

Weston Recreation Ground

Accessibility Plan



**YOUR
PARK**

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In partnership with:

Led by: Your Park Bristol & Bath.

Community partners: Active Weston and Friends of Weston Rec.

Local Authority: Bath and North East Somerset Council.

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Note on bolded words:

Words in **bold** are explained in the Jargon Buster at the end of the document.

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Introduction

This plan is a list of changes to make to Weston Rec, which are intended to make it more accessible for Disabled people and unpaid carers. The ideas came from a group of 14 local Disabled people and unpaid carers working with the charity Your Park Bristol and Bath. The Disabled people had a wide range of disabilities including **neurodiversity**, **mobility** and **sensory impairments**. This group came up with lots of changes they wanted to see, then decided together which were the most important **priorities** to go into this plan.

All **accessibility** changes suggested by the group have been added to the plan. The aim is to work on all the ideas, but to start with the high **priority** ideas, followed by medium, then low **priority**.

Several other **priorities** based around 'community', 'nature' and 'health' are included. These are ideas that will make the park more interesting to visit and better looked after by the community.

The actions in the plan are a list of suggestions which will be discussed further and used by community partners (Your Park Bristol & Bath, Active Weston, Friends of Weston Rec), the local authority, (Bath and North

East Somerset Council), in their work to look after and improve Weston Rec.

The lessons learned from the project are being used to make a **toolkit** that other communities can use to make their parks better for Disabled people and carers. This work is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Accessibility priorities

High priorities

Improving online information

Changes will be made to websites so that it will be easy to find information about the park online, including accessibility, location, address, features, images, description, noisy areas and things that people might be interested in. These websites will be made **accessible**. This will use the [Sensory Trust's idea of the 'Access Chain'](#) to make an inclusive experience for people using the park.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Increased seating around the edge of Weston Rec

A greater number of seats around Weston Rec would make it easier for people to rest and socialise while they are there. The lack of **accessible** seating may limit the amount of time people spend at Weston Rec.

Accessible seating will be added around the edge of Weston Rec, to avoid being in the way of sport areas. The benches must be **accessible** for people who may struggle to lower themselves or pull themselves up. **Accessible** picnic benches should be added at different places around the park. The benches will be in shady areas where people can shelter from the heat.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: Medium

Having a path around the park

Currently, there are no surfaced paths in Weston Rec. This can be a problem due to the heavy-clay soil, which holds water during wet weather and can crack during the summer. Paths will encourage people to avoid the often-challenging ground. The path should go around the outside of Weston Rec, avoiding the sports areas but leading to **accessible** areas and key entrances. It will provide a loop for walking.

The pathways need to be kept clear from mud and water during winter, as they could become slippery and flooded.

All new paths will be **accessible** and wide enough for wheelchairs and other walking aids. This includes adding texture to the paths for people with **visual impairments** or people living with dementia.

Depending on funding, a new path could be introduced in stages. Paths at entrances and to benches should be prioritised.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: High

Handrails on steep slopes

Weston Rec has several long steep slopes and uneven terrain. Having handrails at key areas would show people where the slopes are, as well as giving support to people going up and down them.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: Medium

Improving entrances and gates

Weston Rec has six gates, some of which are difficult for people with mobility aids to get through. This includes '**Kissing Gates**' which do not have the **turning circles** that are needed by people who use various mobility aids, including manual and electric wheelchairs, mobility scooters, walkers and rollators. The gates need to be changed to make them **accessible** to everyone. If it is necessary to use something like a **Kissing Gate**, 'Mobility Kissing Gates' with a square enclosure should be used, or ones which can be opened wide by using a **RADAR key**.

It can also be difficult to understand how to open some gates, especially for people with **visual impairments, learning disabilities** or people living with dementia. Gates should have the same opening method, have clear signs showing people how to use them and colour contrast paint to show where they are opened.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: Medium

Medium Priorities

Clearly marked slopes

People, especially those with **visual impairments**, may struggle to see how steep slopes are, affecting their confidence and safety.

Slopes should be marked on maps at the entrances to the park and the use of different coloured poles and signs could make it much easier for people to understand what to expect of the ground they are walking on.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: Medium

Toilet provided by a community partner

Currently, there are no public toilets at Weston Rec. Having access to a toilet can increase the **accessibility** of the area and support people's health, allowing people to enjoy nature without worrying about how to find facilities. This encourages outdoor activity, enables longer visits, and improves how clean an area is.

Without the potential for a new public toilet at Weston Rec, there would be benefits of building connections with local venues that have one and

arranging for people visiting the park to be able to use their facilities. The Weston Hub is well placed for this but has limited opening times.

