



How is your park or green space being used coming out of lock down?

Bedford Square

Hi Pete here.

We've noticed a distinct upturn in the usage of the gardens and associated spin-offs.

After the covid mutual aid WhatsApp group we set up turned into more of a Bedford Square social connected group, a lot of new relationships have developed over various activities.

So much so, there's been an upturn in locals actually using the space, and more so interacting with one another. It feels like we've reclaimed it from the 'blow ins', who more often than not have been loitering around, smoking pot and drinking booze. (Which they still do TBF)

We have the Brighton Hotel as a property on the square that has been used to host homeless during the pandemic - so there are a few of the new residents using the space too, they're mostly harmless, albeit sleeping off the various intoxicants some imbibe.

We've had a 'bubble man' - who has appeared a few times. Blowing giant bubbles and bubble swarms, much to the delight of the residents.

We've had community lockdown 'concerts' and DJ sets, which to be fair are from people's Windows/Doorsteps. But some residents have gathered in the gardens to dance and chat.

The best thing though is the social cohesion that's happened - this has boosted our community spirit and we are now kicking off the litter picks and weeding sessions. Trying to clear the beds of various invasive species.

We have a community meeting in the garden on Thursday evening, followed by a small ceremony to mourn the loss of a neighbour's cat who had become a local celebrity, sadly died after being hit by a car.

There are many folks using the space too keep fit too, in fact one of our residents is running free fitness sessions for some of the others - and this has transformed into a Sea Swimming club too.

On the downside, there's been a marked increase of blow-ins using it as place to do their toileting, particularly around the communal bin area - which many residents have complained to me about. So much so I've made a poster. (See attached)

Aside from this, It's all very positive.

Best regards
Pete.

Peter J. Ranson
Resident & Acting Chair
Bedford Square Garden Project



Hey you!

Why are you peeing on our plants?*

- ✓ I'm a filthy animal
- ✓ I don't care about this community*
- ✓ Someone else should pay to clean up after me



Don't be a piddling idiot.
Hold it in, take it home and go and whizz on your own bush!

* Bedford Square Gardens is overlooked by over 200 flats - we can see you and know what your doing.

Brunswick Square & Terrace

We have seen a huge upturn in the use of our green space (Brunswick Square) all for the wrong reasons.

Increased drug use with needles and other disgusting items left in the copse and middle beds where children play.

Increased use of Square by large groups of people (40 in one group) who leave all their rubbish behind including drug detritus and bottles which are chucked in the bushes and flower beds.

These large groups have used the Muddle Beds in the Square as their own personal toilet trampling on the Friends Garden and openly seen using all spaces round the Square as a toilet.

Drug deals are being done in the Square.

All this is happening while increased groups of adults with children use the Square.

Dog walkers are increasingly ignoring the No Dogs signs and allowing their dogs in the Square and also to run free and defecate wherever they please.

One of our members phoned 999 last night during a disturbance by a large group of people and was told by the policewoman not to bother them!

She then hung up on them. A very sorry and disturbing situation is happening in this green space.

Regards

Lynne Moore

Friends of Brunswick Square and Terrace



How is your park or green space being used coming out of lock down?

Coldean

I am a member of the Coldean Residents Association and live in Coldean Brighton. We have a local park called Haig Park situated off of Haig Avenue, At the moment the park cannot be used by residents or children because the council have not cut the grass which is now very long. The council did start to cut the grass on our estate but stopped leaving large areas including the park untouched. I'm not sure if this is due to a lack of staff or other problems. It would be nice if the park area could be cut so that the children have some where to play and use the equipment during the summer holidays.

Robin Berry

Coldean Residents Association

Craven Woods

Thanks for your message. The situation regarding Craven Wood is as follows:

Prior to lockdown, I was not able to be there very often, but all I ever used to see were a handful of dog walkers, and probably not more than 5 or 6 people in any two-hour shift on a Saturday morning.

Since lockdown began, we have had no volunteer sessions and I have been in the wood for a couple of hours three afternoons a week on average. Although it is called a 'wood', we have cleared a large amount of fully-grown sycamores and replaced them with a wide range of open land and varying habitats - orchard, hazel coppice, two glades and two stands of native trees and shrubs. Plus three benches with views across the city!

