

Alice Park Improvement Program Test

Introduction

There has been considerable discussion over the last three years regarding the possibility of a skatepark sited in Alice Park. Simply arguing for and against a skatepark will forever polarise opinion; and while my personal thoughts are of no consequence here, it does seem to make sense to ask the actual users of the park what they feel are the important development issues, and what do they see the priorities for improvement should be.

Having viewed the meeting notes from the Alice Park Sub Committee, it had been muted at both meetings that there should be a comprehensive survey of actual park users to gauge their opinion on what they would like to see at Alice Park.

On the basis that I am perfectly positioned to undertake such a study, I decided to do so.

The concept was for each participant to imagine they had £100,000 to spend on any kind of improvement at Alice Park. They were offered suggestions all made by visitors over the past few years and included both the proposed skate park and a smaller junior skate park option.

The intention is not to push, promote or indeed discount or dismiss any particular activity, merely ask each participant how they would spend the money.

The project results are split into four groups, namely:
Stage One – visitors to the park, Feb pre any marketing activity
Stage Two – visitors to the park, Feb following Facebook activity
Stage Three – Local Look responses
Stage Four – Other interested parties (email respondents)

Stage One Methodology

It was very important that this survey was offered to genuine visitors to the park. Key in this initial Stage One consultation was to ensure the following:

- No influence
- No bias
- No promotion

This was attained by eliminating all marketing options. I did not want to gain attention from either faction; Stage One is not a mass protest either way. It is a genuine reflection of actual visitors.

A survey form has been created with 22 options, with additional space for 2 independent options and ideas. The £100k has been effectively split into 20 units of £5k each, and each participant is invited to 'spend' 20 units however they see fit. The first option is to allocate 20 units, (£100k), to the creation of a skatepark. Each option had a guideline

price, indicating roughly what amount of money would be needed for a version of the concept – so for example, a line listed option of 'flora/fauna' has a guide value of 1 unit, or £5k. If they were really keen, they could allocate all 20 units to this line listing. Obviously, all values are approximate and should be used as guidelines only.

All options are listed in approximate cost order. Space is allowed for participants to offer their own suggestions and ideas. Names are asked for, with an invitation to leave email or phone numbers and asked if they would like to be kept informed of the results.

Importantly, the form was not a simple tick list of various improvements – this would have resulted in the majority of options being ticked; without the relevance and importance/cost control we would not have a useful survey. Observing participants was also very interesting; everyone has taken it very seriously and realised they need to allocate very carefully to ensure they don't go over budget, and, exactly as faced by Councillors, not everything can be done.

Participant Control

Initially, in order to ensure that the survey was completed only by those who actually use the park, no external promotional activity was used. The program was not mentioned on Facebook (we have nearly 2000 followers) or promoted by us in any way.

Furthermore, Stage One was carried out during term time, and in the quietest trading period. This was deliberate to ensure that we would attract primarily core users of the park rather than just the 'fair-weather friends'.

Participants were invited from all ages and sexes. Each was approached and offered the chance to complete the form in privacy. Completed forms were then folded and placed in a clearly marked box on the counter, similar to a ballot paper box.

The first papers were released on Saturday 4th February. The first cut-off date was Sunday 12th February at 2.30pm. 100 completed forms were collected during this Stage One period.

Stage Two of the consultation began immediately afterwards, lasting a week and attracted 58 respondents. following some facebook activity. Stage Three thus ensued, and was enhanced by some Facebook promotion and Local Look promotion, designed to get a wider opinion. Although I wanted to encourage park users to give their view, I felt this use of media would encourage those who do visit to complete forms. This 2 week period attracted a further 110 responses. In addition, I have segmented the Local Look forms that were received as I think they deserve separate analysis. The finished deadline for respondents was extended, following a discussion with Rob Appleyard, to Friday 10th March. Respondents between 7th and 10th have also been analysed separately.

A target figure of approximately 300 responses was expected, total responses were 327. Initially, it was hoped for 500 however it is felt that a figure in excess of 300 is enough to present qualified analysis.

The Form

Alice Park Improvement Program

Ok, Here's a thing – lets ask actual users of the park (that's you) what you would do with £100k to improve Alice Park. It's a huge amount of public money, so lets see what people want! I have broken down the £100k into 20 units of £5k, so just put how many units you would like to see spent on these suggested projects. You can add more, or add your own idea or two – just remember to allocate 20!

Please note – we need as many of these as possible by 7th March! Enjoy!!!

