

Perth Common Good Committee – 27 February 2013**PERTH, SOUTH INCH PARK UPGRADE, PHASE 2****Report by Depute Director (Environment)**

This report outlines proposals approved at the Environment Committee on 30 January 2013 for the creation of a high quality destination play area on the South Inch, and improvements to park entrances to welcome people into the park. These proposals are phase 2 of upgrade works which complements the phase 1 works to upgrade the boating pond (completed in 2011).

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i) Ratify the decision of the Environment Committee on 30 January 2013 for Phase 2 of the South Inch Upgrade Programme. This includes the creation of a new play area for the South Inch which will provide high quality play facilities and act as a destination, for both residents of Perth and visitors to the city, enhancing its environmental reputation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The South Inch and North Inch Parks are unique historical features of Perth city, which it is justifiably proud of. They define the north and south boundaries of the city centre and together with the River Tay, create one of the most distinctive city characters in northern Europe.
- 2.2 There has been a longstanding need to regenerate the South Inch, and create a high quality park to serve not only the people of Perth but also to act as an attraction, to help promote Perth city as a visitor destination. This will complement the facilities on the North Inch, as well as the new Heather Garden being developed in Bellwood Park, and Rodney Gardens. These parks, linked by the sculpture trail along Tay Street and the east side of the river, will combine to offer visitors and residents a very positive experience and impression of the city of Perth. Close proximity to the city centre will offer people of all ages the opportunity to combine a wide range of quality recreational activities, within easy reach of each other, and key transport hubs.
- 2.3 This will be a very positive contribution to the regeneration of Perth city which is a key principle within the Community Planning framework and a high priority within the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 2.4 The proposals will directly contribute to the development of the environment and enhancement of facilities within Perth City Centre, one of the six priority areas identified within the Economic Recovery Programme as part of the Council's Economic Strategy.

- 2.5 The quality of the public realm is critical to encourage investment and increase the time users spend in the city centre and major high profile public parks close to any city centre will play a very important role in achieving this. For Perth this is particularly important if it is to retain its enviable reputation for environmental quality and high quality visitor experiences, creating a more economically and socially vibrant place.
- 2.6 The public rightly have a great local affinity with the South Inch and whilst routine maintenance has generally kept the play park facilities fit for purpose, the progressive decline of ageing infrastructure has taken its toll. The phase 1 works to rejuvenate the boating pond have made a positive and widely welcomed improvement to the park, and the proposed phase two regeneration of the play park has been enthusiastically welcomed at the community consultation events. This second phase (which is the subject of this report) concentrates on the creation of a high quality destination play area, whilst also improving the area around the former bowling greens and entrances, to attract people and welcome them into the park.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 In developing these proposals, there has been a comprehensive survey, consultation and design process undertaken to date and this will continue until the project is completed, to ensure that maximum quality and value are achieved. The proposals for the second phase of work in the South Inch improvements are shown on the attached Masterplan (Appendix 1).
- 3.2 The new play area will occupy the former crazy golf, trampoline, putting green and bowling green sites. Initially the proposed play area excluded the bowling green site, however, the recent closure of the bowling club presented the opportunity to more closely link the new play area with the existing buildings. As such the master plan objectives are to:
- i) Have a play area that is protected from flooding and can be used at times when the existing South Inch play area would be inaccessible.
 - ii) Visually open up the whole of the South Inch and link the former Bowling Club and changing rooms facility into the wider park.
 - iii) Remove barriers, open up public access, and minimise secluded areas which cause concern about fear of crime.
 - iv) Remove obsolete, overgrown and expensive-to-maintain shrub beds, hedges and poor quality trees to reduce opportunity for anti-social behaviour, and to reduce maintenance costs.
 - v) Recognise the potential future use of the bowling pavilion, and orientate the play area towards it, thus increasing the opportunity for integration, and create the potential for a social hub, around the pavilion, which offers a café in the summer months.