Early on in lockdown, the wood was very busy with people finding this gem on their doorstep for the first time. I counted on average at least twenty people - mainly families with young children, friends in 2s and 3s, and a few dog walkers. After a while I began to recognise 'regulars' who would stop to chat.

Recently, the numbers have trailed off again, but it is still at least twice as popular as before. Many have said how amazed they were to find this area on their doorstep, and have really begun to use the wood more frequently - it is a valuable green lung with many interesting walks and plenty to stop and look at.

There has been no obvious change in the activities - most people are just having a gentle stroll through the wood, although there was evidence of one barbecue at least.

I hope that helps - please feel free to follow up on any aspect.

Alan Cooke

Secretary, Friends of Craven Wood



Hollingbury Hill Fort & Golf Course

1. There has been a large increase in people using the green spaces on their doorstep for mental respite and exercise. On Hollingbury Hill I regularly counted more than 150 people an hour at many different times of day, including very early and late. That's at least 800 a day. Many were discovering or rediscovering this amazing resource. It was wonderful to see. Local people are continuing to use the Hill.

Rachel Henson
Hollingdean resident

2. I am an active member of the Forum. I have spent significant amounts of time in Preston Park and in Hollingbury - on the fort and the open spaces of the golf course - during the three months of lockdown.

There is no doubt in my mind that hundreds more local families and young people (in their teenage years) have spent time socialising, having picnics, lying in the sun and, particularly in Hollingbury, walking their dogs and themselves. It has been an absolute delight to see so many people making use of the open spaces in our neighbourhood. It is a great shame that the golf course has re-opened which means that local residents are now denied access to the space that they have taken advantage of during lockdown. There are several golf courses easily accessible from Brighton but few, if any, green open spaces like Hollingbury for locals to enjoy. Hollingbury has the added advantage of being on a regular bus route so that families without cars can get there efficiently. Sadly, the needs of golfers have been prioritised over the needs of local residents who just want to enjoy the green outdoors.

Vivienne Barton
Green Space Volunteer & Patcham Resident

3. I'm writing to share that our local golf course and Hollingbury Hill fort were extremely appreciated well used during lockdown.

There must have been on average around 200+ people using it daily & all seemed to be really appreciating the space with their families as a place to exercise away from home and enjoy the local flora, fauna and sunsets.

The golf course was starting to look wonderful without being mowed with lots of daisies making an appearance.

It was a fantastic use of public space & as a local resident I am sad to have our access limited now the golfers are back on the land.

Unfortunately this morning while using what I believe to be a permissive footpath I encountered a rather grumpy golfer who's ball had strayed into the long grass challenging my right to be there. This seems to be a fairly common experience for people walking around the edges of the course.

I do hope we can manage to find a way to share the space.

Polly Charlton
Friends of Hollingdean Park



Hollingbury & Burstead Woods

1. We've seen a huge increase in people using both Hollingbury and Burstead Woods. Mainly for walking but also an increase in den building. We've also seen quite a lot of families with very young children exploring off the main tracks. Fantastic!

We have had one incident of mountain bike earth ramps being built and one incident of teenagers having a fire. Both of these were dealt with by Emma our Ranger and the problem hasn't continued. Dog poo bags remain a problem and it's difficult to know how to stop dog owners leaving them everywhere

A lot of people appear to have used the woods as a route through from the suburbs to Hollingbury Hillfort and it would be nice to see this a bit more joined up somehow now that access over the Golf Course is being stopped. Clear signage showing the routes available once out of the woods would be good. It's a lovely walk and it would be good to encourage people to walk it, and maybe carry on to Stanmer Park. I think a lot of people have realised during lockdown that these places are very walkable to.

Jane Lyons

Friends of Hollingbury and Burstead Woods.

2. We have seen a marked increase in the use of Hollingbury and Burstead woods and the meadow land above the covered reservoir in Ditchling Road.

Whilst we are pleased to see people enjoying the above we have encountered problems:

1. Much more litter left behind
2. Camp fires in the woods
3. Cycle tracks, ramps/jumps being created by moving the valuable (to insects etc.) dead wood logs, digging out soil around our veteran trees, bringing in concrete and other items to reinforce the ramps and destroying the ground flora
4. Creating ever more 'desire lines' through the woods so decreasing the ground flora and breaking up the hedgerows
5. Increase in dog poo bags; some left just a few metres from the bins

On the plus side:

1. More people volunteering to help when we are allowed to resume our work sessions
2. More birds, butterflies and bats seen and enjoyed by people
3. Kids enjoying building 'tree branch' camps
4. More people enjoying the tranquility of the woods, and grateful for the shade!
5. People remarking on how they can hear more bird song without the constant hum of traffic

Gill Taylor, Secretary

Friends of Hollingbury & Burstead Woods



How is your park or green space being used coming out of lock down?

