



# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Restoration

## Final Evaluation Report

Issue number: 1

Status: FINAL

Date: 14 October 2022

Prepared by: Georgina Avins, Emily Keenan & Lizzie Hughes

Authorised by: Ian Baggott

# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Restoration

## Final Evaluation Report

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# 1 | The Lake and Gardens



# 1 The Lake and Gardens

## 1.1 Lakes and Garden section

Fairhaven Lake and Gardens covers an area of 19.5 hectares. It is situated halfway between Lytham and St Annes in Fylde, Lancashire and runs adjacent to the Ribble Estuary. Fylde has a total population of around 81,400 and can be accessed just off the M55. The Lake and Gardens were created in the 1890's by the Fairhaven Estates Company as part of an upmarket coastal planned development. In 1923, the Lake and Gardens came into Lytham St Annes Council Ownership and it remains in their ownership today. The Lake and Gardens consists of:

- Children's play facilities
- RSPB Ribble Discovery Centre
- Lake with boat hire
- Promenade and walking trails
- Crazy Golf
- Crown Green bowling
- Skate and BMX Park
- Lawn and hard surface tennis courts
- Basketball courts
- Picnic area
- Spitfire memorial
- Toilets
- A café
- A shop

## 1.2 History

The initial idea for Fairhaven Lakes and Gardens was first conceived in 1890 by Thomas Riley. The idea was to establish a hotel and recreational provision which offered spaciousness, clean air and community facilities with extensive views of the sea over the estuary. In 1892, a lease agreement was established with Clifton Estate for 264 acres of land along the coast between Lytham and St Annes. The land was split into two sections; section A for development and section B for recreation.

After a temporary sea wall was constructed in 1893, the lake was formed and was filled by an existing pipe. The lake was officially declared open in August 1893 and in 1895 the Fairhaven Estate Company was established to take over Thomas Riley's role.

In 1896, the Fairhaven Estate Company developed plans for a golf course to frame the lake and the area to the West. Therefore, the original golf clubhouse was constructed on site.

In 1901, the Pagoda Boathouse was constructed. Numerous works to the Lake and its surroundings were completed in the early 1900's to improve the landscape such as restoration of the promenade and installation of ornamental planting diving boards and bridges. The most

significant installations were 17 tennis courts, a bowling green, a croquet lawn and a small sports ground, which made Fairhaven Lake and Gardens a popular site for recreational activity.

During the war years, the Lake remained opened but suffered from a lack of resources which took its toll on the management and maintenance of the site. Around 1920, after the war, Fairhaven Lake and Gardens underwent its second phase of major developments, starting with four new tennis courts and an extension to the pavilion and in 1921, the construction of a second boathouse designed by Isaac Dixon & Co. In 1922, after Lytham and St. Annes Council joined, Fairhaven Lake and Gardens was sold to the council for £34,000. A well-known philanthropist in Lancashire, Lord Ashton, helped the council financially to acquire the park, hence the park was renamed to Ashton Marine Park.

The next major development came in 1924, when Mawson and Son of Lancaster, produced a masterplan for the layout of Ashton Marine Park. Mawson and Son were the first international firm of landscape architects and town planners, as well as Thomas Mawson being the first president of the Landscape Institute. They originally proposed a number of improvements, including: the Lake would be enlarged from 12 to 25 hectares to increase opportunities for water recreation; the recreation offer expanded; a new mini golf course and an open-air swimming pool opened and that the South side of the park would offer a natural space, for visitors to enjoy shorelines and plantations. Works were complete by 1926 and officially opened by Lord Derby.

### **1.3 Heritage features**

#### **The Lake**

Fairhaven Lake covers approximately 12 hectares and is fed largely by groundwater, with remaining input from the Estuary. Fairhaven Lake is considered to be the third oldest marine lake in the country and the first created as a result of private speculative development.

#### **The Pavilion Café**

The café is what was the original golf club house, constructed in 1896. This was the first building on site in response to plans for a golf course around the Lake and to the West. It is a colonial bungalow style design by Henry Littler who went on to become Lancashire County Council's chief architect.

#### **The Pagoda Boathouse**

The Pagoda Boathouse was originally built in 1901 and designed by Herbert and William Wade of St. Annes. The boathouse came about as boating had become a very popular activity at the Lake in the late 1800's. The Boathouse has been the RSPB Ribble Discovery Centre since 1993, consisting of a classroom and visitor centre.

### **The current boathouse**

The current boathouse was designed by Isaac Dixon & Co in 1920. It is now considered to be the only known example building of its particular type.

### **Bowling Pavilion**

The bowling pavilion was constructed in the 1920's as part of the Mawson and Son redevelopment, it is now used by the Marine Park Bowling Club.

### **1930's pavilion**

The 1930's pavilion is located along the north side of the Lake. It was built with the original purpose to support the pitch and put course and it is now used to support recreational activities at the park.

### **Spitfire Memorial**

Led by Councillor Miss J Rossall, residents of Lytham St Anns raised £6,000 for a Spitfire in 1940. The aircraft was commissioned with the Borough's name and was allocated the tail number W3644. It was piloted by Sgt Alan Lever-Ridings but was unfortunately shot down in 1942 while Lever-Riding returned from escort duty during a bombing mission over Morlaix, France.

In 2009, the Lytham St Annes Spitfire Display Team was formed as the fundraising arm of the Fylde Spitfire Memorial Fund. The team's objective was to raise funds through public donations to build a full-size replica of the Mark VB Spitfire W3644 flown by Sgt Alan Lever-Ridings. The Memorial was officially unveiled on the 19th August 2012.

## **1.4 Biodiversity**

Fairhaven Lakes and Gardens is now managed as parkland, particularly the Southern side of the lake which was redeveloped to include a more natural offer alongside the leisure. The site is popular for small numbers of bird, butterflies, small mammals and invertebrate species. The Lancashire Wildlife Trust carried out a Phase 1 Habitat Survey which recorded a total of 159 species of plants and 16 species of fauna on site.

The site is also located opposite the Ribble Estuary which is designated as a special protection area, a Ramsar site, a nature reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is the largest area of salt marsh in England and its mud and sand flat habitats are an important site for a variety of bird species, 16 of which are recorded on site in internationally important numbers.

The area to the west of the Lake is dune habitat and is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to its geological importance and the presence of rare orchids on the site.



**The Japanese Garden**  
In the 1920s, it was the height of good taste to collect anything oriental, and so to have a Japanese Garden of 'cliffs, cascades and bridges' would draw in the crowds. They have now been restored to their former glory.

*"The Japanese Gardens in London's Regent's Park are a masterpiece of landscape design, and a testament to the skill and vision of the Japanese architect and landscape designer, Kyojima Kinsai. The gardens were designed in the 1920s and are a beautiful example of the Japanese garden style."*

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The Garden Club  
Trust for Regent's Park  
100 Regent's Park  
London NW1 2NU  
020 7634 1000



## 2 The Project

### 2.1 The Need for Investment

In the years leading up to the project, there was growing concern over the condition of the deteriorating lake. The lake was at risk from sedimentation, reducing water volume, and algal blooms made the lake appear unattractive and restricted activity. The flow control mechanisms operated poorly, and the lake edge was eroded in sections.

The coastal defence project, funded by the Environment Agency, sought to reduce the risk of coastal breach or overtopping and damage to the park. However, if the outer promenade works were not designed sensitively, there was concern that the character and focus of Fairhaven would be significantly and adversely changed.

In addition, the surrounding buildings had inadequate functional layouts, had lost architectural integrity, and were in poor condition. For example, the Pavilion Café had very poor accessibility, and the visitor centre was leaking, drafty and trying to combine too many functions as an information point, retail and education space. The buildings risked being taken out of active use, negatively impacting the site's life and character and reducing opportunities to host activities and events.

Recreational facilities at Fairhaven were also in a state of decline, with several at the end of their lifespan. The adventure play, tennis courts and adventure golf were underused and outdated.

Meanwhile, the horticultural quality of the site had declined, and Mawson's original Japanese Garden has been lost through infilling and removal of planting.

Fylde Borough Council decided that additional, significant investment was required to ensure Fairhaven Lake and Gardens could be fully restored and its heritage fully understood and celebrated.

### 2.2 Funding Application

Fylde Borough Council had previously submitted two bids to NLHF which had been unsuccessful. However, their third Round One bid was approved in January 2017. The difference is believed to be the occurrence of the Sea Defence works, which were scheduled to take place adjacent to the site and would reduce flood risks while also bringing potential for match funding for works.

Following extensive re-working of the brief, Fylde Borough Council applied for their Round Two funding successfully in August 2018, and permission to start was granted in December 2018. A total of £1,476,600 was awarded from the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NLHF) Parks for People Programme, covering 51% of the eligible project cost of £2,897,792.

### 2.3 Vision and Aims

The project sought to restore Fairhaven Lake and Gardens to its former glory as the jewel in the crown of the borough's green spaces and one of the most popular parks on the Fylde Coast.

The project vision is as follows:

*To make Fairhaven Lake and Gardens one of the finest marine lakes in the UK through the conservation of its design and heritage assets, improvements to the lake's infrastructure and water quality, successful management of its facilities and features and the provision of an exciting new interpretation scheme and activity programme for a wide audience.*

The project outcomes were:

- The restoration of Fairhaven's heritage buildings, specifically the Pavilion Cafe and Pagoda Boathouse;
- Improvements to the lake and the restoration of historic landscape including the nationally significant Japanese Garden;
- A new Fairhaven welcome centre and interpretation hub;
- Internal fit-out of current boathouse to support lake-based activities and provide activity space for community groups, a new classroom and meeting facilities;
- An exciting and challenging reinterpretation of the entire Fairhaven site, including new multimedia interpretation and improved signage;
- Improved water quality of the lake body for long term ecological and activity benefit;
- Construction of Mawson's lookout to link the park to the adjacent natural heritage of the Ribble Estuary;
- Introduction of historic planting and landscaping around the park including new pathways;
- Improvements and interventions around the lake to facilitate community activities;
- Creation of new adventure play area for older children;

- Tennis improvements working with the LTA;
- A new Fairhaven website featuring online interactive resources designed to provide further access to collections and encourage further participation as part of a 360 degree pre and post visit experience;
- Backpacks for families and hard copy leaflets, quizzes and trails to support self-guided visits;
- A plant nursery for use by the project and the community;
- Heritage events such as the Fairhaven Regatta, Heritage Open Days and guided walks/talks;
- Sport and Recreation activities such as water sports, health and well-being walks and school recreation passes;
- Education and learning activities such as Ecology ID workshops, programmes for schools & FE/HE and adult learning;
- A new water sports centre delivering an expanded programme of water sport activities including swimming, sailing, canoeing, kayaking and paddle boarding;
- Volunteering and training opportunities in horticulture, heritage, youth steering groups and management.

In addition to the NLHF project, other sources of funding supported the development of a world-class mini adventure golf course on the site as well as tennis improvement (through the Lawn Tennis Association Beacon Fund).

## **2.4 Funding and Project Costs**

Fylde Borough Council was awarded a grant of £1,476,600 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for the restoration of Fairhaven Lake and Gardens under the Parks for People Programme. This grant represented 51% of the total eligible project cost of £2,897,792 (overall project costs including non-cash contributions and / or volunteer time was £3,226,428).

The costs up to May 2022 and actual spend under each heading are shown below in Table 1. The total project cost was £2,897,792. Of this, £1,750,589 was within the capital budget which the project was overspent by £162,932. However, at the time of writing, there was an underspend of £96,409 primarily due to the incomplete lake works and the limitations COVID-19 placed on the Activity Plan delivery.



The Grant Expiry Date has been extended up to March 2023 to allow the lake package to be delivered within the project. This will also allow the activity programme to be prolonged to November 2022 to utilise this underspend.

Cost Heading	R2 (£)	Actual (£)	Variance (£)
Repair and conservation work	874,483	1,455,000	580,517
Other capital works (inc. lake and adventure play)	876,106	458,521	-417,585
Interpretation	110,000	110,000	0
Professional fees	161,653	161,000	-653
New staff costs	168,375	168,375	0
Training for staff	0	0	0
Training for volunteers	9,000	3,000	-6,000
Travel and expenses for volunteers	7,300	1,000	-6,300
Other costs (activity)	42,940	25,000	-17,940
Equipment and materials	37,910	15,000	-22,910
Professional fees	10,600	5,500	-5,100
Recruitment	0	0	0
Publicity and promotion	0	0	0
Evaluation	9,000	9,000	0
Contingency	183,408	36,000	-147,408
Inflation	20,229	8,165	-12,064
Management & Maintenance	241,079	294,579	53,500
Volunteer time	145,709	51,243	-94,466
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,897,792</b>	<b>2,801,383</b>	<b>-96,409</b>

Table 1 Project agreed costs and actual spend

Table 2 below shows the sources of funding as anticipated at Round 2 compared to funds received. The majority of funding was to come from the NLHF grant with additional capital contributions were provided by Fylde Borough Council.

Through the project, staff applied for additional funding from third party organisations, however, not all funding was provided. The Sport England Community Asset Fund was capped at £100,000 per application, leading to a shortfall of £31,791. In March 2022, it was confirmed that the second-round bid to the Coastal Communities Fund had been unsuccessful. Staff are also awaiting new guidance from the Lawn Tennis Association, which has recently revised its funding criteria.

Private donations also came from the RSPB and United Utilities capital contributions, however, not all have been received.

Although the actual funding is £287,897 below the predicted amount, Fylde Borough Council has underwritten all funding, so there is no actual final shortfall.

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Amount (£)</b>	<b>Actual (£)</b>	<b>Variance (£)</b>
NLHF Grant	1,476,600	1,476,600	-
Council Capital Contribution	400,223	400,223	-
Council Contribution to Stannah Bank Landscaping	120,000	120,000	-
Sport England Community Asset Fund	131,791	100,000	-31,791
Coastal Communities Fund	130,000	£0	-130,000
Lawn Tennis Association	51,106	£0	-51,106
Lancashire Environmental Fund	30,000	30,000	-
Lytham Schools Foundation	15,000	15,000	-
United Utilities	60,000	0	-60,000
RSPB	8,000	8,000	-
Café Fit-Out	15,000	0	-15,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,437,720</b>	<b>2,149,823</b>	<b>-287,897</b>

Table 2 Project sources of funding. Note, the table excludes in-kind and revenue funding.







## 3 Project Delivery

### 3.1 Project staff

Fylde Borough Council hired two new staff members to oversee and deliver the project. A full-time Project Officer and part-time Activity Development Officer were appointed during the development phase before August 2019.

In October 2021, the Project Officer left the authority, and the role was handed over to another staff member.

### 3.2 Capital Works

#### 3.2.1 Building and Landscape Works

Capital works were initially delayed due to tender submissions being received significantly over budget. Subsequently, the project team decided to postpone the physical construction works until September 2020 to minimise disruption to the park, its visitors and the businesses as much as possible. In 2019, the project team changed the design team and re-designed the scheme, although this had no impact on productivity.

Once the capital works commenced, they were generally delivered to plan. Besides the lake works, COVID-19 did not significantly impact the capital programme, with most of the planning work completed remotely and contracts awarded in September 2020, after restrictions were lifted.

The Pagoda Building and Visitor Centre was completed and occupied by the RSPB before opening in April 2021. The Water sports Centre was completed in May 2021, although water was introduced to the building post-opening, and water sports resumed in June. Works to the Pavilion Cafe were delayed because the existing structure required additional temporary work and permanent steelwork to stabilise the building before any superstructure works or fit-out could commence. Following the practical completion in September 2021, the Pavilion Cafe had a soft opening in October 2021, ahead of an official opening ceremony in November.

Following practical completion, there was a modest list of 'snags' for the building works. However, since the council's Project Officer left the role, there have been issues getting the contractor to address these issues.

The designs for the restored Japanese Gardens were informed by a community archaeology excavation in 2018, which uncovered several original features. In January 2021, the original stonework was exposed entirely, and the first phase of work was completed in the Japanese Gardens. Contractors returned in April 2021 to complete the engineering works following the completion of the path works, and the Gardens were open to the public in June.

The contractor returned to the site in late 2021 to complete several minor outstanding works, including completing the Crazy Paving and raising the stepping stones. Planting took place throughout 2021 and 2022 and was the responsibility of the new Head Gardener and Fairhaven Site Manager, with support from the consulting Landscape Architect.

During the capital works, the site remained open, with an exclusion fence moving around according to the phases of work. The public was kept informed via newsletters and social media to try and reduce disruption to the site and its users. However, the delays caused by the tendering issues meant works were out of step with the Sea Defence works so works were present on site for a longer period, which was felt by the regular users.

### 3.2.2 Lake Works

The lake works were delayed until 2021 due to COVID-19 and issues relating to the new sluice gate linking the estuary to the lake. The Coastal Defence project completed the replacement of the new lake outfall in July 2020. However, upon review by the hydrologist, the new outfall did not meet the original specification, leading to a reduced tidal exchange. This brought the viability of the proposed lake works into question; the project hydrologist advised against the original dredging plans, which involved the removal of 9,000 cubic metres and adding this material to dunes.

After liaising with the Coastal Defence team and other key stakeholders, it was agreed that the preferred option would be to aggressively de-water the lake in the off-season with the sluice gate left entirely open to coincide with the highest tide levels. This would allow the exchange of tidal waters without requiring additional capital works and enable materials to be purged from the lake using an annual barge 'scrape' device. Around 1,000 cubic metres of material will be removed annually over several years, which will be less invasive and impactful to the surrounding environment and cost significantly less. The dredge has been taken out of the main capital scheme and is being moved the Management and Maintenance budget due to timescales of being able to apply to the MOD for permissions for the deposition of the silt into the estuary.

Due to the delays to the lake package delivery, the project Grant Expiry Date was extended until March 2023. Remaining works to be completed this autumn included improvements to the jetty, the lake edge pilot project, installation of grab chains and creation of the wader roost and activity base on the Islands.

### 3.2.3 Interpretation works

Initial designs for the interpretation were finalised in December 2020, and a graphics production and installation company were appointed in January 2021. An audio-visual hardware company were also selected and began work on the electrical installation in the Pagoda in January 2021.

Contractors completed the new Pagoda building exhibition in April 2021, and onsite interpretation panels and the external cafe panels were completed by October 2021, following the capital works. Once the site was clear in July 2021, drone footage was also captured. The birds-eye footage of the site was included in the Fairhaven app and interactive onsite kiosk.

## 3.3 Activity Plan

The delay in the capital works did not significantly hinder the activity plan as there were already onsite facilities to support the delivery of the events and activities. The activity plan commenced in February 2019, and the first year of events went well, with over 8,000 participants attending events, almost 4,000 more than targeted. However, in 2020 COVID-19 restrictions greatly impacted events at Fairhaven, reducing the number of events and participants, and the work volunteers were able to do on site.

