

Measuring the social impact of Bidston Moss community woodland

November 2007 – January 2008



Bidston Moss has been developed through the Newlands scheme – an initiative of the North West Development Agency and Forestry Commission. A community consultation produced an 'Aspirational Plan' (2004) for the site which outlined "a range of potential new features and landscape enhancements which could help to unlock the full potential of Bidston Moss as a valued and well used community woodland for local people and wildlife".

Much of the work outlined in the Plan has been completed and the Forestry Commission is keen to know whether the potential envisaged has been unlocked; to find out what the impact of the work has been and the difference it has made to local people.

It is acknowledged that the impact of any site will change over time – Bidston Moss is just beginning its life as a recreational resource for the local community and is very new. To be able to assess whether the site is having a positive impact over time a set of baseline data is required to measure against and the work to get this data was carried out between November 2007 and January 2008.

323 people gave their views.
They live close to the site, use the site now or would like to use it in the future.
This booklet shows what they said.



More about measuring the impact of Bidston Moss on the local community

The Forestry Commission has agreed to use 17 measures of success which help define the social impact of new community woodland. Where a site has had a positive impact it is expected that the site will be a focal point of the community – well known and well used – a place people feel proud of, which helps them be healthy and which contributes to the area’s vibrancy and regeneration. Using the 17 measures or indicators it is possible to look at how well the site is performing – what is working well and what could be improved, both now and in the future.

The 17 indicators are outlined as follows 

Bidston Moss is a successful community resource

1. **Local people know about the site**
A successful site is one which many people know about.
2. **Local people know how to get to the site**
To be a successful community resource, people have to know how to get on to a site.
3. **The site is well used by local people**
A successful site is one which people use often.
4. **Local people know what’s happening on the site**
People are more likely to use a site if they know what’s going on there.

Bidston Moss helps to improve people’s health and well-being

5. **The site is used for a wide range of activities**
Over time, as people get to know a site and find out what is going on, it is expected that more people will use the site for a wider range of range of activities.
6. **Children and young people use the site for formal and informal play**
A site where children feel safe to play is one which provides an important role in a community. Again, over time, it would be expected that the number of children and young people using the site will increase.
7. **People are gaining health and well being benefits**
It is expected that a site which has had a positive impact will contribute to people’s health and well-being. So it will be possible to show that people are using it for physical exercise; relaxation; play and leisure.



Bidston Moss develops pride in the area and a sense of community

8. **Community activities and celebrations take place on the site**
When a site is appreciated and valued by the community it is likely that it will be used for community activities and celebrations and this use might increase over time.
9. **The site is seen as an asset to the area and something which has increased people's sense of pride**
If a site has had a positive impact then people will tell stories and give anecdotal evidence to support this.
10. **The site contributes to a greener local environment**
People notice some environmental benefits and might report seeing more birds, animals or flowers and say they value the natural environment of the site.

Bidston Moss improves the perception of the area's safety

11. **People feel safe on the site**
It is important that people feel safe on the site – if they don't they are less likely to use it and the impact is reduced.
12. **There is no rise, or a decrease, in antisocial behaviour on the site**
If people value the site, reports of antisocial behaviour such fly tipping; vandalism; littering; motorbike use will not increase and might decrease.

Bidston Moss supports the local economy

13. **There is an increase in volunteer and employment opportunities for local people**
The site acts a resource for the community by giving training and work opportunities.
14. **The site is valued by local businesses and seen to benefit their work**
Anecdotal evidence that the site has been good for local businesses – a business might have experienced an increase in trade due to more people visiting the site; a new business has started up or workers might enjoy the site in their lunch hour.

Bidston Moss fosters local democracy

15. **The management and maintenance is value for money and high quality**
Ongoing management and maintenance will affect many of the other measures of success. A well managed site is likely to: be better used; help people to feel safe and foster local pride in the site.
16. **People feel they can have a say in how the site develops**
Evidence that users know who manages the site and how to get involved if they want to.
17. **The site contributes to a positive opinion about the work of local agencies and government**
Evidence that local people were adequately consulted about the plans for the site; that the initial investment is seen as worthwhile and the site's design and management meets local people's needs.



Do local people know about the site?
People living in the area have heard of Bidston Moss.

