
PUBLIC PLAY FACILITIES STRATEGY – TEVIOT AND LIDDESDALE

Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure

TEVIOT AND LIDDESDALE AREA PARTNERSHIP

11 June 2019

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out guidance and recommendations for the Teviot and Liddesdale Area for future investment in Public Play facilities and proposals for the removal of obsolete play areas, agreed as part of the 2018/19 Capital Investment Plan and updated within the Capital Investment Plan 2019-20.**

The 2019/20 Capital Investment Plan has funding of £5.036m for investment within Outdoor Community Spaces over the 10 years. This presents a tremendous asset for communities, however also brings a maintenance burden, for which no additional revenue resources are being provided. As part of the original investment within the 2018/19 Capital Investment Plan, it was simultaneously agreed by Council to review the distribution of play equipment provision across play parks in the Borders, which can 1) inform decision making around future investment in communities and 2) guide the rationalisation of obsolete play facilities which are deemed no longer fit for purpose, ensuring a cost neutral impact on established budgets with the service.

- 1.2 The programme of investment in play facilities aims to improve community wellbeing and enhance activity levels for all ages with a beneficial impact on the health of the population. The programme of proposed projects across the Scottish Borders and an indicative timescale for delivery is provided at 3.2 for the period of 2018/19 to 2022/23. The programme proposes a range of provision including Children’s Playparks, Pump bike/Skate tracks and Fitness/Youth Shelter provision as well as the rationalisation of obsolete equipment, where this is no longer fit for purpose.
- 1.3 In conjunction with the strategic investment across the region, Members previously agreed to;

- Changes to the scheme of delegation to give authority to the Service Director Assets and Infrastructure to *“after consultation with local Members, the Chief Financial Officer and the Chief Legal Officer, declare play parks obsolete or those surplus to community requirements and arrange for the removal of equipment and disposal, if appropriate.”*
 - Create a reference group which would include the remit to *“make recommendations to the Service Director Assets & Infrastructure or the Executive Committee (as appropriate) on which obsolete play areas should be removed, particularly in areas where there has been significant investment.”*
- 1.4 In this context, officers have undertaken an appraisal of the wider network of play equipment aimed at responding to the issue of low play value, which SBC has within its play facilities assets. The evaluation has been undertaken to ensure that SBC retains and develops a network of valued, well equipped spaces for local communities. In the Scottish Borders currently the quantity of play provision is high per head of population, but the quality is very low (compared to national benchmarking) – this diminishes the wider benefits of these facilities to communities. This programme of investment will address the challenge of balancing quantity against quality, ensuring optimal provision of play facilities across the network.
- 1.5 Areas of low value play facilities where there is a recognised need (i.e. the only play park in the locality) will be identified as priorities for potential future investment (subject to a future paper).
- 1.6 As no additional revenue resources are being provided to support the long term management and maintenance of the new play parks being created, the removal of obsolete facilities is essential to ensure there is a cost neutral impact on established budgets with the service. No play facility will be decommissioned until the appropriate investment in new facilities in that locality have been completed.

2 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Officers request that the Area Partnership acknowledge the proposals contained in the report and;**
- (a) Officers request feedback on any specific aspects the Area Partnership wishes to be considered prior to the implementation of the report as outlined, and;**
 - (b) Notes that no play part will be decommissioned until the investment in the new play parks has been completed.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Borders currently has 243 play parks, including those located within schools, ranging from smaller local areas for play (LAPs) to strategic destination play parks. Benchmarking informs us that the quantity of provision per head of population is significantly higher than the national average; however, the average play value of the facilities (i.e. quality of provision) is significantly lower than the national average. The trend over the past decade has seen play value slowly improving on the back of the incremental investment that has taken place.
- 3.2 In recent years a more significant level of investment in play across the Scottish Borders has been delivered through the Council's capital programme supplemented by a range of different opportunities that have been realised by community led initiatives including funding from developer contributions, Scottish Government or Heritage Lottery Fund grants. (See Appendix B) These include, most recently, facilities in Wilton Lodge Park, Hawick and in the Public Park, Galashiels where the new facilities are providing significant benefits to these communities. The strategy is to now provide further additional high quality facilities in a range of other locations across the region thereby encouraging play, greater physical activity and outdoor access for children, young people and adults with attendant benefits in terms of general health and wellbeing for people of all ages. The programme of investment in play reinforces or establishes destination play parks that serve both the wider community and visitors to the area. The programme, outlined below in Table 1 (see Appendix A for narrative), sets the context for refining and rationalising the wider network with Teviot and Liddesdale sites highlighted in bold italics:

Planned Programme of Works	2018 /19 £'000	2019/20 £'000	2020 /21 £'000	2021 /22 £'000	2022 /23 £'000	Total
Children's Play						
Galashiels - Public Park*	292	0	0	0	0	292
Oxton*	60	0	0	0	0	60
Stow*	30	0	0	0	0	30
Kelso - Shedden Park	248	0	0	0	0	248
Jedburgh – Harestanes	315	0	0	0	0	315
Coldstream - Home Park*	0	250	0	0	0	250
Peebles Play park	0	225	0	0	0	225
Earlston Play park	0	0	225	0	0	225
Duns - Public Park	0	0	135	0	0	135
Eyemouth - The Bantry	0	0	180	0	0	180
Jedburgh - Canongate	0	0	0	135	0	135
Pump Tracks/Skate Boarding						
<i>Hawick - Wilton Lodge Pump Track</i>	19	0	300	0	0	319
Peebles Skate Park	0	270	0	0	0	270
Jedburgh Skate Park	0	0	0	270	0	270
Galashiels Public Park	0	0	0	0	270	270

Fitness/Youth Shelter Provision						
Jedburgh - Harestanes	27	0	0	0	0	27
Hawick - Wilton Lodge Park	0	27	0	0	0	27
Galashiels - Scott Park	0	0	27	0	0	27
Peebles – Hay Lodge Park	0	0	0	27	0	27
Duns - Public Park	0	0	0	27	0	27
Kelso	0	0	0	0	27	27
Other required Works						
Gavinton Drainage	43	0	0	0	0	43
Eyemouth*	11	0	0	0	0	11
Clovenfords (landscape)*	1	0	0	0	0	1
Play Facilities & surfacing review	0	75	75	75	24	253
General upkeep	0	100	105	106	107	418
Upkeep of School play facilities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unallocated	0	0	0	0	400	400
Total of programmed works	1,046	947	1,047	640	828	4,508

- 3.3 Alongside these strategic sites, the Council is committed to reviewing the wider network to ensure that local play provision continues to best serve communities. The initial appraisal identified that the Scottish Borders has a relatively large proportion of play parks of 'Low Value'. At the same time the region has relatively large number of play parks per 1000 children according to benchmarking data – almost 3 times the national average. In summary, the breakdown is as follows;

Play Value	No. of Play Areas	
High	32	16%
Medium	89	46%
Low	73	38%
TOTAL	194	
(n.b. this does not include the 49 play parks within the school estate)		

Benchmarking data: Number of play areas per 1000 children		
	SBC	National Average
2015/16	10.72	3.69

The investment programme seeks to redress the balance between quantity and quality, through rationalising the estate and targeting resources to those areas of higher impact.

4 REVIEW OF PLAY PARKS

- 4.1 A review of the whole network of play parks has considered the following criteria;

- 1. Play Value (a standard assessment based on Fields in Trust criteria)**
- 2. In-house inspection**
- 3. Proximity to other similar or better facilities**
- 4. Tenure**

4.2 **Play Value**

Sites of low and medium value, based on the Fields in Trust national criteria for play park assessment, have been identified. This takes into account, the site features for each park, quality and range of equipment, challenge and social aspects associated with use of the equipment.

4.3 **Inspection**

Alongside the Fields in Trust play value assessment, specialist officers have assessed the quality and condition of each play area, range of equipment, and level of use.

