

# Bellsquarry Park

January 2021



## Summary

### ***How people rate the park***

Generally the park scores above average, with 8 out of 15 categories above average. Top-scoring features are: Safety, Adaptability and Accessibility (close to homes). The lowest scores were given for: Economic benefits, Biodiversity and Information / Signage. These indicate the themes that work well or could be significantly improved.

### ***What people like about the park as it is***

The most popular element of the existing park is the playpark. This is followed by the location (close to people's homes) and the open space.

### ***What people don't like / issues raised***

The main issue identified in the park is drainage. This is followed by lack of planting, insufficient fencing/hedging, lack of variety, antisocial behaviour, access issues and play area issues.

### ***Recommendations for action – based on all information collected***

By analysing the information collated from all stakeholders, recommended actions for improving the park in the short- and long-term are:

- 1) Add plants for interest and wildlife value (inc gaps in hedging)
- 2) Resurface existing path and add path around park
- 3) Add drainage to paths
- 4) Upgrade entrances (including signage)
- 5) Review existing seating, add seating and bins
- 6) Review existing play equipment, including location
- 7) Review fencing requirements
- 8) Football pitch drainage

### ***Potential Partners***

Suggestions for local partners, who may be able to help with the recommended improvements, include: Bellsquarry Community Council, Bellsquarry Primary School, Murieston Environment Group and St Ninians Primary School.



## Introduction

Bellsquarry Park is protected as open space in the West Lothian Local Plan due to its inclusion in the 2020 West Lothian Open Space Plan. It is designated as a Local Park and is approximately 1.3ha in area, located in the north of Bellsquarry in Livingston.

The park is bordered by housing in the West, a woodland shelterbelt and A71 to the North, woodland shelterbelt and housing to the East and Calder Road to the south.

Bellsquarry Park consists of one 11-a-side football pitch, a playpark, a path along the western edge and two benches, with woodland along the north and east boundaries, and formal hedging along the south and west boundaries.

The park is well connected to the Livingston South Blue Green network via the woodland shelter-belts and Woodland Trust Scotland's Bellsquarry Wood, immediately south-east of the park.

West Lothian Council has some money to make improvements to the park in 2021/22. Feedback from local stakeholders will inform the improvements and help to shape a longer-term vision for the park.



## Information gathering

Feedback from local stakeholders was gathered via an online survey. The survey period ran from 9<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Emails with a link to the survey were sent to all known potential stakeholders, including council officers, Woodland Trust Scotland, Bellsquarry and Adambrae Community Council, Bellsquarry Primary School and local Councillors. 30 fliers advertising the survey were put through neighbours' doors around the park, and 6 posters were displayed in and around the park. The survey was also advertised through the council's Media team. A total of 23 local people gave their feedback altogether.

Relevant information about the area around Bellsquarry Park was also taken from the Livingston South Blue Green Network masterplan from 2008.

Thorniewood AFC football team plays on the pitch.



## Feedback

### From council officers:

The playpark is due for investment in 2025.

