Cranbrook Town Council

Country Park Path Management Plan

1. Introduction

To ensure that the pathways in the Country Park provide safe, accessible, and sustainable access routes for all visitor’s maintenance and quality of standards must be upkept while maintaining the integrity of the surrounding environment and reducing the creation of unauthorised desire lines.

# Maintenance and Monitoring

## 2.1 Regular Monitoring:

Pathways will be regularly monitored to ensure they remain accessible and safe for all users. This includes checks for wear and tear, damage, or any obstructions that may impede access.

## 2.2 Weed and Obstruction Control:

All paths will be kept free from weeds, trip hazards, and other obstructions. When weed control is necessary, only products that are approved for use near water will be applied to avoid any adverse environmental impact.

## 2.3 Pathway Repairs and Upkeep:

Where necessary, paths will be topped up with Granodust to amend any wear or damage, in accordance with the specifications set out in Appendix A. Self-binding gravel will be replenished to ensure the path remains smooth and stable.

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| **Task** | **Frequency** | **Details** |
| **General Pathway Inspection** | Monthly | Check for surface wear, trip hazards, accessibility issues, and unauthorised desire lines. |
| **Topping Up with Granodust** | As needed (at least annually) | Apply Granodust to worn areas to maintain surface quality and accessibility. |
| **Weed Control** | Quarterly | Remove weeds manually or apply approved herbicides near water. |
| **Surface Compaction & Repairs** | Annually (or after extreme weather) | Recompact gravel to ensure a stable and even surface, repairing any eroded areas. |
| **Drainage and Gradient Check** | Annually | Ensure cross-fall gradients are intact, and water is draining correctly to prevent erosion. |
| **Clearing Obstructions (fallen branches, debris, etc.)** | After storms or heavy winds | Ensure paths remain clear and accessible. |

# Pathway Construction and Materials

## 3.1 Sub-base and Surface:

Pathways will be constructed using a granular sub-base (40mm to dust), laid on top of a Terram geotextile. The sub-base will be compacted to a thickness of 175mm. A 25mm wearing course of compacted self-binding gravel (10mm to dust) will be applied. This combination ensures durability, reduces erosion, and maintains a solid, non-slip surface.

## 3.2 Gradient Specification:

The pathway gradients will be constructed with a cross-fall gradient of 1:50, and the going gradients will vary between ‘flat’ and 1:20, which are gently sloping and designed with accessibility in mind. The gradient of self-binding gravel pathways will not exceed 1:15, as recommended by aggregate suppliers. These gradients are suitable for wheelchair and push-buggy access, ensuring inclusivity for all park visitors.

# Access and Accessibility

## 4.1 Inclusive Design:

All paths will be designed and maintained with accessibility at their core, ensuring they are suitable for wheelchair and push-buggy users. The surface will be compacted to avoid any unevenness that could create obstacles for users with mobility needs.

## 4.2 Ongoing Assessment:

Accessibility will be assessed regularly, particularly after severe weather events or high foot traffic periods. Any areas showing signs of wear or damage that may impair accessibility will be promptly addressed.

# Environmental Considerations

## 5.1 Protection of Sensitive Habitats:

Pathways provide defined access routes, effectively reducing the potential for the creation of unauthorised desire lines that could lead to damage in sensitive habitats. By maintaining clear, managed paths, the park helps protect vulnerable areas and ensures visitors are guided to areas where their presence will have the least environmental impact.

## 5.2 Sustainable Materials and Practices:

The materials used for path construction, such as self-binding gravel, are chosen for their environmental sustainability. Furthermore, maintenance practices, including the limited use of weed control products and the replenishing of gravel, aim to ensure that the park's environmental integrity is maintained while providing a functional and accessible infrastructure.

# Long-Term Management

## 6.1 Pathway Assessment and Updates:

Over time, the path network will be assessed for any necessary upgrades or improvements to ensure it continues to meet accessibility standards and withstand the demands of regular use. Future works may involve updating path surfaces or enhancing drainage systems where necessary.

## 6.2 Community Involvement:

Local stakeholders and visitors will be encouraged to report any concerns regarding pathway accessibility or maintenance. Community engagement will play a vital role in the ongoing management and upkeep of the paths.

## 6.3 Sustainability Goals:

As part of the park’s commitment to sustainability, future plans may include exploring additional eco-friendly materials or innovative construction techniques that could further reduce the environmental impact of path maintenance and upgrades.

# Conclusion

This management plan outlines a comprehensive approach to the maintenance and management of the pathways in the country park. By adhering to accessibility, environmental, and maintenance standards, the park will provide a safe, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable routes for all visitors while protecting sensitive habitats.