Hove Lagoon

Hove Lagoon has been getting busier and busier over the past few weeks, with the Big Beach Cafe takeaway service reopening, the new Rockwater temporary food and drinks huts being set up on the beach, the Skatepark reopening and Lagoon Watersports starting a smaller number of classes. The number of visitors will definitely increase this weekend (4th/5th) when the Lagoon Funplay rides are all back - the children's playground is reopening on Monday 6th. They are all abiding by the social distance regs responsibly.

As usual, walkers, dog walkers, runners and cyclists have used the Lagoon in its own right and also as a cut through to the prom and the beach. Most people - with a few exceptions - are abiding by the rules, but we have had a number of reports of groups of young people herding together late at night and causing some mischief. The Lagoon is accessible 24/7. A number of people are going out earlier in the mornings to avoid what they assume will be more people to dodge around.

Generally, the rubbish collections have been ok - Andy our council refuse operative is excellent and a number of locals know him and have a chat. We also currently have two 14 year old girls litter-picking every Sunday for the DoE awards and one of our committee members is our refuse and recycling link with the council.

We have the return of a homeless man in a tent and he produces lots of rubbish and has small fires. He has mental health issues and is being monitored by St Mungo's. People appear to have accepted him and he will eventually be rehomed. Hove Lagoon is less of an open green space than others in the City, but people do like to use it on a regular basis.

Sue Johnson

Friends of Hove Lagoon (Organisers of LagoonFest)

Hove Park

Hove Park is very definitely busier than I have ever seen it and it's great to see so many enjoying the great outdoor space that Hove Park is. So many small children with their parents on scooters and bikes and generally having a good time. Many more dogs than I have ever seen, joggers of all different abilities, groups sat all over the park (many totally ignoring social distancing mainly youngsters) and multiple groups taking advantage of the sunshine and enjoying their picnics. Also the park looks great this time of the year and I must admit the gardeners appear to be doing a good job, although I believe they are having a big problem with litter. I do think we need at some point a litter campaign, it would be a good idea for all green spaces. Both the tennis courts and the artificial football pitches are in full use, but it is such a shame that the playground is out of use especially with so many young children around. I think it is very positive that so many have discovered Hove Park I hope they will continue to go on using it we are very lucky to have it in our area.

Alan Moon

Friends of Hove Park



Palmeira & Adelaide Squares

1. Hello! We haven't noticed any significant changes in normal use, however there has been an increase in anti-social behaviour and breaches of Covid-19 rules. Before the seafront loos were open and even afterwards, our gardens have been used as public toilets. Young people being away from School and College has been blamed for an increase in drug use and we certainly have some evidence for this. It is difficult to know how much negative activity is due to Covid-19 and how much to the very warm weather we have had since April, when more people would be picnicing outside in any event.

We have carried out more weeding than usual as there has been a definite reduction in Council activity, however the plants don't seem to have suffered too much.

Judith Taylor

Palmeira & Adelaide Garden Fund

2. I am a member of The Friends of Palmeira and Adelaide Gardens, and part of the committee.

We have seen, like many others, increased use of our green spaces. Most notable is the use of Adelaide for fitness and training. There are several trainers who now use the space for their classes, usually only one or two participants. Unfortunately there has also been a disturbing use of trees for exercise, some kick-boxing and individual work-outs using straps over tree branches. We have suggested to such people that this is not a nice thing to do to a tree!

Other than that, the increase in use is part of the present national situation and we should consider ourselves lucky that we have an outside space!

Trish Thompson

Friends of Palmeira and Adelaide Gardens

3. I am a member of The Friends of Palmeira and Adelaide - 'FOPA' - and a Committee Member,

I would like to add to Trish Thompsons comments in regards to the increased usage of Green Spaces

It is lovely to see the gardens used for what they were originally intended for, pleasant surroundings, gathering of families and friends a very relaxing time. Its difficult as a local resident to see the take-away cartons and packaging left behind, and in the case of families a scorch mark on the grass to say we were there and we had a lovely time with the BBQ!

