

HELENSBURGH WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT – SKATEPARK OPTIONS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee on 12th September 2023:

1.1.1 Noted that the reinstatement of the temporary skatepark facilities would be completed in autumn 2023 meeting the conditions of the leisure centre planning consent;

1.1.2 Agreed that the waterfront site is not considered to be a suitable long term location for an expanded skatepark if a commercial development is selected as the preferred option for the site but for the avoidance of doubt the previously existing skatepark area extending to 350sqm or thereby will be incorporated into the development site unless a suitable alternative location is identified; and

1.1.3 Noted that a further report would be brought before the Area Committee outlining a list of potential permanent locations for the skatepark and a preferred option would be recommended to be taken forward. Officers have commenced the identification of potential sites as outlined at Section 3.7 of the report and would continue to engage with the skatepark group as part of that process.

1.2 This report outlines the options which have initially been assessed and seeks approval to proceed to undertake more detailed investigations on the preferred locations.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Area Committee:

2.1.1 Notes that the new equipment for the temporary skatepark is currently being manufactured and will be installed as soon as this is completed.

2.1.2 Agrees that officers should proceed to investigate further the option of developing a new skatepark at Kidston Park and also consider Hermitage Park as a secondary alternative while noting the challenges / benefits of both locations.

2.1.3 Notes that the funding to investigate these options will be taken from the £80,000 committed by the council to support the skatepark group to find a permanent location.

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3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Prior to the development of the new Helensburgh Leisure Centre there was a small skatepark at the waterfront which consisted of 3 pieces of equipment. The original skatepark (approved in 2008) was specified as a temporary consent to safeguard the long-term redevelopment of the waterfront site and surrounding area. The Helensburgh Skatepark Group was keen to maintain and expand this facility and accordingly a planning condition was agreed that the equipment should be reinstated at the waterfront while the group developed their proposals.
- 3.2 Helensburgh Skatepark Group have aspirations to create a larger skatepark to attract visitors from across the country along with providing much needed facilities for local people. However if a suitable alternative location is not identified the facility will be incorporated within the waterfront development albeit limited to the previously existing skatepark of 350sqm if a commercial development proceeds on the site.
- 3.3 Officers have been working with the group to identify suitable alternative locations for a new skatepark which would meet their aspirations. Ideally, this would be a parkland site to avoid high land values, which is overlooked by passing foot and vehicle traffic creating passive supervision and also not too close to residential areas to limit noise issues.
- 3.4 This has led to a number of sites being considered as summarised in Appendix 1 and noted below:

1) East Bay Park



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East Bay Park has some positive aspects for a skatepark as it is an open area for passive supervision, flat and straightforward to develop and is also adjacent to a petrol station which operates 18 hours a day. However, it is also near to housing and there are concerns it is too close to the road from a safety perspective. The skatepark group noted similar positive points but considered this location unlikely to be suitable due to the proximity to the road and also the lack of toilet facilities.

2) Kidston Park



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Kidston Park has potential to be a suitable location for a skatepark possibly as part of a wider community recreational hub. It has existing car parking, café and public toilets and is also adjacent to the road for passive supervision. Separately officers have been approached by the café ground leaseholder who is interested in discussing the development of putting facilities which was mentioned at the recent community engagement event as something which was missed from the town.

As part of a wider project this could also incorporate regeneration of the dilapidated bandstand. The main concerns with this location are whether it is too far from the centre of the town / station or if it would change the character of the park. The skatepark group have advised that this is a potential location to investigate further for the provision of a larger facility.

3) Iona Stables, Colgrain



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The site at Iona Stables, Colgrain (next to Morrisons supermarket) is in private ownership. However, the council is in discussions with the landowner to promote the development of a business park at this location. During the early site investigations it was discovered that the ground next to Morrisons is potentially subject to flooding so can't be used for the development of business space. Therefore this site could be available for other uses which are allowed such as a skatepark.

The landowner's agent has advised that they would be happy to discuss this further. In addition, the site is large enough to accommodate this use and is adjacent to other commercial uses rather than housing. Another positive factor is that it is adjacent to the high school which will be a potential user group. The site also benefits from having a local train station at Craighendoran and nearby supermarket.

The skatepark group have advised that this option isn't considered suitable as it is too far out from the centre of Helensburgh which would mean it is used less and wouldn't bring the same level of benefit to the town centre. The group also were concerned that it may attract anti-social behaviour due to the remote location and the risk of flooding.

4) Hermitage Park



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The multi-use plaza space within the recently redeveloped Hermitage Park, funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Parks for People fund, is a site which could offer a skatepark location as it is central, overlooked by other uses and adjacent to the café / toilets.

