

Compiled by the Planning Projects,  
Environment Initiatives and International Teams  
at Brighton & Hove City Council

INTERREG IVB Lively Cities Project  
**Ann Street / Providence Place Gardens**  
**Common Room site assessment report**

SUMMARY: HEADLINES &  
RECOMMENDATIONS

February 2013

**Printing advice:**

*For optimum results, this document should be printed back to back. This is because information provided in the even pages has been designed to be complemented by that contained in the odd pages.*





## 1. Headlines & recommendations

This is a summary of the findings of quantitative and qualitative data collected prior to (2011) and during the (2012) two-week temporary transformation of the Ann Street and Providence Place Gardens area of Brighton into the Common Room.

For detailed information please refer to the report.

### What does the data collected say about the changes put in place as part of the Common Room when compared to that collected one year earlier?

A comparison of data from the 2011 and 2012 surveys suggest how successful (or not) changes implemented as part of the Common Room were in addressing user concerns and suggestions for improving the area.



### 2011

Anti-social behaviour in general and street drinking in particular was a concern for many users and viewed by some as a deterrent to using the area.

One of the most popular suggestions for improving the area was the provision of more seating and tables.

### 2012

There was a noticeable increase in the use of the park (Providence Place Gardens) as people made use of the facilities and activities introduced as part of the Common Room.

A wider range of activities was evident across the project area as a whole, including people making use of the bottom end of Ann Street and park terraced steps as places to rest and linger, due to the changed nature of the space and seating opportunities provided.





### 2011

When asked which aspects of the area they liked most users cited the role of the park as an open, green, public space that provides a quiet respite from the busy area around it. However, most considered the area to feel insufficiently welcome for them to spend time in it.

### 2012

People visited the project area more often and stayed for longer periods of time, with a larger proportion present throughout the day and even into the evening when uplighting was provided beneath the trees in the park.

A more diversified age range of people using the project area with a far higher percentage of young adults, teens/children and seniors.







**High priority Seating, removal of fence and introduction of steps**

These were the most popular changes and as such it is recommended that they be secured as the first phase in any permanent transformation of the project area. Particular care will need to be afforded to the following details:

**Seating**

- the quantity and location of fixed seating;
- movable seating is best avoided as it requires daily management and can result in territorial behaviour by some users;

**Steps**

- ensuring that the design and materials of permanent steps are carefully tailored to encourage and provide access and egress to and from the park, provide comfortable but robust informal seating – whilst deterring 'misuse' (e.g. skateboarding);
- considering and agreeing viable and fair options for residents, blue badge holders and delivery vehicles arising from any parking bays removed from or relocated within the project area; and
- allowing for accessibility across the site.





**Moderate to high priority**  
**Art wall and facilities for food trading**

Particular care will need to be afforded to the following details:

**Art wall**

- the nature, design and extent of the art wall, whether it be for temporary or long-term designs, its role in contributing to a potential wider graffiti strategy in the locality and the co-operation and involvement (as appropriate) of affected landowners and local residents;

**Food trading**

- provision of power supply, water point and possibly other facilities on site to enable more flexible use of the project area and to support food trading; and if and how licensing arrangements/income derived from any on-site trading might support and contribute to the ongoing operation of the Common Room (e.g. assisting in place management and maintenance).







**Moderate priority**

**Restrict access of large vehicles and provision of 'shared surface' approach to carriageways in project area, provision of events, tree lighting (and external lighting of church) Ann Street 'pocket' square**

Particular care will need to be afforded to the following details:

**Large vehicle restriction**

- providing for necessary access while limiting circulation and size of vehicles;

**Shared surface**

- agreeing the extent and nature of any shared surface treatment;

**Events and lighting**

- providing a temporary or permanent table tennis facility in the park and working in partnership with residents and Sussex Police to manage hours of play;
- implementing after school play on a consistent basis and applying for play street status for Providence Place in partnership with St. Bartholomew's School;
- lighting trees, park sculpture and church façade in partnership with St Bartholomew's Church; and

**Ann Street 'pocket' square**

- incorporating parking for delivery vehicles and disabled parking into the design of the 'square'.





**Lower priority  
Wi-Fi**

It is possible that the free wi-fi may be more successful in drawing people into the area in the long term once proposed high priority measures have been put in place (i.e. steps and fixed seating). Its presence was not particularly well highlighted until the second week of the pilot and may well have been needed to be tested over a longer period than the two weeks in October 2012. At the time of writing the wi-fi remains available in the area (currently until Sep 2013) although the absence of any seating since the end of the pilot is not conducive in encouraging its use.

Nevertheless, it has the potential to add to the total 'offer' of the Common Room and draw an increased and wider range of users into the area. It is important in the process of implementing wi-fi to work with local partners to raise awareness and make best use of the service currently in place until September 2013.

**Unsuccessful Common Room change  
Performance area**

This was considered to be the only unsuccessful element of the Common Room scheme as it was not used for its intended purpose – i.e. for impromptu performances. In the context of after school playtime it posed a potential risk insofar as some children considered it an extension of the park and a play attraction, running across the road between the stage and the park during those times. It should, however, also be noted that the road tended to be used as a shared surface for cars and pedestrians during the course of the pilot and that both drivers and pedestrians were observed to co-exist harmoniously and observe due caution for each other.

For the reason that the stage was at no time used for its intended purpose it is recommended that an alternative use be identified of for this sub area, including options for using replacement on-street parking and/or delivery bays.







Thanks everyone who helped to bring the Common Room to life!