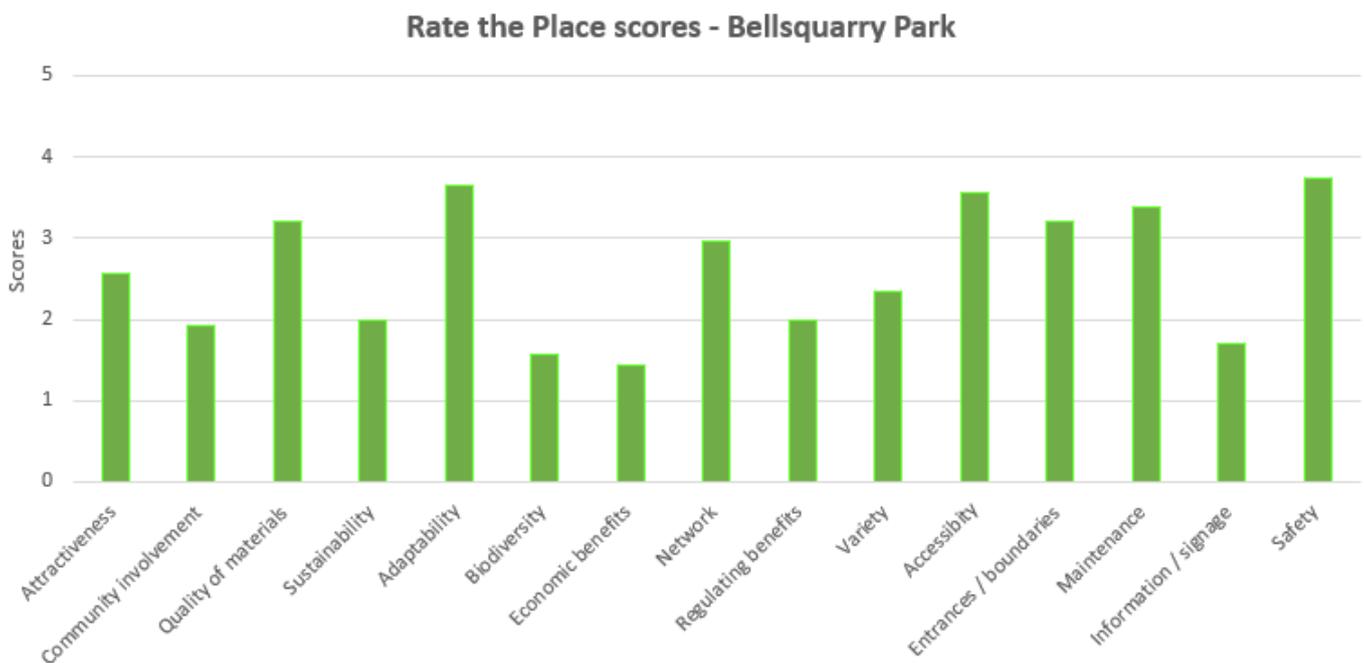
### From survey:

#### Name of the park

Most survey participants call the park Bellsquarry Park, with others calling it Bellsquarry, Bellsquarry Recreation Ground and Bellsquarry Playing fields.

#### Rate the Place

Participants were asked to rate the park as it currently is, using the council's Park Audit questionnaire. The results are shown in the chart below. 23 people participated.



With a possible top score of 5 points for each category, the park scores mostly above average, with the highest rated categories being: Safety, Adaptability and Accessibility.

There are 7 categories with below-average scores, the lowest scoring categories being: Economic benefits, Biodiversity and Information / Signage.

These scores give us an indication of which themes within the park work well and which themes could be significantly improved.

The park's average community-rated score is 39, which rates at just below 'fit for purpose' (40 being the cut-off point). This is below the score rated through the council's park audit process, which is 42.

*Please see Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of the characteristics that were scored.*

## What do people like best about the park?

When the feedback for this question is pasted into a 'word cloud generator', the resulting size of each word shows how often it is mentioned. The 'word cloud' for Bellsquarry Park is shown here, allowing us to see at a glance which elements of the park are currently most valued:



The most popular feature of the park is the playpark. People also appreciate that the park is close to their homes and they appreciate the open space. Others like the variety and the football pitch.





## Suggestions for improvements

The most popular suggestion for low cost improvements in the short term is to add more plants. This is followed by adding seating and improving the entrances. Other suggestions include upgrading and draining the path, adding more paths, bins, signage and moving the memorial bench.

The most popular theme for longer-term improvements is to add more variety to the park in general – through additional sports facilities, outdoor gym facilities, etc. Other suggestions included different play equipment, more seating, more planting, better fencing, improved drainage, better football facilities, further footpaths and added lighting. One person suggested moving the play area away from the houses.