Project	Units Required	Your allocation
SkatePark	20	
MUGA/Astro (on 2 tennis courts)	10	
Junior Skatepark	8	
New Play Equipment (TBA)	5	
Pathways Connected	4	
Sensory Garden for disabled/blind	4	
Wild Fit Natural Gym/fitness course	4	
Water Play Feature (like chippenham)	4	
Pay and Display Parking	4	
Adult Gym Equipment	3	
Quiet Area / Dog Free (by pond)	2	
Benches	2	
Pond Improvement Program	1	
Cricket Pitch	1	
Football Pitch	1	
Resurface/Improve Tennis courts	1	
Flora / Fauna	1	
Disabled Swing	1	
Mother Baby Swing	1	
Security CCTV	1	
Bins / Recycling	1	
Covered Seating	1	
My Idea		
My Other Idea		

Name:		
Email:		
Phone:		
Keep Me Posted:	Yes Please!	No Thanks

Form Analysis

The idea was to present a selection of options available, with approximate price guidelines to give us the important Relevance factor. Items were listed in approximate cost order. For ease of reference, each 'unit' represented a £5,000 investment. Naturally, these are all just guideline costings, but this did give participants an idea of what they could spend the money on. It also ensured that they spent time making the decisions, as obviously nobody could tick all options!

Controls and Measurements

All completed forms were overseen or handed out by responsible members of staff.
No duplicate voting was allowed.
All forms were completed by invitation only.
The respondents represent a diverse cross section of park visitors.

Marking and recording of the responses in Stage One was done by Tony Hickman and Geoff Ward, overseen and acknowledged as accurate by San Van Zyl. All forms have been kept secure and can be viewed independently upon request.
Stage Two and Three monitoring, marking and recording was done by Tony Hickman and Geoff Ward, overseen and acknowledged as accurate by Jennifer Malough.

Each form was checked by Tony and Geoff and given analysis. Any variations were calculated accordingly, and shown and approved by the independent overseer. No paper was deemed 'unacceptable'.

In some instances, some people voted for $\frac{1}{2}$ a skatepark or $\frac{1}{4}$ skatepark. This was done by the allocation of (e.g.) 5 units to the skatepark, or (e.g.) 2 units to the junior skatepark. These were recorded and once the total reached a full allocation required this was then recorded as a full vote. The final skatepark numbers were rounded up for simplicity.

The only other option that attracted fractional votes was for the MUGA. The same rules applied as above.

Instances where respondents had given additional 'votes' for options were simply ignored and counted as a '1'.

Response and Analysis

The Results are as follows:

Total Votes Cast As Per Sheet

		First 100	58	110	56	3	327	
Project	Units Req	Votes	Week 2	3 and 4	local look	other	Total Votes	% of votes
SkatePark	20	7	7	12	3	1	30	9.17%
MUGA/Astro (on 2 tennis courts)	10	14	8	25	26		73	22.32%
Junior Skatepark	8	20	15	27	13	1	76	23.24%
New Play Equipment (TBA)	5	49	31	51	24	1	156	47.71%
Pathways Connected	4	36	18	40	15		109	33.33%
Sensory Garden for disabled/blind	4	32	11	31	10		84	25.69%
Wild Fit Natural Gym/fitness course	4	31	19	24	15	2	91	27.83%
Water Play Feature (like chippenham)	4	48	36	38	9	1	132	40.37%
Pay and Display Parking	4	6	0	5	3	1	15	4.59%
Adult Gym Equipment	3	24	11	17	18		70	21.41%
Quiet Area / Dog Free (by pond)	2	25	16	21	17	2	81	24.77%
Benches	2	34	23	32	26	1	116	35.47%
Pond Improvement Program	1	43	25	54	22	2	146	44.65%
Cricket Pitch	1	13	7	13	4		37	11.31%
Football Pitch	1	27	9	20	10		66	20.18%
Resurface/Improve Tennis courts	1	40	23	47	43	2	155	47.40%
Flora / Fauna	1	28	18	37	18	1	102	31.19%
Disabled Swing	1	30	12	39	22	1	104	31.80%
Mother Baby Swing	1	37	12	29	40	1	119	36.39%
Security CCTV	1	21	9	22	14		66	20.18%
Bins / Recycling	1	17	12	28	14	1	72	22.02%
Covered Seating	1	38	16	39	11	1	105	32.11%
My Idea								
My Other Idea								

