

**The Highland Council**  
**Lochaber Area Committee**  
**27 February 2014**

Agenda Item	15
Report No	LA/12/14

**Lochaber Play Park Development – Naturally Play Project Review**

**Report by Director of Community Services**

**Summary**

This report provides an update on the 'Lochaber Naturally Play' play park development project highlighting the outcomes achieved to date, challenges faced and invites Members to approve the proposals detailed in section 3 of the report for the remaining work plan.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Currently the Lochaber area (Wards 12 & 22) have a Council allocation of £52,400 per annum to maintain the 37 Council adopted play parks in the area. This allocation is spent on the maintenance of play parks and includes work such as grass cutting as well as general repairs which are prioritised based on the annual inspection reports for each park. An additional £10,000 per annum is available for the replacement of play equipment, safety surfacing and fencing. (Figures revised Feb 2014)
- 1.2 With increasing pressures on the budgets available for the maintenance of existing play areas, it is recognised that the involvement of local communities is vital for the long term future of play parks in Lochaber.
- 1.3 In response to this the Lochaber Community Planning Partnership, in collaboration with Voluntary Action Lochaber, agreed an approach to encourage the participation of communities in the innovative re-development of failing play parks within the Lochaber Wards and to consider any new provision requirements in light of developer contributions and other funds being secured for outdoor play purposes. This project is referred to as the 'Lochaber Naturally Play' project.

**2. Project Assessment**

- 2.1 A project progress report was presented to the Lochaber District Partnership (LDP) at their 29 January 2014 meeting. (Appendix 1)
- 2.2 The District Partnership acknowledged and commended the success of the project highlighting the excellent partnership work that had taken place between TEC services, Chief Executive's Service and Voluntary Action Lochaber. It was further acknowledged that the embedding of good partnership working practices and the publication of relevant and useful information for the public will enable continued support to communities beyond the lifecycle of the Naturally Play project.

### 3. Remaining Project Priorities

- 3.1 The project steering group proposed to undertake three final pieces of work under the 'Naturally Play' project.

**Caol** – consideration of the new Caol campus school site for the potential development of new community play facilities allowing for existing provision to be consolidated (community discussion required).

**Upper Achintore** – consideration to be given to the consolidation of provision and subsequent investment in re-development of preferred existing site(s) (community discussion required).

**Claggan** – consideration to be given to the enhancement of existing provision (community discussion required).

These proposals were supported by the Lochaber District Partnership.

### 4. Identified Challenges

- 4.1 A number of challenges have materialised during the project lifecycle. The main challenges are identified as:

- Ensuring that the new schools outdoor play spaces and facilities are available to communities out with school hours.
- Lack of flexibility for use of developer contributions (for play spaces) across communities.
- Restrictive procurement (equipment) list for communities seeking to use the Highland Council purchase structure.

These were discussed in depth by the Lochaber District Partnership (LDP).

- 4.2 The LDP has subsequently agreed to write to the Head of Education seeking an urgent Stakeholders' meeting for the new Caol school campus to discuss the design of the outdoor facilities and seek assurances that the community will have unrestricted access to the outdoor facilities out with school hours.
- 4.3 It was noted that the current policy in terms of green space developer contributions does not have the flexibility to move funds to potentially more needy play facilities in neighbouring communities.
- 4.4 The LDP noted that TEC and ECS Services are in the process of reviewing current procurement terms for play equipment and are hopeful to expand the range of suppliers available.

### 5. Implications

- 5.1 There are no **resource** implications as the actions proposed can be taken forward within current resources

- 5.2 There are no **legal** implications arising from this report.
- 5.3 Partners work with policy guidance to ensure that access to new outdoor play spaces are DDA compliant.
- 5.4 There are no implications for **Climate Change** arising from this report.
- 5.5 There are no **risk** implications arising from this report.

### **Recommendation**

The Area Committee is invited to approve the proposals for the final work plan detailed in section 3 of the report.

Date: 13 February 2014

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### **Background Papers:**

Appendix 1 – Lochaber District Partnership, Play park project report 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 2014.

Sub appendix 1 - A summary of groups supported by the Lochaber play park project to date (January 2014).

Sub appendix 2 - A summary of income / expenditure held in respect of developer contributions for play provision in Lochaber.

Sub appendix 3 - A list of all Lochaber play parks.