90% of people interviewed on the streets have heard of Bidston Moss. Bidston Moss was an active landfill site between 1936 and 1990 and it is possible that the high percentage of people who say they know the site could simply know the name from the site's history.



"I don't know where the entrance is, there are no signs"



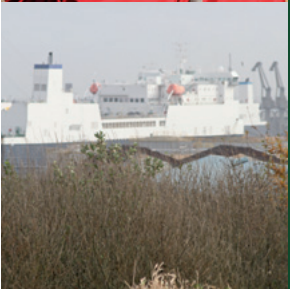
Do local people know how to get to the site?

Under half of the people interviewed on the streets know how to get on the site. Informal entrances are used more often than the designated access points.

42% of people interviewed on the streets knew how to get on to the site and were able to name an access point. The two entrances named most often by respondents were Mosslands Drive (37% named this entrance) and B&Q (31% named this entrance). The two formal entrances, Cross Lane and the entrance at the Waste Disposal site were named by 13% and 14% of respondents respectively. The impact of the site would clearly be increased if more people knew how to get on to the site.

People's preference for using the informal access points indicates that the designated entrances are not working as well as they could or have not been sited in the best places. When asked 'what stops you from using the site?', 21% of people who expressed a view on the streets said 'the poor access'. This included issues like locked gates and not knowing where the entrances are. Indeed, over half of the regular users disagreed with the statement that 'this space is easy to find'.





Is the site well used by local people?

A third of the people interviewed on the streets use Bidston Moss. Of these, half are occasional users but 16% use the site weekly.

Out of the 248 people interviewed on the streets, 70 people said they use the site – which is 28% of those interviewed. Social indicators are rarely gathered for green spaces it is therefore difficult to get sense of how this figure compares to other sites. Our opinion is, that for a new site, which has not actively been promoted, and one that is not a generic urban park, 28% usage is a very good base to build upon.

Of the 70 people who say they use Bidston Moss, 53% use it only occasionally (less than once a month), 21% use it monthly and 16% use it weekly. To maximise the impact of Bidston Moss it is therefore clearly important to ensure that more local people use the site and use it more frequently.



"I thought it was something to look at, not go on"



Do local people know what is happening on the site?

Regular users and involved community groups tend to know what is happening on the site and what facilities are available. There is a concern that the wider community is less well informed.

This question was not asked directly to people on the streets. In future surveys it will be. It was asked through the Spaceshaper events, which gathered the views of regular users. Of the 43 people who came to the Spaceshaper events, 56% agreed with the statement 'I know what goes on at the site'. Researchers observed that regular users were well informed about the sites facilities and the events that took place on it. However, regular users expressed a concern that the wider community did not know what happened on the site. Improving publicity was one of the main action points that regular users suggested.



Is the site used for a wide range of activities?

Bidston Moss is a green space that has been designed as a place to enjoy nature, walk and cycle. This is what local people use it for. These are health promoting activities.

Through the on the street survey, it was found that the top five activities that people do on Bidston Moss are: going for a walk; using it to take a shortcut; dog walking; riding a bike and enjoying nature. These are health promoting activities – especially when done frequently – as is the case for the 16% of people interviewed who say they use the site weekly. When asked what difference Bidston Moss made to their lives, a quarter of those who expressed a view said it was a resource where they could do healthy activities: a place to get fresh air and exercise. However, two health promoting activities – play and sport – are hardly mentioned – either by regular users or those on the street.

Of the 84 people surveyed on the streets who said they used the site:

- 26 said they use it to go for a walk
- 20 said they use it to for taking a shortcut
- 17 said they use it for dog walking
- 10 said they use if for enjoying nature

- 5 people said they use the site for sport or games
- 3 people said they use the site for playing

