

3. What is your name?

Steve Anderson

4. Which organisation do you represent?

The Heswall Society

5. What is your main area of interest/concern regarding Green and Blue Infrastructure in Wirral?

Planning matters concerning Heswall and those in general concerning the Environment, Green Belt and open spaces, footpaths and Heswall community

6. Please provide any additional information as to why you feel this way

I have been a resident of Wirral for 44 years, a retired scientist and over the last 7 years have become progressively more involved with both the natural and built local environment, including planning matters. This has involved me in meetings with Council Officers, local councillors and our MP. I am chairman of the Heswall Society, a Member of WGSA (Wirral Green Space Alliance), a Trustee of Heswall Hall and a member of North Wirral Rotary Club.

7. How far would you consider that the existing Green and Blue Infrastructure network in Wirral is performing well in terms of quality, access and management?

Very Poorly-----X-----Very Well

8. Do you think the following features are currently well supported in Wirral? (Answer Yes No Somewhat)

Wetlands and watercourses	somewhat
Internationally and nationally designated sites eg. SPAs, SSSIs, Ramsar sites	somewhat
Coastal areas	no
Public parks and Country Parks	somewhat
Local amenity green space	no
Woodland	no
Hedgerows	no
Urban greening features	no
Greenways and other active travel routes	somewhat
Public Right of Way network	somewhat

9. Please provide further comments on those assets identified above as being supported well, using specific examples where possible.

RSPB Burton Mere Wetlands (in Cheshire West) and most NT areas are well managed but many waterways are not well managed.

The round Wirral cycleway is a great development. It does, however, need further improvement (see below).

10. Please provide further comments on those assets identified above as not being supported well, using specific examples where possible.

International and national managed sites are often looked after by limited resource and often relying on volunteer groups meaning that many sites do not get the maintenance required.

The Heswall Dales are a good case in point. Maintenance is being carried out by a group of volunteers supported by a part time ranger. This group lacks the resources to maintain the Dales to an adequate degree and thus the area is becoming progressively overgrown and losing to undesirable plant species.

Another area in Heswall is The Beacons. This area is not being managed at all and is being left to nature to take its course.

Feather Lane woods in Heswall has recently had a Friends Group established but they are very limited in what they can achieve by a council policy that does not allow the use of power tools.

Local Green spaces are now only being maintained by limited Council staff. In particular the cutting of grass beds and verges is insufficient and the long grass is detracting from the efforts of Friends Groups to maintain the flower beds eg flower beds in Heswall now maintained by the Heswall Society / Heswall in Bloom team. This could be overcome by allowing Friends groups to use power tools, after suitable safety training, but the Council refuses to entertain this idea. It is also recognised that not all grass verges need to be mown flat but could be developed as wildflower linear meadows to promote biodiversity. The Council needs to liaise with local organisations / residents to agree which locations could be sown as wild flower areas.

A number of footpaths on Wirral are not well maintained and could do with improvement. For example, the path down from the National Trust owned Heswall Fields to the beach needs to be made much more user friendly. In addition, it would be good if a path was created to link Heswall Fields south to Banks Road and Lower Heswall.

The cycle lane network on Wirral needs to be dramatically enhanced. Cycle sections often end abruptly – there are many examples in the round Wirral route eg around Bromborough Pool, sections between Riverbank Road to Park West in Heswall. Where cyclists are forced onto the road, then roads should have cycle lanes. In addition, Heswall would benefit for a cycle lane going west to east to join up with Prenton / Higher Bebington as cycling down the Brimstage Road is no fun for either cyclists or the motorists inevitably being held up by them! Cycle lanes are very often disconnected eg lane from edge of Heswall to Thurstaston roundabout, lane down Lever causeway. Wirral needs to connect and continue cycle lanes much better.

The LUC report highlights the Wirral Way’s importance as a cycle route for both recreation and commuting. There is no doubt that the intensity of use by cyclists has progressively increased and especially during the present Covid-19 crisis. This has hugely detracted from its attraction for walking. Cyclists are now also using the bridleway. To help ensure the enjoyment of walkers, riders and cyclists into the future the Council needs to consider how this excellent facility can be separated for use by these different types of user.

The Dee Coastline is a wonderful asset for Wirral. It is a very important site for wildlife and greatly appreciated by residents and visitors as a place to visit. One area at least, however, has been used as a maritime tip: the Heswall foreshore at the bottom of Banks Road has been allowed to badly deteriorate by allowing many old boats to be left and allowed to decay and currently is a ‘grot spot’.

Currently the local planning process generally regards landscaping as a matter to be covered by conditions. Landscaping, however, is a fundamental component for the green blue infrastructure objectives to be achieved. Thus landscaping provisions should be required as a part of the planning application in all future development and not relegated to conditions.

11. How far would you say the Green and Blue Infrastructure assets listed under Question 6 are well connected for people and/or nature?

I presume you mean question 8

Very Poorly connected-----X-----Very Well connected

12. Please provide comments on your answer for the question above, and where you think are the most promising opportunities for 'improving access' and creating connections?