Throughout the COVID-19 restrictions, the project staff worked hard to ensure the local community remained engaged with the project, using social media to keep people up to date and offering activities online when possible. A commendable innovation was using sound clips from the year one memory workshops to create immensely popular podcasts.

Fylde Borough Council took a risk-averse approach to re-starting events and activities even as COVID 19 regulations eased, and the activity programme went as planned, but with limited numbers. Once restrictions were lifted entirely, there was a return to indoor and large-scale drop-in events. There were also a lot of last-minute additions, such as the holiday and food activity (linked with the Free School Meals initiative) involving typical seaside activities for those restricted by lack of transport or financial difficulty. This had a good fit with the restoration



project, as working with Sure Start and communities in deprived areas was an NLHF objective. The Friends Group also assisted greatly with the events programme.

There were some issues and delays relating to the formal education sessions led by the RSPB. The RSPB had a blanket policy of no school trips to their sites until September 2021. The RSPB Education Officer based on site put a case together, arguing for allowing visits to re-start sooner due to the NLHF project. However, this was rejected as there were no dedicated toilets for visiting schools and the only available toilets at the site were also accessible to the public.

The upside of COVID was that people came to appreciate the space more. Fairhaven Lake and Gardens began to see greater use, particularly by people using the site for exercise and walking. Visitors started going to different areas of the site, and it is busier out of season. Along with the project improvements, there has been a positive impact on the use of facilities leading the adventure golf, bowling and boating to extend their seasons.

The community nursery was completed in 2019, and propagation was planned for January 2020. However, COVID-19 restrictions and issues within the Council regarding recruitment meant work on the community nursery had to be halted. The new Head Gardener was due to start in April 2021 but was only in place from September 2021. Work resumed in October when small groups of volunteers following social distancing and safety precautions were able to return. Work focused on clearing beds and building additional planting areas and workbenches made from recycled pallets. However, there was a knock-on effect on the number of volunteer hours generated for the project. Work in the community nursery had to be put back further due to the need to create a new storm water tank underneath the site. Although the polytunnel was not disturbed, other areas had to be cleared, including the raised beds. The Head Gardener has restarted the new infrastructure for the garden and the volunteering groups will start using the nursery again in spring 2023.

The Activity Programme was extended to account for the delays due to COVID-19 restrictions, the seasonal demand and the £90,000 underspend. Activities ran throughout spring and summer 2022.



## 4 | The Evaluation

## **4 The Evaluation**

### **4.1 Parks for People Programme Outcomes**

The overall project was also expected to deliver against the Parks for People outcomes, under which the funders would assess its success. These being;

#### **1 Outcomes for Heritage**

- 1a) As a result of our investment the Park and its heritage will be better managed
- 1b) As a result of our investment the Park and its heritage will be in a better condition
- 1c) The heritage of the Park will be better interpreted and explained
- 1d) The heritage of the Park will be identified/recorded

#### **2 Outcomes for People**

- 2a) People will have developed skills
- 2b) People will have learnt about heritage
- 2c) People will have volunteered time

#### **3 Outcomes for Communities**

- 3a) Your local community will be a better place to live, work or visit
- 3b) Environmental impacts will be reduced
- 3c) More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage
- 3d) Your local economy will be boosted
- 3e) Your organisation will be more resilient

## 4.2 Our Approach

The following documents were supplied and reviewed as part of the evaluation process:

- R2 Application Documents
- Annual Parks for People Data Reporting Sheets
- NLHF Progress Reports and Payment Requests
- Events and Activities Feedback Forms
- Events and Activities Reports
- Volunteer Hours Data
- Training Records
- Visitor Survey (2020 and 2022)
- Visitor Observation Studies (2020)
- Visitor Counter data
- Green Flag Award scoresheets
- Before, during and after photographs

Further information collected to inform the evaluation included interviews with key project stakeholders.





## 5 | Outcomes for Heritage



## 5 Outcomes for Heritage

### 5.1 As a result of our investment the Park and its heritage will be better managed (w)

#### 5.1.1 Green Flag Award

Fairhaven Lake achieved a Green Flag score of 70-74 in 2012/13 before any works were undertaken. Project staff aimed to increase their overall Green Flag score and set a target of 75-79 or above, equivalent to a high pass.

At the start of the NLHF restoration project in 2019, Fairhaven Lake was mystery shopped by a Green Flag Judge and achieved a pass.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Green Flag judges could not visit the site in 2020, so carried out a desk-only assessment of the site's Management Plan and supporting documents. Assessors concluded the document was comprehensive, with clear maintenance and cleansing regimes and a clear rationale for health and safety measures. The Plan also linked well with the Council's Environmental Policy and Strategy and NLHF Activity Plan, with a good marketing strategy. However, assessors commented there were issues around consistency and clarity in some areas. They also suggested updating the Plan to reflect documentation associated with the NLHF project better and showcase the work which has taken place on site.

In 2021, Fairhaven was Mystery Shopped again and passed with a 'green' score in every category. The judge commented, "excellent Park, well managed and maintained, RSPB staff very friendly and the site has certainly developed / improved since my last visit to the park". They thought providing litter pickers and bags at the RSPB centre was an "excellent idea" and noted the "excellent site history / interpretation within the RSPB centre and throughout".

Fairhaven Lake was achieved Green Flag Award again in June 2022. The judge noted wide range of facilities at the site and high levels of community engagement, referring to the site at the "focal point of Lytham". They also noted the high standards of planting and how well maintained the gardens were. They noted that the "newly established management team have made a great start to management of the gardens, and the plans going forward sound very positive". In the recommendations, they emphasised the need to ensure the plans were realistic and focus on the gardens and not just development.

### 5.1.2 Management and Maintenance Plan

Fairhaven Lake and Gardens has a Management and Maintenance Plan from 2015 to 2025. It is an ongoing plan and will be updated by the Project Officer and Activity Development Officer once the building works have got to the end of their defects period and all outstanding issues are rectified. When updated, the forecasts will be changed to reflect ten years post completion.

### 5.1.3 New Jobs and Work Experience

The two new job positions were filled to allow for the delivery of the project; a full-time Project Officer and part-time Activity Development Officer were appointed before August 2019.

As of September 2021, the new management structure as proposed in the MMP has been put in place. The park is currently maintained in-house by the parks operations team who report directly to the Operations Supervisor. The grounds maintenance operations are undertaken by a site-based team. The core team of three are led by a Craftsman Gardener and includes an apprentice undertaking horticultural NVQ training. The core team are supplemented by two seasonal gardeners for 26 weeks (42 hours per week) from April to October, to allow for the heavy seasonal workload.

This team is supported by the Parks & Coastal services team rangers, whose remit is to develop and implement biodiversity enhancement projects on all of Fylde's parklands. They undertake wildlife surveys and organise opportunities for environmental education and activities to promote the ecological value of our green spaces.

Project staff set out to provide ten work experience placements for local college students studying tourism, media, landscape and horticulture. During 2020, staff were unable to offer these due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, following the pandemic, staff were able to offer a smaller number of placements, including three through the capital works contractor, John Turner.

Staff also took part in the Industry Placement scheme with Blackpool and Fylde College. The placement student completed 45 days from November 2021 to April 2022, and helped develop the Fairhaven digital marketing plan, including work on the website and social media.

A high school work experience student also completed a full week, gaining experience covering all aspects of working on a park.

## **5.2 As a result of our investment the Park and its heritage will be in a better condition**

### **5.2.1 Repair and Restoration of Historic Features**

Following modification to the lake edges, a widened footpath has been added around the lake, improving access and allowing visitors to walk around and enjoy the entire lake. Extensive works to improve the lake condition and water quality were planned, including removing silt and installing aeration-pumps. However, due to project delays and issues with the lake outfall, desilting will now take place gradually following the project.

In addition to the lake works, three historic buildings were restored through the project. The original golf club house was restored and converted to the Pavilion Café. Inappropriate extensions were removed to expose the original features, including the colonnaded veranda and internal cornice details. In line with the architect's original intentions, the east elevation and roof were also remodelled. The interior was remodelled and access has been improved by levelling the split floor and introducing accessible toilets.

Previously, the buildings at Fairhaven were uninviting and confusing as they tried to fulfil too many uses. With the Pagoda Boathouse restored and repurposed, there is now a new visitor welcome and interpretation centre operated by the RSPB. The original timber and ironwork of the roof structure have been exposed to create a stunning feature and the walls now have a large interpretive feature.

Additional interior space has also been created through the conversion of the Isaac Dixon Boathouse which is now a water sport hub and community building. The remodelled building provides space for a classroom and facilities, such as toilets, changing facilities and storage, for lake users.

### **5.2.2 Reconstruction of Lost Features**

In addition to the restored buildings and lake works, two lost features were to be reconstructed through the project. Thomas Mawson's Japanese Garden was fully restored through the project, with designs informed by historical photos, Mawson's original plans and a 2018 community archaeological excavation. Works included restoration of the original steps and pathways, and recreation of a stepping stone feature.

Planting in the Japanese Gardens and wider site were informed by the original designs but, given the harsh coastal environment, species selected for the Japanese Garden were also be

hardy coastal species. The project team decided to hire a local gardener for the work due to their knowledge of the local area and conditions in the park.

Restoration of Mawson's Lookout over the estuary was part completed a part of the Coastal Defence Project

Regarding the wider landscaping works, the Adventure Golf works were completed in July 2020. The NLHF-funded Adventure Play Area works were completed in March 2020. Through the project, two new hard standing tennis courts were added which have created a new year-round offer for the Tennis Club.

# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Capital Works



Café front before



Café front after



Historic image of café back



Café back after



The café interior includes murals of spitfires, in-keeping with the heritage of the site.



# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Capital Works



Excavation of Japanese Gardens



Completed Stepping Stones in Japanese Gardens



Recreation of old photo, showing two children using the stepping stones in the Japanese Garden





# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Capital Works



Opening of Pagoda roof void



New welcome centre and interpretation space



Resurfacing and new paths around the lake



The Isaac Dixon Boathouse is now a water sport hub and had additional facilities, including a shower and classroom space.





# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Capital Works



Resurfacing the tennis courts



Tennis courts after



Play area before



Play area after



Adventure Golf before



Adventure Golf after

### 5.2.3 Rating Fairhaven Lake and Gardens

Visitor surveys were carried out in 2020 and 2022, receiving a total of 235 and 174 responses, respectively.

Respondents were asked to rate a number of aspects of Fairhaven Lake on a scale of one (poor) to four (very good). Chart 1 below shows the average scores given to each aspect in both 2020 and 2022 surveys. Notably, almost all aspects were rated more highly in 2022 than 2020; many of the aspects that have been restored or improved through the project, including the tennis courts, footpaths, café and floral displays have gone from adequate to good. Respondents also noted slight improvements in the site maintenance and cleanliness and appearance.

The only aspect which has decreased in its rating since 2020, is dog control. In 2020, dog control was rated as 2.9 out of four but decreased to 2.7, the lowest rating in 2022. Dog fouling, an additional aspect in 2022, was only rated as 2.8 out of four.

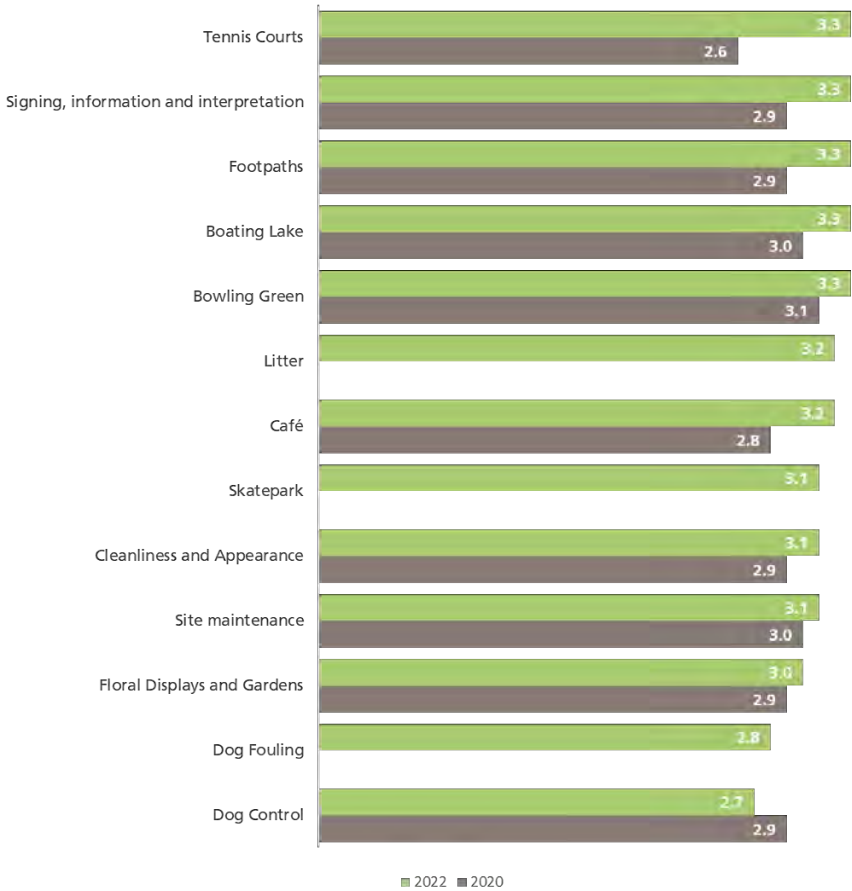


Chart 1 Rating aspects of Fairhaven Lake & Gardens. Where one is poor and four is very good



In 2017, prior to the project, levels of satisfaction were high, at 93%. This decreased in 2020 as a result of the capital works on site, with 87.7% respondents being satisfied or very satisfied. In 2022, levels of satisfaction with Fairhaven Lake have increased significantly, with 97.1% being satisfied or very satisfied. Not only is this a marked increase compared with 2020 but is also higher than the project target of 95.0%.

Fairhaven Lake’s score also remains high on TripAdvisor. Although the site has dropped to fourth of 25 things to do in Lytham, St Anne’s, it has maintained a score of 4.5 out of five and has been awarded a Traveller’s Choice Award 2022. The award is given to accommodations, attractions and restaurants that consistently earn great reviews from travellers and are ranked within the top 10.0% of properties on Tripadvisor.

Respondents were also asked if they had been aware of the project to restore Fairhaven Lake. Almost three quarters of the respondents (73.6%) said they had been aware, and of this over half (56.8%) described the changes they had seen as very positive and another two fifths (40.0%) described them as positive. As shown in Chart 2, the changes to the site most noted by visitors were the restoration of the Japanese Gardens (70.1%), café restoration (67.8%), new footpaths (63.2%) and refurbished visitor centre (62.1%).

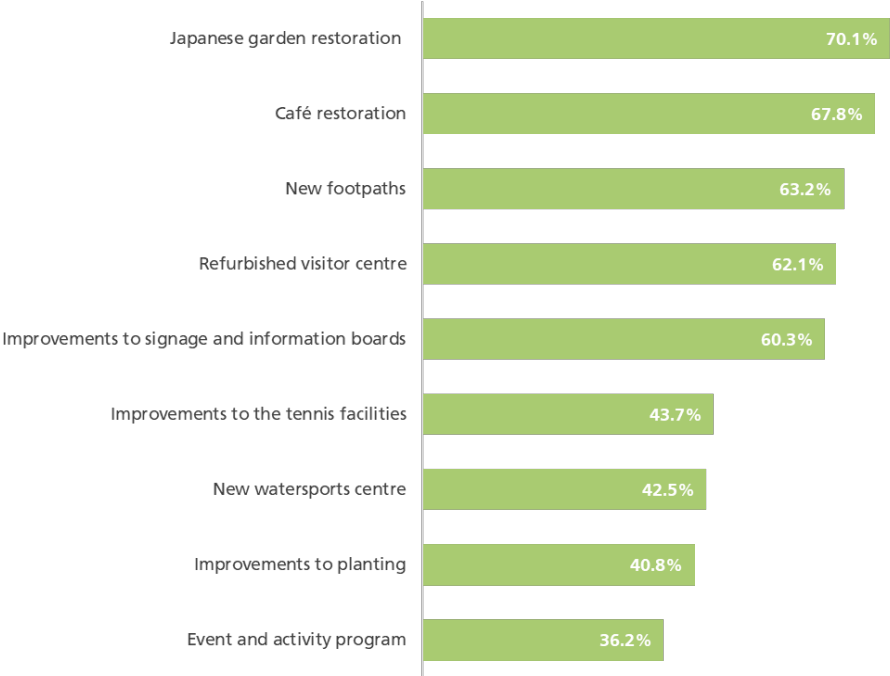


Chart 2 What changes have you noticed as a result of the project?

When asked about what changes they had noticed since 2018 which had been the most positive, respondents said the overall improvements to the site. Respondents said it felt like “it is being cared for” adding that the money “had been well spent” and the restoration had “brought life back into the park/lake”. Prior to the project, one respondent said the site had felt dilapidated but the project had “completely reinvigorate[d] the lake and its environment”.

*“It is a real jewel of regional significance”*

*“The positives are many. Seeing all the areas brought back to life, used by many morning, noon and evening shows how much this place is loved and enjoyed”*

*“Fairhaven lake was a childhood haunt of mine in the 60's when it was always busy. The rejuvenation of the area & the surrounding sea wall has brought visitors back”*

Other positives noted by respondents included the improved footpaths, car park and seating which have made the site more accessible. Some respondents said they particularly enjoyed the circular route around the lake. Respondent also liked the improved signs and interpretation, particularly the Spitfire Memorial which was unveiled in 2012 but had little interpretation of information available. The commented that the “signs around the lake are very well done and informative” and the “RSPB centre is brilliant with all the new information boards and lovely shop with brilliant knowledgeable staff”.

Several respondents also said the restored Japanese Gardens were a positive, with one commenting they had not known they existed. Respondents said the area was “lovely” and loved walking in the gardens. They also enjoyed the walk along the restored sea defences, with one respondent calling it “marvellous”.

The improved facilities, including the boating lake, café, the new play area and Adventure Golf had also been positive improvements. Respondents said these had contributed to making the site ideal for a “full family day out”. Respondents added that the facilities looked “smarter” and “very impressive”. Adding to the offer at the site, respondents also said they enjoyed the family and boating activities.

