

“IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE”
IN SEFTON



Sefton Leisure Services Annual Report

2004 - 2005

Leisure Services Annual Report 2004-05

Leisure Services has had yet another successful year thanks to the hard work of all of our staff.

We have continued to seek external recognition for our services, and our achievements include:

- A prestigious Blue Flag award for Ainsdale Beach
- Seaside Beach Award status for all of Sefton's designated bathing beaches
- Another 'good' rating for Library Services in the Government's performance tables
- An award from Merseyside Police for our work in designing out crime and improving the safety of the borough's parks
- Retaining Green Flag status for Botanic Gardens for the fourth year running in recognition of excellent park management

As part of our service improvement agenda, we have:

- Refurbished Orrell Arts Centre
- Created a new skateboard park in Bootle for young people and developed a borough-wide strategy for new skate parks
- Delivered an impressive variety of arts, education and sporting events for the young, older people, and those at risk of social exclusion, throughout the year
- Successfully set up four Green Gym bases in allotments across the borough and ran, in association with external partners, many sessions to promote fitness and healthy eating
- Set up a pilot Park Ranger service in some parks in the south of the borough, to help improve safety and security
- Completed an access link for people with mobility problems between the Arts Centre and the Atkinson Gallery, Southport

- Developed facilities to allow residents to browse our library catalogue and reserve books on-line.
- Increased the number of adult education sessions available in libraries
- Improved how we consult with and involve local people in developing our services, through working closely with Neighbourhood Action Groups, Residents' Associations, Citizens' Panels and other residents' groups.
- Completed a second year of partnership with Sefton @ Work through the Biodiversity and Access Project Intermediate Labour Market to help local people access employment and training opportunities.

In addition, work continues on a number of key projects. The first year of work on the regeneration of Hesketh Park has been completed, with work now starting on restoring and extending the lake to turn the park into a valued community resource for years to come. Litherland Sports Park has been further developed so that work will start on the new site in 2005; a major study into the accessibility of all our facilities has been completed, and work will continue to ensure that all members of our community can gain access to the services they need wherever they live in the borough.

We would like to thank the staff in the Department, our partner organisations, and all the local people who have worked closely with Leisure Services to make this such a rewarding year. We look forward to working even more closely with you in the future to ensure the continued success of Leisure Services in Sefton.

Lord Fearn

Cabinet Member
for Leisure and Tourism

Graham Bayliss

Leisure Director



Good for Libraries

Sefton's Library Service celebrated its ranking as 'Good' for the second year running in its annual Public Library Position Statement.

The annual assessment by the Government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport, shows that our libraries continue to improve and deliver an important service for local people, and praised the service for its examples of best practice.

Every Step Counts

Leisure Services continued to develop its walking programme, with the help and support of key partners.

Started in June 2003, it brought together Sefton's Leisure Services and Technical Services Department in a project to encourage more people to take up walking as exercise, funded through South Sefton and Southport and Formby PCT Trusts, and the National initiative 'Walking the Way to Health.'

The programme continues to out-perform all other walking programmes compared to the regional average, with around 3000 people attending walks during 2004 and over 500 registered walkers. For 2005 a new walk is planned, which will include a guided tour of the Atkinson Art Gallery and a walk around the Southport area.

Museums and Galleries

The Atkinson Art Gallery's exhibitions of painting, sculpture and photography brought together some fine examples of traditional and contemporary work.

Working with Arts Development, artists undertook residencies, gave lectures and worked with visitors on a number of projects, whilst the displays of locally

produced craft items attracted those interested in purchasing unique and beautiful items to take away.

The Botanic Gardens Museum was able to draw on its collections of social and local history items to attract a growing number of school groups and much good work has been undertaken on creating a digital archive which, when completed, will be accessible to everyone via the Web.

There was an improvement in visits from schools that bodes well for 2005. Both the Art Gallery and the Museum have very active Friends organisations and both institutions are very grateful for their support.

Ainsdale Wins Blue Flag Award

This year we celebrated winning the prestigious Blue Flag award for Ainsdale beach.

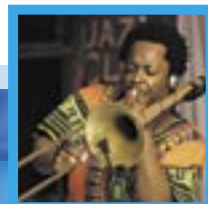
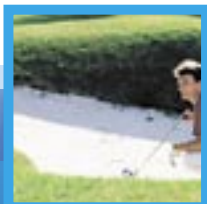
The award is given for the cleanliness of the beach and the quality of its facilities. This is an excellent achievement, and is a just reward for the tremendous effort our Coast and Countryside team has put in to maintain our environment.

