

Balvonie Park

Proposed Development of Land Adjacent to Braes of Balvonie

Feasibility Study



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1 Executive Summary

An area of land to the south of Inverness adjacent to the A9 has been offered by Highland Housing Alliance to Highland Council for £1 if the local community can demonstrate an appropriate community use for the area of land.

Initially this was considered by Inverness South Community Council who elected not to take the project forward and encouraged the formation of a new body who might progress this on behalf of the local community.

In 2013 a new Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation(SCIO) was created from some members of the community council and one or two other interested individuals. This group, Balvonie Park Association, commissioned this feasibility study to test the appetite for local community uses of the area of land, with a view to moving the ownership from Highland Housing Alliance to Highland Council and from the Council onwards to Balvonie Park Association.

The community consultation survey has been completed and this report outlines the main conclusions of that survey and options for future use considerations for the area of land.

2 Introduction

Consultants were retained by the Balvonie Park Association to conduct a feasibility study to identify options for community amenity development for an area of land adjacent to the Braes of Balvonie housing development in the Milton of Leys area of Inverness. This study provides an opportunity to explore different amenity options that could be utilised, investigating their suitability and practicality, in order to improve the standard of amenities available to the local community.

The main aim of the study is to:

- Identify a range of possible amenity options that could be constructed, outlining the main issues and opportunities associated with each options and their feasibility.

Following a community consultation process in spring 2014, and through a number of public meetings, a range of options were raised for consideration. The most pertinent and applicable of these have been considered in this study and are as follows:

- Indoor community facilities – Which could include community space, a café and indoor sports facilities
- Outdoor open space – developed and suitable for a range of passive leisure activities
- Allotments
- Outdoor sports facilities e.g. Bowling Green, crazygolf/putting, sports pitches, etc.
- Children's play area

The feasibility study is also intended to:

- consider the views obtained through the community consultation survey
- identify possible funding streams and grant aid that the Balvonie Park Association could secure to fund any amenity development options
- make recommendations concerning if and when the provision of new community amenity development options could be objectively recommended.
- create a body of evidence that could be used by the Balvonie Park Association to support funding and grant applications to help finance the chosen amenity options.

It should be noted that in the context of potential development of Balvonie Park the views of a number of residents of the Braes of Balvonie development have been expressed strongly that they do not wish to see their area of Milton of Leys negatively impacted upon by increased traffic, noise and anti-social behaviour as a result of any development of the Park. Any development as a consequence of the consultation process must take into account the balance required between enhancing public amenities in the area and detracting from the quality of life of those residents immediately adjacent to any newly developed space.

3 About Balvonie Park Association

The Balvonie Park Association (BPA) has been set up to manage the development of the field between Braes of Balvonie (this is the estate people used to refer to as the Expo Housing) and the A9. The Highland Council have designated this field as an area that should be for the benefit of the local community.

Initial ideas were requested through a news letter in 2013 and a more formal survey was conducted via a questionnaire delivered to all the homes in the Milton of Leys / Park Farm / Braes of Balvonie estates.

We welcome further input as we seek to put together plans to suit as many people as we can, across all age ranges.

The BPA is a registered Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) with the following members on the board:

Kevin Findlay:	Chair/ Treasurer
Bob Roberts:	Secretary
Carolyn Caddick:	
Johnny Croall	
Richard Crawford	
Kirsty Mackenzie	

4 About The Area

In August 2010 Scotland's Housing Expo was opened at Braes of Balvonie in the Milton of Leys area of Inverness. A total of 52 sustainable house designs were created as part of the exposition, all following a sustainable development remit. Following the formal element of the exposition, the houses were occupied by owners/tenants and now form the community of Braes of Balvonie.

The area lies to the west of the A9 at the top of Drumossie Brae on the south side of Inverness. Between the housing area and the A9 lies an area of land which has been designated by The Highland Council as an area that should be developed for the benefit of the community.



The area lies within the council ward of Inverness South. Inverness South is one of 22 wards within the Highland area and is served by 4 councillors. Although mainly a rural ward it contains the main Inverness expansion areas of Westhill, Inshes, Milton of Leys and Slackbuie.

Inverness South is one of the fastest growing areas of the Highlands. The area's population grew by 50.9% over a 5 year period between 2005 and 2010. In this period over 1,600 new homes were constructed in the area. Inverness South now has a total population of 13,487 making it the second most populated ward in the Highlands, with a population density that is just above the Highland average. The area also possesses a higher proportion of people under the age of 50 than the Highland average, the highest proportion of children and the lowest proportion of over 64's in its population in comparison with the other Highland wards.

Although there has been rapid expansion in housing areas in the Inverness South ward this has not been reflected in the development of community infrastructure and facilities needed to support this growth. Too much emphasis was placed on the development of housing at the expense of community infrastructure and services, leaving these expanded communities severely lacking in these commodities.

