nature and for the wellbeing of the town's people.

The scope of the Parks Strategy includes areas of natural growth such as in Ashwood Park, an important area with variety of spaces both formal and informal, including wild areas that are allowed to thrive.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of green open spaces for people's mental and physical health and Buxton's parks and green spaces play a key role in this. These spaces are essential for those residents in the town that have little or no garden. Once they are gone they are gone for ever.

The established spaces at The Serpentine and the Pavilion Gardens are not accessible to everyone in the town. Ashwood Park serves a different area of town and should be managed to similar standard. Other local spaces such as Hogshaw have proved to be of immense importance in providing open green recreational spaces.

Buxton is fortunate not only in its Parks and formal spaces but also in its beautiful woods and other less formal spaces that are equally important.



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Hogshaw is an important area of public open space and rewilding. It is currently subject to discussions on its possible redevelopment (in part) for housing. Like our parks it is an

important space for the local community, for children to play and gather safely, as well as having environmental importance.

### Maintenance levels

Maintenance levels are currently at a reasonable standard but there are times when litter picking is overwhelmed and bins are full, particularly during festival events, concerts etc. Extra support is needed at such times.

### Other points

The Strategy mentions the possibility of a cycle route through the Pavilion Gardens. These areas are widely used by people on foot of all ages and levels of ability. They are important social areas for exercise and relaxation. Even superficially, potential routes such as Broad Walk or the Parade in the Pavilion Gardens are regularly busy with pedestrians who would be seriously inconvenienced by cycle traffic.

There are forecasts that climate change will lead to increases of heavy rainfall leading to high river flows. The Strategy must include consideration of the risk of flood damage to the river banks. The Wye rises onto the banks in the Pavilion Gardens and there are several signs of bank erosion in The Serpentine. Some trees are threatened by this erosion as their roots become increasingly exposed. Development of green space upstream will make management of flooding more difficult and it would be prudent to look to the wider river catchments to help with flood preventions.

The footpath at the western end of The Serpentine is often very muddy and slippery. The document refers to potential resurfacing of this path but an important cause of the damage is drainage from the higher ground on the side of the path across from the river. A drainage channel appears to be necessary. Also, on Broad Walk, near Roseleigh, a drainage channel appears to be blocked as there is a substantial channel eroded into the grass running down towards the lake.

### Partnerships for the future of the Parks and open spaces of Buxton

BCA are keen to work with the Council and other interested bodies to ensure that our parks and open spaces are conserved and enhanced as key resources for our community long into the future.

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