



'Include Us' is a registered Scottish Charity SCIO No SC04816

**REPORT ON CONSULTING WITH THE
COMMUNITY ABOUT
DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE PLAY PARK
AND COMMUNITY GARDEN
AT
CATHERINE STREET, DUMFRIES**

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On behalf of the Include Us
Updated February 2019
www.includeus.org.uk
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REASON FOR REPORT

This report has been written by Include Us which is the charity tasked to develop the park. It aims to share information about how we have consulted and engaged with the community about the development of an inclusive play park and community garden at Catherine Street in Dumfries.

HOW DID IT ALL START?

In 2014 Dumfries and Galloway Council reopened Dock Park following a £2,000,000 refurbishment. The Dock Park, which is on the edge of Dumfries town centre by the River Nith was an immediate success with many children, families and the local community and is seen as a major attraction in Dumfries. Gradually, however, families with disabled children realised that the needs of their children had not been taken into account. There were some good facilities such as ample 24 hour free parking. But there was no play equipment suitable for children with mobility problems, some parents had concerns about the proximity of the river and a 'disabled toilet' did not meet the needs of children who needed a changing places facility. Initial discussions with the Council confirmed that they were not in a position to make any further changes to Dock Park. This led to the development of a Working Group with the intention of developing an inclusive play park which met the needs of a much wider group of children and young people. The Working Group (made up of families, local people, statutory and third sector partners) convened in April 2016 led the consultation process.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'COMMUNITY'

For the purpose of this report, community means not just those who live close by but the wider community of Dumfries and the community which makes up children, young people, parents and any other interested parties.

WHY CATHERINE STREET?

Catherine Street is a small established play park which has a grassed surface, a number of trees and play equipment which is maintained by the council. It is located on the corner of Catherine Street and Academy Street on the edge of Dumfries Town Centre and close to rail and bus links.

Many families told us that they only use the park during the summer. There are a number of large trees in the park which some people told us makes the park dark and foreboding, although parents with babies and small children have told us they welcome the shade on hot days. Access into the park is via a steep concrete ramp. The ramp ends on the grassed area which is often waterlogged and muddy. The grassed area is uneven and difficult to use. There are no paved path ways. Some people told us that they feel the park is currently underused by both the local community and by groups who would benefit if changes were made to access, surfaces, seating, availability of toilets and play equipment to make it inclusive for all.

The park shares a boundary wall with The Usual Place Community Café. The Usual Place has quickly become a well-used and valued resource by families who have a disabled child or small

children because the building is fully wheelchair/buggy accessible and has a Changing Places toilet. Research* into play for all children clearly indicates that -

- Parents are more likely to use a park if they are within 20 meters of a toilet their child can use
- Families with disabled children will travel a significant distance to use a park if there is an accessible toilet close by. The Changing Places Toilet at The Usual Place is the only resource with a changing table and overhead tracking which is open to the public in Dumfries town centre

Immediately across the road from the entrance to the park is the Ewart Library. We understand that Libraries are at risk nationwide so hope that use of the Library by families will increase once the park is refurbished. This may be more likely if we are able to create space in the park for outdoor storytelling and book bug sessions.

Although it is difficult to predict, we believe that the refurbishment of the park will lead to an increase in use mainly during out of school hours, weekends and school holidays. Particularly when the Academy Secondary School becomes a primary/secondary campus through the Future Schools project from 2021. The development of Moatbrae into the National Centre for Children's Literature in Scotland which is a 5-minute walk away will offer amazing opportunities for families when it opens in 2019.

*Playing with quality and equality: a review of inclusive play in Scotland, Scottish Government 2015

KEY MESSAGES

During the consultation, many parents regardless of whether or not their family was affected by disability expressed a strong desire for there to be an Inclusive Play Park in every locality of Dumfries and Galloway. Ideally in future all parks would be suitable for all children including those with disabilities.

Separate to but connected with the consultation regarding the park, Theresa Casey (who became one of the Consultants who helped the Working Group to create the design brief) undertook Scotland wide research about the issues around play spaces and disabled children.