*“It feels a pleasure to visit and take my family and friends”*

*“It is so much more of a fulfilling place to visit the before the project”*

### **5.3 The heritage of the Park will be better interpreted and explained**

#### **5.3.1 Interpretation**

Through the project, a number of new interpretive features were developed and introduced at Fairhaven. New welcome and information panels have been placed around the site, as well as new trail waymarking to help visitors navigate the site.

Along with the new waymarking trail, a new Fairhaven app was developed for the site. Users can use the app to take interactive tours around the site, keep up to date with the most recent events and activities, or share a postcard on Facebook.

The restored Pagoda building now features a timeline exhibition, featuring artefacts from the 2018 community archaeological excavation, and a sound and light show. The building also features an interactive rotating kiosk with a live link to a camera mounted at the estuary which visitors can use to see the migrating birds. A drone was also used to capture birds-eye footage and 360-degree photography of the site which is included on the kiosk and in the app.



# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Capital Works



Rotating kiosk in restored Pagoda building



Fairhaven app



Examples of new signage and interpretation



### 5.3.2 Promotion and Social Media

The project has seen a consistent effort to communicate with local people about the project and the wider park. The project team also post regular project updates on social media, including Facebook and Twitter, which have 6,199 followers and 859 followers respectively. Of particular note, the Restoration Project Facebook Page has also accrued 5,450 likes; more than 20 times the target of 250 likes.

The project has seen an increase in the number of promotional methods and tools from two to nine. As well as the Fairhaven Twitter and Facebook pages, the Friends of Fairhaven Lake have their own Facebook page, which has achieved 3,562 likes, an increase of 2,067 since year one. A project website was also developed in addition to the FBC website and all NLHF associated activities and events were included with FBC weekly newsletter, distributed to residents and businesses. Wildlife and environmental events are advertised on the Fylde Ranger Team social media and leaflets are available in the RSPB Ribble Discovery Centre. Additionally, posters and press releases have been issued about activities and events and the project.

## 5.4 The heritage of the park will be identified/recorded

### 5.4.1 Community Archaeological Excavation

At the start of the project, a community archaeology excavation to re-discover Thomas Mawson's Japanese Garden and inform its conservation and reconstruction was carried out. In 2018, MOLES Archaeology and Churchill Archaeology were commissioned to organise a seven-day community archaeological excavation, which was held in April 2018. A total of 12 trenches were excavated across two sites, one in the Japanese Garden and one to the north-west of the garden at the site of the WWII Nissen huts.

Two of the main aims of the project were to provide a structured programme of archaeological training for volunteers and to encourage both existing audiences and non-audiences to engage with and realise the heritage of Fairhaven Lake. Members of the West Lancashire Metal Detecting Club were keen to assist in the excavation by scanning the soil heads and investigating the Nissen huts. Participants were also invited to assist with the excavation and the activity generated more than 570 hours of volunteering.

Participants received training in use of hand tool, processing and cataloguing finds, and preparing text and drawings of excavated findings. The skill level of the participants increased noticeably throughout the excavation and the experts noted that participants became more confident.



Many of the participants had never visited Fairhaven Lake and Gardens nor assisted on an archaeological dig. Feedback for the event was very high and participants agreed the excavation was a fun, safe, informative and organised environment. They also added that they felt the archaeology was significant and a worthwhile contribution to the history of Lytham St Annes. Many were eager to be involved in future community archaeology projects, only commenting that they would like longer excavations in future.

Unfortunately, relatively few artefacts were uncovered. A total of 66 items were uncovered, mostly composed of glass and metal. Most were dated to the 20<sup>th</sup> century and some from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most were believed to be a result of 'general disposal' one notable find was an ornamental iron handle or plate found near the WWII Nissen huts.

The most prominent features discovered during the excavation were the stone and earthen structures associated with the former Japanese Garden. Two sets of stone steps were uncovered, along with a shingle bank and rocky outcrop. Several features do not appear on historic photographs or the original plans by Thomas Mawson, hence the excavation was an important step in the restoration, ensuring plans for the reconstructed Japanese Gardens were more accurate.

#### 5.4.2 Fairhaven Podcast

In 2020, during the COVID-19 restrictions limited the numbers of activities and audience engagements which could take place. To ensure audiences could still learn about and engage with the heritage of the site, sound clips from the year one memory workshops were used to create a short series of podcasts. The podcasts cover the history of boating and play at Fairhaven, and nature at the site.

They are available online at: <https://discoverfylde.podbean.com/>

#### 5.4.3 Photographic Record

Photographs have been taken throughout the project, capturing the progress of the capital works and activity highlights. Examples are shown throughout this report.

## 5.5 Summary of Outcomes for Heritage

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
1	<b>Park and its heritage will be better managed</b>	Achieve Green Flag Award & Improve the Green Flag score	Band 70-74	Band 75-79 or above	Passed (June 2022)	N/A
2		Management and Maintenance Plan (MMP) – action plan is actively being delivered	N/A	Annual action plan outputs successfully achieved	Awaiting review	N/A
3		New jobs created (FTE)	2	2 (Full-time Project Officer & Part-Time Activity Development Officer for 3 years)	2	Target achieved
4		Work experience placements (FTE)	0	10 across the programme	7	-3

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
5	<b>Heritage will be in a better condition</b>	Built and landscape heritage: Repair/restoration of buildings, historic features & landscape features	N/A	(1) Golf club house restored to a heritage café (2) Pagoda Boathouse into a visitor centre (3) 'Issac Dixon' boathouse into a water sports and community building  Plus, lake enhancements and landscaping works	(1) Golf club house now Pavilion Café (2) Pagoda Boathouse now visitor centre (3) Isaac Dixon Boathouse now water sports hub and community building  Lake enhancements ongoing Landscaping works complete	Target achieved
6		Reconstruction of lost features	N/A	(1) Japanese Garden (2) Mawson's Lookout  Plus, the number and type of unexpected finds during community archaeology sessions that will be displayed in the new visitor centre.	(1) Japanese Garden (2) Mawson's Lookout completed as part of Coastal Defence Project	Target achieved
7		Overall satisfaction with the park	93% (2017 survey)  4.5/5* on Tripadvisor 3 of 24 things to do in Lytham, St Anne's  Fairhaven Restoration Project Facebook page – liked by 182 people	95%  4.8/5* on Tripadvisor 2 of 24 things to do in Lytham, St Anne's  Fairhaven Restoration Project Facebook page – liked by over 250 people	97.1%  4.5/5* on Tripadvisor 4 of 25 things to do in Lytham, St Anne's  Fairhaven Restoration Project Facebook page – liked by 5,450 people	Target achieved  -0.3 -2  Target achieved

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
8	<b>Heritage will be better interpreted and explained</b>	A visitor / interpretation hub developed within the pagoda building	N/A	Visitor / interpretation hub opened	Visitor / interpretation hub completed 2021	Target achieved
9		Themes & type of physical, on site interpretation methods	Current interpretation includes welcome & information boards, the arts trail, wildlife interpretation in the RSPB's Ribble Discovery Centre & the replica Spitfire	Themes to include park timeline, town, the lake, the sea & the estuary / river. Methods to include: the welcome centre, the cafe, information boards, way markers along the site trail & accompanying app plus the website	Welcome Centre, café, information boards, waymarking and app completed.	Target achieved



ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
10		Number of promotional methods or tools used	2 - FBC website & Discover Fylde website	9 - Fairhaven HLF twitter page, FBC website, Discover Fylde website, FoFL Facebook page, Fylde Sport twitter and Facebook page, Visit Lancashire website & RSPB Ribble Discovery Centre webpage and RSPB Northern Region twitter and Facebook. Plus press releases and posters in public areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fairhaven Twitter page – 680 followers</li> <li>2. Friends of Fairhaven Lake Facebook page – 2,482 likes</li> <li>3. Project website</li> <li>4. FBC website</li> <li>5. All NLHF associated activities and events are included with FBC weekly newsletter which is distributed to residents and businesses in the borough</li> <li>6. Wildlife based events are included within the RSPB Ribble Discovery Centre</li> <li>7. Environmental events leaflet and are publicised with the Fylde Ranger team social media</li> <li>8. Posters</li> <li>9. Press releases</li> </ol>	Target achieved
11	<b>Heritage will be identified / recorded</b>	Create a photographic archive of the project capturing before, during & after records	Before project photographs captured	During construction, activities & after project photos collated	Activities photos captured throughout capital works and activity highlights.	Target achieved



6 | Outcomes for People

## 6 Outcomes for People

### 6.1 People will have developed skills

#### 6.1.1 Staff and Volunteer Training

Since June 2019, 13 members of staff have attended structured training events through the project. Training included heritage training with the Friends of Fairhaven Lake, wildlife training with the RSPB, and conflict resolution and Mental Health First Aid with Lancashire Adult Learning. Staff also gained a qualification in being a Park Ambassador Welcome Host from Hub62, First Aid at Work with First Aid Direct and Level 2 powerboating with the RYHA.

A total of 59 volunteers have received training over the course of the project. Topics covered have included heritage training, wildlife, monitoring & evaluation, mental health first aid and support, and writing a project proposal. Overall, 12 volunteers became qualified in First Aid at Work or Welcome Hosting.

Since the start of the project, a total of 72 volunteers and staff have been trained, falling slightly short of the targeted 100 over the course of the project. This is likely due to the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions which forced volunteers to stay at home and limited the number of opportunities to engage throughout 2020.

#### 6.1.2 Work Experience

It was planned that ten young people from deprived areas were to develop skills in project management, leisure & tourism and sports & recreation through work experience and placements, however, initially none of these could be offered due to COVID-19 restrictions and education bubbles.

Once the COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, work placements and training were able to be offered at Fairhaven.

Staff hosted a T-level Digital Design student from Blackpool and Fylde College for 45 days as parts of their long-term industry placement. Work experience included designing and coding a new Fairhaven template website, reviewing the digital marketing strategy, and a personal project.

A high school work experience student also completed a full week, gaining experience of the park’s operations and leisure. They worked within each area of the park including ground maintenance, leisure services, water sport activity and event planning.

Contractor, John Turners, ensured apprenticeship students were involved in the capital works at Fairhaven to give experience of heritage restoration projects, including construction and joinery students. Three apprentices have been working for John Turner Construction Group, assisting with the capital works. These have included an apprentice joiner, who attended 12 hours of a Joinery Workshop, a site-based apprentice electrician who has worked 164 hours, and a site-based apprentice bricklayer who has worked 242 hours.

## 6.2 People will have learnt about heritage

### 6.2.1 Heritage Understanding

As part of the visitor survey, respondents were asked to rate their general understanding of the heritage value of Fairhaven Lake. In 2020, around two thirds (66.9%) of respondents felt their understanding was good or very good. As this was the first time this question was asked as part of a visitor survey, it has been used for the baseline.

In 2022, respondents were asked to rate their heritage understanding again. As shown in Chart 2, a similar proportion rated their understanding as good or very good (64.7%). Unfortunately, this is below the target of 80.0%, however, the heritage interpretation at the site is relatively new and it may take more time for visitors to become more confident in their knowledge of the site.

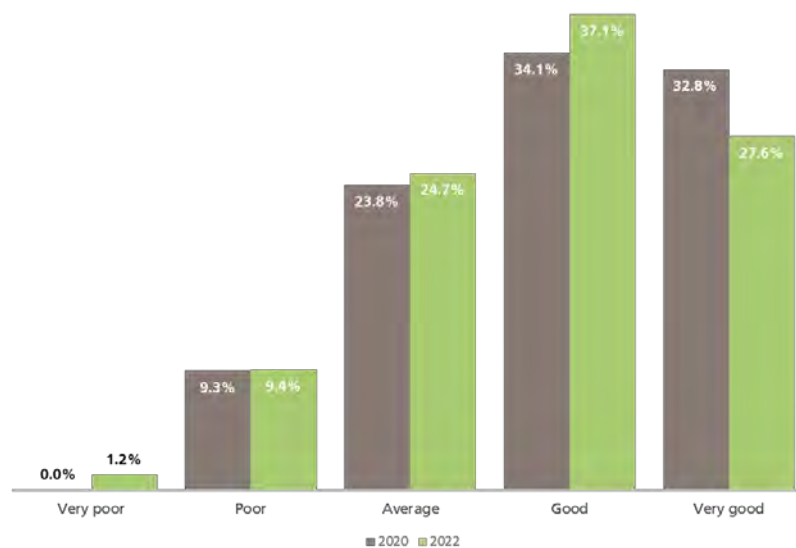


Chart 3 Heritage understanding





The words "local" and "family" also appeared frequently. For many, the park and lake were very personal and part of their family history. Respondents said they had relatives nearby and often used the lake and facilities. Many talked about visiting Fairhaven Lake as a child, citing the activities that used to take place on the lake, such as water-skiing and boating. One respondent said they had elderly relatives who were members of the water-skiing club whose pictures are shown in the café. Several respondents mentioned the site's strong links with the community.

Several respondents also mentioned the RSPB being onsite and knew Fairhaven Lake had a wide range of bird species and was an important stopover for migratory birds.

### 6.2.2 Events and Activities to Explain Heritage

A total of 22 events and activities to interpret or explain heritage have taken place since the beginning of the project, more than double the initial target of ten events. The heritage events, which have included the Autumn Arts Festival, Heritage Walks, Heritage Open Day and Fairhaven Regatta, attracted over 7,000 visitors.

This is particularly notable as COVID-19 significantly impacted the number of events that were able to take place during the second year of the project. A total of 89 people attended heritage and learning activities throughout Year 2. While visitors were not able to attend Heritage Walks in person, the Friends of Fairhaven Lake have also produced a virtual heritage walk around the lake, which is available online (<https://www.discoverfylde.co.uk/fairhaven-heritage-walks/>).

### 6.2.3 Education

The formal RSPB education programme was delayed until September 2021 due to COVID-19 and a blanket policy of no school trips to RSPB sites. However, schools have been able to engage with the self-led trial, with a total of 252 pupils participating in trials which included seaside orienteering, autumn orienteering and heritage features.

Through the project, Fairhaven Lake can also host water sports sessions for schools. NW Outdoors are a private company who run kayaking and canoeing mainly for school groups from multiple locations including Fairhaven Lake. They have delivered some subsidised sessions through the project although these have been disrupted by COVID-19 and works to the site. Across 2020 and 2021, 234 pupils participated in school water sports sessions, including kayaking, canoeing and orienteering.

The new facilities have made sessions much more professional and comfortable. They have better equipment which NW Outdoors now hire from the site where previously they needed to bring their own each time. They are in process of installing a permanent orienteering course which will be used by NW Outdoors when the groups are large and need to be split in half for water-based sessions. However, the course will be open to everyone with maps and a pack available at the visitor centre.

NW Outdoors have yet to start a full season with schools but anecdotally there is a lot of excitement from schools about sessions at the lake. There are many schools within walking distance and there are more deprived schools towards Blackpool. Some of these schools can't afford a coach to the Lake District and are excited by the prospect of giving children a new experience so close to home.

Since re-opening in September 2021, 2,413 pupils have participated in the new RSPB education programme, more than the target initially set for the three years the programme was to be delivered. The activities are aimed at multiple age groups, from early years to key stage three. They include a range of hands-on learning experiences that make the most of the unique habitats near the site, including mud dipping, which is exclusive to the Fairhaven Lake Visitor Centre. The cross-curricular programme covers various topics, including plants, birds and minibeads, coastal geography and history, and sensory walks.

The education offer has benefitted significantly from improvements to the site; there is a large learning space in the welcome centre and interpretation hub, which visiting schools can use as a base for their activities. The Water Sports Centre also offers a new space for educational activities and provides toilets and storage for visiting school groups.

### **6.3 People will have volunteered time**

#### **6.3.1 Volunteer Numbers and Activities**

Throughout the project, over 60 volunteers have been engaged and, at present (September 2022), there are 63 regular volunteers. Project staff set a target of 230 volunteers engaged, however, the actual number of volunteers has fallen 40 volunteers short. However, it is worth noting that COVID-19 restrictions limited volunteering opportunities at Fairhaven Lake during 2020.

Table 3 below shows that volunteers have dedicated a total of 3,452 hours to the project so far. Equivalent to 447 days of volunteer time and over £51,000 in volunteer contributions.

Activity	Total Hours	In-kind Contributions
Friends of Fairhaven Lake	930.5	£11,225.93
Event Support	755.5	£11,826.25
Monitoring and Evaluation	109	£2,847.00
Resident and External Clubs	853	£14,161.58
Volunteer Training	166	£1,983.80
Education Support	109	£2,475.60
Community Nursery	227	£1,963.02
Steering and Working Groups	224	£2,833.57
Research and Archive	78	£1,926.60
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3452</b>	<b>£51,243.35</b>

Table 3 Volunteer hours by activity

### Friends of Fairhaven Lake

The Friends of Fairhaven Lake area fully constituted group who have their own funds and are able to raise and access funds to support projects they deliver on site. They have been through several iterations, with the most recent formed as the project planning started. They see their purpose as supporting the project and the improvements to the site and have been heavily involved, with a representative on the project planning board.

The Friends Group saw a big opportunity with the Sea Defence project which created more footfall along the edge of Fairhaven following improvements to the promenade adjacent to the site. They felt there was a good opportunity to input and influence the project in development and quickly drew up a list of their priorities for the project. These included a path all the way around the lake, halting the deterioration of the site, introducing boats back on the lake and more prominence for the social history of the site, while the nature heritage was well covered by the RSPB. The Friends Group also wanted somewhere for groups such as theirs to meet and also a space to be used by education groups.

The Friends Group continue to be heavily involved in the project, dedicating over 900 hours to support events and develop interpretation. The Friends of Fairhaven Lake worked hard to produce a series of virtual heritage walk videos which were launched on the Discover Fylde website and social media.

Despite COVID-19, the Park Ambassador scheme, which was set up by the Friends Group, was successfully launched in March 2020 and volunteers from Fairhaven Lake project and the RSPB Centre were trained in customer service, heritage, natural heritage and visitor monitoring. Seven new park ambassador volunteers were also recruited throughout the year.

Throughout COVID-19, volunteers and staff worked hard to continue to volunteer programme and the volunteer steering have been working from home and meeting via Zoom.

Owing to their work and dedication, the Friends of Fairhaven Lake have experienced a number of successes throughout the project:

- Accessing funding for projects including £30K for an adventure playground, around half of the total cost
- Organising events such as the big picnic- raising funds from traders and other activities in order to allow investment in entertainment which is free for families
- Accessing funding from other sources including the Co-op Community Fund
- Benefiting from volunteering themselves- 'pride', 'giving something back', 'having a better place on the doorstep', and the social element of meeting each other and 'working on something in retirement that is meaningful' are all reasons cited

### **Event Support**

Volunteers have played a key role in delivering events and activities at Fairhaven Lake by stewarding and supporting events behind the scenes, such as providing refreshments, taking photographs and offering First Aid care. As well as supporting events run by others, volunteers have also hosted heritage and wellness walks at the site, as well as running many of the have-a-go sessions at Open Days.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Volunteers also supported the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Fairhaven Lake Restoration Project by running events surveys and undertaking visitor observation studies.