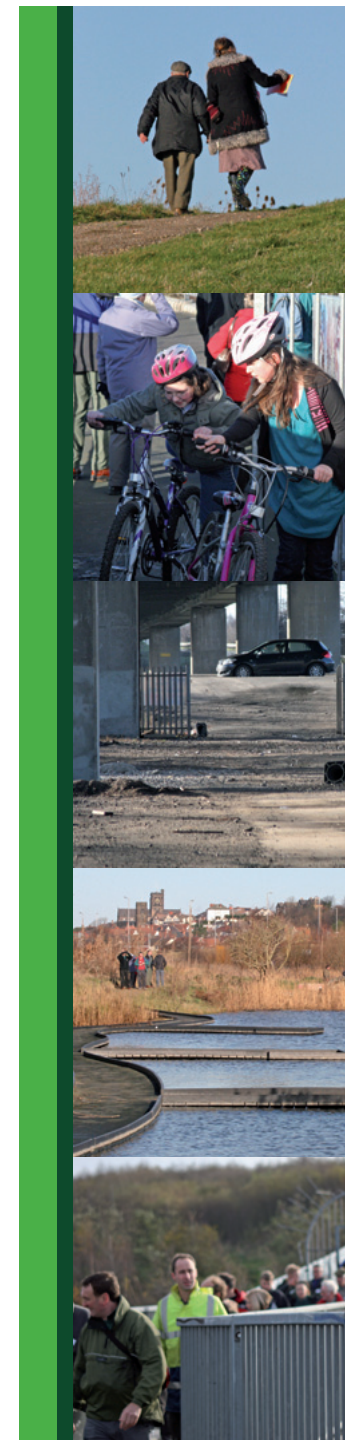
59 (70%) of the people surveyed on the streets, mentioned only one type of activity; while 25 (30%) mentioned two or more.

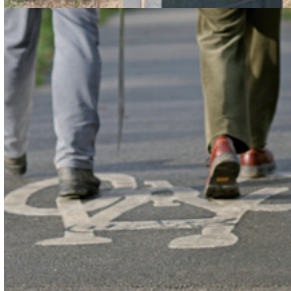
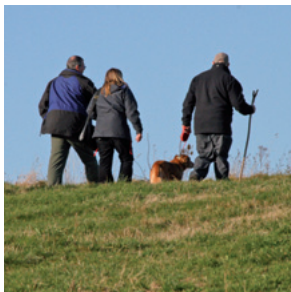


“I’ve never heard of it. I wish I’d known about it because I’m always looking for places to take the kids”

There are some differences in the pattern of use between regular users and the general public. It is noticeable that where people on the streets might mention one or two things they do on the site, regular users mention many different activities. Regular users also seem to use the site for more countryside type pursuits – such as looking at flowers or enjoying nature. This contrasts to those interviewed on the streets, many of whom use the site as a route or shortcut. Regular users also see the site as directly helping them to be healthy.

In conclusion, Bidston Moss is a green space that has been designed primarily as a place to enjoy nature, walk and cycle. It is therefore not surprising that this is what most people use it for. If, in the future, there is a desire to widen the types of use of the site, there will need to be developments in the kind of facilities on offer. For instance: a playing field or woodland play equipment.





Do children and young people use the site for formal and informal play?

Children and young people are using the site through organised activities and occasionally coming with their families.

From observation, very few children are using the site: one child was seen using it during the site survey and six children were seen with their families on the weekends of Spaceshaper site visits. In addition, 23% of people who expressed a view said that they were put off from using the site as they perceived it as isolated and scary. Some parents said they wouldn't like their children to go to the site alone. This may be one factor in the low numbers of children seen on the site. However, it must be noted that the observation work took place in November during term time. It would be interesting to contrast this to the summer holidays.

In addition, evidence given by the Community Engagement Officer shows that children and young people do use the site through organised activities. Around 600 have taken part in various activities in the 18 months since the site was opened. These have included: orienteering; guided walks; cycling; conservation work and litter-picks. In the Spaceshaper events other groups also told our researchers that they are using the site with young people. 'Let's Go', in partnership with the Wirral Cycling Officer, has brought several hundred children mountain biking on the site in the last year.

Finally, there was a perception across the consultation that some young people are using the site for illegitimate purposes – for example making fires, riding motorbikes and painting graffiti. We have no figures to verify this.



Are people gaining health and well-being benefits from using the site?

There is evidence that people are gaining health and well-being benefits from Bidston Moss. This is especially true for regular users.

It has been shown that people are using the site for health promoting activities; however there is scope to increase the number of local people and frequency of using the site for these activities. 25% of those that expressed a view on the streets said that the site made a positive difference to their lives by creating a resource to do healthy activities.

