

The Helix – A Smart Park that Listens & Talks

A park with a voice, and the ability to play.

What if you could ask a signpost about a café, or talk to the trees about the grass?

A modern park that can talk to its visitors; locally, nationally, internationally, using real time data and analytics to have genuine conversations with a globally connected audience.

With internet access becoming an assumed feature, particularly at visitor attractions, and with Wi-Fi being the normal medium for this access, we asked ourselves if the theme of connections which underpins The Helix ethos could be expanded from a physical network of pathways and waterways into a digital network. Using internet enabled sensors and detectors, reporting on a wide range of environmental elements within the park we could produce real time information for education, monitoring and play.

Three elements combine to form the Smart Park concept:

- Access – a free wireless internet connection anywhere on The Helix
- Data – tracking the park environment in real time using proven technology
- Personality – a park that can speak, interpreting the data and increasing engagement

Education – Internal and External

A Smart Park will enable us to boost engagement and education opportunities within the park through interactive play, but also reach out to educational establishments anywhere in the world.

A key part of the educational interaction we currently undertake is limited by the ability of a school/college/university to travel to the park – by bringing The Helix to them, lessons and projects can be developed in house, to fit with the requirements of educators.

Interaction – Play, Engagement, Commitment

By enabling visitors to the park to interpret the gathered data, they will be able to understand the environmental impact of weather, pollution, and their own actions on the health and wellbeing of the park and its habitats. This increases visitor involvement and ownership for the park and its health.

Using established communication systems - including social media, mobile phone messaging and website interaction - park users are able to join and feel part of a global community. International visitors can share their experiences of the park in real time and weave their stories into those shared by local and national visitors.

Monitoring – Evaluate and Improve

Real time data gathering has practical functionality as well. Sensors in the water systems of the park can report any increase in water pollution as it happens, allowing action to be taken swiftly to rectify any issues. Air pollution monitors can inform the park management of hotspots for pollution, and inform efforts to reduce it. Tracking pollen levels and dust levels provides advice for visitors with respiratory issues, with the park sending information out via multiple media streams.

The Helix is a young green-space; the opportunity to monitor the growth of this park from the early stages of growth to maturity and beyond could deliver a magnificent wealth of information for future green space development.

We are delighted to be considered for the award today.