### **Resident and External Clubs**

Volunteers from the clubs that use Fairhaven Lake, including the Model Boat Club, Ribble Cruising Club and Tennis Club, assisted with numerous events to increase their membership and advertise the offer at the site. Activities included demonstration events, instructing participants at the Regatta and running displays. Club volunteers dedicated 853 hours to the project, equivalent to 122 days.



### **Education support**

The education offer was also supported by volunteers who assisted with school visits, supporting events and putting together resources for events.

### **Community Nursery**

Volunteers dedicated 227 hours to the community nursery onsite. They initially worked with the Lancashire Gardens Trust to establish the volunteer-run plant nursery, including accessible raised beds that the volunteers built. A significant amount of work has gone into maintaining the nursery, such as regular litter picks with Duke of Edinburgh volunteers, replanting and weeding.

### **Steering and Working groups**

As part of their key role at the site, volunteers have dedicated time to various steering and working groups to guide the work and events that have taken place at the site. Groups which volunteers have been involved with include the Youth Steering Group, Education Working Group and Heritage Steering Group.

### **Research and Archive**

Volunteers also played an integral role in developing much of the interpretation on site through their extensive research and work, which included searching for images, creating the history booklet and timeline and producing display materials. They also supported staff by reviewing the interpretation artwork and fact-checking the much of the information on display.

In 2020, volunteers were asked what the most popular activities were. The most popular activity for volunteers was research, which over a quarter of respondents (27.6%) said they helped with. This was followed by events (24.1%) and horticulture (20.7%) (Chart 3).

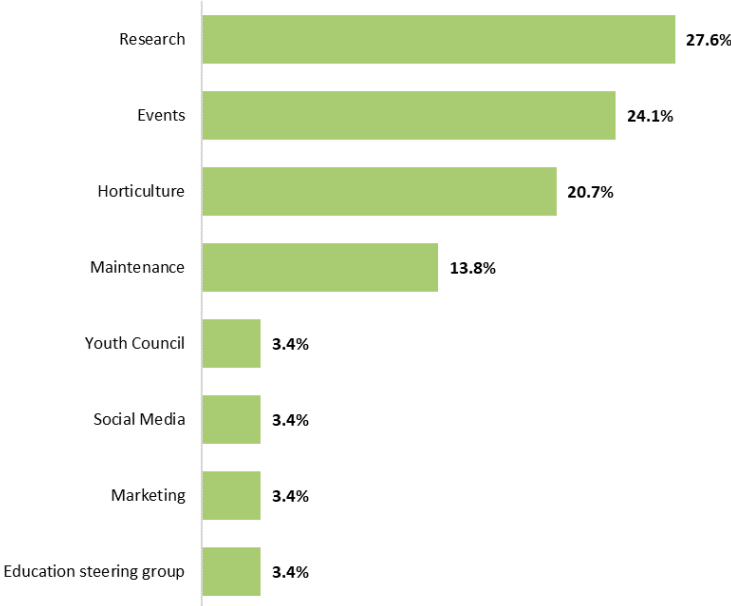


Chart 4 Most popular volunteer activities

Some images of the volunteer activities are shown overleaf.

# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Volunteering



Volunteer Gardening Group



Duke of Edinburgh Litter Pick Volunteer



Archeology dig at Japanese gardens



Making wildflower seed bombs



Park Ambassador Welcome Host  
Training



Heritage Training Session

### 6.3.2 Volunteer Profile

With the recruitment of new volunteers, the volunteer profile has also changed and is more in line with the profile of the local area. Notably, there has been an increase in volunteers under 25, including a volunteer from the Duke of Edinburgh scheme who has helped around the site with a litter pick. Overall, 7.9% of volunteers are under 25, compared with none at the start of the project.

Representation of disabled volunteers has also increased, with 11.1% of volunteers considering themselves to have a disability, and there is now a more even gender split, following the recruitment of more male volunteers. Previously underrepresented ethnicities are also better represented; previously all volunteers were from a White British background but volunteers from Pakistani and Mixed (White and Black Caribbean) ethnicities have become involved.

A total of 14 volunteers completed the Volunteer Survey in 2020. Ten had been volunteering for more than a year at Fairhaven Lake, although the survey was also completed by some more recent volunteers; three had been volunteering for six months to a year, and another for one to six months. Most volunteers helped once or twice a week, and half would help for about one or two hours a month.

Volunteers were asked to provide their postcodes which were mapped and analysed in order to work out where volunteers at Fairhaven Lake tended to come from. As Figure 2 overleaf shows, all 14 volunteers were very local, travelling from within Lytham, with the furthest coming from 3.6 miles (5.8km) away.






Most volunteers found out about opportunities at Fairhaven through social media or from other volunteers.

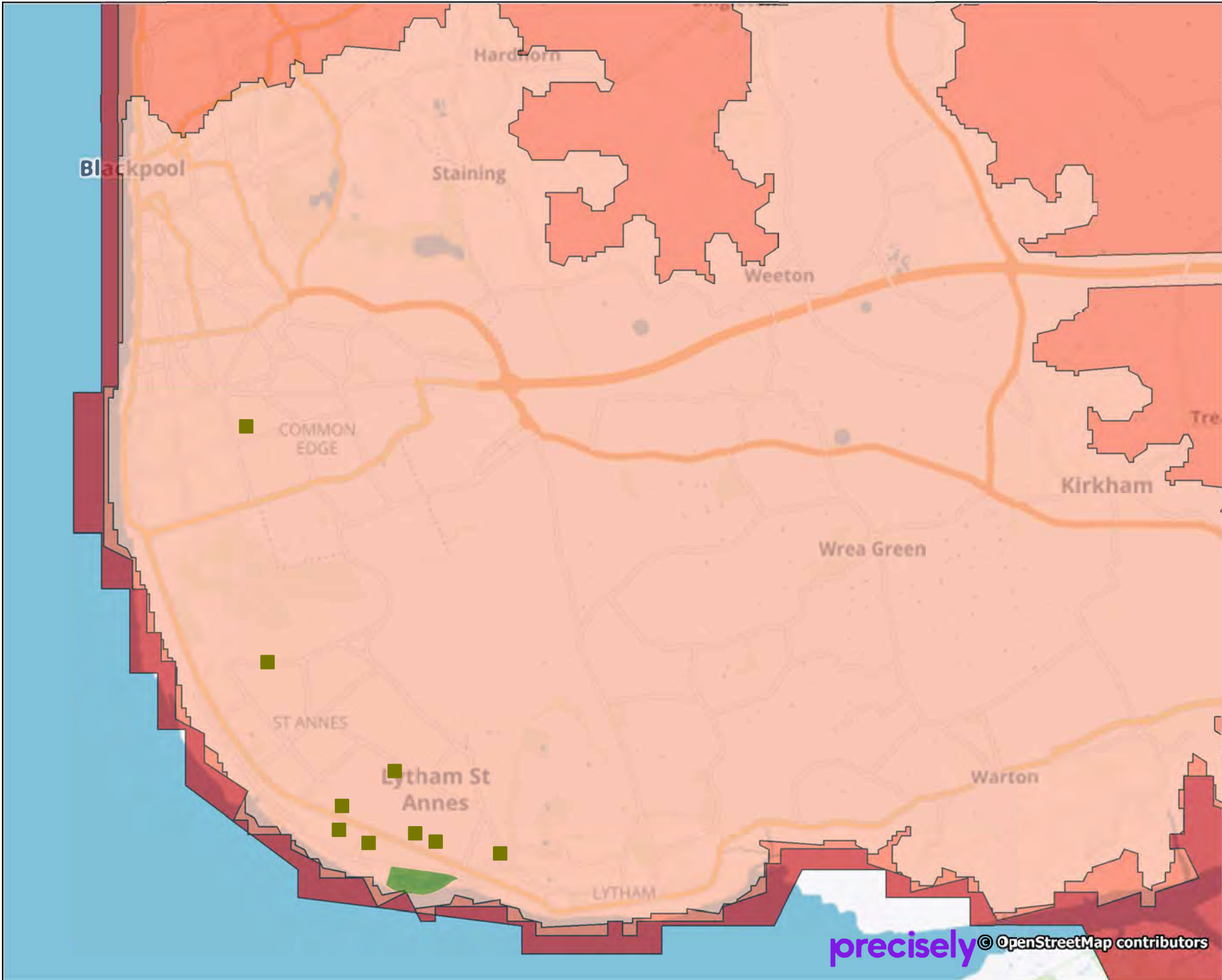


# Fairhaven Lake Year 2 Evaluation

## Figure 2 Volunteer Survey Respondents

**LEGEND**

-  Fairhaven Lake
- Drivetime**
  -  <20 minutes
  -  20-40 minutes
  -  40-60 minutes
-  Volunteer survey respondents



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### 6.3.3 Volunteer Experiences

When asked why they volunteered, the most common reason to put something back into the local area, with 12 of the 14 volunteers (85.7%). This was followed by helping the environment and/or Fairhaven Lake, with ten volunteers. None of the volunteers said they had experienced any barriers that affected their ability to volunteer at Fairhaven Lake.

Most of the volunteers said they gained enjoyment from volunteering (12 of 14). This was closely following by gaining new friends and socialising (11 out of 14). Six volunteers said they gained skills and training, with five saying they had attended further education or training as a result of volunteering at Fairhaven Lake.

When asked how satisfied they were with the support that they received as a volunteer, 13 of the 14 volunteers (92.9%) said they were satisfied or very satisfied. On a scale of one to five, where one is very appreciated, 13 volunteers also rated the level of appreciation they felt for their contributions as one or two. While 13 also said they would rate their experience volunteering as very good or good.

Respondents were asked what volunteering activities they would like to see offered at Fairhaven Lake in the future. Some said they would like to join the Lake Ambassador Scheme. There was also an emphasis on socially based volunteering, such as more events and helping deliver education activities. One respondent said litter picks and environmental works.

When asked what could be improved with volunteering at Fairhaven Lake, two volunteers said getting more volunteers engaged. Another suggested set volunteering times and days.

All 14 volunteers said they were interested in volunteering at Fairhaven Lake in the future.

Some volunteers also added that they "love volunteering at Fairhaven Lake" and they were proud to be part of it. One commented that they "would particularly like to thank Alan Pedder and Julie Vale for their outstanding contributions". A couple commented that it had been difficult trying to do everything over Zoom, but they still enjoyed it and felt they were able to contribute. While another added that following the restoration, there would be more volunteering opportunities for people to get involved in.

For more insight into volunteer experiences at Fairhaven Lake, see the following case studies.









#### 6.4 Summary of Outcomes for People

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
12	People will have developed skills	Number of staff & partners e.g., RSPB attending structured training activity (& type)	0	6 (per year) 100 staff and volunteers will be trained as a result of the project	6 (Year 4) 1 (Year 3) 5 (Year 2) 1 (Year 1)  72/100	+1 -1 -5  -28
13		Number of volunteers attending structured training activity (& type)	0	100 throughout the project e.g., heritage workshops, water sports instruction, leading walks & talks, IT, marketing & managing events  100 staff and volunteers will be trained as a result of the project	8 (Year 3) 40 (Year 2) 11 (Year 1)  72/100	-41  -28
14		Young people from deprived areas will develop skills in project management, leisure & tourism and sports & recreation through work experience and placements.	0	10 across the programme (due to start in year 2)	5	-5

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
15	<b>People will have learnt about heritage</b>	% of visitors surveyed agree that they have a good understanding of the heritage value of the site e.g., awareness of original plans for Fairhaven by Thomas Mawson, heritage features, biodiversity	66.9%	80.0%	64.7%	-15.3%
16		Number of events/activities to interpret/explain heritage e.g., oral history, archaeology & history of clubs exhibitions	0	10 (Fairhaven Open Day, Heritage Regatta, Autumn Arts performance, Archaeology events, heritage walks & talks, Heritage Open Day, Memories event & theatre production, family heritage afternoons, work in progress tours & exhibitions)	9 (Year 3) 2 (Year 2) 11 (Year 1)	+12
17		Number of people engaging with heritage/learning activities	0	1580 participants attending events such as walks/talks & ID workshops per year	2,475 (Year 3) 89 (Year 2) 4,732 (Year 1)	+895 (Year 3) -1,491 (Year 2) + 3,152 (Year 1)
18		Number of formal education pupils using the new classroom space, new welcome centre and interpretation hub	2017/18 formal education bookings: 1,606 pupils	Increase to 2,400 over the 3-year delivery phase	2,413	+13

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
19		Development & implementation of a new cross curricular education programme to support the study of local history with the RSPB & develop of supporting learning materials	Current RSPB education programme	Combined programme developed & learning materials accessible that incorporate heritage aspects of the site	Programme being delivered since October 2021	N/A
20	<b>People will have volunteered time</b>	Number of volunteers	48 volunteers regularly contribute to the park	50 volunteers will contribute their time and talent to the project (in year 1) (80 – year 2, 100 – year 3)  FOFL & Project Volunteer Group merged into one  Fairhaven Partnership Group created	61 (Year 1) 66 (Year 2) 63 (Year 3)	-40
21		Volunteer Profile:	65% M: 35% F 100% WB: 0% BME, 5% Disabled % Under 25 0%	50% M: 50% F, 98% WB: 2% BME, 10% Disabled % Under 25 15%  To broadly reflect local demographics of Fylde	49.2% M: 50.8% F 95.2% WB: 4.8% BME 11.1% disabled % Under 25 7.9%	-0.8%: +0.8% -2.8%: +2.8% +1.1% -7.1%
22		Number of volunteer hours and range of activities	350 (per year) Management and Maintenance	3,500 (per year) Management and Maintenance, Marketing, Horticulture, Capital Works and Events		



ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
23		% of volunteers who feel appreciated for their volunteer contributions	100%	100%	92.9%	-7.1%



## 7 | Outcomes for Communities

# 7 Outcomes for Communities

## 7.1 Your local community will be a better place to live, work or visit

### 7.1.1 Local Community

Results from the 2020 visitor survey and event surveys been used to complete the baselines for the percentage of residents surveyed who agree that the park enhances their quality of life and the percentage of event attendees agreeing that involvement in events & activities is improving their health & wellbeing.

When asked if they felt Fairhaven Lake had a positive impact on the local community, 96.5% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, a slight increase when compared to 2020 results (93.5%) (Chart 5). The number of respondents who strongly agreed has increased from 50.9% to 57.1% since 2020. Furthermore, none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that Fairhaven Lake has a positive impact on local community compared to 1.3% in 2020.

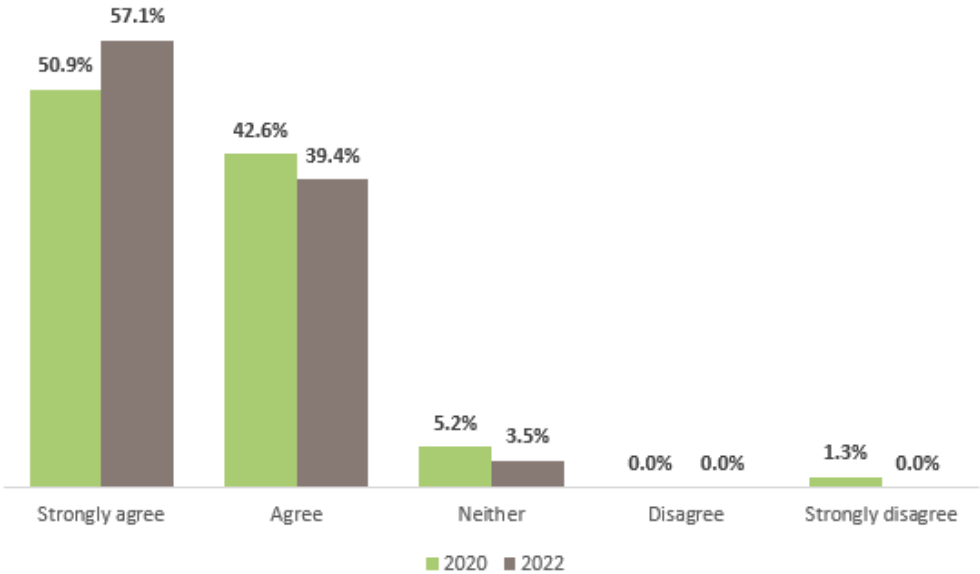


Chart 5 Positive impact on the local community

As well as restoring the site, the project sought to engage the local community through the Community Nursery which has seen residents get involved in growing and maintaining the garden.

7.1.2 Quality of Life

The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (93.6%) that visiting Fairhaven Lake enhanced their quality of life (Chart 6). When compared to 2020 results this has increased slightly by 4.7%, with the number of respondents who strongly agreed increasing from 42.1% in 2020 to 50.3% in 2022. Furthermore, none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that visiting Fairhaven Lake enhanced their quality of life, compared to 0.8% in 2020.

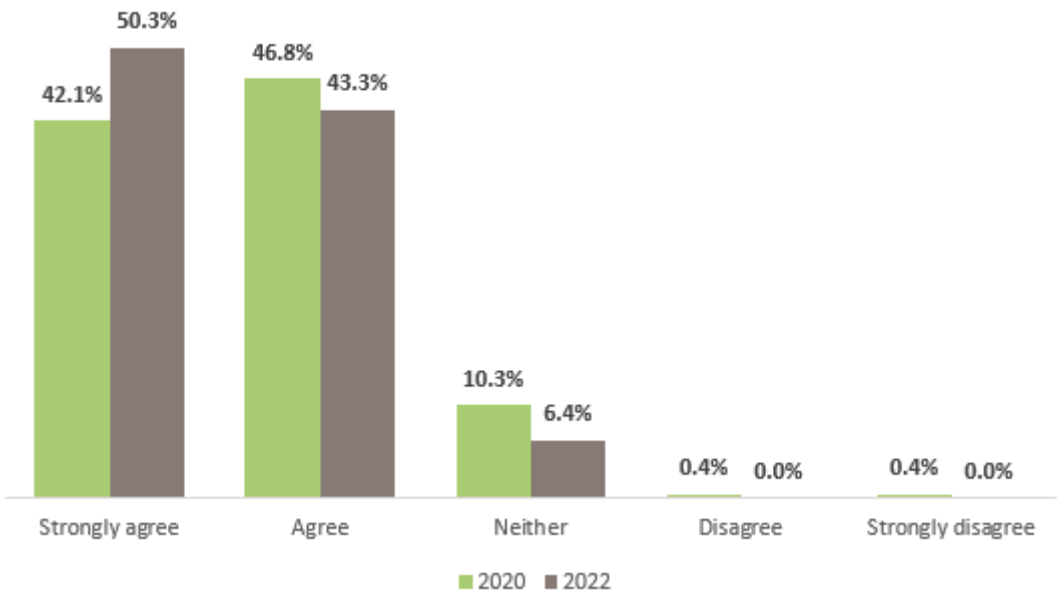


Chart 6 Quality of life



### 7.1.3 Health and Wellbeing

There was also a high level of agreement that Fairhaven Lake enhanced overall health and wellbeing; 89.3% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed (Chart 7), a slight increase when compared to 2020 results (88.2%). The number of respondents who strongly agreed has increased when compared to 2020 results from 44.1% in 2020 to 53.6% in 2022. Furthermore, none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that Fairhaven Lake has enhanced overall health and wellbeing compared to 0.8% in 2020.