Responses from regular users show that people are getting health and well-being benefits from the site:

- 91% agreed with the statement that 'this space makes me feel good'
- 88% agreed with the statement that 'I can relax here'.
- 79% agreed with the statement that 'this space helps me to be healthy'
- 77% agreed with the statement that 'I can have fun here'

People are also gaining direct health benefits by participating in a programme of health walks organised by the Community Engagement Officer. Stimulated by this activity, some participants have set up a walking group and gone on to do health walk leadership training with the Primary Care Trust.



Is the site somewhere to meet other members of the community and take part in community activities and celebrations?

A good range of community activities take place at Bidston Moss, supported by a local worker. This is stimulating self-sustaining activity within the community.

Over the last year a range of activities has been set up on Bidston Moss by the Community Engagement Officer, involving around 1000 people through their community groups. Activities have been predominantly countryside and recreation activities: fishing; cycling; running; orienteering; walking; conservation and environmental education. Some activities have been publicly advertised. These have attracted predominately elderly people. However, in the summer months more young people are involved through holiday activities. The Community Engagement Officer is funded by £20,000 annually from the Forestry Commission, which equates to 1.6 days a week of worker time with a small budget.

There is evidence that this investment has resulted in self-sustaining activity now taking off in the community. Schools surrounding the site now take groups of their own accord for orienteering. A tri-athletes group and Merseyside cycling group now train there each weekend. Disabled fishermen have been supported to use the site independently. Scouts will be undertaking Duke of Edinburgh awards on the site. In addition the Officer reports a noticeable breakdown of territoriality between communities on different sides of the site.

We have no record of any celebrations taking place on the site.



"It's not signposted, I thought it was closed"



Is the site seen as an asset which has increased people's sense of pride in the area?

Through the creation of Bidston Moss, the local area has been transformed. People feel positive about the site and it has improved peoples sense of pride in the local area.

In the Spaceshaper events and community conversations it was clear that people are proud of Bidston Moss and are passionate about it. A major factor in this is that Bidston Moss was a significant eyesore right at the heart of its community: people described the awful smell from the tip; the littering; worries about the incinerator and 'totting' on the site. It was seen as giving a very negative impression of the area and was highly visible – especially from the motorway and railway lines.

In discussion, participants described the creation of Bidston Moss as 'a transformation' saying it had 'replaced an eyesore with an area of natural beauty'. There was also a sense that people were moved by the scale of change in their area with one person commenting "it's not often you get to be involved in something like this". Overall, 93% of regular users agreed with the statement that 'this space improves the look of the local area' and 95% agreed with the statement that 'this it is an important space to the local area'.





Does the site contribute to a greener local environment?

At Bidston Moss people can experience nature in the heart of their community and they enjoy the wildlife; the views, the fresh air and the rugged, wild feeling of the site.

The development of Bidston Moss has created a significant green space at the heart of the community and anecdotal evidence from people interviewed on the streets shows that people value this space because it is a natural area. They shared their experiences of recent visits to the site, which included: picking fruit with friends in the late summer; noticing that the wildlife on the site is increasing; seeing birds they don't recognise and climbing up the hill for the great views.

A recurring theme in the Spaceshaper discussion was the need to preserve the wilderness feel of the site: a piece of countryside in an otherwise urban setting. When people on the streets were asked 'Does Bidston Moss makes a difference to your life?' 43% of the people who expressed a view said that having a green space was an improvement to the area.



"Sitting by the lake with ducks in the summer, having a drink with the family and the dog"



"It's a peaceful spot - they've made it beautiful. It's beautiful going past on the train. It was landfill and now there's lots of wildlife; it's a quiet place to relax and walk in"



Do people feel safe on the site?

Safety on Bidston Moss is a concern for some people and limits their use of the site.

Bidston Moss is a large quiet site, and, with no workers based there, safety is a concern for some people. During the on the streets survey, 136 people gave their views about what stops them from using the site as they would wish. 23% gave safety as an issue that stops them from using Bidston Moss. Amongst regular users, the feeling that the site is intimidating was mentioned by 34% of people. However 56% of regular users agreed with the statement 'I feel safe here'. During discussions at the Spaceshaper event it was noticed that perceptions of how safe the site is varied significantly between different people. Some people felt very confident using the site and enjoyed its isolation – others felt vulnerable. These people mentioned off-putting entrances; not being sure of their way whilst on the site; and finding the lack of other users intimidating. They said that they would not go alone on the site.

