Park consultation report
Stonebank Park
greenspace scotland
July 2016
Description
Stonebank Park is a very small local park in the Ladywell area of Livingston. It is primarily a play area with a few areas of shrubbery. Next to the park is a multi-use games court and an area of hardstanding. The park is surrounded by housing and a main pedestrian route run along the side of the park.

History
The area now occupied by the park was created as the housing in the area was built. We were told be participants in the consultation that the area had initially been a kick about pitch and that the current play area had been developed in partnership with the local Harrysburn Primary School. The park was called Harrysburn Park by some of the young people we spoke to, while others refered to it as Taz’s Park (the name coming from the corner shop next to the park).

Park consultation
West Lothian Council has allocated funds to improve the Park in the financial year 2017/18. greenspace scotland was commissioned by the Council to carry out this initial consultation to gauge local opinion about the current condition of the park and how it could be improved the meet local needs. This is the start of the placemaking process for the park. Consultation involved an afternoon drop in event held in the park and an online survey. Unfortunately, the afternoon of the event was very wet, but in total we spoke to 12 young people (under 16s) and 2 adults.

Disappointingly, we had no responses to the online survey despite all neighbouring houses being leafleted and posters put up in the park and the corner shop. Workshop and survey participants were asked to provide their postcode to give an indication of where feedback was coming from. Only 4 of the people we spoke to left postcode details but all lived within a few streets of the park. The 4 people who left details lived in Stonebank; Ryebank (2) and Willowbank.
Placemaking results
Evaluating the place

Participants in the survey were asked to rate the Park. The criteria used to assess the quality of the park were those used in greenspace scotland’s Community Placemaking approach (which is derived from the work of Project for Public Spaces – see Annex 2: references). This approach can be used to assess the place quality of the park before and after improvements and is used as a starting point for generating ideas for improvement. The results of the initial evaluation are shown below (please note that we only had three sets of scoring feedback – although this was often based on discussions between several individuals).

![Graph showing placemaking results](image)
This is a small survey sample, however, from this we can draw the following conclusions about the park:

It is easily accessible, close to houses and a main pedestrian link to other parts of Livingston.

Participants (including those who did not give us a scoring sheet) indicated that they did not feel unsafe in the park but that there had been instances of anti-social behaviour by teenagers and young adults (‘peeing in the chute and the tunnel’). It is worth noting that the only litter in the park seemed to be food wrappers and soft drinks containers with no evidence of alcohol or drug taking.

It is well used by the target age group for a park which is predominantly for play.

There are places to sit (although the young people we spoke to would prefer to sit on swings rather than benches).

Perceived weaknesses were around the attractiveness of the park – with overgrown bushes and no bins – and its use for community activities. The space, as it is currently laid out, does not lend itself to community events or larger activities but these might be accommodated on the area of hardstanding adjacent to the park.

There are no signs in the park – which may not be an issue for a park of this scale but it does mean that there is not a clear local identity for this space.

How the park is currently used

This park is used in two ways.

Firstly, families with small children use the play equipment. Secondly, older children use the park as a place to meet and ‘chill’ with their friends. This includes using the park as a place to eat takeaway food. The climbing structure with ‘baskets’ in the park was particularly popular with the older children we spoke to since it offers the chance for a group of friends to sit together. This age group also uses some of the play equipment.

What people like about the park as it is

The main things that people like about the park at the moment are the fact that it is a local facility – it is close to people’s homes and the play equipment that is in the park. There were some fears expressed over broken glass etc. but otherwise people liked the park and enjoyed using it.

How people would like to use the park in future

This was really a case of ‘more of the above’. People we spoke to wanted to continue to use the park as they are currently using it but would like to see the features and facilities expanded to offer more for a wider range of users.
Suggestions for improvements

Grouping all suggestions (short and long term), the most common suggestions were:

1. **More equipment in the park**
   This was both about offering more to do for a wider range of people and also ensuring that there were enough places to sit for the groups of young people who like to meet in the park. Suggestions included:
   - More things in the park – more wood than metal
   - More swings for more people (groups are often more than 2 people and like to talk to each other on the swings) – that’s why people like the baskets (5 people said something along these lines)
   - Swings and slide for older children (just small ones at the moment)
   - Monkey bars/climbing wall
   - A shelter (or even a tree house)
   - Tables/benches

2. **More usable bins**
   At the moment, there seems to be only one bin in the park and this is only a metal frame with no liner. We observed young people taking their chip wrappers etc out of the park and over to the bins by the shop but this may only have been because we were in the park at the time.