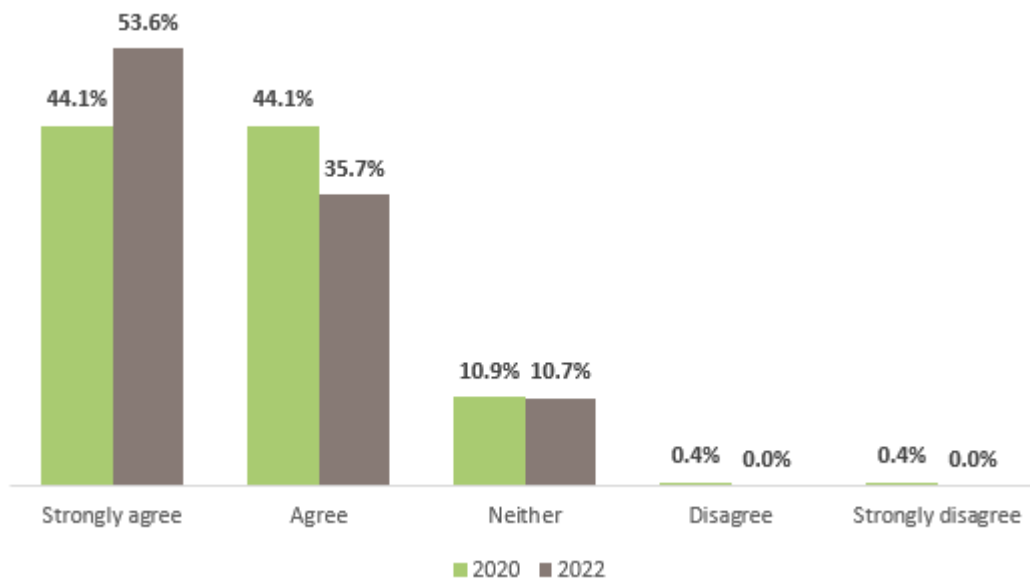


Chart 7 Overall health and wellbeing

## 7.2 Environmental impacts will be reduced

Through the project, staff sought to reduce the environmental impact of activities at the Fairhaven Lake. Throughout the site, and particularly in the Japanese Gardens, new planting schemes have been introduced which incorporate perennial planting and wildflowers instead of typical summer bedding. As well as increasing the biodiversity on site, the gardens have been planted with hardy local coastal species which will not be detrimental to the dune ecosystems nearby if they self-seed. The site has also benefited from having a local gardener involved who has extensive knowledge of the local plants.

Additional work which will benefit the local environment and reduce the impacts of the site are planned to take place as part of the additional lake work package. They will include the creation of a wader high tide roost on the foreshore and a new aeration system and sluice gate. The

latter is anticipated to return it to a brackish habitat and improve the quality of the water, reducing fish and protected eel deaths and preventing future algal blooms.

### 7.3 More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage

#### 7.3.1 Visitor Numbers and Profile

Visitor counters were installed in 2017, creating a baseline of 150,000 visits to the wider site annually and 37,557 to the RSPB Visitor Centre. The project team set targets to increase visitor numbers to 190,000 and 50,000, respectively.

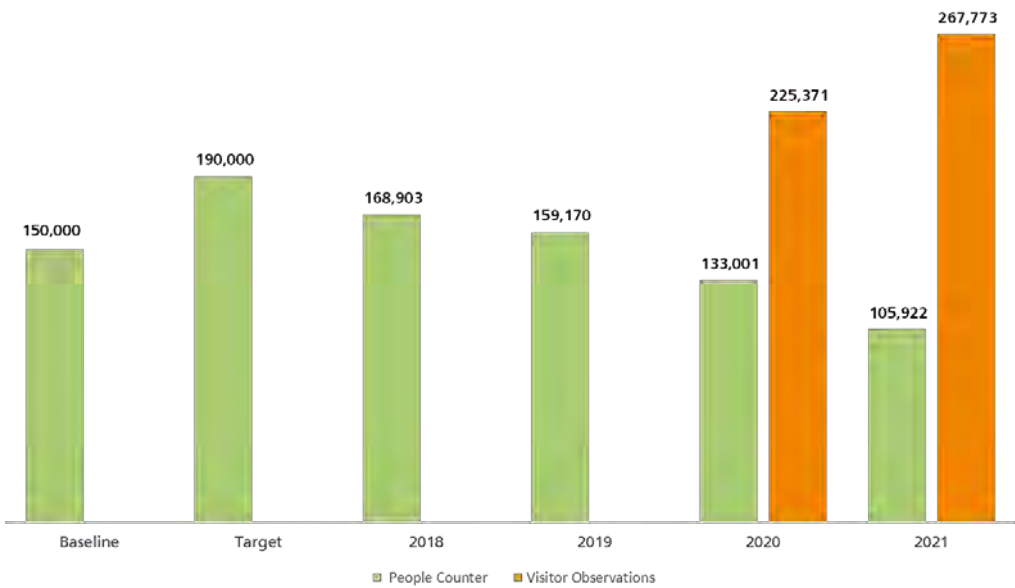


Chart 8 Estimated annual person visits

As shown in Chart 8, estimated annual visits were higher than the baseline in 2018 and 2019, however, they dropped substantially in 2020 and 2021. This is likely due to ongoing disruption caused by a combination of COVID-19 restrictions and capital works it is likely that these figures are not reflective of the eventual visitor numbers to the centre which are likely to be significantly higher in 2022/23.

According to the 2020 and 2021 Visitor Observation Study, annual visits were substantially higher, and well above the target of 190,000 (Chart 8). The 2021 visitor observation study showed that annual person visits to Fairhaven Lake and Gardens were 267,773. This showed a marked increase of around 40,000 since the visitor observation study in 2020, which estimated annual person visits were about 225,371. Visitor Observations took place after COVID-19 restrictions had been eased and undertaken following completion of the capital works hence are more likely to be reflective of true visitor numbers.

The visitor profile is largely similar between the 2020 and 2021 visitor observation studies. Representation of BAME groups has increased since 2017 by around 6.0%, and this number has remained constant between 2020 and 2021 (Chart 9). The project is only just under its target of 20.0% for BAME visitors to the site.

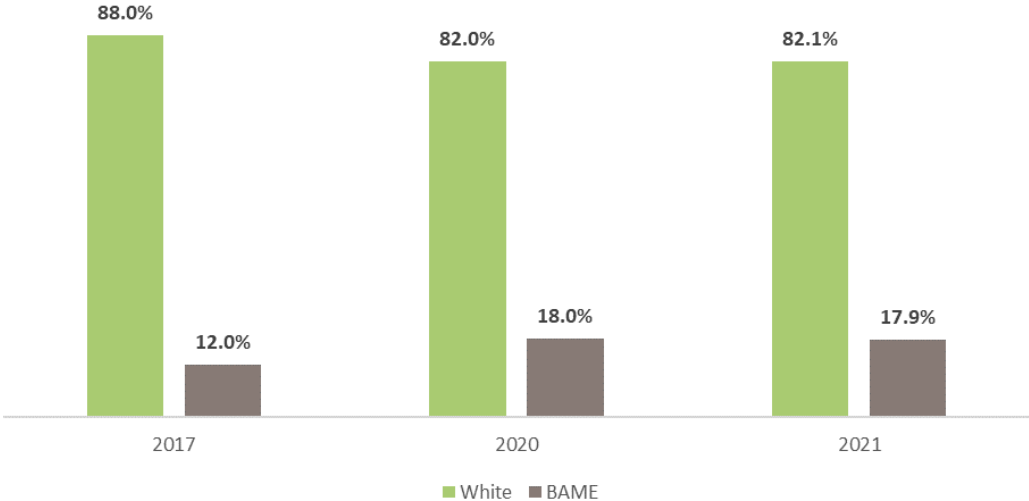


Chart 9 Visitor Profile

Based on the 2021 visitor observation study, around 5.2% of visitors to the site had a visible disability. This number has increased by 2.0% since 2020, in which 3.2% of visitors had a visible disability. Although the project has not met its target of 15.0%, the number of disabled visitors has increased by just over 3.0% since 2017 (Chart 10).

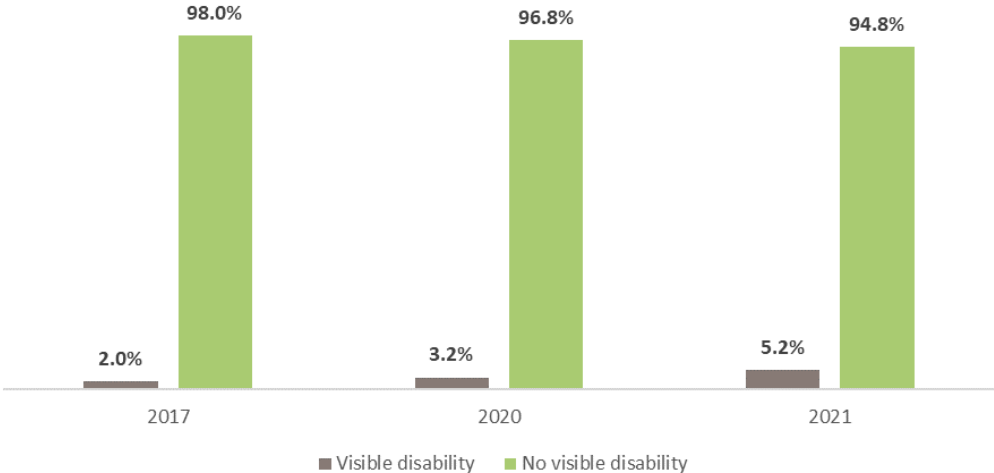


Chart 10 Proportion of visitors to Fairhaven Lake with a visible disability



### 7.3.2 Visiting Fairhaven Lake and Gardens

Visitor Survey respondents were asked to supply their postcodes in order to ascertain where they normally travelled from. In 2020, 206 postcodes were supplied and in 2022, 91 postcodes were supplied. All postcodes were geocoded and analysed, as shown in Figure 3 which also includes drivetimes for up to 20 minutes, 20-49 minutes and 60 minutes from Fairhaven Lake. As the figure shows most respondents were local; in 2020 85.4% came from within the 20 minutes drivetime, and in 2022 this number increased to 92.3%. However, it is worth noting that in 2020 potential visitors may not have been able to attend due to COVID-19 restrictions. Some visitors came from farther afield in 2020 as 3.9% travelled from within the 40 to 60-minute drivetime. However, in 2022, no respondents travelled from within the 40–60-minute drivetime. A small number of respondents from outside the 60 minutes.

Based on the results of the 2020 visitor survey, four fifths of respondents were from within Fylde, 31.1% more than the targeted 50%. Similarly in 2022, over four-fifths (87.1%) of respondents were from Fylde, exceeding the target of 50%. Meanwhile the number of visitors from Preston, Blackpool and West Lancashire were below target in both 2020 and 2022. However, this is likely due to COVID-19 restrictions which limited how far potential visitors were able to travel. Notably, in 2020 a tenth of visitors were from elsewhere; 5.3% of respondents were from outside the 60-minute drivetime. Whereas, in 2022 only one respondent came from outside the 60-minute drivetime.

When asked how often they used Fairhaven Lake, the majority (60.8%) said they visited at least weekly, with 60.8% in 2020 and 50.9% in 2022 saying they visit once a week. A further quarter (24.7% in 2020 & 22.8% in 2022) said they visited monthly. In 2020, three quarters of respondents (76.3%) said they tended to stay for between 30 minute and two hours and in 2022, this number increased slightly to 80.6%.

In 2020, there was a more or less even split between respondents who travelled to Fairhaven on foot (50.9%) and by car (47.4%). Similar results were found in 2022 as 48.5% of respondents travelled to Fairhaven by car and 47.4% by foot.

In 2020, the largest proportion of respondents (42.5%) said they tended to visit with a partner, while a further 37.8% visited with children or young children, or another member of their family. The average group size was 2.8 people, with 2.1 adults and 0.9 on average. Although most respondents visited with family, 14.2% still said they visited alone.


# Fairhaven Lake Final Evaluation


Figure 3  
Visitor Survey Respondents 2020 vs 2022


## Legend


 Fairhaven Lake


## Drivetime

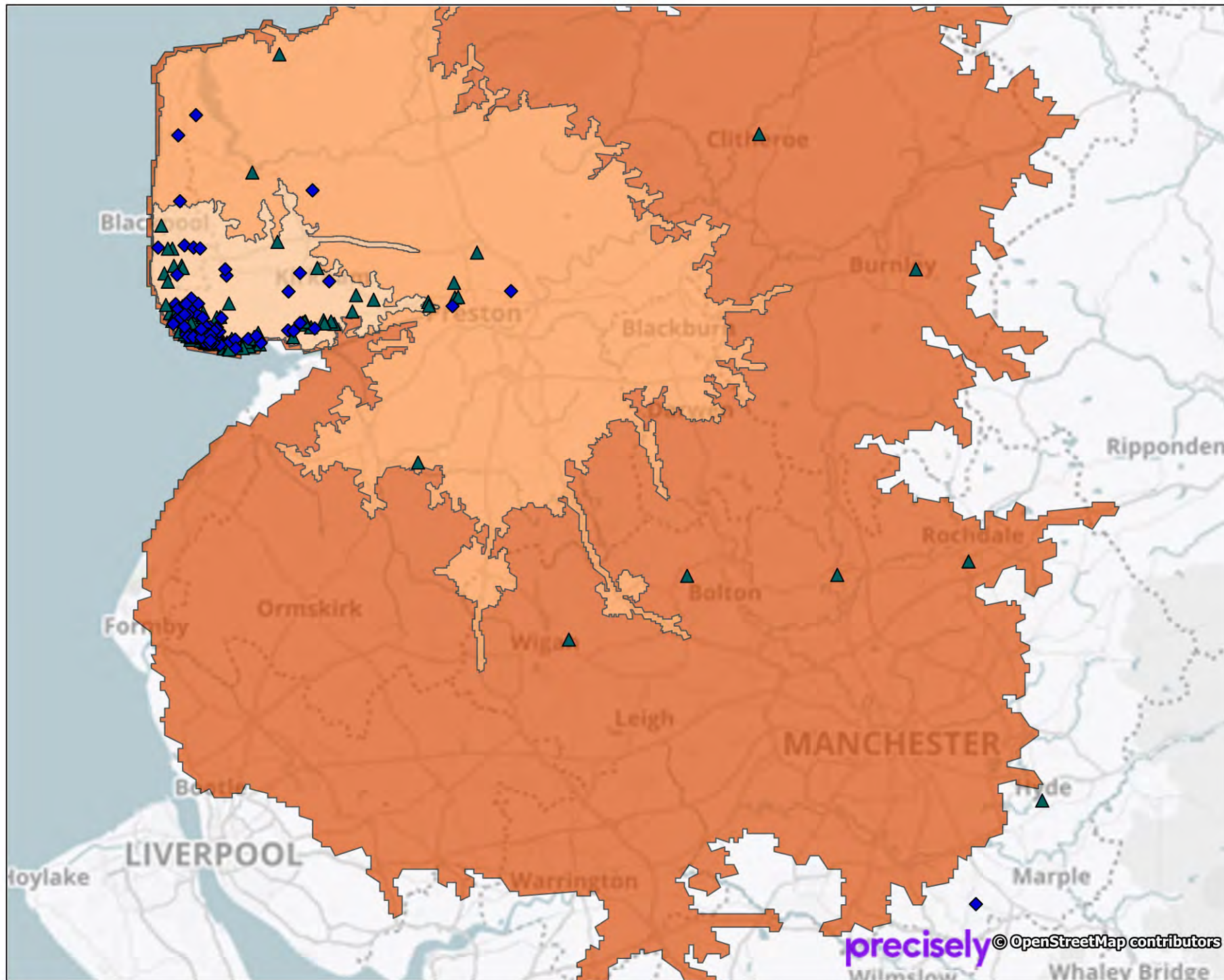
 <20 minutes

 20-40 minutes

 40-60 minutes

 2020 Visitor Survey Respondents


 2022 Visitor Survey Respondents



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When asked what their main reasons for visiting, the majority said to walk or walk the dog (69.8% in 2020 & 75.6% in 2022) (Chart 11), followed by to enjoy wildlife which has increased by 8.8% when compared to 2020 results. Around half (51.1% in 2020 & 44.8% in 2022) said they visited to exercise. The least popular activity was to play tennis and model sailing. When compared to 2020 results, the number of respondents visiting to attend an event has increased significantly from 9.8% in 2020 to 19.8% in 2022.

