
Report To:	Safe, Sustainable Communities Committee	Date:	31 August 2010
Report By:	Corporate Director Regeneration and Environment	Report No:	ECP/ENV/AB10.55
Contact Officer:	Willie Rennie	Contact No:	4761
Subject:	Play Area Action Plan		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request approval of a play area action plan for the refurbishment of play areas across the district.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The May 2009 Safe, Sustainable, Communities Committee remitted the then Corporate Director Environment & Community Protection to carry out a review of play area provision across Inverclyde with a view to producing a play area strategy for the medium and long-term.

- 2.2 The March 2010 Safe, Sustainable, Communities Committee approved the play area strategy and associated recommendations and gave a remit to the appropriate Director to produce an action plan in respect of prioritising the spend of currently available funding, based on the criteria set out in the strategy.

- 2.3 The approved investment priorities from the play area strategy are:

Priority 1

Invest in current stock to meet safety standards.

Priority 2:

Invest in current stock to modernise/refurbish.

Priority 3:

Invest in new provision to meet quantity and quality standards. This may take the form of increasing the size and varying the content of existing play areas, or the construction of new play areas on new sites.

- 2.4 The play area investment fund has a current balance to spend of £519k, of which £269k is allocated to priorities 1 and 2 and £250k to priority 3. External funding of £89k is available in addition to the play area investment fund, giving a total budget of £608k to invest in play areas. The external funding is from housing developers who are required to contribute to play area provision as part of the Planning approval for their respective developments.

- 2.5 Three community organisations have declared an interest in applying for funding through the play area investment fund for the purpose of creating new play areas within their geographical area of interest. The play area strategy allows for community groups to bid for funding for local projects e.g. as matched funding in a lottery or other external funding bid. Such bids are dealt with under priority 3 of the play area strategy. At this stage none of the groups has had any external funding confirmed and they have been informed that the main criteria for success in being awarded funds from Inverclyde Council's play area investment fund are that they have a confirmed external funding source and a project agreeable to the Council. In order to assist the community groups in

securing funding from sources other than the Council, in principle support and a provisional allocation of funds is recommended for each project.

2.6 The proposals in this play area action plan will see 14, which is almost a third, of the district's play areas replaced, relocated to a better site or upgraded.

2.7 The undernoted table shows a summary of the site specific proposals under **priorities 1 and 2**. Unless stated otherwise the term "Install new play area" refers to installation on the existing site.

Priority & Location	Proposal	Value £
1. Clune Brae, Port Glasgow	Remove play area and make the site safe.	5,000
1. Dempster Street, Greenock	Relocate play area to better site nearby i.e. within Murdieston Park	0
1. Murdieston Park, Greenock	Install new larger play area to replace existing one and also offset removal of Dempster Street site.	40,000
1. Lady Alice Park, Greenock	Replace one old and install two new play units	15,000
1. Watt Street, Greenock	Replace one old and install one new large play unit	15,000
1. Fox Street, Greenock	Upgrade some areas of safety surface and install blaes kickabout	30,000
1. Ailsa Road, Gourrock	Install new play area	24,000
1. Main Street, Inverkip	Replace play area fence	5,000
1. Ryan Road, Wemyss Bay	Install new play area	15,000
2. Auchenleck Lane, Port Glasgow	Install new play area	25,000
2. Leven Road, Greenock	Install new play area	75,000
2. Cove Road, Gourrock	Install two or three new play units	20,000
Total Cost		269,000

The undernoted table shows a summary of the site specific proposals under **priority 3**.

Location	Proposal	Value £
Boglestone Community Centre	Install new play area and/or MUGA	100,000
Greenock Central, plot between Ann Street and Sir Michael Street	Install new play area and/or MUGA	75,000
Larkfield/Braeside – specific location to be confirmed	Install new play area	75,000
Total Cost		250,000

The undernoted table shows a summary of the site specific proposals that will be funded from **external funding**. "Install new play area" refers to installation on the existing site.