The park Working Group enabled a number of parents to be involved in this Scotland-wide research which meant that **the largest response** came from Dumfries and Galloway and informed the publication of '**Free to Play**' a guide for community groups and local authorities who want to include disabled children in play spaces. Catherine Street was heavily featured as a good practice example in this guide and there is more about this publication further into this report.

Despite concerns about the lack of parking, families with a disabled child overwhelmingly wished to see Catherine Street developed because of its close proximity to the town centre and The Usual Place because of its accessibility and changing places toilet.

The Council Consultation on Inclusive Play during the summer of 2017 led to Catherine Street being chosen as the park in Dumfries to receive a share of money ringfenced to develop an inclusive play park.

GATHERING THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN, PARENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

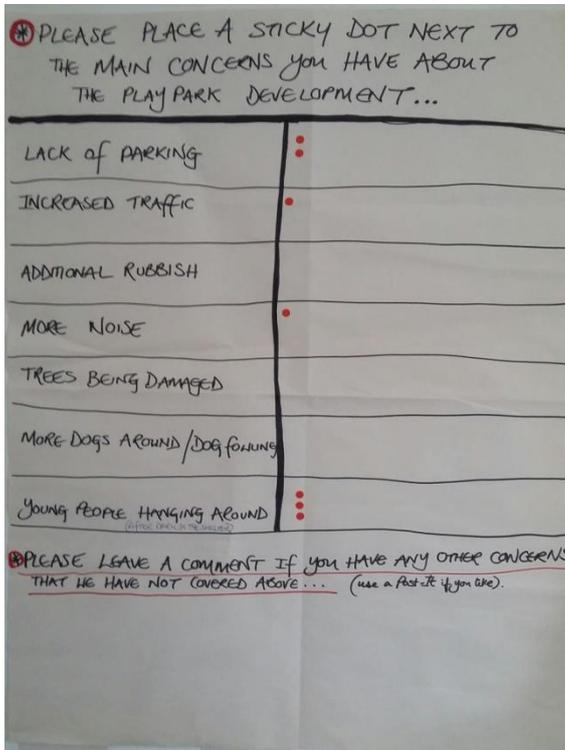
We realised that key to the success of the project would be encouraging families to become involved. We did this in different ways initially using a participatory appraisal approach in partnership with Sleeping Giants.

Helping children and parents have fun while gathering their views seemed the right approach so Play Days in the Park during May, August, October, December 2017, February and March 2018 have been enjoyed so far by over 200 parents, children and local people.

Initial ideas about development of the park included:

- Ensuring that the entrance into the park from Catherine Street is made more accessible with a pathway through the park up in to The Usual Place so that families can easily access the facilities
- Work toward the creating 24/7 access to The Changing Places toilet possibly using the Radar Scheme or a key pad
- Creating a safe accessible opening from the park into The Usual Place
- Making sure that the surface of the park is level and free of fallen debris from lime trees which create a trip hazard for small children and those with mobility issues
- Installing seating which children and adults who use wheelchairs can use
- Creating accessible paths and a walkway/running track around the perimeter of the park
- Installing play/activity equipment which can be used by all children including those with disabilities which is also robust enough for young disabled adults and parents to enjoy
- Providing learning opportunities for children and young people through the creation of raised beds/planters which could provide additional seating area as well as herbs, fruit and vegetables for families to enjoy during their visit to the park or to take home
- Possible creation of a small outside classroom area/performance/creative space and temporary café facilities during spring/summer months
- Employing a Project Manager who can manage the development of the park, facilitating networking, create partnerships, write policies, accessing funding and employing sessional Play Workers to provide play and learning opportunities for children, young people and parents
- Employing a Park Manager and Modern Apprentice to ensure that the park is well maintained and safe to use with the support of volunteers
- Provide volunteering opportunities for young adults with additional needs and others through the maintenance of the park, equipment and planting up raised beds
- Add to the economic development of Dumfries Town Centre through websites such as Disabled Go and Euan's Guide which inspires people with disabilities to try new places which are accessible

1. Neighbourhood Consultation Meetings took place on Friday 31st March and Saturday 1st April 2017 with the local community at St Johns Church Hall in Lovers Walk. Invitations were personally delivered to through the doors of 275 residents in the streets around the park. Meetings with refreshments took place at different times over two days so that as many people as possible could participate



Although attendance and email/phone feedback was limited to 12 people in total, everyone was generally keen to see the park developed. Library staff were particularly encouraged that increased use of the park could lead to more parents coming into the Library with their children and the possibility of Book Bug sessions happening in the park. The management team at three local nurseries are equally keen to see the park developed because of their wish to encourage pre-school children to get involved in nature and outdoor activities. Neighbours had concerns about the lack of parking, increased traffic, noise and the potential for anti-social behaviour. Many of these issues had been anticipated and the possible solutions offered were accepted by those attending.

