

# Improving George Street Skate Park

13<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Report author: Liz Fryman, District Co-ordinator.

# 1 Background to project

Over a number of years, youth service organisations and Councillors have been working with young people who use the Skate Park at George Street playing fields.

Although the site does occasionally suffer from vandalism, this is fairly infrequent and the regular groups who use the site are in fact very engaged.

Most recently the Councillors have funded a trip out over the holidays during summer 2016 and during summer 2015, the group took part in a graffiti art project, the results of which are now on public display in the library.

The current skate park was built and opened during 2005, utilising funding from the New Opportunities Fair Share scheme plus OMBC Transforming Your Space funding.

Councillors have expressed an ambition to improve and refurbish the site, along the lines of that installed at Coalshaw Green Park last year.

For information, appendix A is a short summary of the process undertaken to develop the Coalshaw Green site.

Special thanks to the Chadderton District Team in the development of this briefing note.

## 2 Aim

The aim of the George Street project could be to provide a free wheeled facility that will increase the active citizenship of young people, to promote health and wellbeing, encourage community cohesion and help to reduce anti-social behaviour through engagement of local residents. This facility will be utilised by residents and community groups within the immediate area of Shaw and Crompton as well as others from the wider community.

## 3 Objectives

1. To work with children and young people who live in the area, partner agencies, local residents, community groups and Oldham Council to design and install a new wheeled facility in the area
2. To provide young people / community members with opportunities to gain new skills / qualifications
3. To launch a refurbished fully inclusive free wheeled community facility
4. Promote and market the facility across the Borough of Oldham using mass marketing techniques, social media and other methods.

## 4 Community benefit

The Shaw and Crompton wards have a total of 3,838 young people aged under 16 years and 1,053 young people aged 16 – 21 years (Official ONS Oldham Population statistics 2014)

There is a long history of young people being involved in anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug use, but George Street playing fields is one site where we do not often see evidence of alcohol and drug use. Although no firm conclusions can be drawn from this anecdotal evidence from Environmental Services, it does suggest that the provision of the current skate park facilities distract young people from less desirable pastimes.

There is also a long history of young people who use this facility engaging positively with youth services and Councillors.

Wheeled sports have a very wide appeal and this would be a facility that families with younger children would be able to visit and use, alongside older young people and young adults whose involvement in physical activity will contribute to the districts Health and Wellbeing priorities.

## 5 Next Steps

A small group of officers from the District Team, Regeneration and Environmental Services have met to discuss the scheme and the next step could be to widen and extend this group into a steering group.

Additional members could be: Councillors, youth service providers, community organisations.

A possible next step would be to identify resources to undertake a short feasibility study to establish the foot print of the site, potential developmental options, possible funding sources and a youth and community engagement plan.

To engage with young people too early would raise expectations unfairly, but once the project steering group has been established and a feasibility plan completed, young people should be involved as actively and comprehensively as possible to promote genuine community ownership and commitment to the wellbeing and longevity of the site.

### **Appendix A**

Coalshaw Green Park case study.

### **Appendix B**

Virador criteria and funding information

## **Appendix A**

In 2011 young people led a consultation exercise in Coalshaw Green Park about which facility park users would like to see developed. Between the periods of April - October 772 park users were consulted with. Information taken from the consultation exercise illustrated that the current wheeled facility was used by groups of all ages. However, it was unanimously agreed that the existing facility was too small for current high demand and the level of usage has left it in a state of disrepair. Environmental services department confirmed that items that failed to meet the EU standards had been removed which has left a lack of provision. There are currently no other wheeled facilities in the area that provide an opportunity for children and young people develop their skills in wheeled sports for example, skateboarding, BMX, scooters and skates. An improved facility would provide a safe, accessible and free space for sustained interaction.

Local youth / sports / community workers from multi agencies offered their time to support the project. Public consultation events have been held in the park with key partners' involvement to ensure that the residents remain fully engaged in the project. The 200 residents who live in the closest proximity were sent personal invites to the event as well as a press release to advertise the event thus involving the wider communities. Further targeted consultation was also carried out with known groups for example, Friends of the Park, youth groups, schools, children's centre etc.

Meetings were held with other organisations that work in the area of Chadderton for example: Street Pastors, Chadderton Neighbourhood Policing Unit, Oldham Play Action Group, Chadderton Methodist Church and Chadderton Youth Centre OMBC.

Once the findings were collated a group of local young people met with local councillors and gained their support for the development of the wheeled facility and were successful in being awarded £45,000 from the District Investment Fund and £5,000 from the District Partnership to put towards the development. Permission and the full support were granted from the Council to develop the site.

Working alongside Fullcircle as a community interest group we were able to source funding for the works and under the Landfill Communities Fund successfully sourced funding from Viridor Credits Environmental Company to the sum of £107,384.64. In addition to this £1,500 was awarded to the group from the Youth Opportunity Fund.