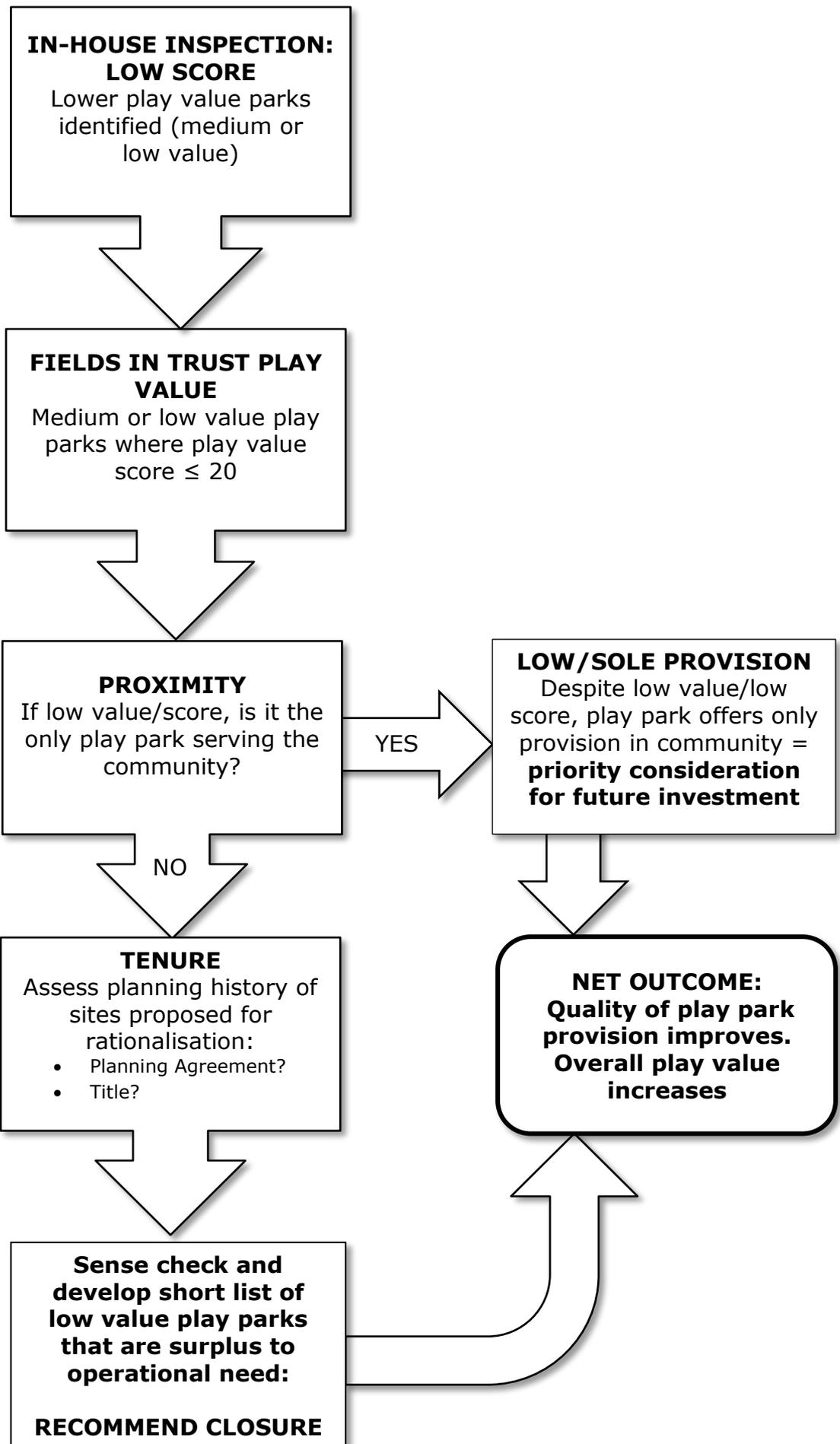
4.4 **Proximity to other similar or better facilities**

The location and distribution of play equipment has been appraised, taking into account the communities served – smaller communities or neighbourhoods where provision is dependent on one facility rely on continued provision of the same or equivalent play space. Neighbourhoods where provision comprises several low value play parks are not reliant on the continued provision in one site only, provided the overall provision in the neighbourhood is taken into account. Based on the above assessment of quality and distribution, the level of need for each individual play park can be appraised. Where quality is low, but form the only play park in the locality, these sites can be considered for longer term investment. Where quality is low and other, better, facilities are in close proximity, facilities can be considered as potentially surplus to requirement.

4.5 **Tenure**

Provision of some play facilities within the network has been integral to development contributions through the planning system. The terms upon which provision has been made require review and consideration as to how to progress in relation to these play areas will be required, perhaps in discussion with Regulatory Services.

4.6 The assessment process is outlined in the chart below;



4.7 **Outcome**

Based on the above 4 stages of assessment, numerous play parks have been identified as surplus to operational need. These are play parks of low value/need in an area where other provision is available which either demonstrates better quality provision or scope for improvement. Through the recommendations outlined in this report, resources can be focussed on areas of most benefit/need.

4.8 As a result of this assessment, the 74 play parks listed in the following table have been identified as meeting the criteria for being decommissioned, of which eight are in Teviot and Liddesdale;

REF NO.	LOCALITY	PLAY PARK	PLAY VALUE	FIT SCORE	ALTERNATIVE LOCATION NEARBY
67	TEVL	Denholm The Loaning	M	20	Denholm The Green
83	TEVL	Hawick Bowden Road	L	19	Hawick Stirches
69	TEVL	Hawick Burnfoot School	M	19	Hawick Sleepy Valley
75	TEVL	Hawick Green Terrace	M	15.5	Hawick Moat Park
206	TEVL	Hawick Hislop Gardens	M	18	Hawick The Stirches
181	TEVL	Hawick Leaburn Drive	L	14	Hawick Weensland Road
81	TEVL	Hawick Mayfield	L	16.5	Hawick Wellfield
78	TEVL	Hawick Millers Knowe	M	19	Hawick Underhaugh
71	TEVL	Hawick Waverley Walk	L	15	Hawick Wilton Lodge Park
79	TEVL	Hawick Wellington Court	L	14	Hawick Wilton Lodge Park
68	TEVL	Hawick Wilson Drive	L	13	Hawick Sleepy Valley

As summarised above, these sites have been identified as being suitable for decommissioning, based on the condition/value and alternative provision nearby. All are within the catchment area of an area of strategic investment.