## Lochaber District Partnership (Appendix 1)

Agenda item	3
Report number	2
Meeting date	29.01.2014

Report Title	Lochaber play park development
Report by	Emma Tayler, Assistant Lochaber Wards Manager Mike Leary, Community Works Manager
Organisation	The Highland Council

### Situation Summary

**The Lochaber play park project has been running for the past 2 years. This report seeks to update Lochaber District Partnership members on the outcomes achieved to date, highlight remaining areas of priority and seek assistance from the partnership to progress a number of areas.**

### 1 **Background**

Currently the Lochaber area (Wards 12 & 22) have a Council allocation of £40,000 per annum to maintain the 37 Council adopted play parks in the area. This allocation is spent on the maintenance of play parks and includes work such as grass cutting as well as general repairs which are prioritised based on the annual inspection reports for each park. An additional £16,000 per annum is available for the replacement of play equipment, safety surfacing and fencing.

With increasing pressures on the budgets available for the maintenance of existing play areas, it is recognised that the involvement of local communities is vital for the long term future of play parks in Lochaber.

In response to this the Lochaber Community Planning Partnership in collaboration with Voluntary Action Lochaber, agreed an approach to encourage the participation of communities in the innovative re-development of failing play parks within the Lochaber Wards and to consider any new provision requirements in light of developer contributions and other funds being secured for outdoor play purposes.

Voluntary Action Lochaber was asked to undertake the following:

- Formulate a 'strategy' to guide and deliver the required outcomes
- Establish a Lochaber play park forum to ensure open communication between services and communities during the life cycle of the project
- Produce a development guide for community groups
- Administer a small grants scheme and provide information and advice to help community groups develop play park projects for submission to LEADER and other funders as appropriate

The strategy document produced contains the following:

- The role of the wider community
- Mapping of existing provision
- Identifies future need and demand
- Identifies priorities and makes recommendations for action

The strategy makes use of national and local data to help identify future demands, define resources and make recommendations on how to take forward

	<p>the re-development of play parks in Lochaber.</p> <p>Over the past 24 months the project has;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported the formation of groups to take play park projects forward.</li> <li>• Provided guidance to groups to ensure that design and equipment selection has been carefully considered to meet safety standards, minimises maintenance and reflects the design aspirations of the community.</li> <li>• Provided a forum in which to share information and expertise.</li> <li>• Assisted community groups to obtain professional technical assistance on design as required such as landscape architects, through a small grant scheme (3 grants awarded).</li> <li>• Supported the preparation and submission of funding applications.</li> <li>• Provided guidance on maintenance and adoption issues.</li> <li>• Guided the expenditure of developer contributions (held by Highland Council, received for play provision) in consultation/collaboration with communities.</li> </ul> <p>The project continues to work through the strategy recommendations.</p>
2	<p><b><u>Assessment</u></b></p> <p>A summary of groups supported by the Lochaber play park project are included in <i>appendix 1</i> of this report.</p> <p>A summary of income / expenditure held in respect of developer contributions for play provision is shown in <i>appendix 2</i> of this report.</p> <p>A list of all Lochaber play parks are included in <i>appendix 3</i>.</p> <p>The project has supported communities to successfully deliver projects that have improved the condition and play experiences of a significant number of play parks in Lochaber. This has enabled the Councils TEC services to effectively direct resources thus gradually reducing the list of 'essential' repairs/replacements.</p> <p>At the date of this report the cost of assessed essential repairs to Lochaber parks stands at an estimated cost of £28,000 compared with £82,000 in 2010.</p>
	<p>2.1</p> <p>There now remains three pieces of consultation/development work to be done before the overall project is concluded in its current form and the general recommendations contained within the strategy are met. These are;</p> <p><b>Caol</b> – consideration of the new Caol campus school site for the potential development of new community play facilities allowing for existing provision to be consolidated. (community discussion required).</p> <p><b>Upper Achintore</b> – consideration to be given to the consolidation of provision and subsequent investment in re-development of preferred existing site(s). (community discussion required).</p> <p><b>Claggan</b> – consideration to be given to the enhancement of existing provision. (community discussion required).</p>
	<p>2.2</p> <p><b>Caol</b> – the new school design includes provision of an 'adventure playground', two new MUGA's (multi use games areas), and a 'kick about' area. There is also the retention of an existing 'community' MUGA area. An area of ground has also</p>

been identified by the designers to be suitable for the development of a play area should the community wish to pursue.