While Pubs and Restaurants are closed and alcohol consumed in public spaces, increased late night noise, and no members of staff to clear away the empties each morning a reflection on the night before, someone had a good time!



How is your park or green space being used coming out of lock down?

So really we feel our local parks are being trashed, and on two occasions I have left experiencing what felt like a children's playground unsupervised and no adults to encourage and teach respect for other users.

It was quieter over the weekend, but then windy and cold, I endured as much as I could.

David Ward
FO Palmeira & Adelaide / LAT

Preston Park

1. Our volunteer group looks after St Peters Churchyard and the wildlife area at the north end of Preston Park. We have seen a marked increase in the number of people using both the churchyard and wildlife area. In most respects the usage is positive with people sitting, passing through and enjoying the spaces. There has though been a significant increase in litter, particularly human poo which we have had to clear up on a number of occasions. We've also seen an increase in our rat population, with some visitors feeding them along with local squirrels..

Preston Park generally has seen a huge increase in usage, we really hope this will result in a positive legacy of people valuing the park long into the future.

Cliff Munn
St Peters Churchyard Volunteers

2. Preston Park velodrome and cricket field, and picnic area nearby close to new pond etc.

As restrictions have eased, all these areas have been used by growing numbers of people, including large gatherings.

Most people take their litter away, and I've had a very good response when I've handed out sacks and carrier bags on fine weekend early evenings. Sacks have been filled and left by the bins in the top corner or by the velodrome cricket pavilion.

There has however been a lot of litter left on the cricket field, in the velodrome + grandstand, and around the picnic area close to the new pond nearby.

Also, on 2 occasions, bottles have been thrown over the grandstand into the tennis club during the day, smashing onto courts that were by then back in use (1 is a children's mini-court). And there has been at least 1 other glass-smashing incident in the park this month.

Tennis club members collected large amounts of bottles, BBQs and other throwable litter from areas of the park close to the club for over a month while many council staff were still 'on furlough'. (City Parks staff are now collecting litter daily again including at weekends.)



How is your park or green space being used coming out of lock down?

Park users of all ages who I've spoken to including cyclists, runners and others exercising, picnickers, and those walking through, generally agree that:-

1. more bins are needed in these areas (currently 0) and at park entrances such as by the steps into the velodrome lower down Preston Drive.
2. bins need to be frequently emptied, especially in warm weather, including collection vehicles circulating as they do on the seafront up to the early evening, if not later.
3. more people are using their parks, some for the first time, or discovering green spaces they were unaware of; this is totally welcome and positive. Unsurprisingly however misuse has also increased, though it is only done by a small minority, and this has highlighted some existing problems and gaps in the existing park maintenance.

James Simister
Friends of Preston Park

Regency Square

From: Regency Square Area Society volunteer gardening group
Re: public gardens in Clarence, Russell and Regency squares

Clarence Square garden during lockdown: fewer people entering, but a different mix of people than before - more families with small children, more solo elderly people, fewer groups of young adults. Overall, a calmer space.

Russell Square garden during lockdown: fewer people entering overall, but some individual residents entering more often, to do solo gardening (volunteer group members and others)

Regency Square garden during lockdown: occasional use for solo exercise (weights, skipping, yoga), daily use by groups of residents from HMOs in the square. Increase in anti-social behaviour (aggression, fights, drug-dealing, urinating in the gardens, trampling borders) from some of the HMO residents with drink/addiction problems.

Regency Square garden coming out of lockdown: more people sitting, in small groups or solo, for longer periods of time than pre-lockdown; huge increase (ie more than pre-lockdown) in litter from takeaways, using the shrubberies as toilets, dumping broken bicycles (think the bicycles are something to do with drug dealing)

Gill Wales
Regency Square Gardening Group



How is your park or green space being used coming out of lock down?

Saltdean Residents Association

Thank you for including the SRA in this.

I have received a complaint about someone bringing a van onto The Oval and setting up Gym equipment next to the public equipment.

It's seems to be a commercial venture, giving park users the impression that there is a charge for using any equipment.

I have reported this to Robert Walker at the Council who is making enquiries. As far as I know he is saying action can be taken since the person involved should not have taken a van into the park.