Location	Proposal	Value £
Leven Road, Greenock	Install new play area – supplementary to priority 2 proposal. Total project cost £90k.	15,000
Grosvenor Road, Greenock	Install new play area	49,000
Bawhirley Road, Greenock	Install new play area	25,000
Total Cost		89,000

2.8 In addition to the proposals outlined in this report, new play areas are due to be installed in Oronsay Avenue and the Woodhall area of Port Glasgow, as part of ongoing housing developments and the play area within the curtilage of Auchmountain Halls is currently being upgraded as part of the housing development within Maukinhill. On completion all three play areas will be adopted for maintenance by Inverclyde Council thereby increasing the number of Council maintained play areas to 48 in total.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the committee approve the play area action plan as detailed in this report.
- 3.2 That in principle support is given to three community groups' proposals and that provisional funding is allocated to each project in the amounts as undernoted.

Boglestone	£100k
Greenock Central	£ 75k
Larkfield/Braeside	£ 75k

**Aubrey Fawcett
Corporate Director
Regeneration and Environment**

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 There are 45 play area sites currently managed by Inverclyde Council, The approved play area strategy sets out priorities for the investment in play areas across the district. Investment focus is on maintaining current stock to an acceptable standard in terms of safety and quality and extending existing play areas or creating new ones in order to bridge gaps in provision in some neighbourhoods.

The approved investment priorities from the play area strategy are:

Priority 1

Invest in current stock to meet safety standards.

Priority 2:

Invest in current stock to modernise/refurbish.

Priority 3:

Invest in new provision to meet quantity and quality standards. This may take the form of increasing the size and varying the content of existing play areas, or the construction of new play areas on new sites.

- 4.2 The play area investment fund is the main means through which the objectives of the play area strategy will be delivered, however external funding will also be utilised where possible. The fund has a current balance to spend of £519k, of which £269k is allocated to priorities 1 and 2 and £250k to priority 3. External funding of £89k is available in addition to the play area investment fund giving a total budget of £608k. The external funding is from housing developers, who are required to contribute to play area provision as part of the Planning approval for their respective developments. All of the external funding is allocated to sites within or nearby the respective housing developments, as part of the Planning approval, so there is no scope to allocate the external funding to other locations.
- 4.3 Three community organisations have declared an interest in applying for funding through the play area investment fund for the purpose of creating new play areas within their geographical area of interest. The play area strategy allows for community groups to bid for funding for local projects e.g. as matched funding in a lottery or other external funding bid. At this stage none of the groups has had any external funding confirmed and they have been advised that the main criteria for success in being awarded funds from Inverclyde Council's play area investment fund are that they have a confirmed external funding source and a project agreeable to the Council.
- 4.4 The 3 Wards Community Council in Port Glasgow has requested Council funding of £200k as contribution towards the installation of a play area and a separate multi-use games area both to be located on a plot of land adjacent to Boglestone Community Centre. The Community Council is in the process of applying for funding from other sources therefore the final sum requested from Inverclyde Council will depend on how much they are able to secure from the other sources and the size and design of each scheme.
- 4.5 Larkfield, Braeside & Branchton Community Council has intimated that they wish to apply for funding from Inverclyde Council for play parks. They have as yet to advise of their proposals.

On a related matter, the Burns Square play area, which was the last remaining play area within the Larkfield and Braeside areas of Greenock, has been removed recently. The site was particularly prone to vandalism and earlier this year the last remaining play unit had to be removed.

- 4.6 Greenock Central Residents Action Group (GCRAAG) has intimated that they wish to apply for funding from Inverclyde Council to create a play area on a plot of Council land located between Ann Street and Sir Michael Street. The plot in question was retained at the time of stock transfer due to its potential to be developed as a play area. It is not at present maintained as a play area

as there is no play equipment installed on site. However, it is likely that the plot was originally intended as a play space, most likely for ball games. The surface is made up of concrete slabs and as such is not up to standard for a modern kickabout. The surrounding wall and fence are also in need of replacement or repair. GCRAG has already made applications to other potential funding bodies in the hope of getting matched funds from Inverclyde Council. At the time of writing their applications to the other potential funding bodies are still pending.

5.0 PRIORITY 1 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 **Clune Brae:** This play area was previously recommended for removal due to persistent vandalism and the age & condition of the equipment and surrounds. The current recommendation is also to remove all equipment from the site and not replace in in-situ. The proposal is being made under priority 1 due to the unsafe condition of the existing site.

Estimated cost of the removal of the Clune Brae site is £5k.

- 5.2 **Dempster Street:** A small play area containing only three pieces of equipment all of which are suitable for younger children only. There is no safety surfacing on the site and as the equipment is at least 20 years old it is not feasible to retro fit safety surfacing. One option would be to remove all the old equipment and replace it with new units and safety surface, at an estimated cost of £20k. Due to the small size of the site the new equipment would still be suitable for younger children only and it will not be possible to expand the site in future to meet the minimum five pieces of equipment standard required to classify the site as a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP).