The Assistant Wards Manager is currently seeking clarification/assurances from the Education service that the MUGAs, adventure playground and kick about areas will be freely available to the community out with school hours i.e after school and during the holidays. With some potential 'enhancement' to current plans (may benefit for instance from additional equipment in the adventure space), these areas will provide a substantial 'play & outdoor activity' resource for children & young adults.

To then ensure fully accessible provision is available for very small children (babies/toddlers), the community could (if they desired) concentrate efforts on developing a new play space for this age range to complement the other outdoor activity areas contained within the campus site. This would then deliver a 'strategic' play site for Caol, which will be well positioned for community access, covering a wide age range.

Funding from developer contributions currently held and forecast could be available to help the community raise additional funds to enhance the current campus site 'play areas' and develop a new baby/toddler play facility. Held and potential funding for Caol play facilities (over the next 3 years) from developer contributions is estimated at £34,500.

### 2.3

**Upper Achintore** – Highland Council is currently seeking internal clarity on the amount of developer contribution monies held and available for the development of play provision in the Upper Achintore area. Once the exact amount is clarified then a discussion with the community will take place to identify the best course of action to expend these monies and improve provision in the locality. Currently the strategy has identified the need to consolidate existing provision and concentrate on the upgrade of sites to be agreed.

### 2.4

**Claggan** – several years ago developer contributions were diverted from the Claggan play area to Inverlochty to allow for the completion of a MUGA which is accessed by children from Inverlochty and Claggan. To counter balance this it was agreed that any future developer contributions amounting to the original value of £15,400 - generated by an Inverlochty housing development, would be diverted back to Claggan for the upgrade of existing play provision as directed by the community.

### 2.5

During the course of the project a number of issues have cropped up which have either hindered the development process or have stopped development going forward as desired.

a) The current Highland Council policy does not allow for developer contributions to be used for any existing or new provision out with a defined area (as below)

Provision for Children and Young People	Provision to be within	LEPA - 10 minutes/600m SEPA - 20 minutes/1200m
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LEPA = Local equipped play area (approx. 1500sqm>), SEPA = Strategically

	<p>equipped play area (approx. 2500sqm&gt;)</p> <p>This means where there is existing adequate provision which is well maintained and there is no need for new provision or enhancements in the near or medium term future the developer contribution can invariably not be spent out for some considerable time however in a neighbouring community they could have a play park in a bad state of repair, desperate for investment. It would make sense in these incidences for some flexibility to be introduced for the use of funds within neighbouring communities.</p> <p>b) Within the current Highland Council procurement equipment framework, the breath of suppliers has been restrictive to some communities who have wished to develop innovative more 'natural' play/community space to their own designs. This has meant they have been unable to use the Councils framework or have had to adapt their plans to fit with approved manufacturer's designs.</p> <p>The Council has now recognised this issue and is in the process of reviewing its current framework with support from the Highland Play improvement group.</p> <p>c) There are challenges when communities are choosing to develop provision of non-standard design. This is more often seen when there are combined play / community spaces which include a range of 'design and build' features.</p> <p>There needs to be more clarity on how we deal with these instances. We do not want to discourage innovative design which fits into the community landscape however we need to be clear and consistent in what the Council can offer in terms of maintenance and inspection support and what is required from designers i.e. inspection and maintenance schedules in order to assess potentially shared responsibilities.</p> <p>d) Challenges exist within communities where school play facilities are not available for use out with school hours. This is particularly true where there may be attractive play provision within local school grounds and less attractive provision within the community play area.</p> <p>There needs to be further discussion on how we can overcome this barrier. Evidence from other Local Authorities has shown that with good, robust design and adequate inspection routines that community access to facilities within school grounds can work.</p> <p>The Highland play improvement group is looking at this issue however, these challenges are currently presenting themselves in the new Caol campus.</p>
3	<p><b><u>Summary of actions already completed/in progress</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clarity is being sought re: community access to planned outdoor facilities within the new Caol school campus</li> <li>2. Clarity is being sought re: amount of developer contributions available for the development of play provision in the Upper Achintore area</li> <li>3. A review of the current 'play equipment' procurement framework is underway</li> </ol>
4	<p><b><u>Implications</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Resource – currently met by project funding in place</li> <li>b) Legal - none</li> <li>c) Equality – none</li> <li>d) Climate change- none</li> <li>e) Risk - none</li> </ol>

### Recommendation

Lochaber District Partnership is asked to acknowledge all the positive work that has taken place under the 'naturally play' project and support the project plan to move forward with the final pieces of work as outlined in section 2.1. The partnership is also asked to support the progressing of further discussion regarding the challenges encountered as per points in section 2.5 of this report.