Sefton for Arts

Southport Arts Centre and the Civic Hall gave us some memorable performances throughout the year.

Adult and children's theatre were extremely popular, whilst music of all kinds attracted good audiences: the film programme, promoted in conjunction with the Southport Film Guild, extended choice by showing non mainstream and foreign language films. Education was a key theme this year as matinee performances brought schools into the theatre, and we took dance workshops into the classroom.

The Arts Centre continued to host events such as the Jazz and Comedy Festivals on behalf of the Tourism Department and provided a professional setting for some



of Sefton's excellent amateur companies to perform. The Civic Hall audiences continue to grow, with its popular blend of light entertainment and performances by local community groups. It is hoped to extend the range of performances at the Civic Hall in 2005/6.

Annual attendance figures for professional arts performances has risen by almost 5% due to the high quality, varied programme of events. An excellent achievement in a highly competitive environment. The number of people participating in community arts activities, such as youth theatre and the extensive arts workshop programme, has increased by over 10%.

Sport and Recreation

The Department's sports facilities again continued to be the focal point of the Council's physical activity programme, with large attendances at the children's holiday activities.

The Youth Only Zone and Positive Action for Young People events have again proved a huge success and will be continued into 2005/6.

The Merseyside Youth Games go from strength to strength with Sefton again entering a large team, who performed with sporting distinction and once again showed the depth of sporting talent we have in Sefton.

Conservation Work

Sefton Council manages some 58 hectares of coastal woodland and the past year has seen a flurry of activity in the Lifeboat Road and Ravenmeols woodlands.

Thinning has been undertaken to encourage mature spacing of trees, new areas have been planted and others cleared and restocked to increase the age distribution within the woodland. This is important to ensure new trees grow to replace the older ones over time, and to ensure a good crop of cones for our native red squirrel population.

All felled timber has been recycled by our Biodiversity and Access Project Young Persons Programme, a training scheme for vulnerable young people supported by funding from the DAT, Youth Offending Team and Children's Services. Also, the Biodiversity and Access Project, funded by South Sefton Partnership and supported by Myerscough College, has helped trainees from the South Sefton area achieve NVQs in Environmental Conservation whilst gaining practical work experience, leading to 16 people gaining employment or accessing further education since the scheme began. To help fund this work, the Department has secured grants from the European Union and Forestry Commission.

Cleaner, Safer, Greener Parks

This year has seen a major review of the Grounds Maintenance contracts and a fresh approach that will bring about an improvement in the quality of our parks.

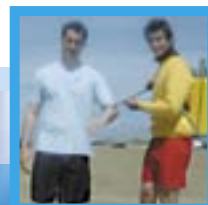
We have been successful in securing funding to establish 9 Park Rangers to patrol key parks in the south of the borough on a one-year pilot. They will provide a welcoming and visible presence in some of our parks and help to promote greater use by the local community and assist in reducing anti-social behaviour, working closely with our colleagues in Sefton Security and the local police.

Sun Safe in Sefton

Sunbathing became safer on Southport beaches this year.

As part of its work in protecting the public, the Department's Coast and Countryside Service gave out high protection factor sun cream and advice on safe sunbathing.

This novel concept, funded by South Sefton and Southport and Formby Primary Care Trusts, was part of a series of measures making sunbathing safer for local people and visitors to enjoy.



