

Agenda Item	7
Report No	BIER-24-24

The Highland Council

Committee: Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee

Date: 5 August 2024

Report Title: Scottish Government Play Funding Allocation

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Members agreed at Communities and Place Committee in November 2021 to allocate the funds received from the Scottish Government's play park renewal fund be apportioned to Area Committees based on a blend of play park conditions and the criteria used by Government which is based on the 0–14-year-old population and rurality.
- 1.2 Various reports have been approved by Communities and Place committee as to how the funding would be allocated to 2025/26. Most recently a report to Community and Place Committee on 23 February 2023 set out the allocation for 2023/24 to 2025/26.
- 1.3 Members have been agreeing spend for their play parks and this report refers to spend at Chapel Street Play Park, Portmahomack.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to agree:
 - i. The homologation of £3,605.07 of funding to the project identified for Chapel Street Play Park, Portmahomack.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - In 2021 the Scottish Government committed to allocating £60m to Local Authorities to invest in their play parks. As part of the five-year programme, Highland Council was awarded £2.918m.

Members agreed at Communities and Place Committee in November 2021, August 2022 and in February 2023 to allocate the funds received from the Scottish Governments play park renewal fund be apportioned to Area Committees based on a blend of play park conditions and the criteria used by Government (0-14 years old population and rurality).

- 3.2 **Legal** - Play areas are not a statutory service; however, where they are provided, we must comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability

(Scotland) Act 1960 for employees and members of the public attending play areas. We must also comply with our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Fairer Scotland Duty.

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to relax and play, and participate in a wide range of cultural, artistic and cultural activities. The Council's approach to support these rights was set out in the Play Park Strategy agreed at the Communities and Place Committee in November 2023 [Communities and Place Committee | The Highland Council](#). This recognises the value of informal spaces for play as well.

- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** - The work with Members takes a place-based approach to reviewing all the play areas within a Ward. It enables views to be gathered on options for play areas including repair and replacement of equipment or whether an alternative use should be considered. Members locally are focused on creating positive experiences for children and young people using play parks across Highland and that provision is made to assure access for all. There is no charge to access at any Highland Council play park. This is in line with the Scottish Government's requirement for this award, that there remains an emphasis on play parks being as inclusive and valuable to children as possible, in line with the United Nation Convention Rights of the Child (UNCRC) duty. There is a need to widen engagement on play area renewal as a condition of the Government's funding and a place-based approach is a foundation of the Play Park Strategy.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - In line with the Council's net zero targets, consideration will be given to the environmental impact of new pieces of play equipment, and their maintenance, with natural play equipment being considered where appropriate.
- 3.5 **Risk** - Inspecting and maintaining and/or replacing play park equipment will prevent injury to children and claims being made against the Council.

The approach to engaging locally on play area options with Members and other community bodies and children will enable honest conversations about prioritising resources. This not only reduces the risk of unreasonable public expectation given the importance of an affordable play estate, but it also enables joint problem solving and the identification of external funding and volunteering support.

- 3.6 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no risks arising from this report.
- 3.7 **Gaelic** – There are Gaelic implications for any new signage required ensuring it has bi-lingual content in keeping with the Council's policy.

4 Background

- 4.1 Playparks have positive social and mental health benefits for children and young people. This was highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns.
- 4.2 The Council has 313 play parks and over 2045 pieces of play equipment. The provisions of play parks in not a statutory duty; but the inspection and maintenance of equipment once installed, is a mandatory requirement. For this reason, play parks are subjected to daily, weekly, fortnightly, or monthly inspection based on usage and risk, and an annual inspection carried out by a qualified playground inspector.

4.3 A place-based review of play parks has been completed. This is aligned to the Council agreement in January 2021 that:

“Budget and decision-making are devolved to Area Committees to enable a place-based approach that uses local knowledge, community effort and resources, alongside Member views and staff advice to solve problems together and to identify possibilities for a more sustainable approach to the play estate.”

4.4 To comply with the conditions of capital grant from the Scottish Government’s play park renewal programme, wider engagement is required along with reporting back on how the investment is being deployed. Wider engagement will align well to the principle of inclusion above and support Members in their local decision-making. In some Wards interested groups have already been involved.

5 Budget and Investment

5.1 The annual revenue budget for play parks for the Ross-Shire Area (all Wards) for 2024/25 is £19,700. This includes labour, plant and fleet, materials, and some contractor costs.

5.2 The five-year allocation from the Scottish Government play parks renewal programme for the Tain and Easter Ross Ward is £138,925.50.

5.3 To allow the earliest completion of these works, and in consultation with Ward 7 Tain and Easter Ross Members, they agreed to support the decision to purchase play equipment and landscaping materials.

- Purchase of equipment for Castle Brae Play Park, Portmahomack value £3,605.07.

5.4 This report seeks homologation of this decision.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 5 August 2024

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