

**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE PROPOSED MALMESBURY SKATEPARK, PUMP TRACK AND MULTI-USE GAMES AREA**

*'Together we can create a vibrant hub where everyone can skate, connect and thrive'*

**1. Purpose of the report**

1. To update Councillors on the progress being made to establish a skatepark, pump track and multi-use games area (MUGA) in Malmesbury, including governance arrangements.
2. To gain Committee approval to progress further on identifying the preferred site for these facilities as set out in this paper

**2. Progress and governance**

1. A joint working group has now been formed and met for the first time earlier in the summer. This brings together representatives of Malmesbury Town Council, Malmesbury's Wiltshire Councillor and Chair of the Local Youth Network of the Malmesbury Area Board (Cllr Grant) and the officers of the volunteer group driving the project to date. These include Malmesbury residents and a trustee for the association of Physical Education, Sport England
2. The volunteer group are in the process of setting up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). A model constitution for this group is attached for information. Ali Scott (Chair) and Jo Morris (Vice Chair) and recruiting trustees to join the governing body of the new association who will all be DBS checked. A verbal update on their progress will be given to the Committee by Jo Morris. It is envisaged that this new CIO will organise the funding, management and maintenance of these facilities.
3. Work is underway to identify volunteers to provide practical and professional skills and construction help and likely sources of grant funding to support the project, as well as practical arrangements such as a bank account.
4. The new CIO aims to collaborate with another local charity, 'Malmesbury Skate Park Group' which is one of the first indoor fully concrete skate parks, run by a community-led charity. The skate park is managed by volunteers, and it is self-sufficient and non-commercial. In 2023, it ran 135 coaching sessions and had 518 user bookings, averaging over 80 users monthly.
5. Ali Scott and Jo Morris recognise the importance of involving the community and particularly young people in the project. They aim to appoint a Youth Representative (16yrs to 18yrs old) and a Youth Liaison Trustee of the CIO. During their research into strategies to reduce anti-social behaviour, it became evident that teenagers felt strongly about their meaningful involvement in the design of public space and strategies for addressing anti-social behaviour.
6. They also recognise the concerns that some of the community and local residents may have about the park and plan to have an open line of communication via email and their Facebook page. They will also be holding a public meeting on the evening of Thursday 3 October 2024 in the function room upstairs at the Kings Arms Hotel.

### **3. Location**

In considering suitable locations for these facilities, the following criteria has been used to assess them.

Would the open space under consideration provide:

- security of tenure over a sustained period?
- easy walking and cycling access for a significant number of users
- access for construction machinery and plant
- enough space to avoid significant disruption of existing recreational use
- distance from these new facilities from the homes of existing residents or those due to occupy homes under construction or where planning permission for such construction has been granted.

Assessing open spaces in and around our town, options that would use private land or not in ownership of either Malmesbury Town Council or Wiltshire Council, due to concerns over security of tenure and other factors, were ruled out.

#### **Sites Considered**

That left three main sites, each of which has been assessed and evaluated against the criteria set out above. A recommendation on the suitability of each site is made

##### **3.1. Open space at Filands between Avenue de Gien and Carnival Close.**

- This site is currently owned by Wiltshire Council, although Malmesbury Town Council has expressed a strong desire to lease or own the space.
- The original site housed Malmesbury School which was demolished to make way for housing development. Some of the rubble remains just below the surface of the site.
- Access by foot or bicycle is via Avenue de Gien. There is no agreed route into the site from Carnival Close or the other houses built on the Filands View estate.
- While the site might well be large enough to accommodate both a pump track and skate park, these facilities would dominate it and disruption other informal recreational uses and users.
- The new facilities would also be very close to existing houses.
- Parking is at a premium in the area and there is no easy access for the equipment needed to build the facilities.
- Although there is significant new housing development taking place nearby, this site is a significant distance from the secondary school where most of the likely users are likely to come from.

#### **Recommendation - Reject**

##### **3.2 St Aldhelm's Mead**

- Owned by Malmesbury Town Council, this is our town's main park and location for civic events and celebrations. The first part of the Mead nearest to the town bridge is subject to flooding and is home to the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacon.
- The larger area further into the park is the location for the adult gym, a football pitch, zip wire and the second World War memorial children's playground.
- This part of the park is also where the recent Athelstan 1100 Saxon battle re-enactment took place as have Civil War reenactment with the Devereaux Regiment. The town's annual bonfire and fireworks display takes place there.
- Vehicle and equipment access to the site is limited and the park is set in a bowl below existing houses and the caravan park. Thus, geography is likely to be a problem when it comes to reducing noise from the new facilities.

- While there is space to site the pump track and skate park, their location would restrict other current uses of the park.
- This location is also the furthest distance from areas of the town's expansion and from the secondary school.

### **Recommendation - Reject**

#### **3.3 White Lion Park**

- This location is owned by Wiltshire Council but leased for an extended period to Malmesbury Town Council.
- The site is the largest of those under consideration. It currently houses two playgrounds for different age children and two football pitches. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is very rare for to be in use at the same time.
- Located on higher ground and with no known previous construction on the site, it has none of the challenges of the other two locations already discussed.
- The site has a smaller number of homes backing on to it and a large, gated access for machinery used to cut the grass.
- The large nature of the site gives the option of locating the new facilities at the greatest distance from existing homes. While new home construction has had planning permission granted (Park Road sites) these would be some distance from the facility, with most homes below the park.
- This location is the closest to the secondary school, is in the area of greatest social deprivation, with a lack of access to public facilities for young people.

### **Recommendation - Explore**

#### **4. Financial Implications none**

#### **5. Recommendation**

5.1 The Town Hall & Facilities Committee agrees that White Lion Park is the preferred site to be investigated further as the location for an outdoor skatepark, pump track and MUGA.

5.2. Final approval by Malmesbury Town Council to proceed with this site is subject to the receipt of a report to include feasibility, planning permission, governance structures, residents' views etc have been concluded.

5.3 The current preferred location, subject to final decision, may be made public and the officers of the volunteer body invite local residents near to the preferred location, as well as the wider public, to a public meeting on Thursday 3 October 2024.

5.4 Those residents who are most likely to be impacted by the location are kept fully informed and their views, opinions and concerns taken into account in the final report to Malmesbury Town Council.

**Cllr Gavin Grant**

27 August 2024