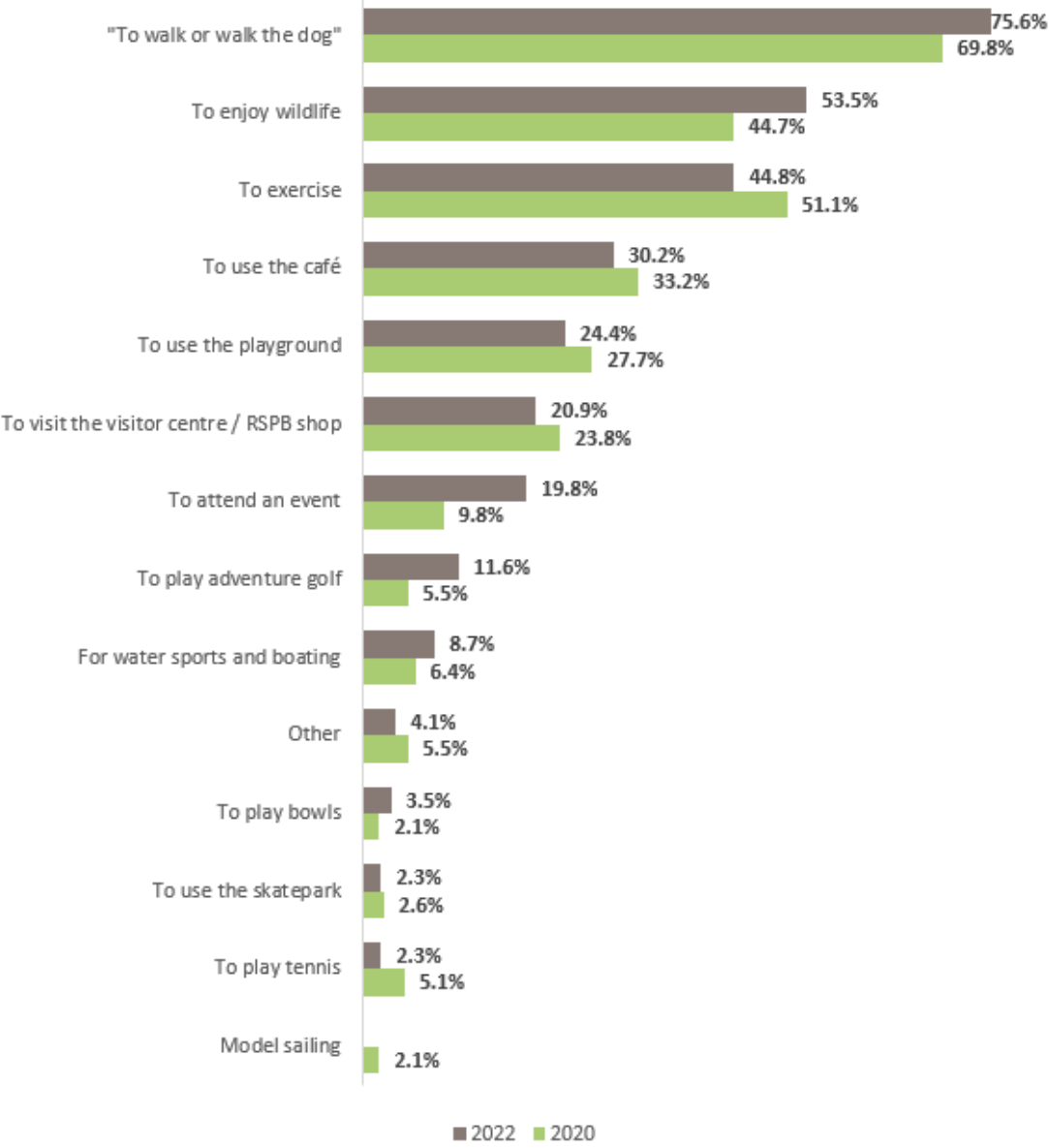


Chart 11 Main reasons for visiting Fairhaven Lake

Respondents were asked why they chose to visit Fairhaven Lake rather than somewhere else. In 2022, 9 in 10 respondents (90.4%) said because it was nearby, compared to 64.7% in 2020. When compared to 2020, respondents who answered visiting with a child or young people has increased from 13.5% to 28.7%. The number of respondents who answered value for money has

also increased from 6.1% to 13.2%. It was recommended was the least popular reason (2.6% in 2020 & 4.2% in 2022). Also, 15.0% of respondents said they visited Fairhaven Lake as a child, compared to 13.5% in 2020.

Over the entirety of the project, 125 new activities have been held. These have included orienteering, a bat ID walk, three wellness walks and seven public water sports sessions. More information on events and activities is in section 5.1. Satisfaction ratings with events remain high, with 87.6% of respondents either satisfied or very satisfied, a significant increase when compared to 75.8% in 2020 and exceeding the project target of 85%. Furthermore, in 2022 83.3% of respondents said they would take part in a similar event or activity at Fairhaven.

### 7.3.3 Events and Activities

Table 4 below shows the number of events and participants throughout the project. Target figures have been obtained from the Activity Plan Action Plan; however, some attendance numbers have been reduced in light of COVID-19 restrictions.

Activity type	Number of events		Number of participants	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
<b>Events</b>				
Autumn Arts Performances	2	2	350	751
Community Action Day	12	5	300	81
Eco Market	0	2	0	1,600
Fairhaven Memories	6	5	380	416
Family Activities	36	22	1,800	1,119
FOFL Big Picnic	3	2	2,100	5,500
Heritage Walks and Talks	29	16	1,090	708
Large-scale events	6	7	3,000	14,811
RSPB Guided Walks and Activities	24	5	480	330
Theatre Performances	0	7	0	504
Work in Progress Tours	12	0	120	0
<b>Sports and Recreation</b>				
Buggy and Wellness Walks	72	21	720	153
Public Water Sport Sessions	22	11	550	127
<b>Education and Learning</b>				
Adult Learning Workshops	14	8	350	133
Seaside Xplorer	12	6	600	87
Youth Learning Workshops	9	6	225	142
<b>Total</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>11,945</b>	<b>26,462</b>

Table 4 Events and Activities at Fairhaven Lake

During the first year of the project, the activity programme was a success; although the number of activities fell short of the target, almost double the number of participants took part with over 8,000 attendees recorded. Unfortunately, with COVID-19 restrictions, a total of 38 of events have had to be cancelled during the second year of the project, including the Friends of Fairhaven Lake (FOFL) Big Picnic, Family Heritage Days, Work in Progress Tours and Sports Open Day. Less than half the planned events were able to go ahead at Fairhaven Lake, however, those which have run attended significantly more participants than anticipate, and a total of 26,462 people attended the 125 events.



In order to keep audiences engaged, project staff were able to substitute physical, onsite events with a social media campaign called Heritage at Home which aimed to encourage people to take part in activities at home. Social media was also used to keep local people up to date with any activities; staff have made an effort to keep some events running, by hosting them online, including two photography workshops and a virtual Heritage Open Day.

## **Events**

Many of the events offered at Fairhaven Lake have centred around arts and theatre which seek to engage local people in the history and environment at the site. Fairhaven Memories included two memory and storytelling workshops which were used to develop a Community Theatre production based on the memories of local people at Fairhaven Lake. Although only five of the planned six events took place, the events were attended by over 400 people, more than the 380 targeted.

As part of the Autumn Arts Performance, an artist was commissioned to run a workshop to create large scale arts performance linking to Fairhaven's ecological heritage and history. The workshop and performance took place in October 2021, attracting 751 participants, more than double the anticipated numbers.

Seven theatre performances have also taken place, including 'Peril at Sea', 'Rabbit Girl' and 'Conference of the Birds'. More information on the latter, which was produced by Spot On, is included in the case studies below.

Through the activity programme, visitors have also been able to learn and engage with the heritage of the site through a series of heritage activities, including walks and talks. A total of 22 family activities took place which focused on the natural heritage of Fairhaven Lake through fun and interactive family sessions. Events included bush and beachcraft, orienteering, minibeast hunts and sandcastle building. Between 2019 and 2021, five Community Action Days were also held. As part of the events, families took part in cleaning the planting beds and planting bulbs and wildflower seed bombs.

Through the delivery of the Activity Plan, the various clubs who use Fairhaven Lake sought to engage with a wider range of participants and increase membership. The clubs, which include model boating sailing and bowling, showcased their offer as part of a number of open days, which attracted 3,311 people over two days. More information on the clubs and how they use the site is available in the case studies.

Other large-scale events included the Regatta, Fairhaven Dog Festival and Dragon Boat Festivals. The Friends of Fairhaven Lake hosted two Big Picnic events, which included seaside activities and a family picnic. The two picnics attracted around 5,500 people.

### **Sports and recreation**

As part of the programme of fitness activities, monthly Buggy and Wellness Walks were planned through the project. Unfortunately, the targeted number was not reached with only ten Buggy Walks and 13 Wellness Walks attended by 153 participants in total were delivered before COVID-19 restrictions were introduced and the events had to be cancelled.

Alongside the school water sports sessions, public sessions have been a huge success. Sessions including taster sessions in kayaking (which received very positive feedback) and paddle sports. Unfortunately, COVID-19 restrictions reduced capacity with bookings limited to households or bubbles.

### **Education and learning**

Through the project, eight adult learning workshops were hosted. Topics included three astronomy and stargazing talks and practical sessions, bat and moth identification workshops and photography workshops. The project did not meet the targeted number of 14 events, however, five of the planned events had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. Where possible, Lytham St Anne's Photographic Society were able to deliver sessions over Zoom.

Six youth workshops also went ahead, attracting 142 participants. The sessions included youth art and music. More information on the youth workshops is included in the UR Potential case study.

Seaside Explorer backpacks were also available between May and October. The backpacks include binoculars, a microscope, trowels and leaflets. Visitors can collect the packs from the Visitor Centre for £5 and use them as they explore the site.

# Spot On

Spot On have been involved in the project in a number of ways.

They have been able to get involved due to the role Julie plays in organising events on site and the number and willingness of volunteers for the site who facilitate events with everything from car park stewarding to refreshments.

They have commissioned theatre for the site including the 'Conference of Birds' an outdoor theatre piece which was made especially for the Fairhaven Lake; artists visited the site and spoke with the Friends of Fairhaven Lake. The event was a good way to connect people to the heritage of the site as it was inspired by the birds of the site and the setting of the Japanese Garden.

The performance of the piece was delayed due to COVID-19 and eventually was launched as part of flight night which had bird puppets made for handmade parade and a soundscape inspired by the birds.

Spot On feel that the performances have helped to broaden the audience at Fairhaven. Their organisation exists across Lancashire and so can promote performances to this group. Many of those who came from other areas hadn't been to Fairhaven for a long time so it helped them to rediscover the new and improved site.

Spot On have also offered advice on finding other artists to work on site, including Sophie Hatfield who ran sessions to develop characters for the site interpretation.



Conference of the Birds Performance



Spot On feel that the new facilities have had a mixed impact on the use of the site for performances. The previous boathouse had more space for performances which is now broken up into smaller rooms. However, the new water sports centre is good for toilets and can be used for workshops, smaller performances or supporting productions.

From personal experience, Spot On know how the improvements and addition of the golf offer for example have turned Fairhaven into a whole day out location.

# Model Boat Club

The Model Boat Club have been using the lake for around 25 years.

The group use various parts of the lake depending on the wind conditions, they have a mixture of electric and wind powered boats and meet in the season on a Tuesday and Thursday evening when there will be five or six people taking part. Other small gatherings also take place.

Fairhaven Lake is also used for the national Scale yacht competition where around 20 to

30 competitive sailors will come to use a good section of the lake for sailing.

The Model Boat Club previously had a monthly social meeting at a local tennis club due to lack of indoor space at Fairhaven but, since the restoration, are now looking to use the water sports centre.

As their club grows, they would like the opportunity to store some equipment or boats on site eventually.

# Ribble Cruising Club

The Ribble Cruising Club has a full clubhouse of site along the prom where they have 20 to 30 boats inside, room for 100 in the boatyard and 75 in the water. They have used the lake at Fairhaven as a safer and more reliable space as the river is tidal. They also use the lake for getting new sailors involved in the sport; every year in May they run a Try Sailing or Discover Sailing event where they welcome new sailors to the lake in bigger, safer boats to try sailing. If they take to it they can then become members of the club and benefit

from more sessions with dinghy's for 8 year olds to teens and bigger boats for adults.

The club run a fortnightly weekend session on the river, and would like to start using the alternate weekend to sail at the lake which they would not have done previously due to lack of changing facilities.

In future, they hope to be able to keep some boats on site in the new compound.

# Bowling Club

The bowling club has men's and ladies groups and around 100 members altogether who buy a contract from the council for £65 per season.

They have three greens, two for summer and one for winter. The greens are used for their practices

and matches and also open to the public who can pay to play on an ad-hoc basis. They always try to leave one green available for this.

# UR Potential

UR Potential are a not for profit, Community Interest Company based in Blackpool, but cover all of the Fylde Coast. They have four areas of work: Volunteering, Training, Youth & Community Work, Research and Consultancy.

They have been working to engage young people with Fairhaven and despite the interruption of some activities they feel they have been successful in introducing young people from Fylde to Fairhaven, giving them a sense of ownership of it while also helping the young people achieve qualifications and valuable experience. Good for the site in broadening the visitor profile in an area which is dominated by older people.

Working with Julie they have delivered:

- Participation in the 2019 open day
- Repainted the skate park which had suffered from graffiti
- Started to plan a summer Youth Fest for 2020 to involve food, drink and music but this wasn't taken forward due to COVID.
- Ran an engagement exercise through which young people were able to review tenders being submitted for the site and feedback their views on what the criteria should be for the decision and their preferred operators
- Used time at Fairhaven towards Youth Achievement Award gaining pints through the AQA Unit Award Scheme for leadership and participation

Lots of positive comments from young people, pride at being involved especially in the tender process which they felt was really empowering. UR Potential will work with the project team to establish how young people can stay involved.

One suggestion was through regular engagement with the Friends group for the site who they could work with on skills exchanges, consultation, or intergenerational projects.



Participants spray painting as part of the skate-park restoration



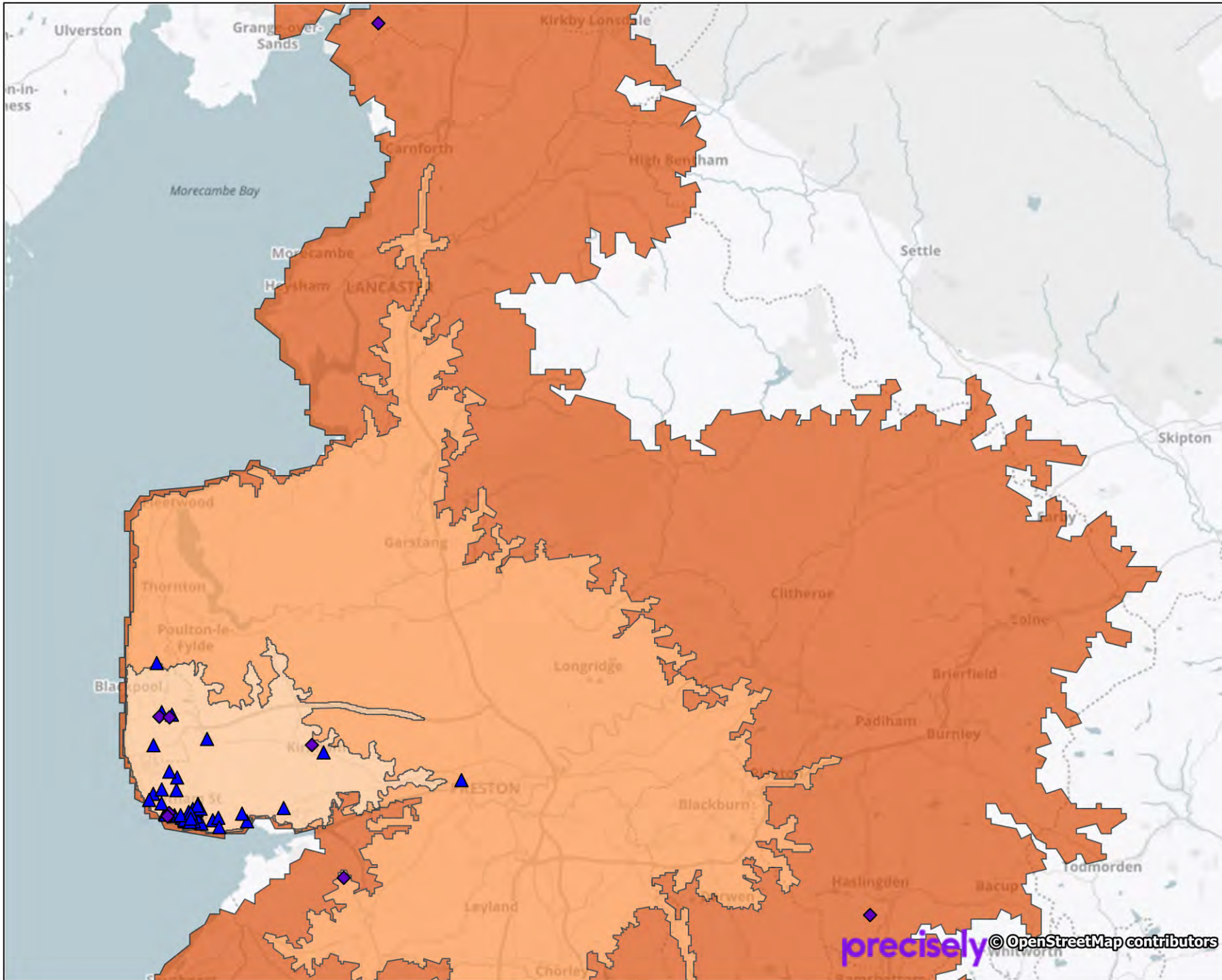
## Events Survey

In 2020, event feedback was gathered through an event and activity feedback form which a total of 11 participants completed. Whereas in 2022, event feedback was gathered through a visitor survey, in which 90 people said they had attended an event or activity at Fairhaven. Respondents were from a wide range of activities including the Bat walk, Family kayaking session, building bird houses, dragon boat racing and the photography workshop.

In 2020, all respondents were aged between 25 and 64; 45.5% were aged between 45 and 54. In 2022, the majority of respondents (48.9%) were aged between 45-64. However, 9.1% of respondents were aged 75+ and 2.3% between the age of 18 and 24. In both 2020 and 2022, the majority of respondents identified as female. In 2020, two respondents considered themselves to have a disability, a long-term illness or an impairment that affected their use of Fairhaven Lake, compared to 14.5% in 2022. In both 2020 & 2022, the majority of respondents were White British.

In 2022, respondents were asked what might stop them from attending an event at Fairhaven Lake, the majority of respondents (43.5%) answered time, followed by cost (39.1%) and physical ability (26.1%). Only 7.2% of respondents answered that equipment was needed.

In both 2020 & 2022, respondents were asked to supply their postcodes which were geocoded and plotted, as shown in Figure 4 overleaf. Generally, respondents to the events and activity survey were fairly local, most coming from within the 20- or 40-minute drivetimes. In 2020, 3 respondents came from the 40–60-minute drivetime area, compared to only one in 2022 who attended the big picnic event.