Within Milton of Leys there now exists a primary school accomodating around 300 pupils and with associated community facilities including two bookable indoor spaces and an outdoor all-weather surface multi-use games area, a local Co-op grocer store and a small local pharmacy. A number of childrens play areas have been constructed by housing developers, however none of these are what might be considered extensive and appear to cater for a predominantly younger age group. There are no community facilities specifically for older members of the community.

5 Community Consultation Survey

It was clear at the earliest outset through open public meetings that the local community of Milton of Leys would require to be consulted as fully as possible to ensure that a democratically agreeable solution was arrived at. A survey was agreed and distributed to all households in Milton of Leys – approximately 980 houses. Surveys were to be returned either to the local Co-op or the primary school. In total 69 surveys were returned which represented approximately 7 % of those distributed. The quantitative outcomes of the survey are detailed below with the qualitative comments being illustrated in Appendix One.

Family Composition

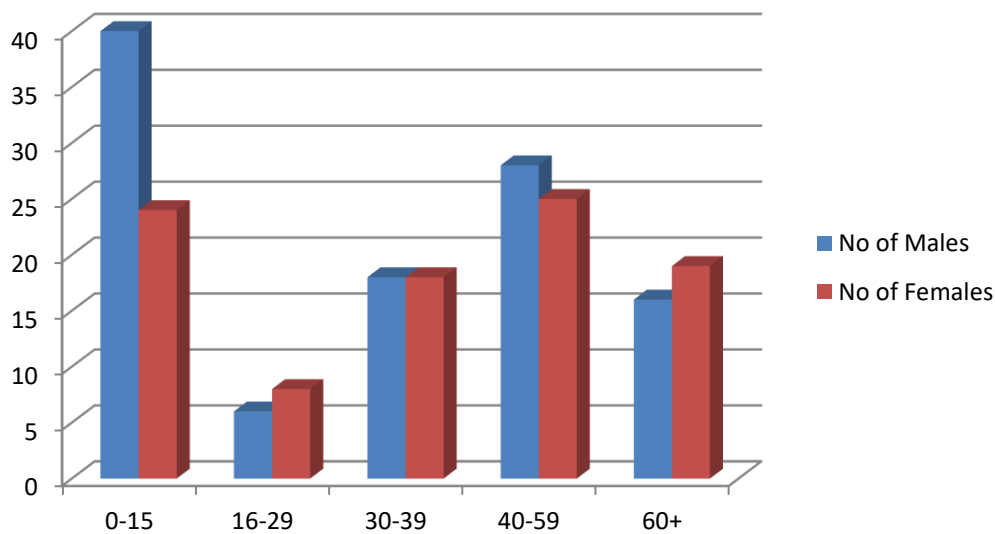


Figure 1. Family Composition of Respondents

The majority of respondents were representing family groups with a number of young people under the age of sixteen however there were also a number of responses from older people and from people without any children in the household.

I think the level of usable public open space amenity facilities in the Milton of Leys area is adequate

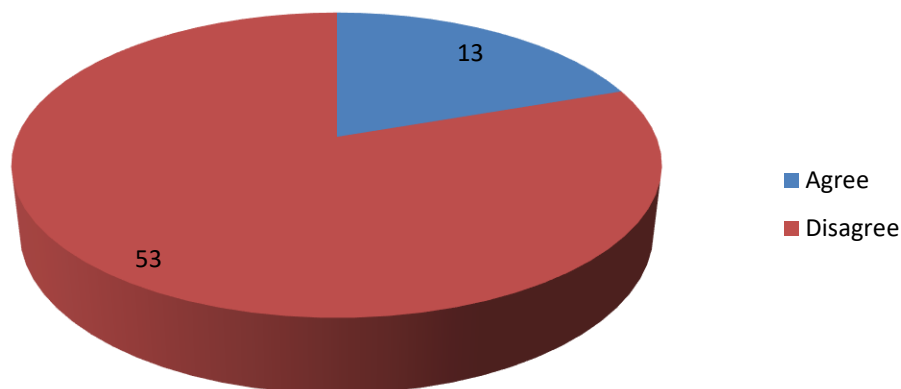


Figure 2. Adequacy of Current Facilities

The vast majority of respondents indicated that they felt the current provision of public open space amenity facilities in Milton of Leys was not adequate.

I think there are adequate play areas for young people in the Milton of Leys area