Total Votes By Popularity

		First 100	58	110	56	3	327	
Project	Units Req	Votes	Week 2	3 and 4	local look	other	Total Votes	% of votes
New Play Equipment (TBA)	5	49	31	51	24	1	156	47.71%
Resurface/Improve Tennis courts	1	40	23	47	43	2	155	47.40%
Pond Improvement Program	1	43	25	54	22	2	146	44.65%
Water Play Feature (like chippenham)	4	48	36	38	9	1	132	40.37%
Mother Baby Swing	1	37	12	29	40	1	119	36.39%
Benches	2	34	23	32	26	1	116	35.47%
Pathways Connected	4	36	18	40	15		109	33.33%
Covered Seating	1	38	16	39	11	1	105	32.11%
Disabled Swing	1	30	12	39	22	1	104	31.80%
Flora / Fauna	1	28	18	37	18	1	102	31.19%
Wild Fit Natural Gym/fitness course	4	31	19	24	15	2	91	27.83%
Sensory Garden for disabled/blind	4	32	11	31	10		84	25.69%
Quiet Area / Dog Free (by pond)	2	25	16	21	17	2	81	24.77%
Junior Skatepark	8	20	15	27	13	1	76	23.24%
MUGA/Astro (on 2 tennis courts)	10	14	8	25	26		73	22.32%
Bins / Recycling	1	17	12	28	14	1	72	22.02%
Adult Gym Equipment	3	24	11	17	18		70	21.41%
Football Pitch	1	27	9	20	10		66	20.18%
Security CCTV	1	21	9	22	14		66	20.18%
Cricket Pitch	1	13	7	13	4		37	11.31%
SkatePark	20	7	7	12	3	1	30	9.17%
Pay and Display Parking	4	6	0	5	3	1	15	4.59%
My Idea								
My Other Idea								

Results Overview

This has proven to be a very interesting exercise, which has promoted enthusiastic debate at every level. It has excited passion about Alice Park, although several comments have been made indicating that many do not think anything at all will actually happen – there has been no investment at all in Alice Park for many years. Visitors have seen the tremendous developments at Victoria and other parks, and are also aware that the recently allocated S106 money, of nearly £300k, does not allow for anything at Alice.

The first thing to note is that the idea of spending all the money on the skatepark is discouraged by over 90% of visitors; indeed this is the least attractive option other than Pay and Display parking (which was actually my suggestion). The general consensus of opinion is not so much against a skatepark, but rather there are much more important things to worry about in the first instance.

Indeed, the two other major investment options, the MUGA, which effectively offers multi-sports that can cater for 8-14 year olds, and a junior skatepark, rank at number 15 and 14 respectively. Again, comments from participants are not against such proposals, but more wishing that the simple things are done first. Simply put, don't spend all the money on ONE thing – not when there is so much more to do.

The Little Things

It is incredibly interesting the amount of voters who opted for the smaller ideas, which gives an indication of how important these details are. 6 out of the Top 10 are relatively cheap options, all 'do-able' to some extent for less than £5k each. The obvious priority is for money to be spent on the pond, which is in a shocking state. Add in a new Mother Baby Swing, Disabled Swing, new Plants, Benches and some Covered Seating and you have spent £35k and made many people happy.

Indeed, the second-placed option, 'Improve the Tennis Courts' could be literally improved with a de-moss program and new nets for another £5k; although for the purposes of this survey the analysis shows that many people want dramatic improvement to the courts.

Top Trumps

Without a shadow of a doubt, the number one improvement would be some new play equipment in the park. This would cost £25k and you may be able to keep happy the people who voted for a Splash Play Pool too – we can effectively group these two options together as they are essentially 'new play equipment'. Unfortunately, further research into costings for the Chippenham Splash Park show that this would be approximately £85k, however as stated several times previously the figures shown against all options will get you something for that allocated amount of money.

Almost everyone commented upon the need to join the pathways together, to make a mud-free path around the park. This was asked for by fitness users, mothers with young children, elderly, wheelchair users and indeed young cyclists who enjoy the cycle

path. The estimated cost of £20k does seem highly excessive, and has accounted for a lower ranking than would be expected. If this could be done for a lot less money, say 1-2 units (£5-10k), this would have been in the Top5.

The Top 7 projects were voted for by over 33.3% of all participants, and, if we group together 1 and 4, ie new play equipment and water play, we can spend 14 units or £70k and make a massive difference. Another 3 units, £15k, and you have the Top 10 covered. This would still leave some 'in the pot' which could be used for eg match funding options.