## Fairhaven Lake Final Evaluation

Figure 4  
Event Survey Respondents 2020 vs 2022

- Legend**
- Fairhaven Lake
- Drivetime**
- <20 minutes
  - 20-40 minutes
  - 40-60 minutes
- 2020 Event Survey Respondents
  - 2022 Event Survey Respondents

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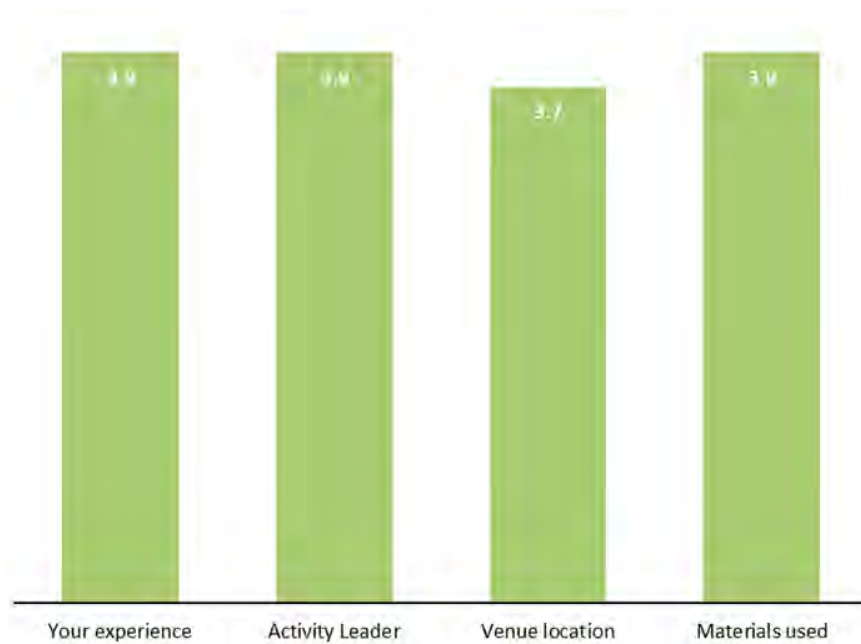


Chart 12 Rating the activity

A more in-depth events survey was conducted in 2020. Respondents rated the activities very highly, with each factor receiving an average score of 3.7 or higher out of four (Chart 12). Respondents were very satisfied with their overall experience, as well as the knowledgeability and friendliness of the activity leaders and materials used, each scoring 3.9. Venue location scored slightly lower; however, this is as the photography workshop had to be done over Zoom, not face-to-face as planned. All of the respondents said the activity met their expectations, except for one respondent who commented that the “real event [was replaced] with computer one”.

Feedback was very positive. Respondents described the events they attended as “very enjoyable”, “brilliantly organised and led” and “absolutely fantastic”. Respondents to the Family Kayaking Session were especially pleased with the activity. One commented that their “husband loved it so much he has now bought his own kayak” and another said they hoped the Council could support more water sports and that it was good use of the lake. Other comments were that there was good communication for booking the Photography Workshop and that they were glad the workshop was able to be delivered online instead.

Seven of the 11 respondents (63.6%) said the activity was beneficial to improving their health and wellbeing. Two respondents from the Photography workshop felt the activity was fun but did not improve their health and wellbeing, and two (from the Photography group and Bat Walk) said the activity was enjoyable but not very challenging.



# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Events and Activities



Public Family Paddle Experience Session



School Paddle Experience Session



Paddle Boarding at Regatta



Beachcraft



Mini-beast hunt



Beachcraft



# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Events and Activities



Adult Learning Walk



Bat Walk



School session at archaeology week



Community Action Day



Family Heritage



Nest box building



# Fairhaven Lake and Gardens Events and Activities



Summer theatre performance



Autumn Arts Festival



Open Day



Story Stall



Big Picnic



Theatre Performance with Spot On

**7.4 Your local economy will be boosted**

One of the key outcomes of the restoration project was to boost the local economy by increasing the income generated from visits and events. In 2017/18, prior to the project, annual income was estimated to be around £56,059. The project team set a target of £151,200 annual income in 2021/22.

During the 2020 season, the boat service did not open, hence provided no income, however, the Adventure Golf opened in September and, despite the COVID-19 restrictions in place, it brought in £26,174. Annual income increased dramatically following the completion of the capital works, including restoration of the café, fit-out of the current boathouse, increased education offers and new adventure play area and water sports centre.

As Chart 13 below shows, annual income has increase dramatically throughout the project. In 2021/22, a total of £233,219 was generated from the adventure golf, boat service, leisure and sports bookings and from the water sports centre. This is more than four times the 2017/18 baseline and substantially more than the target of £151,000 initially set.

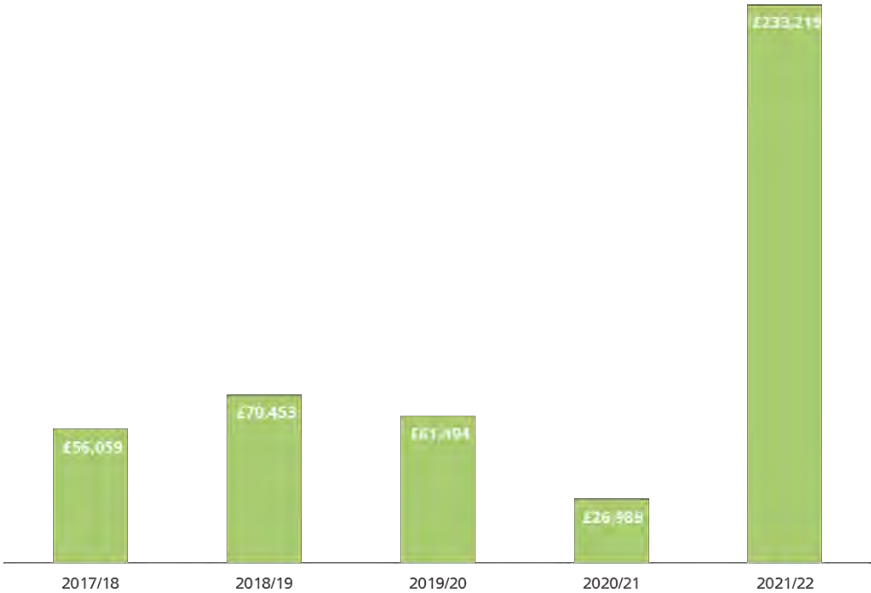


Chart 13 Annual income for Fairhaven Lake 2017 to 2022

As part of the visitor surveys, respondents were asked how much they thought their group had spent during their most recent visit. Chart 14 compares the levels of spend between 2020 and 2022. In both years, most respondents said they tended to spend less than £10 when visiting Fairhaven Lake. However, in 2022, there was a slight increase in spend, with a tenth (10.1%) visitors spending between £21 and £30, and 1.8% spending more than £41 (double compared to 2020).

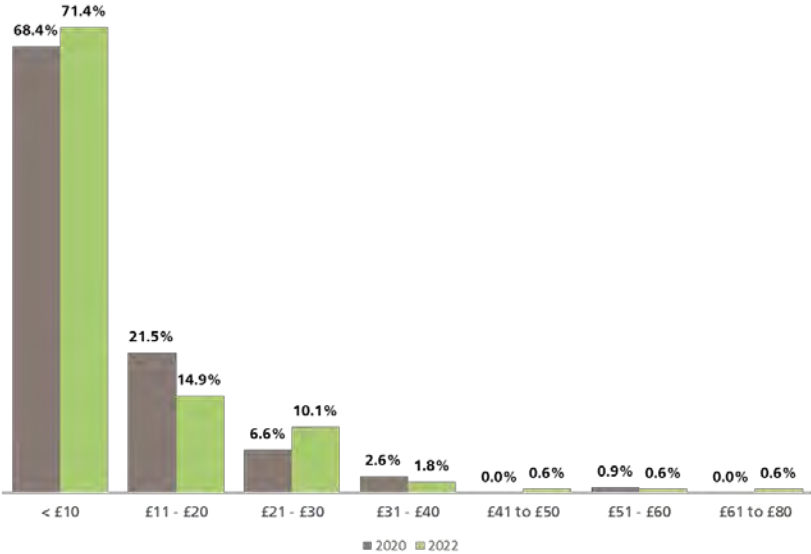


Chart 14 Comparison of group spend at Fairhaven Lake between 2020 and 2022

Moreover, a tenth (12.6%) of respondents to the 2022 visitor survey added they visited Fairhaven Lake because it was value for money.

**7.5 Your organisation will be more resilient**

**7.5.1 Working with Partners**

Throughout the restoration, the project team worked closely with various stakeholders through partnerships to support and enhance the offer at Fairhaven Lake.

The Fairhaven Lake Partnership Group had their inaugural meeting in early 2020. With 29 partnerships in total, the project team has made great strides in establishing partnerships with other organisations surpassing the original target by five. Partnerships include work with Spot On, which performed at Fairhaven in 2020, and the Lytham St Anne’s Photographic Society, which has helped deliver photography workshops online.

As well as enabling the delivery of additional activities (as outlined in 7.3.3 earlier), the project has benefitted other groups who use the site, thanks to close collaborations and partnership working.

For both the Ribble Sailing Club and Model Boat Club, who use the site regularly, the project has been a very positive experience. During the project development, they felt they were consulted well and were listened to about proposed changes which would have interfered with their activities. They also felt they could easily communicate their priorities to the project team. The delivery of the works didn't pose an issue for either club, and they felt the Fairhaven Site Manager was very accommodating during this period. For example, the Ribble Sailing Club were allowed access to the slipway when it had restricted public access due to the works.

As well as the new facilities, both clubs have noticed an increased use of the site, and they feel this has given them the potential to get more people involved; the Ribble Sailing Club were even RCC involved in open days, offering free sails. They have noticed more use of the lake and all the facilities, including the bowling greens, although they think this may partly be the impact of COVID, which saw people exploring and forming new habits. After seasons limited by the capital works onsite and COVID-19 restrictions, both clubs look forward to an entire season using the lake and facilities.

Other clubs that use the site also had positive experiences through the project and benefitted from the new facilities. The Sea Scouts have a good relationship with the project staff, having taken part in the onsite open days, and set up orienteering trails for families to participate. The Scouts use the site weekly for about 12 weeks in summer, attracting up to 24 scouts per session. They also run sessions for other scout groups in the district and younger cubs and beavers. They are thrilled to have access to changing space and toilets and are glad the boatyard has been provided.

The Tennis Club, which has existed since 1912, only had a grass court on site before the project, making their offer very seasonal. However, they now have two new hard-standing courts through restoration work, creating a new year-round offer for the club. The courts allow the members to play all year, as well as offer pay-to-play and coaching sessions. The club's popularity has grown since the new courts were added, with the membership growing from 50 to 200 and a notable increase in junior interest. As well as the new courts, the footfall has increased, creating more interest. The club aim to tie in with the events at the lake by holding their open day at the same time as lake events, all of which can attract new members.

The RSPB centre and staff based at Fairhaven Lake have also benefitted through the project. RSPB staff had a good experience working with the team from the Council. The feeling is that they are all working to make the site bigger and better. The RSPB contribute to this by ensuring their volunteers promote the council facilities, events, and activities.

The previous Visitor Centre was leased from the Council and was solely run by the RSPB. The building was leaking, drafty and trying to combine too many functions as an information point, retail and education space. The project has allowed the RSPB to have a new space to host a visitor centre which promotes everything relating to the lake rather than just the natural heritage, and the much-improved interpretation links the heritage of the site to the wider Ribble estuary. Visitor feedback about the Centre has been positive.

The RSPB staff on site feel very positive about the education potential at the site. The better facilities mean the season can extend the programme into the spring and autumn. For example, the Water Sports Centre has offered a new educational space with toilets and storage for visiting school groups. The education programme's success is evidenced in the number of pupils who have engaged; 2,413 have participated, outdoing the target of 2,000, which was set before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summer 2021 was a very busy period, and the RSPB staff observed an increased footfall. Where previously out-of-season visitors to the Centre could be in single figures, it is now infrequent to see numbers fall below ten people. Previously, the RSPB offer was very seasonal; the Centre was open only six days a week, but now, it is open seven days a week alongside the cafe. In turn, the increase in visitors and retail spending mean better support for the education work delivered by RSPB onsite.

Fairhaven Lake is unusual and important for the RSPB as it is rare for them to have a centre that is not on an RSPB reserve. As a result, they see a broader audience, so it's an excellent opportunity to engage people who might not come to reserves and reach out through education.

In summary, investing in Fairhaven Lake has created commercial and community opportunities. The success of the restoration project has emphasised the value of working effectively and engaging with partners.



### 7.5.2 New Management and Maintenance Structure

As outlined previously, the Lake and Gardens now have a new management structure which both provides capacity to maintain the site and embeds resilience through the training of horticultural apprentices. Individuals with horticultural skills are increasingly in demand in the sector and this could pose a threat of staff shortages in future. To combat this problem, the Council plan to allocate approximately 10.0% of the workforce to apprenticeships. These positions will be classed as 'non-productive', to allow the individuals time for training and to learn the value of quality grounds maintenance and the diverse aspects of parks management.

The restoration project acted as a springboard for future development at the site and the creation of a new, tailored staffing structure. The Community Activity Officer transitioned from their project role in July 2021 to allow the role to be retained beyond the project. A Fairhaven Manager was also appointed in June 2021 to oversee commercial activities at the site. A dedicated Head Gardener was appointed in September 2021, who has been able to inform landscaping and planting. There are also two dedicated Fairhaven Assistants, appointed in October 2021, who do not just support the gardener roles but all activities on site. The same month, a Watersport Coordinator was appointed.

### 7.5.3 Additional Funding

The project has attracted additional funding through grants to continue to improve and develop the park. In addition to the £8,500 in additional funding from Soroptimist International for water sports equipment, the Friends of Fairhaven Lake successfully applied to the Co-op local fund. In April 2020, they received a payment from the fund of £1899.59. They plan to add the funds to their reserves and will use it to provide activities benefitting the community. The project has also benefited from £15,000 from The Lytham Schools Foundation, bringing the total additional funding through grants to around £25,400.

The level of volunteer input to the project has also contributed significantly to the restoration of the site. Volunteers have been involved in a range of activities: guiding steering groups, assisting with interpretation design, maintaining the site and running events. Volunteers have contributed a total of 3,452 hours to the project, generating £51,243 in volunteer contributions. Their contributions have aided the staff in the delivery of the project and will help ensure Fairhaven Lake continues to thrive and benefit the local community in future.

## 7.6 Summary of Outcomes for Communities

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
25	<b>Your local community will be a better place to live, work &amp; visit</b>	% of visitors surveyed who agree that the park enhances their quality of life	88.8%	80%	93.6%	+13.6%
26		% of visitors agreeing that the park improves their health & wellbeing	88.2%	80%	89.3%	+9.3%
27		Enhanced sense of pride within the community with the introduction of a Community in Bloom scheme & through the Community Nursery	N/A	Achievement of a Community in Bloom award & involvement of local residents in the community nursery	Volunteers working in community nursery, however, work limited due to COVID-19	N/A
28	<b>Negative environmental impacts will be reduced</b>	Improved water quality of the lake and return of it to a saltwater brackish habitat, with aeration systems and a new sluice gate reducing fish and protected eel deaths and preventing algal blooms	N/A	N/A	Not completed yet; to be undertaken as part of the outstanding lake work package	N/A
29		Wader high tide roost created on the foreshore	N/A	N/A	Not completed yet; to be undertaken as part of the outstanding lake work package	N/A

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
30		New planting schemes to incorporate perennial planting & wildflowers instead of summer bedding	N/A	Reduction in summer bedding as described in the MMP	Planting of wildflowers and shore-hardy species took place throughout 2021	N/A
31	<b>More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage</b>	Visitor Numbers – annual person visits to Fairhaven Lake & Gardens	150,000	190,000 (and of those 25,500 taking part in organised activity)	267,773	+77,773
32		Visitor Profile: % White British: % BME, % disabled:	2017/18 visitor survey: 50% M: 50% F, 88% W: 12% BME: 2% Disabled	To broadly reflect the 60-minute drive time demographic profile: 50% M: 50% F, 80% WB: 20% BME, 15% Disabled	48.0% M 52.0% F 82% WB 18% BME 3.2% Disabled	-2% M +2% F +2% WB -2% BME -11.8%
33		% of visitors within the 60-minute catchment area & % travelling from Blackpool & rural Lancashire	2017/18 visitor survey: 61% from within Fylde, 23% from Preston, 9% from Blackpool, 5% from West Lancashire, 2% elsewhere	50% from within Fylde, 30% from Preston, 13% from Blackpool, 5% from West Lancashire 2% elsewhere	87.1% from within Fylde 2.2% from Preston 7.5% from Blackpool 0% from West Lancashire 3.2% from elsewhere	+37.1% -27.8% -5.5% -5.0% +1.2%

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
34		Number and type of new activities to engage the public with heritage, the arts, nature, sport and fitness	RSPB education & activity programme, FOFL events & partner led events e.g. Fairhaven Lawn Tennis Club coaching, Ribble Cruising Club public sessions, sea scouts, DNA4Life fitness boot camps, Stepping Out run Nordic walking & family orienteering events run by Sports Lancashire	247 events delivered as part of the activity plan to include health & wellbeing events, heritage events, wildlife events, education & learning, water sports, family events & volunteering	125 events	-122
35		Satisfaction with events & activities & return rates	2017/18 survey: 77% rated activities/events as good/excellent & 98% said they would take part again	85% rating activities/events as good/excellent & 98% stating they would take part again	87.6%% satisfied or very satisfied & 83.3% stating they would take part again	+2.6% -14.7%

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
36	<b>Your local economy will be boosted</b>	Income generated from visits, sessions, events and publications - increased spend to local economy resulting from increased visitors, an improved offer and enhanced marketing	Annual income: £56,059 (2017/18)	Increased levels of spend compared to 2017/18 data.  2021/22 annual income of £151,300 forecast (covering pay & play, courses, boat storage, room & event hire) – see business plan page 94.	Annual income: £70,453 (2018/19)  £61,494 (2019/20)  £26,989 (2020/21)  £233,219 (2021/22)	Annual income:  +£81,919 (2021/22)



ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
37	<b>Your organisation will be more resilient</b>	Number of partnerships created with other organisations - enhanced local stakeholder & partnership work	1 – RSPB	24	29 – Fylde Community Link, Beaumont College, Whalley Range High, Outdoor Education North West, Fylde SUP, Ribble Cruising Club, Fylde District Scouts, Model Boat Club, Fairhaven Lawn Tennis Club, Marine Drive Bowling Club, Lytham St Annes Photographic Society, Lytham Coast Guard, Lytham St Annes RNLI, FoFL, Ansdell In Bloom, Blackpool Bowmen, Ribble Canoe Club, UR Potential, British Cycling, British Triathlon, St Annes Keiddokwai Cultrapedia, Lancashire Garden Trust, Lytham Heritage Centre, Love My Beach, LWT, RSPB, Fylde Bird Club, Spon On	+5

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
38		Development of a Fairhaven Partnership Group (comprising of FoFL, project volunteers, a Heritage Advisory Group & a Youth Steering Group) who will guide future management decisions	N/A	Group established	First meeting in February/March 2020.	-
39		Implementation of the new management structure & staff retained beyond the project	N/A	3 new staff posts including a Fairhaven Manager, a Heritage & Leisure Officer & a Water Sports Development Officer, plus a Head Gardener (expansion of current role) & additional staff support e.g., attendants, instructors and gardeners.	Fairhaven Manager, Community Activity Officer and Watersport Coordinator,  Plus, a dedicated Head Gardner and two assistants	Target achieved
40		Additional funding through grants will increase to continue to improve and develop the park	N/A	N/A	£1,899.59 from Co-op Local Fund £15,000 contribution from The Lytham Schools Foundation £8,500 Soroptimist grant for water sports equipment	-

ID	NLHF Outcome	Measure	Baseline	Targets	Actual	Variance
41		In kind match funding from volunteer input	£40,233 (2,721 hours) during the development phase	£145,709 at project end (see volunteer schedule within overall cost plan)	£51,243	-£94,466



## 8 | Project Review

## 8 Project Review

### 8.1 Successes

#### **Restoration of a Beloved Site**

Fairhaven Lake is an important local site; visitor survey respondents emphasised its strong links with the community and talked about how it was a part of their family history. Thanks to the restoration project, the beloved site has been brought new life and is again playing a vital role in the community, enhancing their quality of life, health, wellbeing.