2. A Play Day took place on Saturday 6th May 2017 which local families were invited to participate in. Sleeping Giants are our Consultation Partners and used a Participatory Appraisal approach to gathering the views of children, young people and parents who came along. This was a hugely successful day which 66 parents and children attended. Local children played and interacted well with disabled children and their siblings from PIN. Sleeping Giants did a mini consultation using Participatory Appraisal approaches with children and young people. Children were invited to express their views in a variety of different ways including drawing and story telling. Parents added their comments and feedback into a book.



3. A Design Workshop for children took place on Saturday 26th May 2017 with disabled and non-disabled children. Run by Elspeth Bennie, Artist Blacksmith who has been commissioned by The Usual Place to create railings and a gate between the café and the park. The workshop enabled children to give their input to the design.

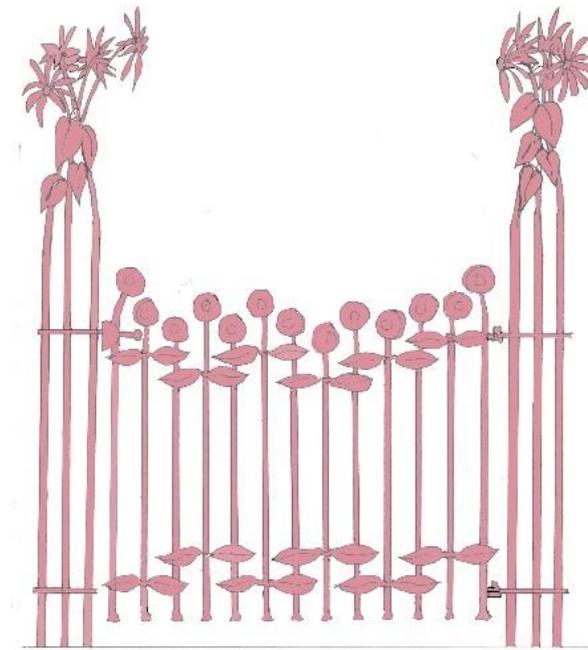
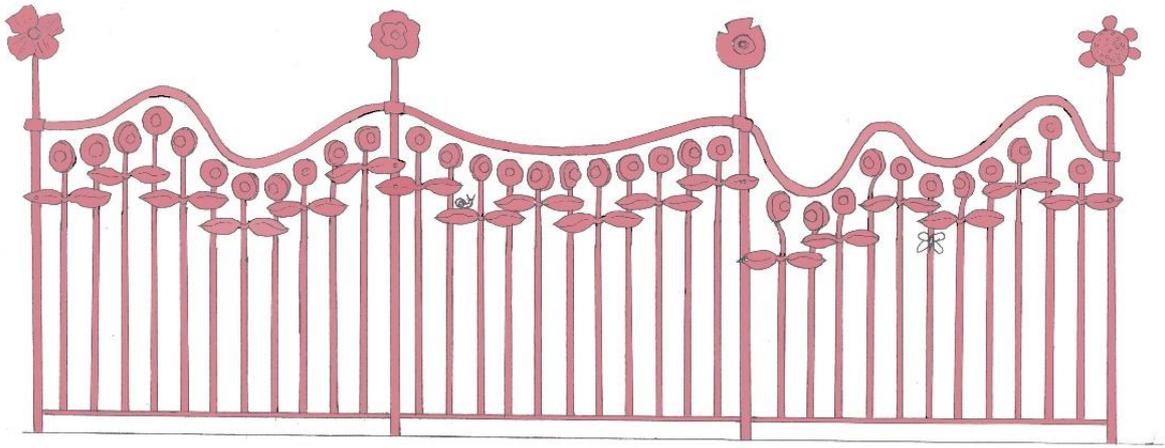
"Prior to creating the design work for the new railings and gates for the Catherine Street play park I felt it was essential that consultation took place with the parents and children who may be end users. Initial conversations with the core group of PIN parents identified areas which would not normally be an issue such as choice of colour and potential finger traps. The tactility of the autistic children gave an insight in to how the design could possibly develop. These initial conversations were followed up by a workshop held at the Usual Place on the 27th of May where the parents and their children took part in plasticine workshops to develop some ideas for the railing. The workshop had two strands to it. The first was an introduction to forging which will be a key method of working on the railing. Plasticine moves exactly the same as hot metal when it is hammered and the children greatly enjoyed being let loose with real hammers on their wooden anvil blocks. The second strand was making simple flowers with the plasticine. The design of the railings will probably take the theme of growth and it would be good to reproduce some of what was created at the workshop.