4.9 The assessment has identified sites that are classed as low value, yet as the only play park in the community they offer an important facility. This forms a basis for the future longer term programme of investment, which will be the subject of future reporting.

5 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The 2019/20 Capital Investment Plan has funding of £5.036m for investment within Outdoor Community Spaces over the 10 years.

5.2 The investment in new facilities is estimated to create an additional pressure on resources to maintain the new facilities of approximately 12k per year. The risk assessment for these facilities will result in a requirement for the service to increase the frequency of inspections and experience also tells us

that the amount of repairs will be greater as a result of the increased use, wear and tear of shackles and swing seats etc. As no additional revenue resources are being provided to support the long term management and maintenance of the new play parks being created, the removal of obsolete facilities is essential to ensure there is a cost neutral impact on established budgets with the service.

- 5.3 Within the 2019/20 Revenue Financial Plan a revenue pressure has been identified from 2020/21 to instate a replacement fund for Outdoor Community Spaces, to ensure their future provision.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Risk and Mitigations

There is a reputational risk to the Council from the rationalisation of facilities. Communities may be initially concerned that provision is being reduced, however this will be mitigated by any communications or engagement drawing attention to the net gain afforded in play facilities for all through the programme of investment.

6.2 Equalities

It is anticipated that there are no adverse impact due to race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion/belief arising from the proposals in this report.

6.3 Acting Sustainably

There are no direct economic, social or environmental issues with this report although there may be within individual projects and these will be identified and addressed as appropriate as part of their specific governance arrangements.

6.4 Carbon Management

There are no direct carbon emissions impacts as a result of this monitoring report; however, there may be within individual projects and these will be identified and addressed as appropriate as part of their specific governance arrangements.

6.5 Rural Proofing

This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

6.6 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

None.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR, Communications and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

- 7.2 In addition to the above, the overarching report was approved by the Corporate Management Team and the Members Reference Group, who requested Area Partnership consultation.

Approved by

Martin Joyce

Service Director Assets & Infrastructure Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jason Hedley	Neighbourhood Operations Manager

Background Papers: Capital Programme 2018/19 – Investment in Play Areas and outdoor Community Spaces, Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure, 31 May 2018

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council, 31 May 2018 – Item 7.0

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Capital and Investment Team can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Jacqueline Whitelaw, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA, 01835-824000, ext. 5431.

APPENDIX A – CONTEXT: SUMMARY OF RECENT INVESTMENT

LOCATION	SUMMARY
Pringle Park, Selkirk	Selkirk's Pringle Park (2013) and Bannerfield Park (2014) have both undergone significant improvements led by community groups who fundraised for capital costs. Scottish Borders Council provides ongoing support via operational inspections and minor repairs.
Tweedbank Park	In 2008 Tweedbank Loch and Park was developed as a destination play area at the Loch, complete with Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), on the back of significant funding secured by Developer Contributions.
Canongate, Jedburgh	The Canongate play area in Jedburgh, received a £145k investment in 2010 as part of a successful bid to the Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund.
Woodcote Park, Lauder	As part of the relocation of community services, Woodcote Park in Lauder received a significant Council investment in 2012 to create a new relocated play area and associated sporting facilities at the park.
Wilton Lodge Park, Hawick	The Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) Parks For People Project at Wilton Lodge Park, Hawick, saw the conclusion in 2017 of a £350k project to create a destination play area complete with associated infrastructure at the park.
Shedden Park skate park, Kelso	The recently-completed removal of an existing Skate Park and creation of a state of the art small wheels facility at Shedden Park, Kelso (£400k) has been led by the community.
Public Park, Galashiels	A £292k investment has overhauled the play park provision at Public Park, Galashiels, developing a destination Play Park serving the town and surrounding villages
Harestanes Country Park, Jedburgh	The first project of the current programme has been completed and opened on Sunday 28 th April. This destination playpark contains a significant amount of play opportunities for less able children and users and extends the Councils facilities in terms of offering play opportunities for all, £342k
Home Park, Coldstream	Installation of new facilities underway, completion estimated June/July 2019
Shedden Park, Kelso	Installation estimated to begin in June/July, with completion in Aug/Sep