However there are concerns from Economic Development and initial contact was made with NLHF to seek their views on Hermitage Park as a possible location. NLHF have advised that this would represent a change in the approved purposes and masterplan and would require a heritage impact assessment to be undertaken by a specialist consultant in historic parks and accompanied by

plans, surveys etc. for consideration by NLHF. As a consequence the final drawn down of c£100k has been put on hold by NLHF pending further information being received with regard to the council's position. This obviously represents a risk to the council as it may breach the purposes of the £2.3m grant.

Officers from Development and Economic Growth have also noted the following:

1. The plaza itself is not a vacant space.
2. It is an open space, adjacent to the Pavilion and the children's play area as well as to the adjoining care home and residential properties.
3. It forms an integral part of the Park design and hosts a wide range of activities which would be lost to the Park, including school activities, events, fitness activities, family activities and a range of other social uses.
4. It contributes to the practical operation of the park and the day to day use by visitors,
5. It functions as part of the approved access route to the Pavilion for the less able and helps meet our obligations in terms of the Disability Discrimination Act.
6. The space itself is designed to allow easy access by all users including the less able.
7. This use has increased markedly since the completion of the care home immediately neighbouring the park.
8. The site is also close to housing and sheltered accommodation and a skate park in this location would significantly change the character of the Park.
9. All taken together, the park would lose much more than it gains from such a change.

There are other areas within Hermitage Park such as the ground behind the Victoria Hall which could be considered. However, this may also not be approved by NLHF but more importantly is quite secluded, close to residential properties and could be more prone to anti-social behaviour from people not using the skatepark.

The skatepark group have noted that Hermitage Park would be a suitable location but their main concern is that they wouldn't wish to be in a location where there was conflict with other users, groups or funders.

- 3.5 Some other locations were also considered such as Helensburgh Rugby Club and East End Park but it was considered that the existing use and proposals from the teams using these areas didn't allow sufficient space / parking to support further development.
- 3.6 For any proposed location there will be positives and challenges to overcome and it is apparent that while there is general support for a new skatepark this does tend to be less enthusiastic when the development is proposed near people's own house / business / community activity.
- 3.7 When considering any of the above locations it is important to note that a number of factors will still require to be assessed. These include ownership / title conditions, planning issues, access / parking, flooding, environmental / noise concerns and the cost of development.

- 3.8 The Policy & Resources Committee on 10th August has approved the use of place based investment funding (£80k) to assist the delivery of a permanent skatepark subject to all conditions being met. It is therefore considered that the next steps should be to investigate the preferred option of Kidston Park in more detail utilising some of this funding. In addition the option of Hermitage Park should also be explored further while noting the concerns of Economic Development highlighted above.

4. CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 The Council and wider public are very supportive of the Helensburgh Skatepark Group and wish to support its aspirations to develop a skatepark in the Helensburgh area for local people to enjoy and also to attract visitors to the area. This is signified by the recent allocation of £80,000 to the project by the council.
- 4.2 There are a number of potential locations to consider, each with their own benefits and challenges, and officers would now like to concentrate resources on the preferred option of Kidston Park with Hermitage Park also being explored further.

5. IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy – The provision of a temporary skatepark at the waterfront is a planning condition associated with the delivery of the community sports hub.
- 5.2 Financial – The council has allocated £80,000 to the project. There is a risk that c£100,000 of funding from NLHF may be withheld if Hermitage Park is selected as the skatepark location.
- 5.3 Legal - The terms and conditions of any transactions to follow are intended to be delegated to the Executive Director of Customer Services.
- 5.4 HR – None
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty
- 5.5.1 Equalities – Protected characteristics – None
- 5.5.2 Socio economic Duty – None
- 5.5.3 Islands – None
- 5.6 Climate change – The use of ground which is unsuitable for alternative development for a community use is a positive outcome and also encourages a healthier outdoor lifestyle. The development of a skatepark, particularly if it is concrete, is a negative factor.
- 5.7 Risk – The main risk is that an alternative location is not found which could impact on the development of the waterfront site and fail to meet the aspirations of the skatepark group.

5.8 Customer Service – None.

Douglas Hendry, Executive Director with responsibility for Commercial Services
Councillor Gary Mulvaney – Policy Lead, Finance and Commercial Services

13th November 2023

For further information contact:

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Appendix 1

Skatepark locations - initial options assessment

Location	Skatepark group views	Site owned by the council	Central location	Other risks (funding, road safety)	Site has passive supervision	Site has other amenities (toilets / café)	Site near housing / residences	Total
East Bay Park	2	3	3	1	3	2	1	15
Kidston Park	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	19
Iona Stables	1	2	1	3	2	2	3	14
Hermitage Park	2	3	3	1	2	3	2	16