*All suggestions can be viewed in Appendix 2 at the end of this report.*

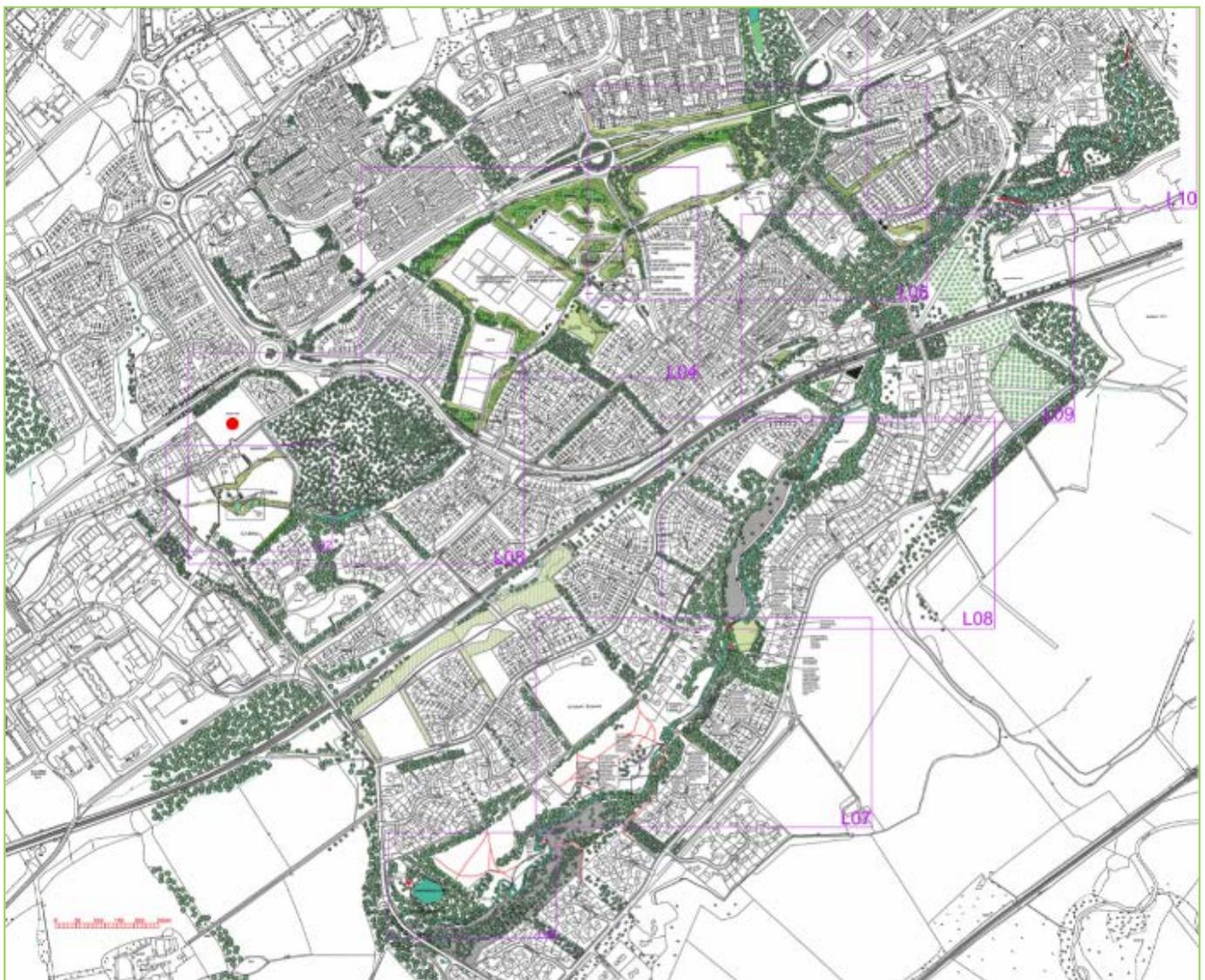


## Livingston South Blue Green Network

The Livingston South Blue Green Network (LSBGN) initiative was brought together in 2008 from a desire by a number of community groups to enhance the quality and improve the connectivity and functionality of the 'Greenways' across the Livingston South area for the benefit of people and wildlife. A study was completed and subsequent works went ahead to improve the waterways and surrounding greenspaces.

The overall vision for the LSBGN was “for a well-connected, well-maintained, multi-functional and valued network of open space throughout Livingston South which provides a wide variety of recreation and leisure opportunities for all members of the community as well as enhancing the bio-diversity of the area and ensuring that future maintenance is more sustainable.”

Although Bellsquarry is included in the green network, the park itself was not included within the remit of the 2008 works. It is the aim of this park improvement project to contribute to the same ethos of a well-connected, well-maintained, multi-functional, biodiverse and valued network of open space in South Livingston.