The latter group tended to be women and older people. Increased, legitimate use of the site might allay some of these fears but for others could compromise the site's peaceful nature.



"It used to be an absolute eyesore, stuff being blown about onto other sites. I remember it being a rural area and now that's come back its really nice"



Is there an increase, or a decrease, in anti-social behaviour on the site?

In common with most green spaces, antisocial behaviour does take place on the site. However as the site has become more widely used, these incidents are slowly reducing.

The Forestry Manager for Bidston Moss has provided a record of incidents of antisocial behaviour on the site between April 2007 and January 2008. These are given in the table below. As the Forestry Commission do not have a constant 'on site' presence there will be incidents that go unreported to the Forestry Manager.

63% of the Spaceshaper respondents mentioned antisocial behaviour as something they dislike about Bidston Moss. Vandalism; graffiti; rubbish; dog fouling and motorcycle activity were all given as examples of the antisocial behaviour that is happening on or close to the site. People also mentioned the poor state of the area under the flyover and the destruction of the Stargazer sculpture. However, the Forestry Manager reports that as usage of the site has increased with the opening of the access points onto the site, there has been a notable drop in anti-social behaviour on the site. He feels that legitimate use of the site by more people acts as an effective deterrent.





ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	OCCURRENCE / ACTION
Stone throwing from the pedestrian bridge over railway	3 reports
Illegal motorbike use on site	8 motorbikes confiscated by the police. Reports and evidence of motorbike usage on site varies depending on police involvement and the season. In the summer months there are 2-3 reports a week and in winter months it falls to 2-3 reports a month
Graffiti on bridge and information signs	2 operations in summer to remove graffiti and 4 extra visits to remove racist or offensive graffiti
Verbal abuse from gangs of teenagers	2 reports on the footbridge
Severe vandalism	1 incident that caused damage to several woodland blocks, footpaths, signage and destroyed the Stargazer sculpture.
Littering near the Waste Disposal site	Reported irregularly when people riffle through the skips and then sort on site.

"It's a bit isolated; I'd never go there alone"



"Not enough people using the site – I'd never come here on my own"



Is there an increase in volunteer and employment opportunities for local people?

There are no reports of yet of volunteer opportunities being created. However, there are signs of emerging volunteering activity.

Whilst there are significant numbers of local people taking part in activities on site, this is different to sustained and regular volunteering. Having interviewed the Community Engagement Officer and the Forestry Manager, it appears that there are no regular volunteers on Bidston Moss. In addition, there is currently no developed infrastructure to support volunteers on the site, but this is a position that the Community Engagement worker and the Forestry Manager hope will change.

There is, however, evidence of emerging volunteer activity: young people have been trained by BEANBAG to be mini-wardens on the site over a six week course and adults from the health walks have taken part in health walk leader training with the local Primary Care Trust.

"30 years ago I used to take the kids to walk across Bidston Moss to Bidston Hill with a picnic. The kids all came back exhausted and they had such a good time!"



Is the site valued by local businesses and seen to benefit their work?

There are no reports yet of a measurable benefit to business from Bidston Moss.

Researchers asked representatives of 10 local businesses if the development at Bidston Moss had made a positive difference to their business. Most had experienced no impact on their business but one commented that "anything that makes the place look better attracted more customers". Forestry Commission staff have given anecdotal evidence that RSPCA staff and volunteer dog walkers are benefiting from the improvements at the Cross Lane end of the site. 70% of regular users did not agree with the statement that 'this space is good for local shops and businesses'.



"It will eventually be a good place to walk, good for wild life. It's on my door step and it's open to everybody"





Do people feel they can have a say in how the site develops?

There are opportunities for local groups to get involved in the running of the site but a priority is to ensure that there is better information about the site out in the local community.

Bidston Moss is a new site and a Steering Group with representatives from local community groups has been set up to oversee the development of the project. 50% of regular users agreed with the statement that 'the people who live around here are involved in running this space'. However, it must be noted that those attending the Spaceshaper event were active members of local community groups and therefore more likely to know about the sites involvement mechanisms. In future, people interviewed on the streets will also be asked this question.

In discussions at the Spaceshaper events, and this was also evidenced in the responses from the general public, there was a strong feeling that local people do not know enough about what goes on at the site and what it offers. This is the first rung on the ladder to engagement: if local people do not know what's going on at the site then they cannot be involved in decisions about it. Regular users said they wanted this issue addressed as a priority. They want to see more publicity for the site such as a web site; a diary in the local paper and a leaflet about the site.