3. **Lighting**
   This was mentioned in passing by a number of people but only written down by one person. Lighting the park might reduce some of the antisocial behaviour but would need to be designed to have minimal impact on the houses next to the park.

4. **Improving the path into the play area**
   A short path runs from the gate into the park to the play equipment for younger children. This is in poor condition and peters out before reaching the play area and it is not easy if you have a buggy with you. This path could be improved.

5. **Biodiversity**
   One young person suggested that it would be good to have a pond ‘for frogs’ at the end of the park furthest from the play equipment. A good proportion of the respondents felt that current maintenance was acceptable but there was a need to ensure that bins are emptied and litter collected. There were also concerns expressed about the condition of some parts of the path network.

6. **Connect the park to the rest of the area**
   This includes the use of signage but also expanding the park boundary to include the MUGA and the area next to it (to allow more uses for the space). It is also about reaching out to local schools and other organisations to engage them in the redesign of the park and surrounding area.

7. **More for teenagers and young adults elsewhere in the area**
   There was some recognition that the antisocial behaviour in the park was a result of there being ‘nothing to do’ for teenagers locally. While this can’t be addressed by the park improvement, it is important to recognise this wider problem.
In a similar vein, one person wanted to see a BMX or go kart track locally (and bike hire) but acknowledged that this couldn’t be provided in the park.

Note: the detail of individual responses from the workshop and the survey is presented as Annex 1 to this report

greenspace scotland recommendations

Update and expand the equipment in the park
This includes replacing the lost basket swing and increasing the provision for older children (swings, slide etc.). It might also include the provision of picnic tables, more seating or a youth shelter (although this would require more consultation with neighbouring properties).

Improve the footpath to the play area
This is a very small stretch of path but improving it would make the play facilities much more accessible for young families.

Consider the possibility of ‘expanding’ the park
Widening the accepted boundary of the park to include the sports area and the hardstanding next to it would offer the opportunity to host community events – formal and informal in this space. At present, the condition of the hardstanding area is poor and it has a negative effect on the feel of the whole space. Identifying and developing a use for this space would (in the view of the authors) have a significant effect on the wider area,

Park signage
The provision of a sign giving the name of the park (and possibly a little bit of history relating to the work with Harrysburn Primary) would help to give the park more of an identity.

Next steps
The recommendations within this report will form the brief for a landscape architect who will draw up a draft plan for park improvements. The draft plan will be circulated for comments and to help prioritise improvements further, if necessary. A revised, costed plan will then be drawn up and circulated. Once agreed, the improvement works will be issued for tender.

Note on working approaches – given the historic involvement of the local primary school in developing the play facilities, it might be worth following this lead in the next stage of park improvement. This would give access to the majority of site users and develop a greater sense of ‘ownership’.

Partners
The following potential partners were identified by survey participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WLC (4)</th>
<th>Schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday Club (Youth Club)</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday Club (2) – 10-16s</td>
<td>Local charities</td>
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## Appendix 1 – all suggestions

### What do you like about the place?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swinging baskets <em>(note the big, single, one has been burnt)</em> (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundabout (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The spinning bowl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s close to my house (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What would you like to be able to do here?

- Chill, talk and hang about
- Chill and have fun with friends

### Suggestions for actions

<table>
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<td>More swings for more people (groups are often more than 2 people and like to talk to each other on the swings) – that’s why people like the baskets (5)</td>
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<td>Swings for older children (just small ones at the moment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monkey bars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big slide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climbing area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter (5) – tree house</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Something/somewhere for older kids (elsewhere in the area) - stop them from peeing in the chute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pond for frogs and other wildlife</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMX/go kart track</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bike hire</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
More bins
Bins that you can use (and that are emptied)

Better path into the play area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How could the park be better connected to the rest of the area?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signs (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve the local schools in improving the park</td>
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</table>

**Potential partners**

West Lothian Council (4)
Thursday Club (Youth Club)
Monday Club (2) – 10-16s
Schools
Community
Local charities

**Any other comments**

Grass cutting and litter clearance needed – no liners in the bin
Appendix 2 References

The following West Lothian Council strategies and other documents were consulted in the development of this report:

- Open Space Strategy
- Sports Pitches Strategy

The placemaking methodology can be found at [http://greenspacescotland.org.uk/community-placemaking-.aspx](http://greenspacescotland.org.uk/community-placemaking-.aspx)