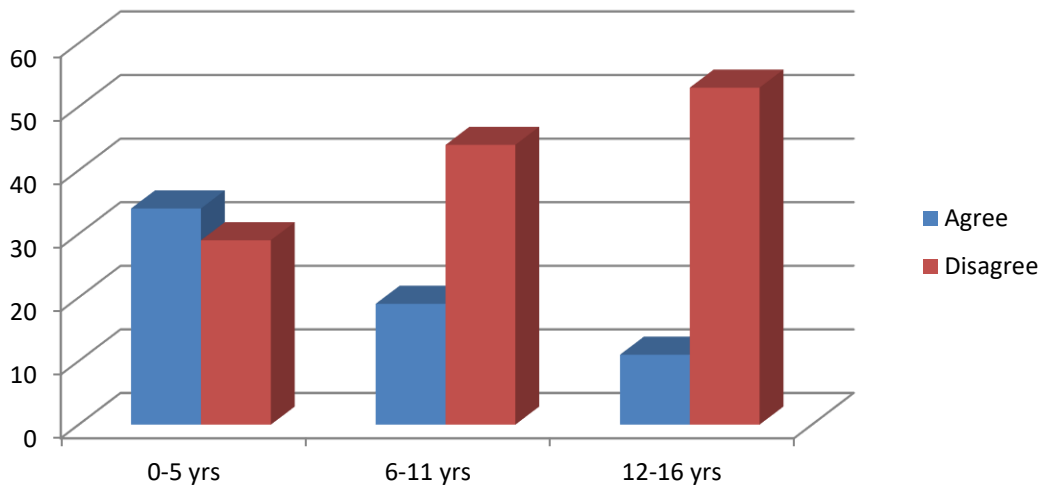


Figure 3. Adequacy of Play Areas

As is indicated in the overview of the area there would appear to be a sufficient number of play areas for younger children however respondents indicated that the adequacy of existing play areas in Milton of Leys declined as older age groups were considered.

I think there are adequate outdoor public amenity facilities in the Milton of Leys area for older people

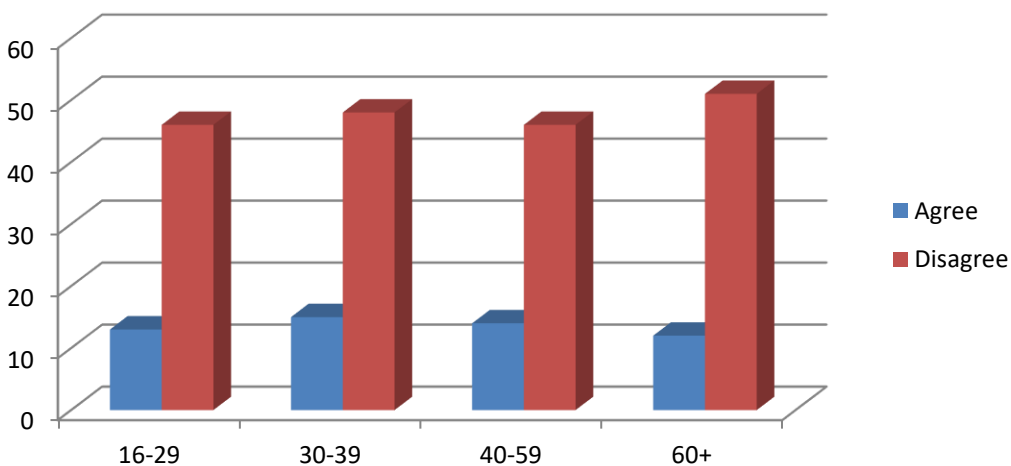


Figure 4. Adequacy of Outdoor Facilities

Consistently across all of the older age groups offered, respondents believed that there was an inadequate supply of outdoor community amenities within Milton of Leys. Many of the qualitative responses within the survey reflect this and make a number of suggestions for the types of amenities that would be welcomed.

I think there are adequate indoor community facilities in the Milton of Leys area

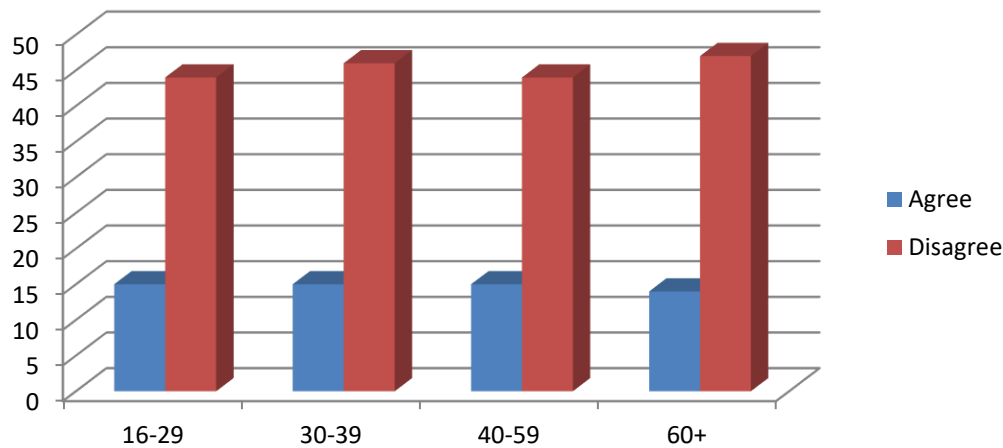


Figure 5. Adequacy of Indoor Facilities

Similarly to the previous graph there was general consensus that indoor community facilities in the area were lacking across all older age groups.