"I remember hearing the seagulls and seeing the cranes from my mums house which was near there"



"I like the traffic free environment, the open space, trees and wild flowers"



Does the management and maintenance of the site provide value for money and high quality?

The site is well looked after but suffers from some antisocial behaviour. This impacts on people's perception that the site is safe and affects people's sense of pride in the site.

In discussions at the Spaceshaper events it was evident that people felt that the maintenance of the site was of high quality and appropriate for the site. 77% of regular users agree with the statement that 'this place is clean' and 84% of regular users agree with the statement that 'this space is well looked after'.

However, people are concerned that keeping on top of maintenance issues is essential. One person summed up the discussion saying "I worry that it's going to stagnate and not be looked after". As seen in Indicator 12, there is also a perception amongst users that the site is not safe. Good quality maintenance has an important role to play here. For instance, tackling antisocial behaviour such as graffiti and vandalism will improve the perception of the site's safety. It will also encourage people to use the site more and will build people's sense of pride in the site. Currently the Forestry Commission maintenance budget for Bidston Moss for 2008/2009 is £39,000.

20% of regular users disagreed with the statement that 'the people who look after this space are around a lot'. A further 28% did not know how much workers were present or not. Through the discussions at the Spaceshaper event it was evident that there is a desire amongst regular users to have a permanent presence of staff on site but also a recognition that this might not be possible.

"I helped myself to 9lbs of gorgeous apples a few weeks ago and two lunchboxes of blackberries – lovely"



There are some structural issues to this site that make it a challenge to manage. For instance the area under the flyover is consistently seen as an unattractive area and the bridge over the railway is intimidating and a magnet for graffiti. It is difficult to see what any management team could do to tackle these problems but people have said that they are put off using the site because of them. In contrast, there have been some real successes in management and maintenance, particularly, the bridge over the wetland area which retains the wild feel of the place whilst enabling better access to it.

A key challenge for site managers is to deal with the situation that the two most well used entrances are informal and therefore not legal entrance points. It is therefore difficult for the Forestry Commission to invest in these. This also raises the issue of improving the two official entrance points - and perhaps looking at a third in the future - as a way of increasing use, pride and ultimately the impact of the site.





Does the site contribute to a positive opinion about the work of local agencies and government?

People appreciate what has been created so far. They value it and are excited by its potential.

It is fair to say that if someone visited Bidston Moss not knowing the history of the site they might think that the site had a way to go before it became a valued community resource. However, it is clearly apparent from the qualitative research that the creation of Bidston Moss has been overwhelmingly positively received by local people. People appreciate the resource that has been created and can see the potential for the site as it matures and further developments take place. One person commented: 'they have made an eyesore into a thing of beauty.' Noticeably, there were no reports to researchers of the investment made in Bidston Moss being seen as a waste of money and 95% of regular users agree with the statement that 'this space has been made well'.

"I like it, but people don't know about it – it needs publicising"



"I used to come down here looking for frogs as a kid. I've got lots of happy memories. One time when they were building the motorway we found a whole load of railway tickets that had been dumped, they were like streamers and we picked them up and let them all blow in the wind, it was like Christmas or something!"





Who gave their views

The work to gather information against these indicators was carried out by Pathways Consultancy, Manchester. The Pathways team:

Spent time 'on the streets' talking to people: **248** people gave information this way

Researchers worked around Bidston Moss in locations from where it is roughly a 10 minute walk to the site. They stopped people as they were out and about and interviewed them using a short questionnaire. Researchers aimed to gather views from people across a wide age range and contact details were gathered if people were willing to disclose them.

47% of the people surveyed came from Wallasey Village and 37% from Bidston Rise.

Interviewed **14** people using the site

Researchers spent eight hours on the site over a two week period and interviewed those people they met whilst on the site.

Ran two Spaceshaper events: **43** regular users of the site gave their views this way

Representatives of local groups who had a known interest or connection to the site were invited to these half day events. As well as looking at the difference the site had made to local people, the Spaceshaper process was used to assess the quality of the woodland.