Wirral Waters, Docklands, all new housing developments, redundant industrial sites, further accessible public footpaths/permitted routes and their

interconnectivity to allow wider participation, less intensive use and protection of sensitive areas.

In Heswall, there is an ancient highway as far as Kitts Field. The way it is shown on current maps indicates that the council does regard it as a highway right to the end but this needs to be confirmed with the Council and that it does not need to be shown as a footpath. Examination of Tithe Maps shows that Kitts Field was glebe land, although it may well now be under different ownership, lying at the furthest extremity of the track which is a continuation of the bitumen surfaced section of the Pipers Lane. Kitts Field is a narrow field which separates this extremity of Pipers Lane from The Dungeons.

Clearly there is a public right to pass along this ancient highway, as far as Kitts Field, passing through its old field boundary landscape and ancient hedgerows. It is recommended (1) that awareness of access along the length of Pipers Lane to Kitts Field is improved by signposting and marking of maps (including the link from the Wirral Way) and also (2) that extending access over the short length of Kitts Field to The Dungeons Footpath is explored.

Heswall has a number of existing urban green connections (mainly linking to Heswall Centre but can also be used for recreation in the reverse direction). These generally provide routes via parks and green spaces with links usually via established leafy avenues but with need for better signing (physically and on maps) and attention to some degraded sections. Notable examples are:

- 1 From Mere Lane to Heswall Centre:
 - via wooded footpath to Tower Road North sylvan quiet route to footpath / open space over Poll Hill then footpath through wooded area to Poll Hill Road then via Poll Hill Road to Grove Avenue / Dale Avenue to The Puddydale
 - to Tesco also a connection to Feather Lane Woods and Heswall Dales.
 - to Heswall Centre via Town Centre green space outside Oxfam etc
- 2 From near junction of Pipers Lane with Delavor Road to Tesco via path through Bush Way / The Dales to Thurstaston Road (near Queens Drive) then Feather Lane Woods to Tesco or Feather Lane to Heswall Centre (a route taken by more active walkers for shopping and for recreation).
- 3 From Heswall Lower Village to Heswall Centre:
 - From Rectory Lane via Churchyard (views to estuary / hills) conservation village centre, School Hill CA sandstone walls / wooded, Dawstone Park, The Mount / Feather Lane to Tesco OR Rocky Lane to M&S OR Hill House Park to centre.
- 4 Hillside Road / Wall Rake via The Beacons, Beacon Lane, Rocky Lane then via Hill House Park/ Mount Avenue / Feather Lane to Tesco (junctions with routes 1 and 2).

There are a number of green "feeder links" which connect with the above.

Opportunities for consolidation route marking / maps, - maintenance of woods / view from Poll Hill, recognition protection of green area from Oxfam with improvement outside Lingham's & Costa.

- Improve linkage between Puddydale and town centre by improved, more prominent / inviting gateway from Oxfam area to Puddydale,
- Improve area outside Lingham's & Costa

Recreational / bio routes

There is potential to:

- establish a green corridor following the section of the (Scarbrook) stream which lies upstream of the present public footpath that runs from Bush Way up to the link through to Thurstastone Road opposite Feather Lane woods.
- establish a green route from The Dales via a vacant plot (just uphill of redstone drive) on Oldfield Drive to the broad areas of open country and The Wirral Way - the objective to remedy the increasing isolation of The Dales. This is particularly important as the historic access corridor between the lowland heath represented by the dales and Cleaver Heath has been lost due to development and fenced off.

In terms of maintenance in Heswall, Well Lane is important and particularly its raised banks with shrubs and trees and houses set well back. It is recognised in the current Gayton Guidelines which "New development should utilise existing access points. Where a new access is necessary, it should be sited so that existing trees, hedging and banking are disturbed as little as possible. Proposals for new development should make provision for the retention of a substantial belt of trees adjoining the highway, and this should be supplemented by additional tree planting." Developments need to respect these aspects.

13. Which two of the following features presents the greatest threat to Green and Blue Infrastructure delivery in Wirral, and its ability to support a high quality of life?

- Lack of funding
- Climate change
- Socio-economic deprivation
- Development pressures
- Lack of coordinated effort between partners e.g. public health/planning
- Lack of awareness of the importance of Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Anti-social behaviour
- Other (please specify)

14. Please provide an explanation of your answer to the above question.

The Council has confirmed in writing that its former undisclosed policy was to release large tracts of Green Belt land for development, mainly unnecessary new housing which would threaten the special sense of place, landscape and historical assets and opportunity of the Peninsula, rather than long-overdue redevelopment in the east of the peninsula. Despite an apparent change of rhetoric recently, the Council by wishing to stick to the 12,000 new dwellings figure estimated using the standard method in the developing Local Plan, continues the threat to our precious Green Belt which are the lungs of the peninsula and also which provides the all-important landscape that make the area such a desirable location to live in.

It is clear that a lack of funding and hence resources is resulting in the progressive deterioration of our green and blue infrastructure. It is probably also true that recently this infrastructure has been given a low priority.

15. Where do you consider the key opportunities for Green and Blue Infrastructure creation and enhancement are in your area, or any areas you have a particular interest in over the next 5 years and beyond?