- vi) Provide a spacious play area with increased 'natural play' which would be designed to be both sympathetic with, and enhance, the parkland of the historic South Inch, and neighbouring Central Perth Conservation Area.
 - vii) Have the availability of a 'Green' for public events (e.g. events requiring a marquee) with availability of an outdoor electrical supply, and access to café facilities.
- 3.3 The concept of the play area is loosely based on the Perthshire landscape comprising of hill, hill fort, pictish stone, woodland, river and glen. The play area will have an open character and proposed earthworks will be carefully designed to ensure they complement the wider parkland.
- 3.4 The focal point of the play area is a 6.5m high 'feature' timber play unit located on a 3m high mound. This is designed to act as both a 'look out' post and attract attention to the play area from Edinburgh Road, and also to promote the facility to visitors to the city.
- 3.5 The location and type of the play unit has been carefully considered so as not to affect key views of St Leonard's in the Fields and Trinity Church. An example of the intended type of play equipment is illustrated on the play area masterplan in Appendix 1. Access to the top of the main mound will be provided where possible, by a continuous rampway with an intermediate stop off point at the top of a 1.8 - 2.2m high slide. Adjoining the main earth mound and linked via a rope bridge to continue the 'upland landscape' theme, is a second earth mound, which contains a smaller timber activity unit encircled with vertical timber posts, to emulate a hill fort. The fort can also be accessed by steps leading from the base of the slide, by ramped access, or by rope pull, as well as physically climbing the slopes of the mound.
- 3.6 The key play area components will consist of:
- Teen play area: large mounds with climbing units, slide and rope bridge (as detailed above).
 - Play area for young children with sand play located near to the former bowling club pavilion with its potential for café and upgraded public facilities.
 - Activity trail, comprising of reinforced grass path with mini trampolines and sculptural play equipment. This follows the low level path along the route of the former crazy golf course and uses the existing low mounds with stands of birch trees to create a wooded glen to explore.
 - 2.5m high climbing boulders create a strong feature at the southern entrance to the play area as well as providing the opportunity for the more daring to practice their climbing skills.

- Traditional swings for all age ranges, double zip slide and 3m diameter Dutch disc round-about have proved to be very popular when installed on other sites. The addition of a multi person swing creates a strong feature at the eastern entrance to the play area whilst encouraging group participation.
- Play opportunities for a wide range of abilities and interests with many pieces of equipment designed for people of all ages and, where possible, providing inclusive play with access for all.
- Drainage areas between the southern base of the mounds and the flood wall will be planted with waves of water-loving reeds and grasses.

3.7 Subject to committee approval, the implementation of these proposals will require a number of key stages to be completed and these are set out in the following proposed programme:

- Second public consultation in February 2013,
- Planning Approval: April 2013
- Tender Out: Early April 2013 (pending Planning Permission and Common Good Committee approval)
- Award Contract: Mid May 2013
- Site Start: Early June 2013
- Site Completion: End August 2013
- Site open: Early – mid September 2013

3.8 The creation of the play area and its closer relationship with the pavilion building is expected to act as a catalyst for their future use. As with the success and popularity of MacRosty Park in Crieff, the provision of shelter, refreshments and toilets, are seen to be key to fulfilling the potential of the park and may offer very good opportunities to a private or social enterprise. Once the play area is complete, the potential use and likely demand for the buildings may increase and could potentially include indoor play, a crèche for shoppers, and sale of refreshments.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 The Heads of Legal Services, Democratic Services, and Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

4.2 Details of the community consultation can be found in Appendix 2. A summary of the completed questionnaires from consultation event at Glenearn Community Campus are included in Appendix 2 and provide an outline of the typical questionnaire feedback throughout the initial consultation process.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The outline cost estimate for the Phase 2 works is £574,000 including professional fees of £48,000.

5.1.1 Capital:

5.1.2 There is an approved budget of £28,000 in the 2012/13 Capital Budget and £546,000 in the 2013/14 Capital Budget for the South Inch Improvements. This includes an external funding target of £90,000 for entrances and signage improvements to be carried out within 2013/14. A number of sources for external funding are being explored and the overall budget will be adjusted to reflect the actual funding obtained. There are opportunities for funds to be raised for other future community projects and the South Perth Partnership has expressed an interest in helping to raise funds.

