

ALICE PARK TRUST SUB-COMMITTEE – 3 JULY 2017

PUBLIC STATEMENT AND QUESTIONS FROM GRAHAM PAGE

Statement

At the meeting of the Alice Park Trust Sub-Committee on 27 March 2017 it was agreed to recommend in principle the introduction of a skate park into Alice Park. This was consequent on two things:

- (1) A well organised campaign by those advocating such a facility; and
- (2) A feeling in the committee that a decision was long overdue.

Without further consideration it did not seem to be a very informed basis on which to take such a decision. It was apparent at the meeting that at least one councillor was conscious that there were concerns in the local community relating to this and a survey conducted by Tony Hickson, the Alice Park Café proprietor, suggested that if funds were available to devote to the Alice Park that there were other priorities that deserve consideration. Various groups of park users who have such concerns would like them to be seriously examined before the decision is finally taken and resources allocated. As a regular user of the park I share these concerns. I do not pretend to be a representative of those groups but in conversation with them I share their view that the following matters should be examined before a final decision is taken.

Whilst there has been a well-articulated desire for this facility, what is the actual need? If there are too few users (despite the input of private money) is the devotion to this one project of up to £100,000 justified, what will be the impact on existing users?

Questions

**(1) How many people is it envisaged will use this facility, and what is the age range of those who wish to take advantage of it?**

The number of people that will use the facility will depend upon the day / time / school holidays etc. Since the original petition of 500 signatories in 2014, a further petition was received by the Trustees last year which has revitalised the issue.

The new skatepark will be deliberately designed to be suitable for children of all ages – from the toddlers who use the nursery in the park to teens and beyond. A specialist consultant has been used to advise on design and location.

**(2) What criteria were used to justify the selection of this particular site?**

The decision to locate a skatepark in the east of Bath followed a petition from local residents for skatepark provision in the area. Locations examined for suitability included Larkhall Recreation Ground, Kensington Meadows and Alice Park. Larkhall

Recreation Ground was rejected, following a public meeting, because of its proximity to adjacent houses and the acoustics of the landscape –making it conducive to sound travelling well. The site also lacks toilets and other amenities. Kensington Meadows was rejected for similar reasons: its proximity to local residences, the lack of infrastructure (toilets and limited parking) and because of concerns about winter flooding. In contrast, Alice Park is a well-established destination park. It has toilets, car parking, a café, good public transport links, and other, popular, play and sporting facilities.

**(3) Has any “impact analysis” been done to assess the effect that the introduction of a skate park might have?**

Once the Alice Park location had been decided upon, the Council conducted an outline feasibility study within the park to identify the most suitable location, and consider some of the impacts. The Trust members have visited the site and are taking into account the views of park users before making a final decision on the scale and design.

In relation to the points about design, Cllrs Rob Appleyard and Chris Wright from the Trust will be meeting the skatepark design company this week to explore the parameters which could affect the proposed skatepark design, including exploring the latest concepts to mitigate noise, considering drainage implications of a flat design versus a bowl design and cost versus complexity etc.

If you are wondering about impact on other users, this was explored in the original consultation document which explored people’s concerns.

**(4) How can the use of the skatepark by different age groups of differing ages and abilities in a confined space be reconciled?**

The main method of separating different age groups is time. Younger children tend to be taken to the park earlier in the day, both on week days and weekends. Older children will use the park after school and on weekends, in the afternoons. We have found this to be the case at Midsomer Norton and at Royal Victoria Park. Where there is a mix of abilities, the less able tend to defer to the more able and the less able watch and learn where possible. There is also etiquette at skateparks whereby the older children look out for the younger riders.

**(5) How in effect will a potentially dangerous activity be effectively managed and if necessary be regulated?**

The skatepark will be built to the standard of BS EN 14974:2010 and should have a guaranteed life of 20+ years. Snagging will be undertaken at 1 year and any repairs undertaken then as part of the contract. The skatepark can be included in the weekly, quarterly and annual inspections of the adjacent play area as well, if directed by the Trust.

**(6) Is the cost devoted solely to the of the introduction of the skate park without regard to the existing park users' needs identified by the survey in a time of scarce resources justified?**

The capital funding of £100k was earmarked solely for the design and build of a new skate park by the Council Cabinet in 2014.

**(7) Apparently a proportion of the money is to be provided from private sources. As these amounts are substantial, it is in the public interest that these sources be identified. Who are the donors and what are the amounts of the donations**

The private contribution has been held by the London Road Partnership.

Any money donated to the council would be subject to a due diligence assessment and the source of the donation would be made public.

**(8) If the project goes ahead, how will the costs be controlled? If there is an over-run from where will any additional costs be sourced?**

The project budget will include a sufficient contingency and that spend on the project will be regularly monitored; however we cannot speculate on the theoretical case of an over-run. Project spend will be monitored by the Trust.

**(9) Will this be subject to Planning Procedures?**

No – due to the relatively limited size of the design, this constitutes 'permitted development' and therefore does not require planning consent. However, the Trust is taking the impact on the park extremely seriously and is currently scrutinizing the design and will be setting down a set of strict criteria for the skate park design to adhere to.