

REPORT TO COMBERBACH PARISH COUNCIL

TUESDAY 8th DECEMBER 2020

FUTURE USE OF LAND AT THE RECREATION AREA

REPORT OF THE PARISH CLERK

1 Introduction

The area of land beside the Recreation Area is currently a grassed area pending any plans by the Parish Council to develop it for another use. The Parish Council has been approached by a representative of young people in the village that it be developed as a skate park. This report looks at this proposal in some detail.

2 Background

A resident contacted the Parish Council with detailed proposals requesting that this area of land be developed as a skate park. The proposal included drawings as to how a design could fit on the space available along with initial costings. This information was circulated to all Members of the Parish Council.

3 The site

The area of land is currently grassed and is adjacent to fields and the Council's storage unit. It measures maximum 20m x 9m.



4 Consultation

The Parish Council has not undertaken a formal consultation process but has invited views through the Village Newsletter and Facebook on the future use of this land and the suggestion that it be utilised as a skate park. There were views expressed both for and against in equal measure. Those residents in favour felt that a facility for young people was to be welcomed and some residents suggested a pump track rather than a skate park. A pump track was a more versatile facility that could be used by bikes or scooters as well as skateboards and would appeal to a wider age range. Those who were opposed to a skate park raised concerns about costs, monitoring, and noise and disturbance to neighbours. There were alternate suggestions made including a wildflower meadow, Community Allotment or adult exercise equipment area.

The suggestion of a pump park was put to the person who raised the initial idea who felt it could be accommodated but would be a little cramped in the space available and less enjoyable. He also commented that the design for the skate park that he submitted did include an area for younger children.

5 Costs and funding

Costs will vary depending on the design. Information from Cheshire West and Chester Council has indicated costs between £25k - £50. A skate ramp such as at Winsford Lifestyle Centre would cost around £30k. One design company has indicated a pump track could be installed at a cost of £17k plus groundworks. The resident who raised the initial suggestion and submitted a design outlined the costs as below:

Std half pipe with extended quarter pipe	£22500 + vat
Hiab	£1200 + vat
Tele handler + driver	£1600 + vat
Total	<u>£25300 + vat</u>

The cost of groundworks is expected to be around £4k and access for DDA compliance could be around £2k.

There will also be ongoing costs (tidying up rubbish, cleaning and pressure washing, keeping the area free of leaves, and ongoing maintenance to the surfaces and structures).

The Council currently has £36k in reserves but this is committed to various projects as well as a general reserve fund of £5k as required to cover administration salaries. The reserves include funds for replacement facilities of swings, multi-use climbing frame and slide etc as they are 18 years old and near

an end of life. There is also a budget towards new equipment which currently stands at £7k Any new projects such as a skate park or pump track would therefore need to have funds moved from an existing project or new funding sought either through the precept or grant funding or a combination of both.

There are a number of funding options that could be further investigated such as Wren, Veolia, various National Lottery, Sport England and several other small grants, including the Ward Councillors.

The RFO has contacted the Council's insurance company which indicates an increased premium of around £300 per year.

6 Design

A number of designers have been approached and it appears that a bespoke design is common that is based on the space and size available. However, designers have indicated a need for a 2m or 3m 'fall zone' around the whole track. This would limit the track area by 4m or 6m. A designer who has installed a pump track in the county has advised that a pump track could be fitted in the space available at the Recreation Area.

7 Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents (Rospa)

Rospa

In relation to skateparks, Rospa advises that the Parish Council would only be liable for any accident should it be proved negligent and if all recommended steps are taken it is unlikely that the Council could be deemed negligent.

RoSPA recommends the following action for skateparks:

- involve skaters and other users in the development and management of the facility
- discuss siting of the provision with the local police architectural officer
- site the facility so that it is overlooked (this gives some informal supervision) and is away from overhanging trees etc.
- make sure that there is good access for emergency vehicles
- ensure there is good, firm access to the area
- ensure that correct signs are provided (see BS EN 14974 for an example)
- ensure that all equipment is built and installed to BS EN 14974
- obtain a post installation inspection from a suitably qualified body such as RoSPA to ensure safety standards are met. (Your insurance company may insist on this)
- inspect your site regularly. Even in a small parish this must be a minimum of once a week
- ensure users know where to report faults
- obtain an independent annual inspection of the site. RoSPA can undertake this inspection at the same time as it is inspecting play areas

- document all inspections and keep records for as long as possible. (RoSPA recommended a minimum of 15 years)
- undertake all repairs/maintenance problems as soon as is practical
- if this cannot be done, take the equipment out of use as far as is possible
- inform your insurance company

In addition, Rospa suggests the following precautions with regard to users:

- encourage the wearing of correct "gear".
- wearing of wrist protection
- on new sites encourage the more experienced skateboarders to show the less experienced ones how to fall

There is no specific guidance on pump tracks which Rospa advise is the format of most new tracks. Rospa suggests that advice should be sought from professional BMX/pump track specialists.

Information from specialist pump track suppliers does suggest the need for a "fall zone" as outlined above which limits the track space available.

Other facilities nearby

There are a number of skate parks or pump parks in the Northwich area with the nearest being at Barnton; there is also a skate ramp at Saxons Lane and Vickersway Park, Northwich and the skate ramp at Winsford.

Barnton Skate Park is below. The Clerk has advised that the facility is well used but is the source of much anti-social behaviour normally at night when youths congregate. There are issues with drugs and alcohol. The Parish Council employs a Park Warden to clear the site everyday and very often there is broken glass on the ramps or graffiti. They recommend locking the skate park at night if possible.



Greenbank

Pump track:



There is also a skate park at Greenbank.

Vickersway Skate Park, Northwich (currently closed)



A pump track was installed at Mickle Trafford at a cost of around £20k. This is not in the vicinity of Comberbach but is included for an idea of costs.

PCSO

The PCSO has been contacted and indicated support for a skate park or pump track on the grounds of providing a facility for older children and teenagers.

RECOMMENDED: that the Parish Council considers the report and determines whether or not a skate park or pump track should be further explored.