Without any prompting some of the children started producing insects which can also be placed along the railings - hopefully in such a way that they are not too obvious and a child can find them - maybe inside a flower or on the underside of a leaf"

Elspeth Bennie, Artist Blacksmith



Children created flowers and insects at the Workshop which Elspeth has incorporated into her design for the fence/gates - see the following page for detail



© Elspeth Bennie, artist/blacksmith

4. A Design Workshop for parents took place on Tuesday 13th June 2017 with PIN parents. This was led by Theresa Casey who is a published world wide Consultant in Inclusive Play and included Harry Harbottle who is a Risk and Play Consultant/Chair of Play Scotland.

Theresa wrote about the focus and outcome of the Workshop which provided parents the opportunity to widen their thinking about what an Inclusive Play Space could include.

"We introduced some key resources to the parents at the Workshop to inform design ideas and processes, using up-to-date knowledge from the field of inclusive design for play. It is noted that there isn't a standard 'set' of inclusive play area indicators however there is a developing body of knowledge to draw on. In particular Theresa highlighted three resources from Play England, International Play Association, and PlayRight Children's Play Association (Hong Kong).

Design-led processes and use of natural features and landscaping within play areas are increasingly recognised as important ways to bring in sensory qualities, flexibility of use and choice which underpin inclusive and accessible spaces.

During the Workshop we discussed accessibility and inclusion with the general principle being that not every element of a play area needs to be accessible to every child, but that every child should be able to access the social experience of play and have choices about how they play. In the session the group also discussed elements of a strong design brief which sets out the kinds of experience the group are looking for, affordances in play areas (how features of the play area support a range of behaviour and activity) and types of play.

The discussion led on to how a good play area should feel welcoming and attractive and can be seen as a community hub; current use by older people for a quiet place to sit, youngsters needing somewhere to socialise, tai chi groups, nurseries and playgroups should not be displaced but rather incorporated into the design with attractive seating and good sight lines. In addition, play areas can be the site of activities such as storytelling, extra play and art activities, performance and sessions to support children and families with particular needs"

Theresa Casey
Play Consultant

PLAY DAYS IN THE PARK

Our Play Days in the Park have become a really important way for us to reach out to children, young people and their parents. In a fun way we have been able to share what we are doing, why and how, while at the same time gathering the views of everyone who participated. We expect to continue with Play Days until work starts to create our inclusive play park

Our October 2017 Play Day in the Park was a really happy event to help celebrate our success in securing funding from the Council. Families had a great time making new friends, seeing old friends, enjoying lunch at The Usual Place, eating Bill's Lego cake and meeting David our lovely volunteer from The Usual Place. Helen from the Holywood Trust along Elaine and Gavin from the Council came to present families with funding cheques. New families joined in and everyone continued to give us their views and new ideas to add into the Design Brief.

Our Christmas Play Day in the Park in December 2017 provided families with a great opportunity to help decorate the park with tinsel and baubles. We had another very successful day where for the first time there were the same number of PIN and local families. Positive inclusion for all children and young people - hurrah!



While our main focus **during 2018** was to fundraise and refine the initial outline concept design created by our Landscape Architect, we continued to engage in a range of different ways with the community. **During 2018**, Play Days took place on

A Valentine's Play Day took place on **14th Feb**

A 'Snow Drop Planting Day' on **30th March** saw 1000 snowdrops planted in the park!