5.2 Revenue:

5.2.1 The design has been developed to minimise any increase on revenue budgets, particularly for maintenance. The current play area and bark surfacing, because of their age and vulnerability to flooding from the Craigie Burn, often require significant repairs and clean ups.

5.2.2 Added to that the old trampoline area, and hedges associated with the bowling greens, were costly to maintain. These issues are also being addressed as part of the proposals. The choice, location and design of the new equipment and surfaces has been made to stay within existing available budgets. Subject to approval by Committee, this approach will continue into the detailed design stages to ensure the facility is sustainable in the long term.

6. COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009-2012

6.1 The South Inch Improvement project contributes to all five Objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 which provides clear strategic direction to inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. They are as follows:-

- (i) A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment
- (ii) Healthy, Caring Communities
- (iii) A Prosperous, Sustainable and Inclusive Economy
- (iv) Educated, Responsible and Informed Citizens
- (v) Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

7.1 An equality impact assessment needs to be carried out for functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.

7.2 The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- i) Assessed as **relevant** and the following **positive** outcomes expected following implementation:
- Full consultation and engagement with the whole community is proposed and is integral to the project. The first phase of consultation has been completed. The list of consultees can be seen in Appendix 2 and the second phase is due to take place in late January/February 2013. This will ensure that the design of the new play area is as inclusive as possible.
 - There will be free, open access to the new destination play area.
 - The new destination play area will be for the benefit of local people and visitors to the city alike. The South Inch is fully accessible to people of all abilities including wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs etc and it is proposed that the new footpath network within the play area will also be fully accessible.

Inclusive play will be considered throughout the detailed design process with many pieces of play equipment being accessible to a wide range of abilities and interests. Formal and informal seating will be incorporated into the design at regular intervals and at key locations along new footpaths.

- The construction of the new play area and removal of segregated areas and existing visual and physical barriers (including shrubs, hedges and fences) will promote the park as inclusive and open to all. This will create a more open environment which will improve perception of public safety and reduce potential for anti-social behaviour. This is further enhanced by removal and cutting back of trees in the vicinity of the tunnelled access from Glenearn Road.

8. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

8.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).

8.2 The matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. Pre-screening has identified that the PPS will have no or minimal environmental effects, it is therefore exempt and the SEA Gateway has been notified. The reasons for concluding that the PPS will have no or minimal environmental effects are that.

1. No Major changes to infrastructure and access
2. No change to Flood Prevention Scheme reservoir or function
3. No introduction of development which significantly changes the existing character and function of the local environment.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The South Inch is a high profile and very important open space adjacent to the city centre, and as such should be a facility which reflects that profile, and is a positive part of what Perth has to offer. The new play area, improved entrances and signage on the South Inch will create a much improved visitor destination for Perth city centre, complementing other attractions in the area and creating something the city can be proud of. It will provide an exciting new contemporary facility encouraging children and families to engage with the outdoor environment.

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Note:

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

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Date: 29 January 2013

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Consultation

South Inch play Area

Design Consultation:

The following list includes all people/groups that were consulted at the outset of the design process of the play area:

External consultation:

- Glenearn Campus on 31st May 2012 (see attached summary of questionnaire results – this contains the most common responses and represents typical feedback),
- Youth worker at Glenearn Campus on 8th June 2012,
- South Perth Partnership in July 2012,
- Perth and Kinross Access Group in June 2012
- Pupils Perth High School (lunch time consultation event and completion of 100 questionnaires) on 29th August 2012,
- on-line questionnaires sent to all school in Perth June and August 2012,
- on-site posters and signs in July 2012,
- Newspaper release in June and July 2012,
- Posters in libraries in July and August 2012.
- Park user groups such as footballers.
- Network Rail (tunnels and access to Glenearn Road) consulted in June and October 2012

Internal consultations:

- Stake holders consulted through out the design process
- Local Councillors consulted at design brief and early stages of the design (June – July 2012),
- Street lighting on 3rd July 2012
- Flood Protection team consulted through out the design process .