Ran a 'community conversation' event: **6** representatives of local groups and **2** local councillors gave their views this way

For those people who couldn't attend the weekend Spaceshaper events but wanted to take part in the work, a small focus group was convened on one morning. Here, representatives of local groups reflected on the difference the site had made to the local area and community.

Surveyed **10** local businesses

Researchers interviewed 10 people who owned or worked in businesses close to Bidston Moss. They were asked what they thought of the site and specifically what difference they felt it might have made to their business.

A methodology paper is available from the Forestry Commission. The results of research process have been analysed and written up by Pathways. All primary data is held by the Forestry Commission. The quotes used in this booklet were given during the consultation and have not been altered in any way. Throughout this document we will be referring to those people who took part in the Spaceshaper event as 'regular users'. Those who were interviewed on the site or on the streets are referred to as 'on the streets'. Those who attended the community conversation and local businesses are referred to directly. Spaceshaper is a practical toolkit developed by CABI Space which measures the quality of a public space.



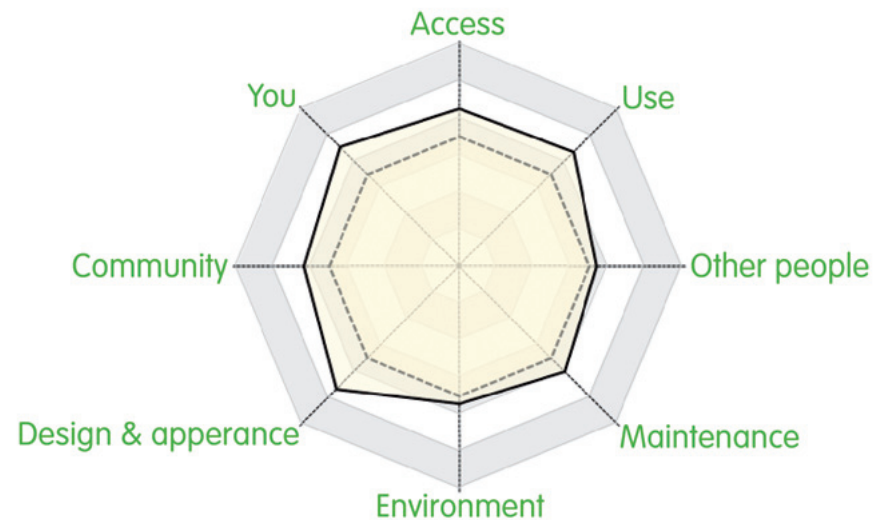


Spaceshaper for Bidston Moss

Two Spaceshaper events were held at Bidston Moss on 25th November 2007 and January 6th 2008 and were attended by 43 people. Both events used Spaceshaper, a practical toolkit which measures the quality of open spaces, to structure the discussions around the site and its future.

The Spaceshaper questionnaire asks 41 questions about an open space: how well it works; about the space itself and the difference it makes to people. The questions are grouped under eight headings and when people's responses are put into a computer programme, they produce a spider's web diagram like the one below.

This diagram shows the results for Bidston Moss (the solid black line). The dashed line shows how each of the eight issues would be in an average space. Results better than average are outside the dotted line. Results worse than average are inside.



Overall, the result is positive for Bidston Moss: the solid black line is outside the average line for all eight issues. However it is fair to say that there is also room for improvement: if the site scored more highly in the future, then the solid black line will move outwards to the edges of the diagram.



From the Spaceshaper diagram, it can be seen that the issues of **design and appearance; community; you and use** score very strongly at Bidston Moss:

- **Design and Appearance** considers whether the space improves the look of the local area; and whether there is a good mix of plants and animals amongst other things. The work at Bidston has transformed a former landfill site so it isn't a surprise that it is above average.
- The **Community** part of the questionnaire asks to what extent local people value the site. In Spaceshaper discussions it was clear that this transformation has been extremely important for the local community. An eyesore has been turned into a green space for people to use and enjoy. It has helped build peoples feeling of pride in the area.
- The **you** part of the questionnaire asks if the space makes people feel good; if they relax there; if they come to escape and whether they enjoy being there. People said clearly that these were some of the things they like and appreciate about this site so again, this was to be expected.

- The **use** result reflects the fact that part people can use Bidston Moss for things they like to do; it helps people to be healthy and they can enjoy nature here.