I think there are adequate sports pitches for the community in the Milton of Leys area

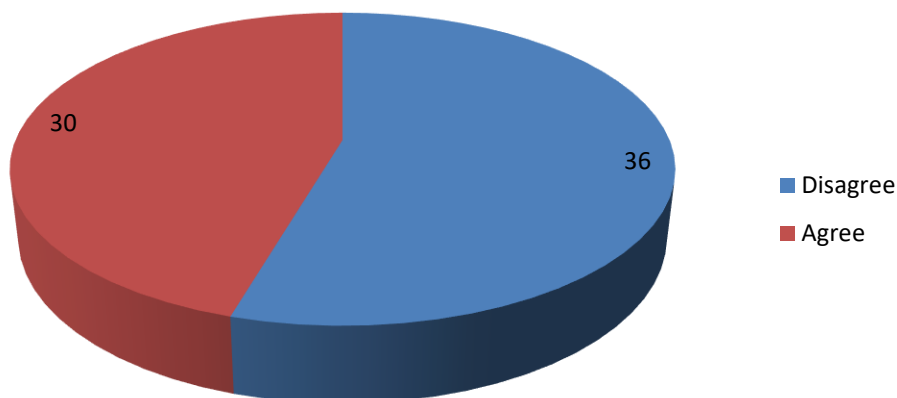


Figure 6. Adequacy of Sports Pitches

When considering the provision of sports pitches within the Milton of Leys area there was a less clear-cut picture with many respondents feeling that there was an adequate supply of sports pitches. There are currently two designated sports pitches in Milton of Leys, a rough “kick about” area beside Cedarwood Avenue and the school MUGA.

Which of the following facilities would you like to see provided for the Balvonie Public Open Space area?

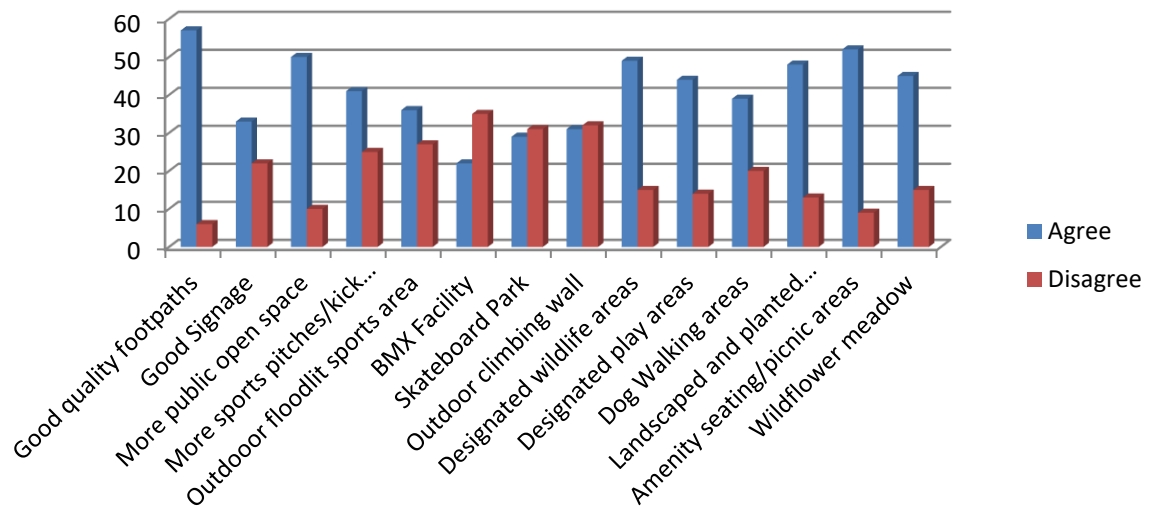


Figure 7. Possible Facilities

Respondents were asked to indicate which facilities, from a list provided, they would welcome in the proposed development area. There was a general sense within the responses to suggest a leaning towards less formal development and more enhancement of the open space for non-structured recreation.