The recommended proposal is to remove all equipment and not replace it. Play provision in this neighbourhood would be better served by the creation of a new, modern play area on the site of an existing play area within the nearby Murdieston Park, the proposal for which is detailed in the next paragraph.

Appendix 1 is an aerial photo showing the proximity of the existing and proposed sites.

- 5.3 **Murdieston Park:** A small play area containing only three pieces of equipment which at present is suitable for younger children only. There is no safety surfacing installed around the equipment. One piece of equipment is in excess of 20 years old and it is therefore not feasible to retro fit safety surfacing around it. The other two items are small springys. There is ample room for expansion on this site and it is therefore proposed to remove all the old equipment and replace it with an increased number of new play units. Due to the large size of the site it will be possible to immediately create a play area to the LEAP standard (5 play units). In addition, with room for expansion and a kickabout already in-situ it will be possible to further expand this site in the future to meet the Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) standard (8 play units).

Estimated cost of the removal of the old equipment and replacement with a new play area on the same site, but covering a larger footprint, is £40k.

- 5.4 **Lady Alice Park:** There are six play units set in a park environment, all are at least 15 years old some may be over 30 years old. In the last decade roughly four or five older units have been removed from the site due to wear and tear and not replaced. That being said, with the exception of one play unit all remaining items are in a safe condition.

It is proposed to remove and replace one of the oldest play units due to the safety surface not meeting current standards. It is also proposed to install a second play unit to fill some of the gaps created by previous removals.

Estimated cost to remove one old play unit and install two new units is £15k

- 5.5 **Watt Street:** The play area has a fairly large footprint, but only three play units. All of the units are 20 or so years old. One unit, a large chute situated on a mound of causie stones and concrete slabs requires to be replaced due to its poor condition and lack of adequate safety surface. It is proposed to remove the unit and associated mound and replace it with a new multi-use unit.

Estimated cost to remove the old equipment and replace it with a modern multi-use unit is £15k.

- 5.6 **Fox Street:** One of the district's most recently refurbished play areas having been upgraded in 2002. There are no proposals to remove or replace any of the play units, however some of the safety surface needs to be upgraded at an estimated cost of £5k. There is also an ad hoc kickabout adjacent to the play area. The kickabout surface was originally grass, but due to wear and tear the surface is muddy when wet and rock solid dirt and stones when dry. Replacement of the kickabout with a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) would cost at least £100k, so it's not an option under priority 1 or 2 given the available budget. However, the current condition of the kickabout requires to be addressed. It is therefore proposed to convert the kickabout to a blaes surface at an estimated cost of £25k.

Estimated cost to upgrade safety surface and convert kickabout to blaes is £30k.

- 5.7 **Jacobs Drive:** This site has six play units, of which three swing units are at least 40 years old and the other three play units are at least 20 years old. None of the swing units have safety surface installed around them. The majority of the play area surface is made up of cracked and broken tarmac or concrete and needs to be replaced. Benches previously installed at this site were vandalised and their remnants had to be removed. The site is a regular drinking haunt for teenagers after dark and alcohol-related debris has to be cleaned up on a regular basis as does the contents of the large litter bin as it is frequently tipped over and the contents strewn around the site. Despite the anti-social behaviour issue, neither the play units nor the safety surface have suffered any serious vandalism. During the day this is a good community facility and schoolchildren from the adjacent high school regularly use it, however after dark it becomes a problem site. If this site is to be retained as a play area then it will have to be upgraded within a reasonable timescale – three years. The estimated cost to upgrade will be in the region of £120k. Given the condition of the site and the specific local context as regards inappropriate use after dark, it is recommended that no action is taken to refurbish or remove the site at this time. A decision as regards the future use of the site should be made following local consultation on the subject. It ought however to be noted that there is as yet no earmarked budget for play area investment beyond this financial year.

It is not proposed to spend anything on this site at present, however it is important that the safety issues associated with this site are noted in this highest priority section of the report.

- 5.8 **Ailsa Road:** Three of the five units in this play area are approximately 20 years old and all five units make use of natural grass as their main safety surface, which is nowadays considered unacceptable. There is also a redundant area of concrete set into the plot which requires to be removed. It is proposed to remove and replace all 5 play units on this site.