A 'Picnic in the Park' took place on **7th May** (May Day)

A 'Summer Play Day in the Park' on **1st August** provided an opportunity to engage children and young people of all ages and abilities to start contributing to how our Welcome Signs

would look when the park is open. Over 80 parents and children participated in a lovely fun day which included art activities enjoyed by all.

EXHIBITION OF PARK DESIGNS

This proved to be our busiest time in engaging with the local community with two days at Bakers Oven and two days at The Usual Place over 4 days between 22nd and 25th October 2018. Over 200 people came to our exhibition, asked questions, shared concerns, made suggestions and gave an overwhelmingly positive response to the plans for the park.

An Invitation to a Neighbourhood Meeting about the
INCLUSIVE PLAY PARK AT CATHERINE STREET



We posted invitations through the doors of 250 neighbours around the park and invited people to a Neighbourhood Meeting on the evening of 24th October 2018.

We were joined by our Council colleagues who were able to answer questions regarding the removal of trees which some people were concerned about.

CONSULTATION WITH OTHERS

Meeting with MP's, MSP's, the Scottish Government, Elected Members and others interested parties such as Loreburn Community Council continued throughout 2018 while we were taking the time to refine the design brief for the park. These links proved to be very helpful and supportive with our thanks going to Loreburn Community Council who provided a welcome donation for one of our Play Days. Meeting with staff from local Nurseries/Play Groups/Schools has also been helpful in sharing information and gathering views.

FRIENDS OF CATHERINE STREET PLAY PARK

We invited people to become Friends of the Park from 1st August 2018 onwards and to date have over 100 members of Include Us. This is another opportunity for us to engage with the wider community through e-newsletters and articles.

INCLUDE US FACEBOOK, WEBSITE and NEWSLETTERS

Our **Facebook** page has proved to be very popular in advertising events and posting frequent 'Do you know' questions and answers. People very often post questions back and we strive to respond to each one, offering to have a phone, or face to face discussion with those who need further information or reassurance about plans for the park. Our **email address** is on our Facebook page so that people can make direct contact if they prefer. Our **website** went live at the end of September 2018 and provides greater capacity for letting people see plans and look at FAQ. There is also a comments section which people can forward to our email address. **Newsletters** published every 2-3 months continue to be another way we engage with the community.

PROGRESS ON CREATING AN INCLUSIVE PLAY PARK @ CATHERINE STREET

We strongly believe that our progress so far has been dependant on sharing with and learning from the experience of children, siblings, parents, the local community, professionals and others. Our evidence for this is based on:

- having a well-established, motivated and enthusiastic parent-led Working Group to take forward future plans
- the initial consultations we have undertaken with parents who have children with additional needs
- our involvement with families, individuals and businesses within the local community
- commitment to collaborative working and co-design with all stakeholders
- the relationships we have developed with professionals such as the play consultants who are experts in inclusive play
- willingness to share with and learn from others at a local and national level
- our understanding of the economic benefits which developing an Inclusive Play Park will bring to Dumfries and the wider area
- developing positive partnerships with organisations such as pre-school Nurseries, The Theatre Royal, The Stove, Moatbrae, Dumfries Markers Market, Oasis Youth Groups, D&G Outdoor Woodland Learning among others

Free to Play

A guide to creating
accessible and inclusive
public play spaces

Thomas Casey and Harry Harbottle



FREE TO PLAY GUIDE

Because our model of consultation and engagement has been so successful, Play Scotland asked if the project could be used as a good practice example resulting in the publication of 'Free to Play' - a guide on developing Inclusive Play for local authorities and community groups in Scotland.

The guide was launched on May 2018 at the Scottish Parliament by Marie Todd, Minister for Children and Young People. Trustees were invited to represent the project and to share their experiences in consulting and engaging with the community.

<http://www.playscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/Free-to-Play-Guide-to-Accessible-and-Inclusive-Play-Spaces-Casey-Harbottle-2018.pdf>

FUTURE INVOLVEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY

During 2019, we are planning workshops which will engage with children so that they can help us to design the Welcome signs for the park. And we will continue to address any queries and concerns that people have regarding plans for the park.