Frequency of likely use

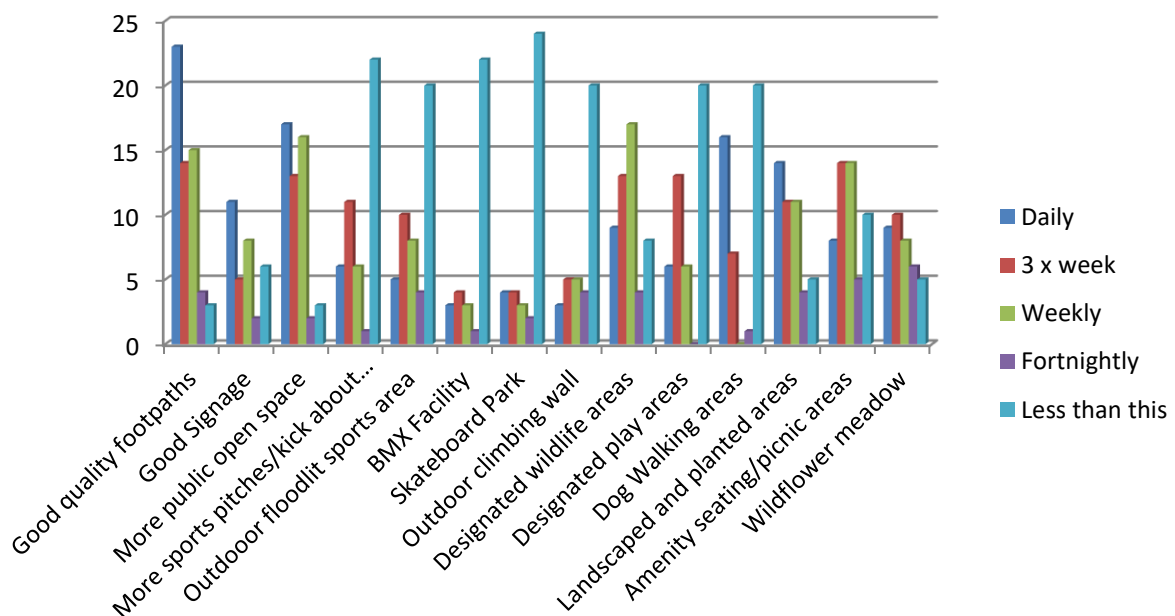


Figure 8. Frequency of Use

After indicating their preferences for the development of facilities respondents were asked to indicate their likely frequency of use. The responses gathered appear to strengthen the case for less structured recreational activities such as walking.

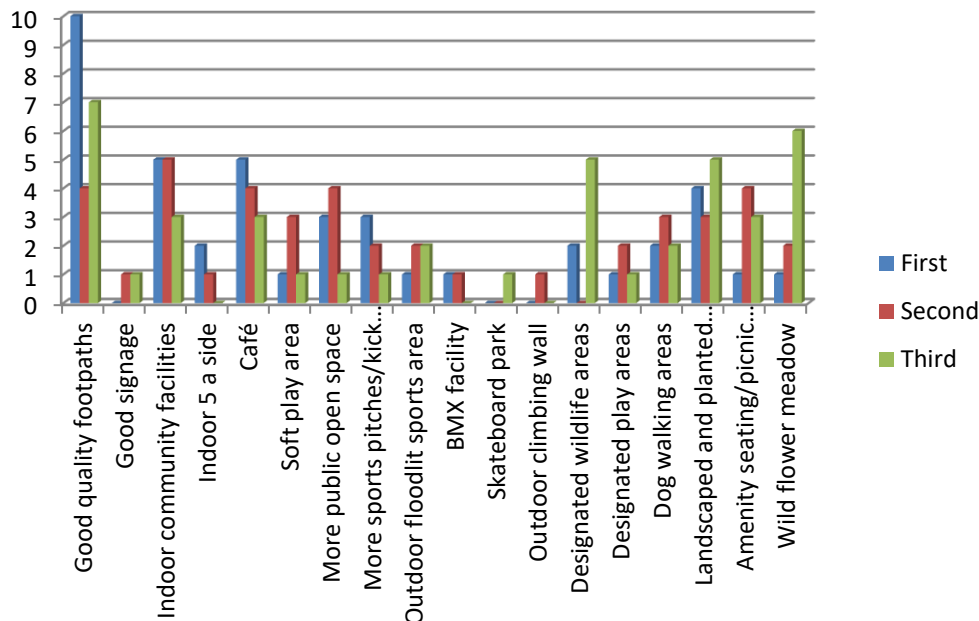


Figure 9. Rank Order of Preference

Figure 9 illustrates the rank order of preference for the options presented within the survey. Taking the responses and assigning them a score according to a simple 3 points for a first choice preference, 2 points for a second and 1 point for a third, the following scores for each amenity were obtained:

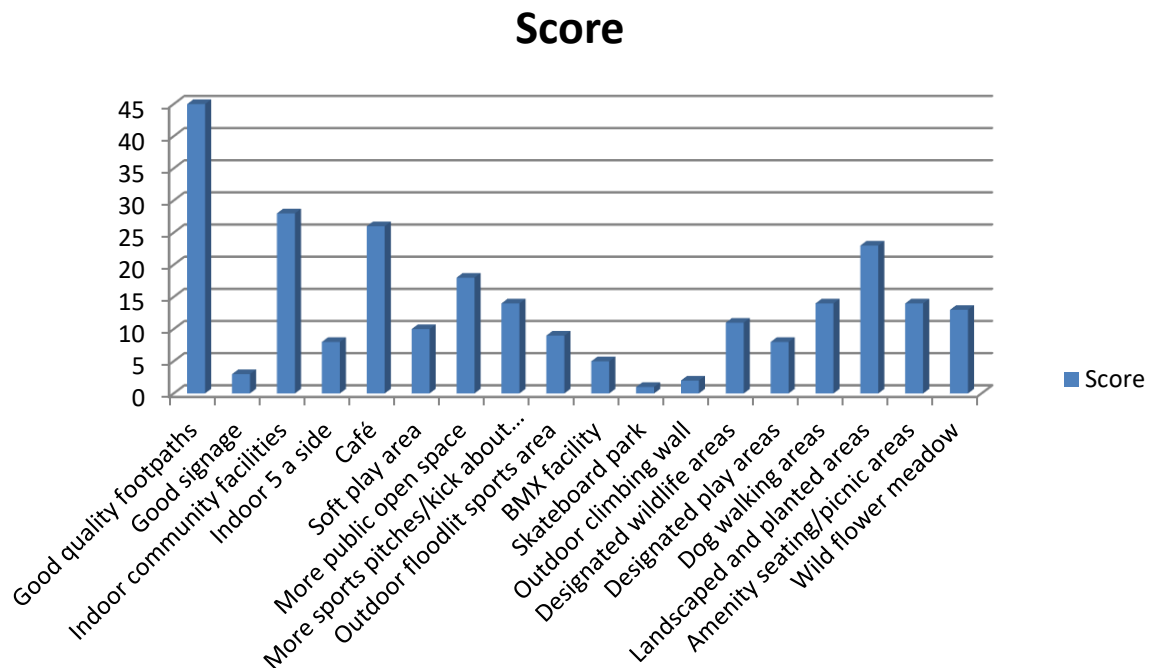


Figure 10. Amenity Scores

This graph clearly illustrates a preference for good quality footpaths as being the number one preference for most respondents, followed by some form of indoor community facility and then a café.

As mentioned there were many comments received from the surveys and these have been detailed verbatim in Appendix One. A few of the pertinent and recurring issues were for the use of the land for allotment purposes, the development of alternative sporting facilities such as crazy golf or a bowling green and a desire to ensure that any development was sustainable in the medium to long term.

6 The Options

The area of land at Braes of Balvonie has the potential to be used for a number of community related uses. Deciding on which option best suits the amenity needs of the community, whilst ensuring best use of the land and minimal disruption to neighbouring properties, requires careful and detailed consideration.

A number of public meetings were held following the initial approach by Highland Council to Inverness South Community Council and lively debate took place about the potential to use the area of land for a wide variety of purposes, ranging from leaving it as an open and wild space, to developing a community building, with many other options in between.

It was as a result of these meetings that the Balvonie Park Association was established to act as a cohesive focal point for all members of the community in the consideration of the uses of the land.

Through the various public meetings and the community consultation survey, the following options for development have been identified as being within the top priorities for most respondents and have therefore been considered:

- Indoor community facilities – community centre, café, indoor sports facilities, etc.
- Outdoor open space – footpaths and picnic areas developed and suitable for a range of passive leisure activities or left as wild open space
- Allotments
- Children's play area
- Outdoor sports facilities – bowling green, crazy golf/putting, sports pitches, etc.

6.1 Indoor Community Facilities

A number of survey respondents and contributors to public meetings have suggested various forms of development on the land that would come within the scope of indoor community facilities.

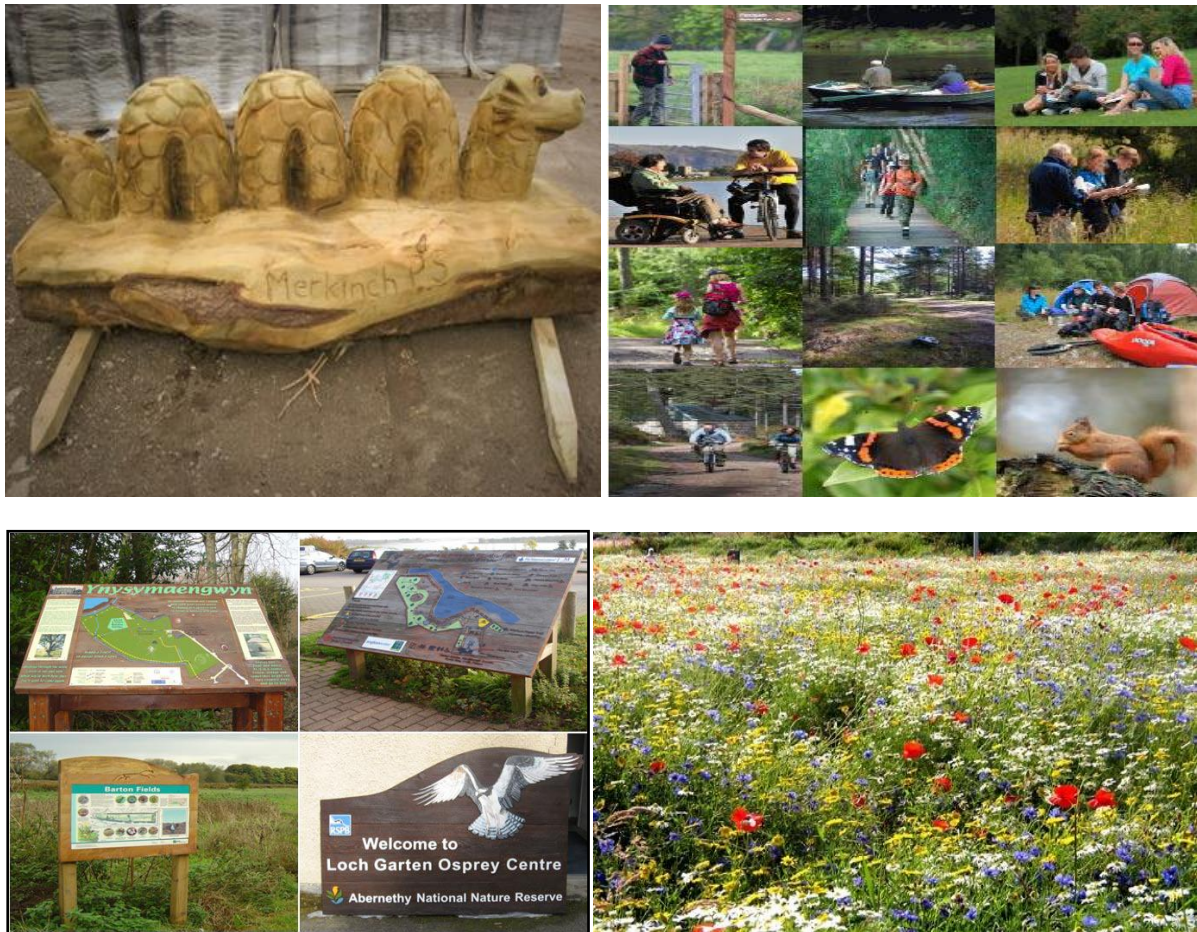
The concept of a Community Centre for Milton of Leys could be considered appropriate given that the current level of indoor community facilities extends to the small community room at the school and the larger games hall, again at the school. Both rooms are currently quite heavily booked with a range of regular and ad-hoc activities and groups and the scope to extend the use of both spaces is limited by school hours and existing hires.