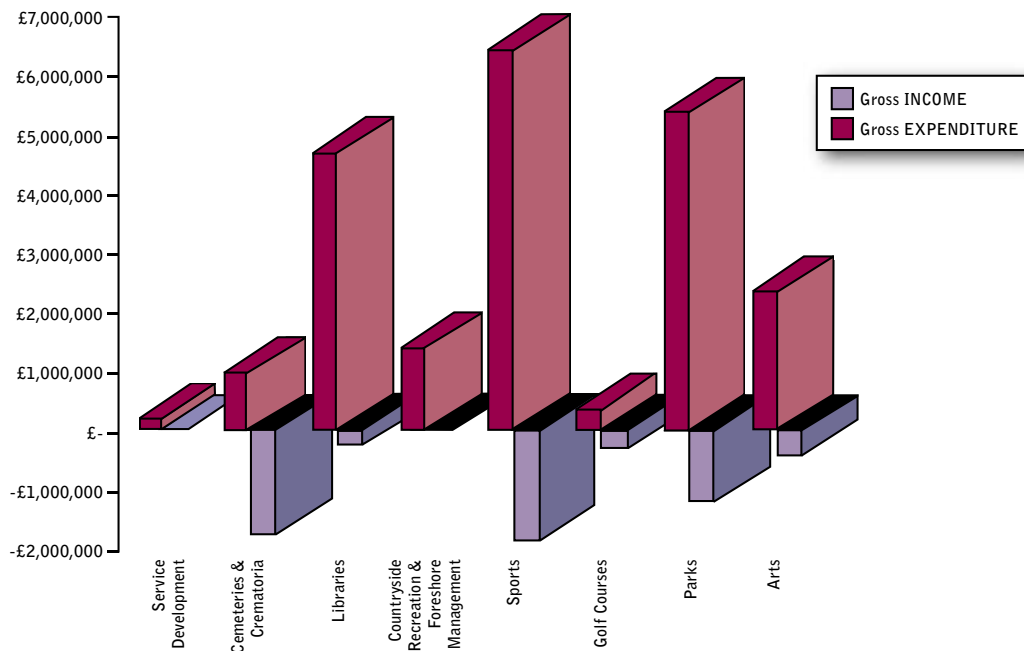
Facts and Figures

Sefton Leisure Services provide a wide variety of facilities for the local community, including:

1	Boating Lake	2	Community Arts Centres
1	Coastal Centre	1	Civic Hall
1	Marine Lake	2	Theatres
2	Golf Courses	1	Museum
34	Parks	13	Libraries
2	Skate Parks	1	Mobile Library
181	Open Spaces	2	Environmental Training Centres
65	Children's Play Areas	13	Sites of Local Biological Interest
4	Cemeteries	3	Local Nature Reserves
2	Crematoria	2	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
6	Sports Centres	1	Coastal Park
4	Swimming Pools	1	Country Park
1	Art Gallery		

The Costs of these services are:

Leisure Services Finance 2004-05



Litherland Sports Park

The creation of Sefton's first purpose-built athletics track moved one step closer this year, as part of a £5.2m sports centre designed to encourage Olympics stars of the future.

The Sports Park, incorporating Litherland High School and the Moss Lane Playing Fields will include: a six lane synthetic athletics track with an 8-lane straight and a centre field marked out for field events and rugby union, a full size synthetic turf pitch, grass pitches for football at all levels, cycling and walking routes. At its heart will be a sports pavilion with 12 changing rooms, a 40-station fitness suite and a clinician/referral suite. It is intended that the sports park will open during spring 2006.

Libraries a Shining Example of Best Practice

A Leisure Services initiative was identified as an example of best practice by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

Their assessment of our Public Library Position Statement noted the innovative way our Library and Sports Development Sections had worked with South Sefton Primary Care Trust to publish a series of historical walks packs. Devised by library staff, the 'town trail' packs highlight local heritage, to encourage people to take up walking as part of a healthier lifestyle. Trails for Waterloo and Bootle are currently in print; another is planned for 2005.

Positive Futures Team

This year, through the Positive Futures project, over eight thousand young people, residing in areas of high deprivation, have benefited from leisure activities within 18 local community centres.

The Positive Futures project has been acknowledged as a model of good practice by numerous government and regional offices. This year alone the project has seen considerable growth with several new partners, increased funding and staffing.

New contracts have been secured to extend and deliver the Behaviour Improvement Project and Positive Activities for Young People (Connexions) programmes across the borough; and Children's Services have continued to invest in the project's success, funding a further two disability development officers to support the project's future.

Thornton Crematorium Open Day

This year saw the first ever open day at Thornton Crematorium, which attracted well over 200 visitors.

A multi faith dedication service was held to dedicate the new Garden of Remembrance, which was officiated by representatives from the borough's three main religious groups. Visitors were shown around the crematorium and given guided tours of the crematory by our Cremator Technicians to help dispel misconceptions. A further open Day will be held at Southport in 2005.

These are just some of the highlights that took place in 2004/05.
If you would like to find out more about what the Leisure Services Department provides please contact:

Leisure Services Department

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