Please identify any promising delivery mechanisms or funding routes (these might include: developer contributions, government grants, other grant making bodies, partnerships, community initiatives, or a combination of these)."

The Council needs to better manage its Assets. Wirral Countryside Park, linked to the Wirral Way could be sensitively developed into a more vibrant and profitable facility. This Asset, like most of the other Wirral Leisure Assets suffer from a lack of Council-led care, management, improvement and investment (including by encouraged third parties) to an extent well beyond the pressures on Budgets.

There are many sources of funding which the Council (admit they) have not pursued sufficiently. 'Developer Contributions' can be employed but should not be used to get round rules or accepting second-best.

16. Are there any valuable Green and Blue Infrastructure initiatives or projects underway in your area which we should be aware of, or which could be built upon? (for example, green space creation/enhancement, access improvements, habitat creation, flood alleviation or community-led initiatives)

In Heswall, the Heswall Society / Heswall in Bloom team supported by our local Councillors are developing a large new flower bed by the junction of Telegraph Road and Boundary Lane. Two benches are also being installed in this area. This will provide both a physical and aesthetic amenity for the benefit of residents and visitors.

In addition to the Heswall Society / Heswall in Bloom team that look after the flower beds and planters in the centre of Heswall (including the bus station), Heswall has a number of 'Friends Groups' many initiated and supported by the Heswall Society, helping to look after specific amenity areas. These are Friends of: - The Dales, Poll Hill, Hill House Gardens, Dawstone Park and Featherlane Woods.

17. What do you think about the proposed Vision for Wirral (outlined below)? Is there anything missing? Does it successfully reflect local aspirations?

"The future of Wirral will respect and make the most of the Borough's unique peninsula landform. A well-connected and resilient GBI network will provide the framework for future growth, ensuring that both urban and rural areas enjoy thriving wildlife, resilience to the impacts of climate change and provide opportunities for play, walk, cycle, and to meet your neighbours. Wirral's 'sense of place' will distinguish it from other Boroughs.

Weaved throughout each of the peninsula's neighbourhoods, the green and blue infrastructure network will be one that all ages and communities can freely access and enjoy, and will help Wirral rediscover its place as a green 'escape' for recuperation from daily stresses, underpinning local health and wellbeing. The network will sit at the heart of regeneration and will be a pillar of support for sustainable economic growth."

This vision is excellent and reinforces the importance of the Green Belt and green spaces for the well-being of Wirral residents. This vision is not currently translated into the way that the Council is developing the Local Plan. We need the Council to make a much stronger position against any Green Belt development than is currently being displayed and stop using out of date Office of National Statistics figures to justify the inflated predicted housing need figure of 12000 while the *actual* need is significantly lower.

18. Any further comments not covered by the above questions?

Peel Holding's Masterplan and thoughts for the areas in and around their Docklands are a solid basis for the Council to develop and deliver on the necessary wider Redevelopment of the East and North of Wirral. An interesting element of interconnectivity is Peel's suggestion to extend the Wirral Heritage

Tramway from Birkenhead to link to Wirral Waters and on to Seacombe Ferry Terminal, so that it may link these nodes/areas, enable 'green' commuting by residents of Wirral Waters and provide a tourist loop from Liverpool to Seacombe and the planned Eureka! National Children's Science Museum, on to Wirral Waters with its 'Village' facilities, further on to Hamilton Square and other attractions in Birkenhead Centre, and finally to Woodside Ferry Terminal for the return across the River.

The regenerated Woodside Ferry Terminal and Tourist Information Centre offers another great opportunity for the Council to utilise better its assets.

I have a number of comments related to the interactive map related to Heswall:

- The interactive map divides the Dales into SSSI / Nature Reserve. The whole area should be designated SSSI.
- The interactive map showing paths and cycle lanes does not show all the rights of way in Heswall, examples include the path connecting Pipers Lane to the Wirral Way, the path connecting Boundary Lane and Heathway.
- A number of Green Spaces are missing from the interactive map - Hill House Park / Garden the Thurstaston Road / Telegraph Road triangle and the triangle opposite the Catholic Church at the junction of Boundary Lane / Telegraph Road, area The green area outside Oxfam and the green areas from the library to the fire station should be recognised.
- A number of footpaths are unmarked. Whilst it is important that these are identified in the Local Plan / supporting documents, it is fundamental that they be included on the statutory footpath map and there is not long to sort this out.
- The footpath between Oldfield Drive and Greenfield Lane had a physical marker placed at the request of HS and should be on the maps.

Finally, but certainly not least is the Council approach to Green Belt in the emerging Local Plan. The Council Development Options Review document, the ARUP study and the latest Issues and Options document all explore the possibility of releasing Green Belt for development. It is hoped that Green Blue Initiative will further demonstrate that rather than releasing Green Belt for development, the Council need to protect and enhance and further develop what we have. This approach would help to keep the Wirral healthy and focus regeneration which is now the stated aim of the Council and also the wish of Wirral's residents. Green Belt was narrowly defined in the past by Merseyside County Council for the very good reason of promoting regeneration and this objective has not changed.