

HOW TO: Improve your Local Playpark



There are two approaches a community can take to improving their playpark. Do it all yourselves and take on the responsibility of installing, maintaining and insuring the new equipment, or work with the Highland Council (THC) who will assist with the process, from inception to completion and who will then adopt, insure and maintain the whole park.

In the case of the Carrbridge Playpark improvements, the group collectively agreed that working with THC was the obvious one. Although not being able to offer any financial support, THC officers were willing to work closely with the group and help with procurement and installation of all the new equipment. The community was solely responsible for fundraising. Financial support for Carrbridge came from within the community, through local fundraising and with the backing of the Community Company, and external sources. The average piece of equipment cost £10,000.

A one year fundraising target was set, followed by six months of negotiating with suppliers, procurement and installation. Some hard work but also fun times lay ahead.

Process and Action required to Upgrade your Playpark

1. Set up a group of people (working group) who are interested and motivated to take on the project and make improvements. Don't forget to let your Community Council and Community Company (if you have one) know what you are planning to do.
2. Establish what organisation in the community will 'hold' the money raised, eg Community Company, Parent Council etc. If they have charitable status, you'll be able to apply for a wider range of external funds, as well as registering for Gift Aid on some of the money you raise. Your Community Council is not advised to take on this role.
3. Establish ownership of the land that the Playpark sits on and check if planning permission is required from THC. Ask for support from your local Community Council if unsure of how to do this.
4. Investigate if any ground work needs to be done eg drainage measures, lighting, paving and link with your local Community Council who will support you in this.
5. Carry out a consultation on what improvements / equipment / landscape features your community would like. Consultation with children, parents and other carers is essential, to establish what the need is. This evidence is also very important for funding applications. Make contact with your local primary school/parent council, who will be one of the key groups to help in carrying out a consultation. Design an appropriate method of gathering information from primary and secondary pupils (possibly a questionnaire, meet the class and have an open discussion), but also remember to involve the parents/carers and the wider community in the process, especially anyone who lives near to where the playpark will be.
6. Set up a competition with the children and use the drawings as images for any fundraising events/ collection cans etc ... all good for marketing.
7. Spend time visiting lots of other playparks, to see what they have done with the space, what equipment they have that you might like and what you think will work in your space.

8. Create a calendar of fundraising events including community events. Are there key events in your community where you can set up an event, raise awareness of your plans, eg Christmas fairs, Highland Games etc.
9. Cost out what the different elements and the total cost of your playpark project will be and then identify where you might be able to source funding. Ask your local Third Sector Interface (TSI) such as Voluntary Action in Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS) for support. They will have lots of experience in this area as well as knowledge of funders and how to go about raising money.
10. Involve as many people from the community as possible. Get them to organise specific events they have strengths in. You will want to involve parents whose children will use the playpark as their motivations should be high.
11. Set up some social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) – useful for information sharing of events and showing progress.
12. Use the local press to launch your project, provide updates and celebrate completion at the end too.
13. Keep on fundraising until you reach your target. This may be an unknown at the beginning but aim high. As time goes along, you will begin to have an idea what new equipment/facilities you want and you'll have a better idea of what you need to raise. Have a rough target to begin with though, as a form of motivation.
14. Pass information collated from consultations to your key THC contacts who will ask their suppliers to create visual impressions of this information. Some suppliers will not take up the invite but you will have other suppliers submitting a bid.
15. Meet the suppliers: make no commitments, but make sure you discuss and express clearly what you are trying to create/achieve.
16. Once drawings have come in, discuss in your working group if there are any changes, omissions or additions required and sift the preferred ones until you have two. (This might go back and forward quite a few times). Draw up a criteria sheet which will help you reject any who have not complied with your specifications. This process should take place with a THC officer. Go back into the school and ask the children to vote for their favourite one. This is an important part of the process.
17. THC, your Community Council and your community group all should have a say in the final decision of who will win the tender, based on the scoring system created by THC.
18. THC will procure the equipment and installation from the successful suppliers and will authorise the work to go ahead and then oversee it. Did you know that THC are able to recover any VAT incurred, so costing the community 20% less! Yet another good reason to work with THC.
19. Pay THC's invoice.
20. Have a celebratory opening event (don't forget to thank everyone for all their hard work and support) and PLAY!

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