Local Look Analysis

I thought this warranted a separate paragraph, as the general results from this section are slightly different from those who completed our forms at the park.

Local Look Responses Popularity

Project	Units Req	Votes	Week 2	3 and 4	local look	other	Total Votes	% of votes
Resurface/Improve Tennis courts	1	40	23	47	43	2	155	76.79%
Mother Baby Swing	1	37	12	29	40	1	119	71.43%
Benches	2	34	23	32	26	1	116	46.43%
MUGA/Astro (on 2 tennis courts)	10	14	8	25	26		73	46.43%
New Play Equipment (TBA)	5	49	31	51	24	1	156	42.86%
Pond Improvement Program	1	43	25	54	22	2	146	39.29%
Disabled Swing	1	30	12	39	22	1	104	39.29%
Flora / Fauna	1	28	18	37	18	1	102	32.14%
Adult Gym Equipment	3	24	11	17	18		70	32.14%
Quiet Area / Dog Free (by pond)	2	25	16	21	17	2	81	30.36%
Pathways Connected	4	36	18	40	15		109	26.79%
Wild Fit Natural Gym/fitness course	4	31	19	24	15	2	91	26.79%
Bins / Recycling	1	17	12	28	14	1	72	25.00%
Security CCTV	1	21	9	22	14		66	25.00%
Junior Skatepark	8	20	15	27	13	1	76	23.21%
Covered Seating	1	38	16	39	11	1	105	19.64%
Sensory Garden for disabled/blind	4	32	11	31	10		84	17.86%
Football Pitch	1	27	9	20	10		66	17.86%
Water Play Feature (like chippenham)	4	48	36	38	9	1	132	16.07%
Cricket Pitch	1	13	7	13	4		37	7.14%
SkatePark	20	7	7	12	3	1	30	5.36%
Pay and Display Parking	4	6	0	5	3	1	15	5.36%
My Idea								
My Other Idea								

The first assumption is that they all want to play tennis, with a massive 76% wanting improved tennis facilities. This is always a very interesting option, as the LTA are always willing to contribute financially with match funding options. In 4th place is the MUGA,

which again shows a tendency towards improved sporting activities. More interestingly, both of these options do provide the park with fund raising options in themselves, which in turn can be re-invested into other park projects.

If we assume that these are suggestions from people who would use the park more if we did what they suggested, this could have dynamic improvement implications for the park generally – if we did up the tennis courts and provided a MUGA, this in turn would get more people into the park using paid for facilities that generate more revenue.

Other Ideas

The form allowed for individual input. All other ideas are listed as follows:

Refurb Tennis Court Hut	5
Climbing Wall	2
Extend/Improve Cycle Track	2
Floodlights	
Cricket Nets	
Kids Wooden Adventure Course	3
Outdoor Heating for the cafe	
Quiet area for babies	
Sheltered area for young people to hang out	
Disabled parking	
Diggers in the sand	
Soft Play	
Keep grassed areas	
Hill with slide	
City Farm	
Forest School	
Climbing wall	2
Compost bins	
Trampoline	2
Children's gym	
Free toilet	2
Basketball ring	
Free Tennis	
Paddling Pool	2
Covered Tennis / Tennis Bubble	5
Better Drainage	
Fenced Area for Dogs	
Improved Cafe Services	
Sculpture	
Soft Play Area	3

Once there is some money secured for some development, it would be interesting to see how well these proposals faired with relevant costings.

Summary

This has been a very time consuming and in depth survey, however it has been quite an eye-opener. It would appear that the sensible thing to do here is listen to the people and satisfy the skatepark enthusiasts, and it appears that it can be done. The obvious answer is to split the money. If the Committee accept that a small skatepark is right for the park and is acceptable by current and future users, then why not offer say £25k to the Skatepark, they can match fund and build a small park, and the committee can spend the remaining £75k satisfying at least the Top 7 preferred options.

We can then undertake fund raising activities in the park with specific targets and goals to continually improve the park, based upon what the users actually want to happen at Alice Park. If we take into account the Local Look analysis, we could spend money on projects that themselves generate money, which has to be a good thing for the park generally.

A final consideration has to be the changing nature of the local residents. Within 12 months, there will be some 50 or so elderly residents opposite the park. While I am sure there will be some skateboarders among them, maybe genteel walks around the park, enjoying the beautifully remastered pond, benches and covered seats would be slightly more in keeping.

With kindest regards

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