## Recommendations

Generally, the park scores just above average and is appreciated by local residents. However, there are some key issues and areas of concern, which should be addressed. Anything that can't be addressed now will be held on record for future park management / investment. By analysing the park scores and feedback from all stakeholders, recommended actions for improving the park are:

- 1) Add plants for interest and wildlife value (inc gaps in hedging)
- 2) Resurface existing path and add path around park
- 3) Add drainage to paths
- 4) Upgrade entrances (including signage)
- 5) Review existing seating, add seating and bins
- 6) Review existing play equipment, including location
- 7) Review fencing requirements
- 8) Football pitch drainage

A path around the park, with appropriate drainage, would create a structure for the park and enable more people to access more areas of the park. It would also encourage people to walk around the periphery rather than across the football pitch, and gives a rationale for improving key entrances to the park.

Extra planting will boost biodiversity and the regulating benefits of the park. Introducing edible plants to the general planting (e.g. fruit trees) would also increase the variety of things to do and economic benefits. Gaps in the hedge can also be addressed with planting.

With extra paths, the position of the existing benches can be reviewed and adapted if necessary. Further seating and bins may be added where appropriate.

Fencing will be reviewed and replacement or additional fencing will be considered, as appropriate.

Lighting in West Lothian is only provided on asphalt footpaths. As the park is generally a more informal space the proposed footpaths would be whindust, to supplement the more formal footpaths in the area. As there are also lit footpaths around the park, lighting in the park would not be considered at this time.

Suggestions for additional play equipment will be reviewed by the Play Team when the play area is due for refurbishment in 2025. Moving the whole playpark will not be possible in one go. However, gradually moving play equipment further away from the houses could be considered as a longer-term measure, as and when the equipment needs replacing.

Information about the football pitch drainage will be passed on to the relevant teams and would need to be considered via the council's pitch drainage policy.

## Next Steps

This report will be posted on the parks webpage [www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo)

Based on the feedback and recommendations in this report, park plans will be drawn up and people will be given the opportunity to vote on the final plan.

The 18 people who opted to join the park email list will be kept updated about the park improvements. Anyone else who would like to join the list can request to do so by emailing [becky.plunkett@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:becky.plunkett@westlothian.gov.uk)

## Potential partners

Suggestions for local partners, who may be able to help with the recommended improvements, include: Bellsquarry Community Council, Bellsquarry Primary School, Murieston Environment Group and St Ninians Primary School.

*A full list of all suggested partners can be found in Appendix 2 at the end of this report.*



## Appendix 1 – Rate the Place characteristics explained

No.	Measure	Some things to consider 'yes' answers = higher score, unless stated
1	Attractiveness	Is the park generally attractive? Does it have a consistent or unique character?
2	Community	Does the community help to make decisions about the park? Are there frequent community events? Is there evidence of community involvement?
3	Quality	Are features and facilities robust and long-lasting?
4	Sustainability	Is weedkiller used in maintenance? (lower score) Is every bit of grass cut short? (lower) Recycling bins on site? Are there signs that materials / resources are reused on site? (e.g. grass clippings on shrub-beds)
5	Adaptability	Could spaces within the park be changed easily to suit different uses over time?
6	Biodiversity	Are there different shapes, sizes and types of plants within the park? Do you regularly see different insects / birds / other animals in the park?
7	Economic benefits	Does anyone charge for activities or events here? Does anyone sell things here? Do people collect wood or berries? Do people fish? Do people grow food here?
8	Network	Is the park connected to other green areas nearby, or rivers/burns? Is it connected to walking/cycle paths?
9	Regulating benefits	Are there trees / shrubs / plants at different heights? (to filter air/water, soak up rainfall and store carbon) Are there areas that visibly hold water when it rains? Are there flowers to support bees and other pollinators?
10	Variety	Is there a good variety of things to do in the park? e.g. sport/ walk/ sit/ learn/ play/ watch wildlife / picnic/ cycle/ eat/ run / climb / socialise / walk dog / good views
11	Accessibility	Is the park easy to walk to and get around? Is most of the park accessible to buggies / wheelchairs?
12	Entrances / boundaries	Do you know you're in a park? Are entrances and boundaries well defined? Are they attractive?
13	Maintenance	Is the park well-maintained? Is there much litter, vandalism or areas of neglect? (lower)
14	Signage	Is it clear who looks after the park and how to contact them? Is there any information on wildlife/ history, etc?
15	Safety	Do children and older people regularly use the park? Can you see across the park? Are there areas that feel unsafe? (lower)