The diagram shows that **maintenance** is appropriate for the site and regular users say it is easy to find and easy to get around - so **access** scores quite positively. The two issues which score least well are '**other people** (the site is less good at involving a diverse range of people) and **environment** (the site lacks some amenities that would help it be better used and it could be made to feel safer).

The discussions covered some of the issues in more detail and looked at what people want to see happen on the site:

Maintenance: it is clear that people see maintenance as essential in ensuring the site is perceived as welcoming, safe and available for a variety of activities. Their only concern is that there should be enough ongoing resources to maintain the site to a high standard.

Access: It is fair to say that 'access', and also 'environment', are viewed more negatively than is apparent from the diagram. The formal entrances to the site are difficult to find and one, close to the Waste Disposal Site, recycling plant, is particularly intimidating. Participants felt that the entrances serve to put people off the site rather than encouraging them on to it. The street surveys found that people use informal entrances to the site more than formal entrances.

One person summed up the discussion - "we deserve to have attractive, welcoming access points to the site. What we've got isn't good enough and it's embarrassing to take people there". Better signage within the site is also seen as important to help people navigate it. Access is seen as a major barrier for new users to the site and in particular, the lack of a car park is seen as one of the top things that need to be addressed. There is a strong will and desire among the people who use the site to resolve the access problems. However it is recognised that this will take the involvement of local politicians and agencies, since it involves sensitive issues around land ownership.

Environment: the site currently works well for people who are confident, fit and streetwise. However developing facilities on the site will help it become more welcoming to a wider audience. For instance the site is rather inhospitable if you are elderly and need to pause regularly on a bench. Toilets are also an important facility for older and young users of the site.

In addition big public or sporting events can't happen without toilets and changing facilities. Some people in the discussion wanted to see a café on the edges of the site or a mobile tea van, as having a break on visit to an open space was an integral part of what they wanted from a recreation space. Others felt this would compromise Bidston Moss's wild appeal. These divergent opinions are not so successfully represented on the diagram.



Several wider issues were also raised and these are outlined briefly:

- **Promotion:** people want to see much more active promotion of the site e.g. a leaflet; website and local publicity. People understand that the official opening was deliberately low key but feel that publicity now needs to increase significantly. They see this as important in increasing use of the site and so justifying the investment made in creating Bidston Moss.
- **Facilities for young people:** young people who came to the events and know the site well want to see more facilities specifically for them, especially around play. Other, older, participants didn't see the need for play facilities and stressed that if any were installed they should be on the edges of the site to preserve its wilderness feel. There was a feeling that this issue, and the linked debate about improving facilities on the site, needed exploring further.
- **Ongoing engagement with users:** In the discussions there was the feeling the Forestry Commission needs to commit to ongoing engagement with users of the site and in future sites it needs to think about engaging earlier and more in-depth with local people and potential user groups. There are some instances where participants feel the site's design demonstrates that user groups were not consulted enough – for instance some corners on the cycle paths are not seen as safe and the site does not work as a mountain bike trail.

Summary :

People are proud of Bidston Moss: "It's what Bidston needed; we've had a tip for too long. It's great for dog walkers and fishermen. It brings people together and it's good for education for schools"

Bidston Moss is a green space resource for people to use for leisure and to relax in and there is a real hope that it will contribute to the regeneration of the area. People want the site to be promoted and its use maximised to its fullest potential. They feel strongly that this is the beginning and a lot still needs to be done.





What happens next?

- The data shown in this booklet represents a baseline for Bidston Moss in 2008. It tells how well the site is performing at this time with regard to its impact on the local community. It is recognised that the site is just newly developed and still to reach its full potential. A similar survey will be carried out in 5 years time and data will be gathered again for the 17 indicators. At this point it will be possible to see if the site's social impact has increased, stayed the same or declined
- Bidston Moss has been the pilot for the Newlands Social Indicators work. The methodology used at Bidston Moss will be looked at and, if necessary, revised for the other Newlands sites. The Forestry Commission will then gather similar data for the other sites and then draw conclusions about the overall social impact of the Newlands scheme

In the meantime:

- This data will be used by the Bidston Moss Steering Group and the managers of the site to inform future work on the community woodland at Bidston Moss
- Follow up information will be sent to everyone who gave their views and contributed to this work

Jane Whitaker
6th March '08

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