As well as the local community, the site is also beloved by the clubs who use it regularly. A big success of the Activity Plan has been working with these groups to reorientate, be more open, and engage with a broader audience in the community. Clubs, such as the Ribble Sailing Club and Bowling Club, have hosted open days and supported whole site events. The restoration project and close partnership working also meant the clubs benefitted from the restoration project, including new and improved facilities. All of these will help the clubs find new members and continue into the future.

#### **Improved Offer and Income**

The project, including the restoration of heritage features, improved facilities and enhanced activities and offer, have breathed life into the site.

The data captured and anecdotal evidence suggest the site has an increased number and range of visitors. New and enhanced facilities, such as the cafe, water sports centre and RSPB visitor centre, have increased interest in the site. The improved access also brought a lot to the lake and was key during COVID-19 restrictions when so many local people were looking for places to walk. There is more passing interest from those walking on the coast and more out-of-season visitors.

Throughout the project, the event and activity programme has also helped bring more visitors to the site. In particular, the improved water sports facilities mean more visitors can get out and enjoy the lake in ways described by previous generations. Despite only half the targeted events going ahead, over 26,000 people participated, more than double the targeted number.

The education offer has also been enhanced through the project. The RSPB now have access to better facilities, including the Visitor Centre and Water Sports Centre, and can offer educational activities further into the spring and autumn. Even though school visits had to be cancelled



through COVID-19, the target of 2000 pupils engaged was outdone significantly. Moreover, the increased retail spend at the Visitor Centre means more funding for their education programme. The RSPB has already been able to introduce new topics which link the natural heritage of the site and surrounding area with the national curriculum.

Additional income from the cafe, which is now open seven days a week, and other onsite facilities, will also help fund further activities and improvements at the site and support local businesses. New income for the site is already coming from investment outside the project in adventure golf, which is outperforming the targets set out in the Business Plan.

### **Heritage Interest**

The interpretation and heritage activities have reignited ties between the site and local history. Lots of the heritage interest has come from the community, who have provided personal stories, information and photos.

Public engagement has increased through the recreation of historic photos of children on the stepping stones in particular. There was a photograph of some children on the stepping stones in the Japanese garden, which caught everyone's imagination, and the boy from the photo, now in the 90s, was found, still living locally.

There was a lot of interest in new events which link to heritage, such as the regattas and community days. The community archaeology excavation was also a key success. The excavation focused initially on the Japanese garden, but thanks to public engagement, the scope was broadened to the excavation of WWII history, including the home guard shelter. This captured the public imagination, and the event was featured on BBC North West Tonight. The excavation helped tell the story of the site and its link with the Spitfire Memorial, which was relocated to the site but had no previous connection.

The Friends Group, which has played a key role in the restoration and development of Fairhaven Lake, have also supported the heritage engagement by giving talks and tours of the site. They also provided much of the research for the onsite interpretation.

The new interpretation boards have been a success, and many of the visitor survey respondents cited them as where they got their heritage information about the site. When developing the boards, there was a focus on making them visual, appealing, and accessible for those who speak English as a second or foreign language. Fairhaven Lake had its own suite of characters created for the interpretation. It was expensive but has worked well and ties in with the new branding

developed for Fairhaven. The new interpretation also links the site's heritage with the wider Ribble estuary.

### **Volunteering and Community Engagement**

Volunteering has been a big success. Despite the impacts of the COVID-19 restrictions, which significantly limited what volunteers could deliver onsite, they have dedicated 3452 hours and generated over £51,000 in volunteer contributions. Volunteers have assisted in many activities, from stewarding events, supporting the education offer and working in the community nursery. The latter has seen the volunteering working with the Lancashire Gardens Trust, and developing partnerships with local colleges.

Much of what has been achieved would not have been possible without the dedication of the Friends of Fairhaven Lake. The Group has a growing membership of around 40, which has brought a range of specialisms, including marketing, links to other arts organisations and historical knowledge to the project. They have supported and guided the project throughout. The Friends Group are also very flexible, and their assistance has been invaluable to the project team. For example, offering help with last-minute initiatives, including delivering the Holiday Activity Food programme which brought children of Free School Meals and the Asylum Scheme to the park in Summer 2021.

### **Project Team**

The project has significantly improved Fairhaven Lake's resilience by creating a new unique staffing structure. Fairhaven Lake now has a dedicated Head Gardener, Fairhaven Lake Manager, Community Activity Officer, Watersports Coordinator and two Assistants who do not just support the gardener roles but all activities on site. The local authority has agreed to give Fairhaven its own cost centre so that staff can be commercially minded in producing profit which is then reinvested into the site. The Fairhaven model could be a prototype for other sites.

It cannot be understated that much of the Fairhaven Lake Restoration Project's success is also due to the project team's work. Project partners have commented on their positive experiences working with the Activity Development Officer and the Council. There is a general feeling now that they are all working to make the site bigger and better. Partners added that the new staff team is excellent and will ensure a sustainable future for the site. They have a very good working relationship with them, as evidenced by the project results, which have been to many mutual benefits.

## **Data Capture and Monitoring**

A notable strength of the project team was the data capture and monitoring. The team have excelled in capturing data for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the project. The project monitoring and evaluation toolkit were implemented successfully, specifically by the Activity Development Officer, and records supplied to CFP have also been clear and consistent, going a long way to helping complete a thorough evaluation of the project. In our experience with almost 100 evaluation projects, it is rare to see such a comprehensive approach being delivered. The team should be congratulated on gathering so much information, which shows a real commitment to monitoring and evaluation.

## **8.2 Learning Points and Issues Arising**

### **8.2.1 Development Phase**

Many staff and partners described the development phase as good but slow. The team was already in place, and the Activity Development Officer knew the site and had a good idea of the approach needed. There was also a good idea of the scope regarding capital works. Overall, it was a positive experience, but some issues still arose that should be noted and avoided in future projects.

#### **An Unclear Brief**

Following two unsuccessful bids to NLHF, there was a tendency to overpromise on the third bid to ensure the project would be funded. These over-commitments needed to be addressed at round two. The brief at round one was also unclear and needed refining significantly.

The way the bid had been formed meant that during the development phase, the project team needed to:

- Seek extra funding externally, including £100,000 from Sport England
- Seek extra funding internally, including underwriting of unsecured funding, which was a protracted process
- Seek commitment from the Council to undertake some works inhouse including landscaping
- Modify proposals, including removing one veranda from the scope of the project and reducing areas of pathways to be improved

These issues highlight the need for expertise when developing a bid; once commitments are made, these are tying and will cause risks and problems for the project at a later point.

### **Poor understanding of Risk Management within the Council**

Several major risks were not explored at round one and required unpicking during the development phase. These were:

- The round one bid said the café structure would be kept when there was little of this building worth preserving due to 1960s extensions and the poor structural condition of the original building. Options were not explored as to whether it would be better to start from scratch. The eventual result was “increased costs and extra build time propping up a building which should have been pulled down”.
- A café tenancy which gave the tenant right to uninterrupted business unless a full redevelopment took place, meant the Council always had to seek permission from the tenant. The tenant had a say over the design of the new building. “The Council were on the back foot, and there was a vacuum of control”.
- The initial costs for the two café verandas were estimated to be £20,000. However, they were ornately carved verandas with structural support, and this would never have been sufficient.

These risks are believed to have come about as those developing the round one bid did not have the experience or background to question the costings and proposals suggested by architects.

### **Project Management**

Fylde Borough Council is a small council and can't maintain a project management resource full-time. Hence a Project Manager was only brought in at round two when the development phase funding was in place.

Likely, many of the previous issues would not have arisen had a dedicated Project Manager overseeing the project as a whole been in place. A Project Manager could have advised on and developed a more comprehensive brief and brought in expertise regarding project funding and risk management.

During the development phase, there was no Project Management Framework in place. Issues were compounded when, once a Project Manager was in place, political actors and senior officers had no intention of adhering to the process in their own framework.

### **Consultation Fatigue and Scepticism**

Previous failed bids meant a sceptical attitude among some stakeholders and the public. Very local residents were also resistant to the change and feared the project would lead to issues such as noise pollution and limited parking. They were concerned that the activity programme and number of visitors were inappropriate for the site, adding it was "not like Blackpool".

Scepticism and lack of support from stakeholders may have also impaired the round one bid by limiting the focus on potential risks and meaning there was not an appropriate investment in the project.

The project has highlighted the value of working with partners and ensuring all stakeholders are engaged and enthusiastic. Once everyone is onboard, it can create so many opportunities, both commercial and within the community. There is also value in having an on site team who can meet and consult with residents to ensure they understand and support the project's impacts. Taking this onboard, they have returned to a previous model at Fairhaven Lake, which saw the Fairhaven Site Manager live on site in the cottage. Owing to the project's success, there is increased confidence, and staff are looking to do more at the pleasure island and the coastguard station.

### **8.2.2 Delivery Phase**

The Delivery Phase did not start well, with the need to value engineer the project drastically. Issues were further compounded when COVID-19 brought restrictions which delayed delivery of the lake works and saw many planned activities and educational events cancelled.

### **Project Delays**

The initial procurement saw three contracts of landscape, buildings and lake grouped into two: buildings and landscape, and lake to reduce contract management for the Council. However, the early development phase was not well managed by consultants; the move from RIBA stage 3 to 4 took longer than the scheduled three to four months, which should have been sufficient. When the tender for Stage 4 works was finally issued, it had not been sufficiently tested, and there was a lack of clarity on many points. Bids came back £1.6 million over budget, and the process had to be scrapped.

Following this, the project had to be value engineered, which delayed the process by a whole year. A Council-based Project Manager took over as project lead and decided to split the contracts back into three and review the costs.



The value engineering process meant many 'nice to haves' were lost from the capital side; an extension to the pagoda was removed, and a simplified fit out of the activity room was chosen. The project team also found a way to build directly onto the flat roof of the café using the existing structure, reducing costs. The boatyard remained unchanged owing to a £100k Sport England grant supporting the water sports centre. Planned landscape works, including the path works, had to be removed from the project. The Activity Plan budget was ring-fenced and remained unaffected.

Following the value engineering, the works went to tender a second time and came back with quotes much less over budget, only using some contingency and inflation allowance.

Following the unexpected phase of value engineering, the delays to the capital works had knock-on effects, which impacted the delivery of the activity plan and other site uses. For example, the return of the cafe operator had to be delayed by four months until September 2020. To mitigate losses for the operator, a sectional handover date for the Ice Cream Servery was agreed upon with the contractor in May and the Council offered a small pavilion from which to sell ice cream.

That said, the delays did work in favour for the project team and partners. Due to the delay, the capital works were delivered during COVID-19 restrictions when the Visitor Centre and other facilities were closed anyway. In a sense this reduced disruption on site

### **COVID-19**

While the COVID-19 pandemic did not substantially impact the delivery of the capital works, many planned activities and volunteering opportunities had to be cancelled, and staff and volunteers were forced to think outside the box to deliver much of the Activity Plan.

Many events, including an Open Day and Dragon Boat Tournament, which would have attracted 1,000 participants, were cancelled due to COVID-19. The RSPB Visitor Centre had to be closed, and no educational sessions could be delivered onsite until September 2021. Project staff could only provide half of the intended work placements offered through the project. COVID-19 restrictions also limited volunteering opportunities, and work on the community nursery had to be halted.

COVID-19 had a devastating impact on the project delivery and was a significant and unforeseen issue for the project to overcome. However, staff and volunteers should be commended on their response to the problem as evidenced by the number of targets still achieved. While the project extension went some way toward achieving this, staff worked hard to keep audiences engaged

throughout the extended period. Residents were kept up to date on social media, and activities were provided online where possible. The volunteers also persevered, hosting elements such as the steering group online.

### **Meeting Expectations**

Public reception has generally been very positive, especially for the Japanese Garden. The only issues raised are that interventions haven't covered the whole site. There is a perception that a £3 million project should deliver all of that money directly in changes to the site rather than elements like professional fees or a revenue budget.

There have been some comments about the café. The restoration of the building to its original design saw some floor-to-ceiling windows replaced, which has been unpopular with some. It has been ongoing work to communicate that the café was being returned to a more original design and not designed as a café would be for a new site. This again highlights the value of regular communication with residents.

### **8.3 Legacy and the Future**

While the project can be deemed a huge success, this is only the beginning of a new phase for Fairhaven Lake. The Restoration Project has reignited local interest in the site and its heritage and given staff, partners and volunteers a stepping stone for future development.

Throughout the project, there has been strong support from the Head of Tourism and Culture within the Council and a good link established with Discover Fylde, so there is a genuine drive to improve assets onsite. The Council are also increasingly interested in joining up projects in regeneration and has created a new directorate for managing such projects, which will include Tourism and Culture and could bring forward even more opportunities.

As evidence of their enthusiasm, the partners are also continually driving to improve the site further, and many were keen to make suggestions as part of the evaluation.

Water sports have become a big attraction and the groups that use the lake have made a number of suggestions to expand its use further. NW Outdoors suggested the site would benefit from more boats and various sizes of wetsuits and buoyancy aids to help get larger school groups out of the water and potentially attract more groups. The Sea Scouts also suggested more jetties on the lake to improve access.

The Friends of Fairhaven Lake would like to see the boat offer expanded. Currently, there are only 10-12 boats and there can be up to an hour wait in season. They would also like a new electric pleasure boat on the lake. The Friends Group are keen to see this and would fundraise the £10,000 required. They have developed a business plan showing where they could support its operation.

Following the restoration project and improvements to the site, the Ribble Cruising Club and Model Boat Club have also begun storing some of their equipment at the site. Both clubs have access to the boat yard and a storage container each and are very happy with the situation.

The outstanding lake works are a priority and will see the water quality improved and the lake become a haven for wildlife. The new activity island would also provide new opportunities such as Forest Schools. The Ribble Sailing Club and Model Boat Club have said completing the dredging as part of these additional works is critical. The Sailing Club said the silt is forming sandbanks, most notably on the East of the Valve house up to the toilets. These shallower areas lead to boats getting stuck. The issue for the Model Boat Club is that the silt raises the lake bottom and the weeds that grow there. This causes the weed to be more plentiful and nearer the surface and can interfere with the boats' propellers.

Following the success of the project and partnership working, the clubs that use the site have seen their memberships increase and are keen to improve their facilities further to facilitate this. The Tennis Club have suggested flood lighting for the courts, ideally within the next five years if current demand is maintained to increase the season further. They also suggested improving the finish of the area around the golf and tennis offer, adding that, while facilities are good, the area could be smarter. The Bowls Club have also made suggestions, including the seats returned to the elevation overlooking the men's green, a new shelter by the men's green and to see the wintergreen maintained over the summer.

The Friends of Fairhaven Lake would like to address some of the landscaping elements which had to be removed from the Restoration Project. These include completing the landscaping on Stanner Bank and creating a formal garden and memorial. The latter could be developed in the former pitch and put space which is a hedged-off and no longer used.

As well as expanding the offer, staff hope to attract a broader audience to Fairhaven Lake to enjoy it. The Activity Plan aimed to increase engagement with those from ethnic minorities from the 60-minute drivetime, as well as local residents. Throughout the project, this audience has grown. However, this is thought to be due to increasing diversity in the 60-minute drive time

and audiences seeking out a 'safe' but 'rural' setting in COVID-19 times. The Activity Plan hosted some cultural exhibitions, but these were more helpful for broadening the horizons of the local audience and positive integration rather than attracting broader audiences to visit. There is hope in future to work on this further with food and music events.

The onsite clubs are also keen to continue working with the project staff on the events programme. The Tennis Club would like to promote their activities further.

With an expanding offer and events programme, there will be a need for further infrastructure improvements to support the increasing visitor numbers and opportunities. Services for concessions will need improving, such as the ice cream kiosk which can only accept cash currently. Now the Water Sports Centre has been in use for some time, partners have noted some further improvements which could increase its functionality and uses. For example, the addition of more toilets, soundproofing and staging, and additional storage and a kitchenette. The RSPB have also suggested emergency lighting and a ramp are needed in the Visitor Centre, and the Friends Group have suggested adding power to the events field.

Improving accessibility for visitors at Fairhaven Lake should also be a priority. Some of the pathways are too narrow and in poor condition, particularly the path on the far side of the lake where people are coming off the path to pass each other and damaging the edges and vegetation. Further improvements could include the addition of audio loops to the interpretation and providing facilities to get disability groups out on the water.

Overall, the facilities and new staffing structure delivered through the Fairhaven Lake Restoration have given the site a big leg up in making further positive changes. The project did not achieve everything the project team hoped to achieve, but it has laid solid foundations for that to happen in the future.

While without the NLHF, some positive things might have occurred at Fairhaven, they couldn't possibly have happened on this scale or so quickly. The project and the effectiveness of its delivery have brought together partners, clubs and volunteers, which will contribute to the future running of Fairhaven Lake. They have also successfully generated additional income while maintaining a balance between the clubs, RSPB and commercial users; commercial use is supported as it is understood that profits come back to the site to complete further works.

Careful ongoing monitoring will be required as the site looks to break even and become independently profitable over the next ten years. However, monitoring, planning and versatility through COVID-19 have been strengths of the project team and partners, which bodes well for the future.