### Appendix 1 - LDP

Communities who have obtained advice/support through the play project to date

<b>Community</b>	<b>Development</b>	<b>Status</b>
Spean Bridge	Play area redevelopment	complete
Glencoe	Play area enhancement	complete
Arisaig	Development of new play/community space	In progress
Plantation	Development of new play/community space	In progress
Lochyside	Play area enhancement	complete
Ardgour	Play area enhancement	In progress
Acharacle	Play area enhancement	complete
Kilchoan	New play area	complete
Duror	Equipment replacement	complete
Invergarry	Play area enhancement/poss new development	In progress
Kinlochleven	Equipment replacement	complete
Lochaline	Equipment replacement	complete

Appendix 2 - LDP

Jan 2014

Lochaber Playpark developer monies held / to be collected									
Area	Housing site	developer contribution expected	funds received (TECs)	funds received (P&D)	Dev built	still to be collected	developer	comment	Balance held
Claggan	Former Fire Station Site	6,000.00	6,000.00		y	0	LHA	monies available to spend	6,000
Claggan	Former Newco site	16,500.00	0.00		y	0	LHA	used against Inverlochy MUGA/awaiting further monies from Inverlochy future dev to 'pay back'	0
Lochyside	Castle Drive	17,250.00	17,250.00		y	0		spent up on community project	0
Caol	Former Clinic Site (MacKenzie Court)	12,000.00	0.00	12,000.00	y	0	HC	held by P&D	12,000
Upper Achintore	Heathercroft	16500 (min)	0.00		y	£16,500	LHA	Wrapped up in section 75 agreement. HC planning gain neg pursuing	
Invergarry	River Court	8,000.00	8,000.00		y	0		monies available to spend	8,000
Arisaig	Canon Gillies Place	16,500.00	16,500.00		y	0	LHA	monies available to spend	16,500
Mallaig	Kings Way	8,000.00	8,000.00		y	0	LHA	expenditue incurred £8,000 for upgrading of existing provision	0
Ardgour	James Carmichael Way	4,500.00		4,500.00	y	0	HC	held by P&D	4,500
Spean Bridge	The Galleries				y	0	premier dev	no payment due	0
Spean Bridge	Caledonia park				y		Holme Park	no payment due	0
Upper Achintore	Angus centre	£10,500			n		HC		
		99,250.00	55,750.00	16,500.00		£16,500			47,000

## Ward 12 &amp; 22 play parks

## Appendix LDP

	<b>LOCATION/NAME</b>
1	An Aird Camanachd Crescent
2	FW Victoria Road, Play Area
3	Plantation Pinegrove, Play Area
4	Plantation Pinegrove Sports Court Play area
5	Inverlochy Nevis Road sports court
6	Inverlochy Battlefield Crescent
7	Claggan Ardnevis Road Play Area
8	Upper Achintore Lundavra Road play area
9	Upper Achintore Lundavra Road/Grange play area
10	Upper Achintore Lochaber Road play area
11	Inchree (Onich) Righ Crescent Play area
12	North Ballachulish Bail' ur play area
13	Ballachulish Park Road Play Area
14	Ballachulish Jubilee Park Play area
15	Glencoe Lorne Drive Play Area
16	Kinlochleven Park Road Play Area
17	Kinlochleven Lovat Road Play area
18	Duror Play Area
19	Acharacle Village centre play area
20	Strontian play area
21	Lochaline play area
22	Ardgour North Green play area
23	Kilchoan (NEW PARK) Non LA owned land
24	Banavie Neptunes Staircase Play Area
25	Caol Banavie Road play area
26	Corpach Caledonian Road Play Area
27	Lochyside Castle Drive play area
28	Caol Erracht Drive South play area
29	Caol community centre (youth shelters & 5 aside pitch)
30	Caol Erracht Drive North play area
31	Caol Riverside Park (not yet formally adopted)
32	Arisaig play area
33	Morar play area
34	Mallaig Fort William Road play area
35	Mallaig Loch Nevis Crescent play area
36	Spean Bridge Altour Road (Village Hall)
37	Spean Bridge Dalour Cottages
38	Roy Bridge play area
39	Invergarry Garry Crescent play area