Who: Community partners.

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Make it easier to get to Weston Rec

Many local people can walk or roll to Weston Rec, however for those who cannot and rely on public transport or private vehicles, it can be difficult.

This was seen as a **priority** for the group, but solutions were difficult.

Close to Weston Rec, there are two bus stops, one of which is currently out of use. As well as increasing the number of buses going to the area, there is a need to let others know which buses go to Weston Rec. This should be shared online, and it would also be good to have information at bus stops and on buses, so people know how to get to Weston Rec and when to get off the bus.

Options to improve parking for people driving to Weston Rec could be explored. The roads surrounding Weston Rec are residential and on-road parking is difficult. Although **Blue Badge holders** can park on single and double lines, for up to 3 hours, in these areas the options are still limited.

Community partners like Weston Hub could offer parking spots for people using Weston Rec.

Who: Community partners.

Cost: High.

Time: High.

Accessible signs pointing people to Weston Rec

To encourage more people to use Weston Rec, it would be useful to have **accessible** signs pointing people towards it. Finding your way around places can be more challenging for people with certain impairments, particularly **cognitive or neurological conditions**. To make it easier for people to see and understand the signs, they should be clear, have a high contrast between the text and background and placed in well-lit areas. They should also be placed at a suitable height for wheelchair users.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: Low

Low Priorities

Improving accessibility of the woodland play area

Woodlands can be a difficult place for people with access needs. The tree canopy means that the area can be poorly lit and trees and plants can be potential obstacles and trip hazards.

The woodland at Weston Rec has a new play area, and although this is available to everyone, it isn't **accessible** for some. Before it can be **accessible**, uneven paths need to be widened and levelled, physical barriers and obstacles should be removed, and physical support for those attempting to use the new play structures needs to be provided.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: Medium

Introduce lighting

There has been a lot of discussion about whether to introduce lighting to Weston Rec. Lighting would make it easier for people to access Weston Rec during darker times of the day and could reduce anti-social behaviour. However, it could be bad for the **nocturnal** wildlife in the park. Lighting from the park can affect people's sleep and make it difficult for people to enjoy living in their homes. Further consultation would be needed to discuss adding lighting to Weston Rec.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: High

Time: High

Introducing a public toilet

Having a public toilet within Weston Rec has several benefits, enabling older adults, families with young children, and Disabled people to enjoy the outdoor space safely and comfortably, and reducing social isolation as a result. However this needs to be explored further in relation to the **deeds** of the land. A lot of thought would need to go into where the toilet would be placed and who would be responsible for looking after it to make sure people are able to continue using it.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners

Cost: High

Time: High

Community priorities

High Priorities

BBQ area with disposal bins

Having a dedicated BBQ area at Weston Rec would bring the community together, encourage people to use the area, and provide safe, designated spaces for social gatherings. It could also make it possible to reduce the use of disposable BBQs by providing permanent ones which are better for the environment.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Boards with information about the nature and history of Weston Rec

Weston Rec doesn't currently have any park information boards. These would enable people to learn about and feel a connection to Weston Rec at a deeper level. They would be a useful, long-lasting tool for

connecting visitors with the natural and historical landscape. They should have visuals, maps and concise text.

Who: Community partners.

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Improve playground accessibility and equipment

At Weston Rec there is already a playground area with various pieces of equipment. This should be developed so it is **accessible** to a wide range of people. This would include having well maintained wide and flat paths, including a solid surface both inside and outside the playground, with a fence dividing both areas. The gate should also be wide enough for a wheelchair to go through. It should also have inclusive play equipment on solid surfaces like rubbery ground or concrete. The inclusive playground equipment is designed to allow people of all abilities to play together in the same space. Examples include wheelchair-accessible roundabouts, basket swings, ramp-accessible play structures, ground-level sensory panels and musical instruments.

Rather than only focusing on Disabled children, the equipment should be suitable for people of all ages and abilities.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: Medium

Signs for the park's entrances and exits

For people visiting Weston Rec, it would be beneficial to have clear signs so people can easily find the entrances and exits. These signs can help to make sure people, including Disabled people and those that are unfamiliar with the area, feel safe and help them to find their way around. They could include maps to help people know what to expect in the park.

Who: Community partners

Cost: Medium

Time: Medium

More social seating

As well as increasing the number of seats at Weston Rec, it would be good to have more areas of social seating. This includes seats that are **designed** in a way to encourage conversation, group interaction and a

sense of community, rather than just providing a place for people to sit by themselves.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: Medium

Medium Priorities

Mobile coffee or catering van

As Weston Rec doesn't have its own café or anywhere else offering refreshments, a mobile coffee or catering van would encourage people to visit the area. The community are supportive of this being provided by a local community organisation or charity.