Otherwise the SRA Harmony Garden in The Oval has been well received with people picnicking there: we understand some people have come from as far away as Reading to see the garden, having previously lived in Saltdean.

Jon Ray
Chair, Saltdean Residents' Association

Saunders Park

Hi, I run the community garden at Saunders Park. I've noticed lots of things:

Postivities:

- Many more people out and about enjoying the space. More interaction between passers by. I now see groups of individuals chatting together on their dog walks rather than keeping themselves to themselves-parents bringing their children for their school work, (one child had to complete a questionnaire about what wildlife she could see in her local park). I showed her the worms in the compost bins and the bees etc. Mum was very grateful! Parents in general glad to have something to do with their kids by looking at what's growing.
- More volunteers wanting to take care of the space (5 new helpers in the group since lockdown started).
- More people stopping to say how much they enjoy the space whilst we are there gardening and more engagement than before from passers-by thanking us for what we are doing there.
- We are now donating our produce to the local food bank
- More local people using it who have been shielding – Saunders is the only green space in what is quite a built up area so for some who don't have gardens, it's the only place they can go to get out in nature. Lots of feedback from people about how much they love and appreciate the garden more since lockdown.



How is your park or green space being used coming out of lock down?

Negatives:

- HUGE increase in the litter being dropped. A local resident goes out every day to collect approximately x1 bin bag full. I've leant her rubbish pickers and gloves. She also happens to have Mental Health challenges and finds the litter extremely upsetting. She benefits from having the garden on her doorstep and says that helping in the group has been a lifesaver.
- Increase in anti-social behaviour – mainly large groups of teenagers drinking and leaving bottles and cans. Coupled with what I suspect is a decrease in council litter pickers, the impact is doubled. When residents have reported this to police, nothing has been done.
- The grass has not yet been mown this year. Whilst this is great for wildlife, (and I've been asking for it to be kept long in the orchard area), the other areas are beginning to look unkempt. I suspect again that the council have been stretched beyond capacity and this is a low priority.

Rosie Linford

Community Cook, Gardener & Composting Coordinator

St Ann's Well Gardens

In many ways we are delighted that the park has been so well used, with more activities to be seen, more family and young people and a whole host of healthy and outdoor activities, more tennis being played and private training sessions. It is a very busy park now.

However the litter has been bad and the worst thing has been the open drug dealing (broad daylight) and complaints from residents about very late and noisy parties, often until the very early hours. Also our Sensory garden's shelter has been broken into and occupied.

The Police have been notified and have made some regular visits but apparently most of their time is allocated to the sea front. I did contact our local councillor who chairs the Council's Community Safety committee and the police were alerted again. An article appeared in the Brighton and Hove News online during the heat wave.

Melanie Davis

Friends of St Ann's Well Gardens

Westdene Green

Significant increase in use of The Green here. New use by very young children [3-7] learning to ride their bicycles, accompanied by parents. Successful outings by groups of older children [10-12] on bikes, also. A fantasy scheme for The Green: earth-banks fashioned to give them a circuit in the SW corner.

Also new use by older people for distanced picnics.

Regular football with informal coaching of children by friendship groups

Roads are much quieter here, which allows for children to use them. The roads here are normally unsafe for kids.

Mike Letton, Treasurer TWEACK



How is your park or green space being used coming out of lock down?

Woodingdean

I have noticed an increase in people walking, biking and also just sitting and enjoying the outdoors with picnics, books etc. I think many are really appreciating our green spaces more than previously.

We have had some green waste tipping during lockdown, which we are dealing with but other than that I have not observed anything less than positive.

The only downside is increased numbers of people on popular local routes/ paths at peak times. This has reduced my sense of enjoyment at times and also made distancing a challenge. Not everyone is considerate unfortunately.

The Drove Road bridleway at the back of Woodingdean is an example. In places the vegetation has been allowed to overgrow so that the path is only 1 metre wide instead of 2. This has caused issues due to a high number of walkers, dogs, horses and significant increase in cyclists. It becomes very congested.

Thanks and best regards

Clare Millett Hopkins
Woodingdean Wilderness

General Comments

This is a general comment. Lots of exercise businesses are using green space eg Hove Lawns, parks etc. I feel they should not be allowed to do this or be licensed and charged. What do you think? I am a councillor for St Peters and North Laine.

Sue Shanks
Reply sent to Sue 3/7/20