
**CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022-29 – INVESTMENT IN PLAY AREAS AND
OUTDOOR COMMUNITY SPACES**

Report by Director Infrastructure and Environment

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

22 February 2022

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out proposed priorities for delivery of investment in play areas and outdoor community spaces across the Borders for 2022-2029, building on the strategic investment programme approved in 2018. This report also proposes the establishment of an Elected Members Reference Group to oversee delivery.
- 1.2 The 2022/23 Capital Investment Plan, which is being presented to Council elsewhere on this agenda includes funding of £4.048m into Play Areas and Outdoor Community Spaces. This investment aims to improve community wellbeing and enhance outdoor activity opportunities for all ages. With the programme of original commitments nearing completion, a further programme of prioritisation for investment is now required. On this basis Officers have met with Ward Members to review future priorities for investment and, taking this into account, have prepared a proposed programme for investment over the next seven years. Parks & Environment will work with colleagues in the Communities and Partnerships Team to undertake local community engagement at the development stage throughout the investment programme in relation to the Council's Participatory Budgeting commitment.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that Scottish Borders Council:-**
- (a) Approve the proposed programme of work set out in Appendix A.**
 - (b) Approves the establishment of a Members Reference Group to support the delivery and ongoing review of the proposed programme and appoints the Members of that Group.**
 - (c) Agrees that recommendations on future changes to this programme will be highlighted as part of the established Financial Monitoring process to the Executive Committee.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Borders currently has 187 play parks, including those located within schools, ranging from smaller local areas of play (LAPs) to strategic destination play areas. Since May 2018 Scottish Borders Council has, through a programme of investment, invested £2.1m, with a further £0.647m forecast in 2021/22 in enhancing this network of play areas and community spaces, aimed at providing high quality facilities in strategic locations to encourage play, greater physical activity and outdoor access for children and young people. As part of this, destination play areas have been delivered in Harestanes, Galashiels, Kelso, Peebles, Hawick, Coldstream and Newtown St Boswells, with further projects to be delivered in Jedburgh, Duns, Eyemouth and Earlston.
- 3.2 As part of this approved programme, Scottish Borders Council has undergone a rationalisation of play facilities which has seen some facilities become decommissioned based on low play value or need. This programme of approved decommissioning is ongoing as planned. While this sets the context for targeting future investment, no further decommissioning of play parks is proposed under the programme outlined in this report.
- 3.3 Further to the success of this investment, Scottish Borders Council has undertaken a review of future priorities within the network of play areas and community spaces based on local need, distribution and community accessibility. As part of this process Officers have met with Ward Members across all 11 Wards to identify local priorities, considered alongside a suitability and condition assessment. While these priorities are mapped out against current budget projections, it is recognised that there needs to be flexibility within this programme to respond to any changes in local priorities, community aspirations and any new or emerging local or national funding opportunities that may arise. In this regard, the establishment of the Member Reference Group would provide support throughout the programme.
- 3.4 The Council recognises the importance of these spaces and places as part of vibrant, sustainable and healthy communities. The investment allows the Council to deliver significant benefits across the Borders through taking a more strategic approach, with the flexibility to respond to opportunities and community aspirations.

4 PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF DELIVERY - PLAY AREAS AND OUTDOOR COMMUNITY SPACES

- 4.1 Appendix A outlines a proposed programme of capital investment over the next 7 years. These proposed projects have been identified, building on the previous round of investment, working with communities and Members to address areas of need.
- 4.2 As part of the investment programme, it is noted that there are no further proposals to decommission any play park assets other than those previously agreed. Therefore the investment will increase the number of assets and the associated statutory safety inspection duties.

4.3 It is proposed community engagement is undertaken throughout the development of this investment programme of proposals, working with Community Engagement officers in relation to the wider Council's Participatory Budgeting commitment.

5 MEMBERS REFERENCE GROUP

5.1 It is proposed that the delivery of the investment programme is overseen by a Members Reference Group, with support from Officers. The primary purpose of the Members Reference Group will be to maintain a strategic overview of the programme. The Group will:

- oversee the procurement and delivery of the programme
- support community consultation and participatory budgeting in the delivery of the projects
- make recommendations as appropriate on any changes to the programme reflective of emerging constraints and opportunities

5.2 It is proposed that the Group would meet biannually to review the programme against these parameters. It's proposed that Membership of the group would comprise the Council Convenor as Chair, the Executive Member for Community Development and Localities and representative Member from each of the 5 Area Partnerships. Support to the group will be provided by appropriate Council Officers.

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

(a) The proposed programme of work detailed in Appendix A will be funded from the existing Play Areas and Outdoor Community Spaces block, with additional Development Contributions of £0.059m:

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total Operational Plan	Total Strategic Plan	Total Capital Plan
	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's
Total Investment as per Appendix A	1,635	764	518	2,917	1,131	4,048

- (b) Officers will maximise the use of further Development Contributions where available.
- (c) The above proposal does not include the Scottish Governments Play Park Renewal funding, once funding levels for 2022/23 and beyond are notified these will be highlighted as part of the established financial monitoring process to the Executive Committee.
- (d) The Council has a Play Park Replacement Fund to allow for replacement of facilities at the end of their useful life.