Estimated cost to remove and replace all existing play units and to remove and reinstate the concrete area is £24k.

- 5.9 **Main Street, Inverkip:** This site and all the play units are in good condition. However, part of the wooden fence surrounding the site needs to be replaced. The problem length of fence is adjacent to the Main Street side of the play area and replacement is necessary to ensure the safety of the children using the play area. Short term repairs have been carried out in the interim.

Estimated cost to replace the fence is £5k.

- 5.10 **Ryan Road:** This play area is located just to the rear of Ryan Road and is small containing only three pieces of equipment all of which are suitable for younger children only. The chute unit is corroded and will be removed at the end of the summer. The other two units are also old and in need of replacement. It is proposed to remove all existing units and install at least three new units in their place. The new units will be designed for use by younger children only.

Estimated cost to replace old and install 3-4 new units is £15k.

6.0 PRIORITY 2 PROPOSALS

- 6.1 **Auchenleck Lane:** Located between the Mid Auchenleck and Devol areas of Port Glasgow. The last of the play units were removed several years ago and now only a kickabout remains on site. The play area gap analysis identifies this locality as having a significant gap in play area provision. It is therefore proposed to install new play units on the existing site.

Estimated cost to install three or four play units on site is £25k.

- 6.2 **Leven Road:** There are only two play units remaining on this large site, one is a toddlers swing unit and the other a large communal swing unit constructed mainly of wood. The existing play units are not unsafe, but the mainly wooden item has only a short lifespan remaining and will probably be removed within one or two years. The part of the site from which equipment has already been removed detracts from what is otherwise an attractive setting. There is no fence separating the play area from the footway on Leven Road, which is an unsatisfactory state of affairs.

It is proposed to refurbish this site at a cost of £90k of which £75k will be funded from the play area investment fund and £15k from external funding from a local housing developer, under the terms of a Planning approval. Designs will be invited from play area suppliers and the local community consulted on the design brief.

- 6.3 **Cove Road:** This site now contains only two play units as others have had to be removed over the years due to wear and tear or corrosion. Corrosion is a particular problem as the play area is directly adjacent to the river. There are obvious gaps where equipment has been removed and not yet replaced. It is proposed to install at least two new play units on this site.

Estimated cost to install two or three new play units on this site is £20k

7.0 PRIORITY 3 PROPOSALS

- 7.1 As referred to earlier in the report, three community groups are actively seeking external funding to invest in play areas and the play area strategy encourages this approach in order to supplement Council investment in play provision. There is a budget of £250k available under priority 3.

It is often the case that the providers of such external funding require applicants to demonstrate that they can contribute financially to their project or even match fund it from other sources. It is therefore proposed that in principle support is given to the three community groups' proposals and that provisional funding is allocated to each project in the amounts as undernoted.

Boglestone	£100k
Greenock Central	£ 75k
Larkfield/Braeside	£ 75k

8.0 EXTERNAL FUNDING PROPOSALS

- 8.1 External funding from local housing developers is available to spend on three sites within the district – Leven Road, Grosvenor Road and Bawhirley Road. The developers are required to make a contribution to the provision of play areas under the terms of the relevant Planning approval.

- 8.2 **Leven Road:** A contribution of £15k is available for the upgrade of this site. Proposals for this site are detailed in paragraph 6.1 of this report.

- 8.3 **Grosvenor Road:** A contribution of £49k is available for the upgrade of this site. All but one of the existing play units on the site are in a very poor condition and earmarked for removal.

Designs will be invited from play area suppliers and the local community consulted on the design brief.

- 8.4 **Bawhirley Road:** A contribution of £25k is available for the upgrade of this site. All existing play units on the site are earmarked for removal. Designs will be invited from play area suppliers and the local community consulted on the design brief.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Financial

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report £'000	Virement From	Other Comments
Carried Forward Earmarked Reserves	Play Area Investment & Modernisation	2010/2011	£169		Priorities 1 & 2
New Earmarked Reserves	Play Area Modernisation	2010/2011	£100		Priorities 1 & 2
New Earmarked Reserves	Play Area Investment	2010/2011	£250		Priority 3

9.2 Human Resources, Legal and Equalities

None

10.0 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Finance was consulted on the financial Implications section of this report.

APPENDIX 1

Site to be expanded

Site to be removed

Less than 150m

200 feet 50 m

