

Interview with Rob Hobson

Contributed by Administrator
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'So how did you get involved in the Friends of Royal Albert Park?'

I used to have a hotel on the top of North Bay overlooking it. When the sea defences work ended, I was a member of a local business group who wanted to improve the area.

The council said it was a good idea to consult the public, and the best way to do that would be through the formation of a friends group.

We started by inviting people from various local organisations, for instance the local residents association, and by November 2003 we'd got an idea of what we'd like.

By 2004 that had become a plan, and over the winter of 2004/5 that went to public consultation. We put out questionnaires to, for instance, local properties, schools, and we made it available in the library.

One of the issues that came back loud and clear is that the current skatepark is inadequate.

By 2005 we had developed a master plan that gained approval from the local council.

We also had to get permission from the palace to call it 'Royal Albert Park'.

Since then we've been trying to raise the funds required to make it happen.

Locals may have noticed that the pathways beyond the castle archway down to North Bay (that area's called Castle Holmes) have been repaired recently and re-opened. That's a result of council funding. There's further funding for picnic tables, benches and signage that should be installed soon.

By the middle of June, we hope to have an exercise trail installed using £12,000 of funding from the National Lottery, Sport England, and the local council.

We have a meeting due shortly that we hope will see funding made available to enable the rest of the plan to be implemented. That includes moving the skate park to its new home. You can see from <http://www.hairybobs.com/> the local skaters have been heavily involved in designing the new site. The current site will become a children's playground.

We wanted to bring the whole site up to date. In 1998 the council cut costs by stopping grass cutting in the park, so the whole area started to be taken over by weeds and nettles. It simply wasn't fit to look at. Nowadays it's maintained properly and plays its part in the success of Scarborough in Britain in Bloom.

However, it's currently nice for a walk, but there's not a lot to do. We intend to change that with the exercise trail, new skatepark and dirt track for bikes, we're in the Wilbur Smith geology trail (a joint venture between ourselves, the Rotunda museum, and the local council), and there are plans for a shower block for surfers.

Geologically there's amazing evidence of a major earthquake. You can

stand under the castle arch and look towards the sea life centre and make out what moved, and the same looking back south towards Cayton.

It's a beautiful spot, it's an oasis. We hope that by developing a number of great ways to use it we can preserve it as a green space. We already have phase three plans, including the creation of a contoured putting green.