Who: A local business with support from Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Cost: Medium

Time: High

More community events

Hosting more community events at Weston Rec, ranging from nature-based activities, small picnics to larger festivals, would help build community spirit and offer inclusive spaces for local people to interact. There is already WestFest every year, which features music, dance, sports and games. Conversations with Bath and North East Somerset Council are needed to make it easier to hold community events.

Who: Community partners

Cost: Medium

Time: Low

Introducing a shelter

Weston Rec would benefit from having a non-permanent shelter, offering somewhere for people to rest, providing protection from the sun or rain. A non-permanent structure also offers flexibility whilst reducing costs.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: Medium

Nature priorities

High Priorities

Flower and sensory area

A flower rich and **sensory** area at Weston Rec would provide a calm and welcoming space enabling visitors to engage with and benefit from having contact with nature – the sights, sounds, scents and textures this offers. The plants and flowers would be chosen to stimulate the senses and attract local wildlife, including plants of different colours and textures which bloom in different seasons.

This area would be designed to be **accessible** for all, considering different people's conditions, needs, and abilities. It would ideally include raised flower beds, wide paths and a quiet area for those who can feel overwhelmed easily.

Who: Community partners.

Cost: Medium

Time: Medium

Increasing the number of trees

Increasing the number of trees would bring several benefits to Weston Rec. This includes encouraging wildlife, reducing flooding, and supporting the local community in offering more shade during summer.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Low

Time: Medium

More diverse planting near the edges of the park

Increasing the number of different types of plants near Weston Rec's boundaries, such as along fences and railings, would be a great way of creating natural buffers and increasing the number of plants growing in the area, including mixed-species hedgerows. This would also increase the different types of wildlife in the area by creating new habitats for them.

Who: Community partners

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Wild area

Weston Rec has the potential to offer a wild area by reducing the amount of mowing and encouraging wildflower growth in some areas. This would offer natural habitats for birds, insects, and small mammals such as squirrels, foxes and hedgehogs. It would also encourage local people to come and learn more about plants and animals living in the area.

Who: Community partners

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Medium Priorities

Pond

A pond in Weston Rec would be an attractive feature that would increase the quality of Weston Rec while supporting a wide range of wildlife, including birds, dragonflies, amphibians, and plants living in the water. As the pond would be in a public place, a fence would need to be placed around the pond to protect the wildlife and prevent people from falling in.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Tree Trail with identification information

Having a Tree Trail would provide an opportunity for people, of all ages, to learn more about different types of trees, exploring and enjoying some of Weston Rec's trees, including a mix of both native trees and trees from other parts of the world.

There are different ways this could be done, including trail board signs, individually labelling trees, or providing the information online.

Who: Community partners.

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Low Priorities

Increasing number of bins and distribution of them

Waste bins are an essential feature in parks, to keep the place clean, tidy, looking nice, and protecting the environment. Currently, in Weston Rec there are bins by most gates that are emptied by Bath and North East Somerset council on a regular basis. It may be worth adding more bins to Weston Rec to reduce littering in areas away from the current bins.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Health and Wellbeing

High Priorities

Distance markers on the pathway

By having clear distance markers on paths, movement will be encouraged. This could involve using different symbols, or painted lines on paths to support shared use.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Marking sports fields and nets

At Weston Rec, there are places to play football, cricket, basketball and volleyball. Encouraging people to use Weston Rec for sport activities brings people together in their community by doing healthy group activities. Clear line marking is a simple and useful way of keeping people safe by letting them know what each area is meant for which activities.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Keeping open space

Having an open space free from organised activities and obstacles offers an area for people to experience Weston Rec in their own way and keep the beautiful views of Bath and the Cotswold Way.

Who: Community partners.

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Medium Priorities

Outdoor gym equipment for adults

Having an outdoor gym at Weston Rec, would provide free, **accessible** exercise opportunities for all. This is a great way of improving people's health and wellbeing, while bringing people of all ages in the community together for enjoyable, pressure-free social exercise.

Who: Bath and North East Somerset Council and community partners.

Cost: Low.

Time: Medium

Low Priorities

Keeping a quiet area

By having a quiet area, Weston Rec would offer a space for people to escape the noisy roads, relax, and connect with their local environment.

This is particularly important for people that can feel overwhelmed by noise and can experience **sensory overload**.

This could be done by finding quieter areas furthest away from traffic, having trees as natural sound barriers, dog-free zones, an area for seating away from paths, and using signs asking people to keep the noise down in these areas.