With the limited level of community facilities overall in the Milton of Leys area there is a relatively strong case for development. On the converse side however is an argument that such a facility should be more centrally located within the community and may be considered to sit more naturally

on the land adjacent to the Co-op and school. An indoor facility development in this location would be accessible to all Milton of Leys residents within a maximum ten minute walk and has the added advantage of being on an existing bus route.

Given the level of concerns raised within the community consultation survey against any extensive over-development of the Balvonie Park land then this option has been considered at this stage as being an inappropriate use of the Balvonie Park land.

6.2 Outdoor Open Space



6.2.1 What is Green and Open Space

Open and green space can be very diverse in the types of land and areas it encompasses. The Scottish Government, in their Scottish Planning Policy: Open space and physical activity, define open space as a term which;

"consists of any vegetated land or structure, water or geological feature within and on the edges of settlements, including allotments, trees, woodland, paths and 'civic space' consisting of squares, market places and other paved or hard landscaped areas with a civic function."

Greenspace Scotland state that green and open space can be seen as incorporating;



6.2.2 Benefits of Open and Green Space

Open and Green space is an essential ingredient of successful neighbourhoods and it provides a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits to local communities. There is huge national demand for better quality open spaces. Surveys repeatedly show how much the public values them, while research reveals how closely the quality of public spaces links to levels of health, crime reduction and the quality of life in every neighbourhood.

Open and Green Space: Health Benefits

The following are some of the key issues that have been raised with regard to benefits to health and well being associated with green space;

- The proximity and accessibility of open and green spaces in relation to residential areas appears to affect the overall levels of physical activity/exercise. This has been found to be especially true for children and young people as well as older people.
- Physical exercise in open and green spaces is generally positively associated with promoting wellbeing and recovery from stress.

- There is evidence that some behavioural or emotional problems in children, such as attention deficit disorder, can be improved by exposure to open and green space. Exposure to open and green spaces can also help tackle other health issues affecting children such as childhood obesity.
- Open space provides a wealth of opportunities for outdoor play, which is known to have developmental and therapeutic benefits for children and young people. Open and green space areas provide challenging environments that can help to stimulate children and help them develop motor skills.

Open and Green Space: Social and Community Values

Open space affords opportunities for social interaction between people of different communities, fostering social inclusion and community development;

- Open and green spaces can often act a central focus for community activity, involvement and capacity building. This can lead to positive developments in citizenship and local pride and reduction in anti-social behaviour and crime.
- Open space provides opportunities for communities to get involved and to an extent take ownership in creative and cultural activities by supplying a venue for cultural events and festivals, outdoor events or public art installations.
- Open and green space plays a significant role in providing places for social interaction for all groups found in communities due to the diversity that can be found in these areas. As people move from one life stage to another, this leads to changes in how they perceive and use open and green spaces.
- Research has shown that individuals who have some nearby vegetation or live closer to an open space seem better prepared and more effective in managing major life issues, coping with poverty and performing better in cognitive tasks. This applies to both adults and children, and is especially relevant to those living in difficult social or economic circumstances.
- Open space can function as an 'outdoor classroom' offering formal and informal learning opportunities for schools and communities thereby contributing to lifelong learning and helping to improve educational attainment.

Open and Green Space: Economic Impact

This section addresses the key issues identified on how green and open space can provide an economic impact in communities;

- Quality open and green space is known to have a significant positive impact on house prices, supporting the creation of more stable housing markets.
- Good quality open space contributes significantly to urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal and development projects by improving the image of the place and attracting investment.
- It improves investor and resident perception of an area by raising confidence in the area.