- (e) Further work has to be undertaken to assess the additional required inspections and maintenance regimes from the creation of these new facilities, and how this can be funded from within existing resources.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) There is a risk that as a project progresses through the various phases from inception to construction and commissioning, adjustments will be required to the phasing of the projects delivery or cost estimate, or that the project may not be able to be progressed as anticipated, resulting in the potential for reputational damage through e.g. a failure to deliver on expectations. These risks will be managed through regular capital project monitoring meetings with budget holders and project managers.
- (b) With reference to the above noted risks and in order to capitalise on any potential opportunities that may arise during the lifecycle of the project, Elected Members are encouraged to approve the creation of a Members Reference Group, as outlined in Section 5 of the report. Building on the mitigations noted above this group will act as an additional layer of oversight for the project, and by doing so, help to ensure the successful delivery of the project and the realisation of subsequent positive impacts for local communities.
- (c) Furthermore, as this project has and will continue to engage with various stakeholders it serves to have a positive bearing on both corporate and service risks that have been identified, recorded and continue to be managed in relation to stakeholder & community engagement and community empowerment. This is achieved by enabling communities to share their views in the development of plans that will directly affect them and raise any subsequent concerns, thus also helping to reduce reputational damage associated with failing to engage or involve communities in local decision making. In conjunction, and with reference to Section 4.3 there is also an opportunity to have a positive impact the Council's Participatory Budgeting commitments.
- (d) Lastly, approval of this project presents an opportunity to contribute towards achieving the 'Empowered, Vibrant Communities' and 'Good Health and Wellbeing' Outcomes as outlined in the draft Council Plan, should it be approved, in terms of engagement, participation and access to quality leisure activities.

6.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

- (a) The Council has a statutory obligation to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic (age, disability, gender re-assignment, trans/transgender identity, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race groups, religion or belief, sex-gender identity, and sexual orientation) and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not. This involves tackling prejudice and building understanding. Additionally, where proposals are "strategic", the Fairer Scotland Duty requires us to show that we have actively considered how we can reduce socio-economic inequalities in the

decisions that we make and to publish a short written assessment on how we have done this.

- (b) The programme will not disproportionately impact on grounds of equality, poverty, health and socio-economic disadvantage. The proposal will increase the quality/amount of facilities for play for young people in lower income areas, areas of material deprivation and rural areas. The proposed community engagement will ensure that the delivery of the programme meets local needs and is inclusive.

6.4 Sustainable Development Goals

The proposals have been assessed as contributing positively towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals 1, 3, 4, 11, 12, and 16;

	UN SD Goal	Impact
1	End poverty in all its forms everywhere	The proposal will increase the quality/amount of facilities for play for young people in lower income areas, which will encourage local activity and support community cohesion/quality of life
3	Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages	The proposal will increase the quality/amount of locally accessible facilities for play for young people who can access it on foot or by cycle. Proposals will be developed with community input.

4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all potential	The proposal will increase the quality/amount of facilities for learning through play in communities
11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable	The proposal will increase the quality/amount of facilities for safe play within their public spaces
12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	The procurement exercise for the investment will adhere to sustainable procurement principles in accordance with SBC guidelines
16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	The proposals will be developed through a community engagement process adopting participatory budgeting principles.

6.5 **Climate Change**

The proposal will increase locally accessible community facilities, reducing the need for car journeys, thereby contributing positively to the 20 minute neighbourhood model (contextualised for rural communities). The proposal will also enhance local amenities and provide local infrastructure for recreation, skills development for young people and health and wellbeing. The procurement exercises that will be undertaken throughout the programme will seek to ensure sustainably sourced materials are included wherever possible, in accordance with circular economy principles and minimising resource use.

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

The proposed programme of investment has been assessed against the rural proofing checklist and no negative impacts were identified.

6.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

6.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no proposed changes to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation.

7 **CONSULTATION**

7.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and comments have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Name

John Curry

Title

Director – Infrastructure & Environment

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Craig Blackie	Parks & Environment Manager, ext 8036
Carol Cooke	Greenspace Manager, ext 5537

Background Papers: Capital programme 2018/19 – Investment in Play areas and outdoor community spaces, Scottish Borders Council 31 May 2018

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council, 31 May 2018 – Item 9
<https://scottishborders.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g3726/Public%20minutes%2031st-May-2018%2010.00%20Scottish%20Borders%20Council.pdf?T=11>

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Contact us at Jacqueline Whitelaw, PLACE, Business Support, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA, Tel 0300 100 1800, email JWhitelaw@scotborders.gov.uk.