Who: Community partners

Cost: Low

Time: Medium

Having signage about responsible dog ownership

Having signs in Weston Rec to remind people to look after their dogs and to respect other park users could reduce the impact of dogs at Weston Rec. These signs can encourage people to pick up their dog waste, keep their dog under close control, and share that not everyone likes dogs. Although it's the law in the UK to clean up dog waste in a public place, this is difficult to enforce. In Weston Rec there are no paths and it's not unusual for dogs to foul on the grass and for it to be left. People may walk through it and mobility aids can pick it up, spreading the waste further.

Who: Community partners

Cost: Low

Time: Low

Jargon Buster

Accessible: When something meets the needs of Disabled people so that they can use it without problems.

Audio descriptions: When something is described with spoken words so that the **visually impaired community** can access it.

Blue Badge holders: A Blue Badge is a UK disabled parking permit that allows Disabled people to park closer to their destinations. It is linked to the individual, meaning it can be used whether they are the driver or a passenger.

British Sign Language (BSL): This is a language that uses hand gestures. It is used by many **d/Deaf** people in the UK.

CCTV: Cameras that film an area so that it is easier to tell who carried out any **vandalism** that happens.

Cognitive or neurological conditions: These are impairments which may affect the brain, spinal cord, or nervous system, affecting how people think, move, feel, and interact with the world (e.g. stroke, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, or multiple sclerosis).

Costs – Low (£0-£5,000), Medium (£5,000 - £50,000) and High (£50,000 +)

Contributors: People who were part of making something.

d/Deaf: People who don't have any hearing. The capital 'D' is used when someone is part of the community of Deaf people. **BSL** is often their first language.

Deafblind: People who don't have much hearing and sight so talking or BSL might not be **accessible** for them.

Deeds: A legal document that outlines the ownership of land.

Designed: Planning how something will be made.

Dropped kerb: When part of the pavement slopes down so that people can get up and down from it easily.

Kissing gates: a hinged gate set within a small U- or V-shaped enclosure, like those that are often found on public footpaths.

Learning disability: is a reduced intellectual ability, usually identified soon after birth or in the early years, and will last a person's whole life.

Mobility impairments: When someone finds it harder to move around.

Neurodiversity: The natural diversity in people's brains.

Nocturnal: Animals that are active during the night.

Priorities: Something that is very important.

RADAR key: is a specially designed skeleton key that unlocks accessible public toilets fitted with RADAR locks (also known as a National Key Scheme (NKS) Key).

Sensory impairments: When someone is **d/Deaf**, **visually impaired**, or **deafblind**.

Sensory overload: This refers to an intense feeling of being overwhelmed when the brain gets too much information from the senses – taste, touch, sight, sound or smell – and cannot process it. Triggers can vary from individual to individual, often leading to stress, anxiety and panic.

Sensory trail: A walk that has lots of experiences that are good for people who have **sensory impairments**. For example, visually impaired people may benefit from experiencing the variety of smells around.

Tapping rails: A small, raised edge to the side of a path so that **VIs** can find it with their canes.

Turning circles: This refers to the amount of space needed by someone using a wheelchair or other mobility aid to turn around without bumping into anything.

Toolkit: A guide people can use to help them do a piece of work.

Raised kerb: When pavement is raised up so that it is easy for wheelchair users to get from it into a bus or other type of transport.

Research: When people look into something to understand it better.

severe mental impairments

Unmonitored: When something isn't watched over by a real person all the time.

Vandalism: When something is damaged or broken or made to feel unsafe.

Visually impaired community (VIs): The community of people who are blind or who find it hard to see.

Appendix

Cost and time ranking

Each change has been ranked low, medium or high for cost and time.

This has been done to give an idea of how much money and time it would take to make them happen.

The rankings are based on these categories:

	Cost	Time
Low	£0 - £5,000	0-6 months
Medium	£5,000 - £50,000	6 months – 1 year
High	More than £50,000	More than 1 year

Other Ideas

More ideas were put forward during the park visit than could go into the plan. These ideas are included below so that they can be worked on if another group of people would like to do more work after this project.

These largely looked at dogs using the park.

Having a ‘Bark Park’ – secure area for dogs

A 'Bark Park' at Weston Rec would offer security and peace of mind for community members and dog owners enjoying the area.

Introducing a rule to keep dogs on leads

Keeping dogs on leads can help community members to feel more relaxed in their local areas, whilst protecting wildlife and livestock. These rules are often introduced by Public Spaces Protection Orders but can be difficult to monitor.