

Green Infrastructure South West Web Portal: Delivery Case Study



Belmont Sensory Garden

Location

Exeter, Devon



Lead organisation

The Garden is looked after by the Parks and Open Spaces team at Exeter City Council
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Main issues raised and highlighted

The Belmont Sensory Garden is one of the first gardens in England specifically intended for the blind, designed to engage all five senses. The site was originally opened in 1939 but later restored in 2007.

Aims of Project

- Provide an outdoor area specifically designed for blind people
- Incorporate locally-inspired and produced pieces of art/facilities
- Reduce anti-social behaviour in the garden and the surrounding park grounds
- Increase seating areas to also include family seating areas.

Description of project



One of Exeter's most popular parks, Belmont Park was first opened to the public in 1886 as a play area for the children of St Sidwell's. Subsequently enlarged, the park has undergone many changes and today is a dynamic feature of Newtown's vibrant community. In 1939, at the eastern corner of the park, England's first garden intended especially for the blind was opened. In 2006, consultation with park users revealed that use of Belmont Park had been deterred by anti-social behaviour and a lack of seating.

In 2007, Exeter City Council responded by restoring Belmont Park's Sensory Garden to a space that encouraged more positive park use and incorporated a family seating area. First the garden was better integrated into the park by clearing away obscuring shrubbery. Then ferns, herbs, and flowers, were planted to provide year round sights, smells and textures.

Landscaping in the new Belmont Sensory Garden follows three main themes of stimulating scent, colour, and texture with variations of bark and stem types. Plants with engaging textures or prominent seed heads have also been woven into the mix. As the site develops, the plants and herbs are kept at eye level and arms reach in order to enhance the tactile and visual experience which can be enjoyed by people with or without disabilities. Among the plants and flowers are vegetables including carrots, onions, runner beans, asparagus and beetroot – chosen for its dark colour. Finally, local residents designed and painted the garden's four new picnic benches in colours of the seasons.

In May 2007, the Belmont Sensory Garden opened to the public. For more information visit www.exeter.gov.uk

Delivery mechanism/long-term adoption of project:

The park is home to the Newtown Community Association, the Exeter Scrapstore and the Belmont Bowling Club. A busy kick-about area, half basketball court, and close proximity to Clifton Hill Sports Centre and Clifton Hill Driving Range, make Belmont an ideal spot for those wishing to keep fit.

Belmont Pleasure Grounds is easily accessible from Belmont Road and Blackboy Road. Seating is provided and open spaces are available for picnics. The park also features a large dog free zone with equipment for younger and older children the largest play area in Newtown.

Outputs/outcomes/benefits

Somewhere for people to learn about 'the garden' and especially for those with learning difficulties, a place where they can go and enjoy and appreciate their local surroundings.