

HBC VALLEY GARDENS UPDATE
9 May 2013

Questions from the public

1. Question

Dogs swimming in the stream and disturbing the ducks/moorhens - is it permitted? If not, can it be stopped?

Answer

I am not aware of a byelaw that actually says dogs cannot swim in the stream. Dogs are supposed to be kept on a lead and this is shown clearly on all the main entrances on the signs that have recently been re-skinned.

As for stopping them I am not sure how that could be achieved. We only have two full time resident gardeners in the Park and whilst I am sure they will say something if they see someone causing a nuisance there is a real limit as to what they can achieve. I also happen to know that one of my team has been in there early on a morning a few times and she is aware of one particular owner whose Labrador heads straight for the stream and they don't stop it. She has spoken to them but sadly they did not care! That's what we are up against.

2. Question

Youths skateboarding in the Colonnade lobbies causing damage to the benches - this is probably more than just a sign issue. The ranger used to be permitted to confiscate bicycles/ skateboards etc., hand them in to the police for them to be re-claimed from them - quite a good deterrent. Is this still permitted? If not, why not?

Answer

The Ranger does try and move on the bikers, footballers and skateboarders from the colonnades as and when he sees them. But like all things he has to be there when they are there causing a nuisance. He will continue to do so when he is there and sees a problem.

As for confiscated bikes etc. as far as we are aware he has never done this and if he has he should not as he does not have the legal powers to do that.

That said we will change the sign to include skaters.

3. Question

There is also the broader issue of cycling and skateboarding (not in the skateboard area) in the Valley Gardens.

Answer

We are continuing to work on this and have completed the signage we discussed previously. As with all things signs are not a direct deterrent and as a result we will again be working with Sk8safe this year who will be working with the youngsters to raise awareness and hopefully minimise this as a problem. I can also confirm the Ranger does stop people he sees cycling/skating through the park and he will continue to do this.

4. Question
Is horse riding permitted in the Valley Gardens?

Answer

Technically yes. The Bogs Field Act states that we can make byelaws in respect of the following: "... for regulating or prohibiting the hiring or riding of horses and other animals; and for preventing horse racing or the racing of other animals." However, this only covers part of the gardens and we do not have a byelaw in place to support this, so it cannot be enforced.

Having said that, we would not actively encourage horse riding within any park or open space due to the possible impact on other park users and generally it is not a problem. There is also the inevitable problem as referred to above, in that if we had such a byelaw, how would it then be enforced?

That said the byelaws are very dated and I have discussed the matter with our legal section as to whether or not they could be reviewed.

They have confirmed we could but it is a lengthy process and one that will take a considerable period of time to work through. We are looking to see how we might implement such a review and deal with this issue. However, I would again stress that even if we do this the issue of enforcement is still a real concern and not one that I will get any more resources to address.

5. Question
Signage at entrance - what is not permitted in relation to cycling, skateboarding, horse riding, alcohol, barbeques, other sporting activities etc?

Answer

Well I am sure that all of you who have visited the gardens over the past few weeks will have noticed the new signs that do just this and address all of the concerns raised and discussed previously at this meeting.

General

Gardens Harrogate

On 19 May 2013 between 11:00 and 15:00 Gardens Harrogate are having an event in the Gardens which is free and open to the public. There will be lots of stalls from over 25 organisations selling plants and much, much more. The purpose is to raise money and increase awareness of gardens and horticultural groups etc. that are available or work in the area. Please come along.

RHS Yorkshire in Bloom – Open Spaces Award

Open to voluntary groups and is there to raise awareness of the increasing input that voluntary groups are having in the maintenance and care of sites within the community. Fee £35. Closing date 17 May 2013. Assessed in June 2013.

Very short form – why not enter?

Patrick Kilburn
Head of Parks and Open Spaces
9 May 2013