## Appendix 2 – All survey answers

### 1) What do you like best about this park?

#### Play equipment

- The wood effect on a lot of the equipment
- The play park and it's location.
- The play park is very well used...
- good play park but lacks variety
- Play park
- The play equipment is robust and brightly coloured.
- the play area has got better over time. could still have some improvements.
- There is a very good children's play area which was upgraded a few years ago.
- Play facilities for young children
- Children have a good play area.
- ... the playpark is very good.
- The park particularly the flying fox.
- We use for the children's play park. It has a good selection of equipment accessible to toddlers.

#### Location

- Close to school for after school play.
- Close to where we live.
- Very close to my house
- Close by
- Location and size

#### Space/open space

- Open space,.
- the open space is regularly used for football training etc, mainly for youngsters.
- It is a large space for people to be outside in the air, it is a place the most local people know (although probably know more about the play area than the actual park area).
- Dogs have space to run
- Space for kids to run.

#### Variety

- Love that there are activities for all age groups
- Fair amount of variety
- It provides a public recreation facility within the village for both pre-school and school children, footballers and dog walkers. it also provides a buffer to the village school.

#### Football pitch

- Football pitch
- Pitch for football training

#### Other

- Surrounded by shrubs
- Grass area can be used for picnic
- It is quite quiet...
  
- This is a park that has been upgrade in the last 5/6 years a considerable amount of money went into the upgrade and drainage, however drainage is very poor.
- However, the ground doesn't drain well and as a result gets very soggy and with no official control over who uses it and when, the ground can get overused and becomes a muddy area. It has been drained in the past but it was not a great success and there is nothing to stop the overuse when the ground it very wet. While it is good to see the park being used, control over when it can be used might help.
  
- Absolutely no consideration has been given to the needs and comfort of residents who live on the periphery. The park proves very popular but all of the equipment is on the edge of residential gardens creating at times an unacceptable and unbearable noise for the residents, particularly the residents in the centre on the edge of the playground.

## 2) *Is there anything you don't like?*

### **Drainage**

- The park has very poor drainage especially at the flying fox.
- The muddy surface when it is overused in wet weather. It takes months to recover yet groups still come and play in the mud
- Poor drainage
- Even although drainage was improved it can still be very wet with large puddles forming.
- Grass area gets very wet, boggy. How good is current drainage?
- Is it basically a waterlogged football pitch.
- Drainage issues.

### **Lack of planting**

- Apart from the surrounding trees nowhere for wildlife
- More flower/plants would be nice
- there is no wild flowers,
- No attractive planting. Not much for pollinating insects or wildlife.
- ...some more vegetation/wild flowers.

### **Lack of Variety**

- Very little choice for different ages and feels waste of space that could be put to better use
- There isn't very much variety. There is the play area and then it is just a big area of grass (short grass),
- Vast grass area could be redesigned for other uses, eg. Seating areas, outdoor gym equipment, path around field for walking, running

### **Access issues**

- The park has one path, which leads to the play park, the entrance at the other end of the park is just a mud entrance that I'm guessing isn't an official entrance.
- The path up to the playpark can be quite waterlogged at the entrance gate at times. This gate is quite tight for larger buggies and probably not too accessible for those with disabilities.
- Only one path
- The park could benefit from having a path round the outside/running track...

### **Lack of seating**

- there is no place to sit except 1 bench.
- Apart from round the children's area nowhere to sit.
- the benches are only at the play park.

### **Play equipment too near houses**

- I don't like the fact that the equipment is so close to residential property when there was enough space to site it away from said residential property. I am afraid with the increasing development in the local area that the lives of the nearest residents are going to be made a misery.
- I don't like the fact that large equipment that can be used as a viewing platform is sited so close to my garden causing us to have to grow hedging high therefore we have difficulty maintaining it. This then adds additional cost to us as we have to hire someone to do this work. The bench that is situated next to the boundary hedge beside the bin is directly next to our garden.

### **Insufficient fencing/hedging**

- There is no fence around the play area to keep the dogs out of the kids play area.
- Security. There is only one gated pedestrian access on the south east corner (Calder Road runs along eastern border).
- There is an unsecured pedestrian access in the south west corner and a field gate on the east side for grass cutting equipment and maintenance access - this gate is often open, no padlock is used which could enable unlawful access for travellers or fly-tippers.
- The wire and post fence on the southern boundary is regularly breached behind the goal to enable balls to be retrieved. This also enables kids to access the private tree zone buffering between the park and the residents of Birchwood Gardens.
- the side that runs parallel to the road is marshy and the hedge has so many breaks that is very easy for children to run through and onto the road. it has so much potential but has been left.

### **Antisocial behaviour**

- Very dark at night which encourages youths to congregate as they cannot be seen
- Frequented by noisy antisocial teenagers/children.
- Particularly at nights with alcohol being consumed. I am on the garden bordering the park and times the noise and foul language is unacceptable
- The bench acts as a magnet to late night revellers, underage drinking. It is also a gathering point during the day therefore increasing noise pollution and destroying our enjoyment of our garden. Affecting mental health.

### **Play area issues**

- It could be bigger and more could be done with the grassy area why not have an area for sand
- The play park section can get quite busy so expansion of this section would be great.
- I don't know of any football teams that train on the pitch and it is so big that I feel the park could easily be extended to upgrade the equipment and possibly put some structures in that could be used by disabled/wheelchair users such as the bigger swings, children sized ones with over head harness, roundabout that fits wheelchair etc
- The rope roundabout is too high for kids and always requires parents to push the kids.

### **Parking issues**

- I don't like the fact that the park attracts far more traffic into Calder road and Knowetop creating noise, pollution, and parking issues.
- Parking isn't great
- Lack of parking

### **Other**

- No toilet facilities
- the 'football pit'/much grass area is neglected and overlooked.
- There is nothing I dislike
- Nowhere to eat.

### **3) List three low-cost things that you would do to improve this park, that could be done straight away**

#### **Planting**

- Shrubs
- Planting the grass verge next to the residential periphery hedge with evergreen shrubs and small trees that would grow no higher than 3 metres. This would help as a sound and visual barrier for the existing residents.
- More plants
- Add more and different flowered plants or bushes or trees
- Plant flowers
- Wild Flower areas
- Colourful plants
- More colourful shrubs in the corners
- Planting
- Wildflower verges
- There is a rough area at the Knowetop end that is steadily getting bigger due to grass cutting not going far enough. This started as a small weedy area and has slowly expanded. This area could be developed into a wild flower zone which would look more attractive and create bio diversity.
- Fruit trees and bushes

#### **Seating**

- Add more seating
- Picnic benches along the side next to Calder Road
- More seating
- Picnic benches
- Improve seating
- More seating areas
- Picnic benches
- More benches around the park
- more seating
- Add picnic benches

#### **Bins**

- I believe more litter bins should be provided.
- Bin at far end
- Bins emptied more
- More waste bins
- Another bin

#### **Signage**

- Signage about not using the ground for football etc practice when it is wet. Several signs would be needed along Calder Road as access is gained through the hedge
- Signage
- More signage
- Signs

#### **Entrances**

- Provide a gate to the south west access and secure the field gate with a padlock.
- Create a welcoming entrance
- Vehicle gate at car turning point could be rehung and perhaps a "people gate" put in beside it to save the big gate being used apart from by WLC vehicles
- gates on the entrance that doesn't have one
- Improve the entrance across from Bellsquarry Park. Construct a second gated pedestrian access in north east corner to enable dog walkers crossing from Bellsquarry Woods
- Access to the playing field opposite the entrance to the wood could be improved as it is just a muddy banking for most of the time and that is not safe
- Improved entrance signage or proper entrance gateway

#### **Drainage**

- sort the draining issue along the right side
- The path from Knowetop and through the park badly needs an upgrade.
- Add drainage so the grass isn't so muddy after rainfall
- Upgrade path as flooded regularly
- Improve drainage.

#### **Path**

- Create a path around the The parameters of both Park and field
- Build a path around the football pitch for walkers.
- Path / Running track
- Lay footpath inside eastern boundary linking the existing SE gate with proposed NE gate, then extend along north & western boundaries

#### **Move existing facilities**

- There is an argument for moving the bench on the periphery of the residential gardens further away to help alleviate noise. This could also be done with existing litter bin.
- move the equipment away from close by residential property in particular the scream machine AKA the zip wire

#### **Other**

- Fill/level the ground as a few bumps
- Nets for goals
- Paint the structures
- Bigger play park
- Defined football pitch
- More community events
- Better lighting
- Social media marketing
- Hedging or fencing between goal and park

#### 4) *What three changes would you make in the long term that would have the biggest impact?*

##### **More facilities in park as a whole**

- More variety in park
- Introduce another activity area such as a tennis court
- Skate park
- Change use of large grass area
- Trim track or climbing frame
- More sport courts (some basketball courts or something)
- More for younger children
- Different options for main park
- Basketball court
- Running Track / art work

##### **Inc outdoor gym equipment**

- Outdoor gym equipment
- outdoor gym
- Outdoor fitness area

##### **Play equipment**

- Basket swing
- Sand area with diggers
- More play park
- there is so much space the play area could be so much better for children of all ages
- Sandpit

##### **Fencing**

- Fence around the play area to keep kids in and dogs out
- Fencing
- Erect high level fencing behind both goals to protect the children's play area and planting screening Birchwood Gardens

##### **Football facilities**

- redo the football pitch area
- Provide a secured container for the storage of football equipment etc for local teams and training

##### **Paths**

- Paths the full way round the park and field
- Not keen on surfaced paths but others might like them around the perimeter

##### **Lighting**

- Lighting along the path from Calder road to Knowetop
- Lights around park for safety at night walking

##### **Seating**

- Seating
- Picnic tables
- Picnic benches
- More seating

##### **Planting**

- Shrub planting
- Hedges
- Spring bulb and wildflower areas
- Improved vegetation / bio-diversity
- Altered mowing regime

##### **Drainage**

- Better drainage - again!
- Better drainage
- Drainage

##### **Other**

- see actually things take place there.
- Returf
- Cycle lock ups
- Wildlife interactive signs.
- Car park
- Toilets
- Moving the equipment over to the area of land that runs parallel with the A71 and the tree belt. This would help reduce the noise to the existing residents. On busy days and when there are groups in the park the noise can be heard well along Knowetop. The machinery educes raucous laughter and screaming to an unacceptable degree.
- close it down ;it is too close to residential property
- I DO NOT think it acceptable to consider picnic benches for all of the reasons I have listed. I think this would encourage too many people from outside the area and create unbearable intrusion and noise nuisance for residents.
- I DO NOT think it is acceptable for dogsd to be tied up, left barking and yapping and probably doing their business in the childrens play area. Something needs to be done to ensure people pick up dog dirt and human litter.
- Upgrade
- Extend
- Bins
- Build A canine enrichment area
- A shelter for parents at the play park

**5) Which local groups could help to put your ideas above into action? (Please name them e.g. 'Hillside Primary Parent Council')**

**Community Councils**

- Bellsquarry community council, Murieston community council
- Murieston and bellsquarry community groups on Facebook
- Bellsquarry and Adambrae community council
- Bellsquarry community council
- Adambrae and Bellsquarry Community Council is considering at the moment applying for some of the T own Centre Fundmoney for picnic benches.

**Primary schools**

- Bellsquarry Primary School
- Bellsquarry Primary School would possibly like to be involved in planting bulbs and wildflowers.
- St Ninians Ps - many of our school pupil live in Bellsquarry and surrounding areas
- Bellsquarry PS?

**MEG**

- Link in with MEG?
- Murieston Environmental Group

**Other**

- Not sure
- Woodland T rust?
- Would love to see a place for West Lothian Shinty Club to play regularly.
- Village Hall Management Committee?