Open and Green Space: Environmental Impact

The inclusion of open and green space in communities can have several positive environmental impacts;

- Well designed open space contributes towards ecological diversity and supports environmental sustainability.
- Green and open space areas improve air quality and can reduce noise pollution and the visual intrusion from traffic.

- Within urban open space, varied habitats help to relieve the monotony of the urban landscape with different colours, textures and sounds and help to bring the delights of the countryside into urban areas.

Shrub and flower planting

Specific references within both the survey and public meeting discussions about creating wild spaces with either natural or intentional planting were also raised. The following should be considered if a shrub and flower planting programme was to take place in the park:

- Shrubs and flowers are only planted where they would enhance the make-up of the park
- Any shrubs and flowers are not planted at random but within a planned design
- Species used are appropriate to the Balvonie Park location and fit within the park's objectives
- Planting should be carried out under optimal conditions for plant establishment and survival using methods to ensure maximum seed germination, plant growth and survival.
- A comprehensive management plan should be put in place with community buy-in for managing and tending to the plants.

SWOT Analysis: Shrub and Flower Planting

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve ambience and aesthetics of park • Improve bio-diversity in area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest from community
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community ownership and management scheme for tending flowers and plants • Community planting scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invasive species • Vandalism and damage to plantings

Wildflower meadow

The further potential development of wild and open space is the introduction of a wildflower meadow. Wildflower meadows offer a diverse and typically attractive habitat that can be appreciated and enjoyed by young and old alike. During the last century, 97% of the UK's wildflower meadows have been lost due to changes in land management. The introduction of a wildflower meadow in an urban setting can offer several advantages:

- Plant diversity attracts insects and other invertebrates, birds and animals
- The range of flowering species housed in these meadows add a changing palate of colour to urban environments as the seasons progress
- Community ownership can be fostered and encouraged around the meadow through active involvement in activities. This can include maintenance and mowing of the area through to the collection of the seeds produced in the meadow
- A wild flower meadow can provide opportunities in terms of both education and recreation, from nature lessons to art lessons
- A wildflower area can have a significant role in developing the ambience of an area; bring a little piece of the countryside to an urban environment

Introduction and Management of Meadow

If the introduction of a wildflower meadow was to happen consultations would have to take place with local wildlife bodies to ensure that suitable species are introduced in the meadow. Factors that would have to be considered include pedology, hydrology and the region's climatic conditions. There would also need to be an appropriate management regime in place to ensure the sustainability and long term success of the meadow. Annual mowing would have to be carried out when plants die back and shed seeds.

Strategic Context

Scotland's Biodiversity: it's in your hands

This is a strategy for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Scotland. It represents Scotland's response to its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the European Union's 6th Environmental Action Programme and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, along with the Scottish Government's stated desire to put biodiversity at the heart of our national identity and culture. Delivery of the strategy is pursued through partnership working (Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, RSPB, Scottish Wildlife Trust, etc). The strategy sets out three main areas of work:

- Species and habitat work which are also part of a UK plan
- Existing work on National Nature Reserves etc
- Biodiversity Implementation Plans

Highland Council: Local Biodiversity Action Plan

A variety of different groups have been identified to assist in delivering the actions and these groups are; community groups, businesses, classrooms, land managers, the local authority and other agencies. The main aims of the action plan are to:

- raise awareness of biodiversity
- identify particular habitats and species which are considered important
- suggest projects and actions that could be undertaken by individuals, communities and agencies

Meadow Issues

Despite bringing floral and faunal diversity and an aesthetic benefit to urban areas, Wildflower meadows present some negative issues and complications:

- These areas can be perceived as being untidy; with perceptions of the areas being a wilderness, waste ground or an abandoned area
- The physical height of the meadow when in comparison with mown grassland areas can be seen to impede access for humans
- Management of a wildflower meadow is a long term commitment. Meadows need time to become established and flourish. If the support is not in place these areas can become overrun by grasses, brambles, weeds and shrubs.
- Wildflower seed is more expensive than grass seed and this would have to be considered in the management regime for the meadow

Several of these issues could be overcome at the community level through engagement and education events, signage and interpretation around the meadow site or even fencing. The cost of a wildflower meadow is fairly low with a 2500m² meadow costing around £4,000.

SWOT Analysis: Wildflower Meadow

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase local biodiversity of area• Improve area ambiance• Access for all• Can appeal to all age groups• Attract SRDP funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long term management commitment to area needed• Negative perceptions of areas appearance
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of site as an education resource• Develop community engagement and ownership of site	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invasive species• Misuse of area; Grass fires, fly tipping and littering• Lack of interest/commitment from public to site

Enhanced landscaping

The further amenity option identified for this development within the context of a wild and open space was the introduction hard landscaping works and associated low impact infrastructure which would add character and an added dimension to the park. This could be in the form of structured footpaths/cycleways, picnic areas, benches, signs, etc.

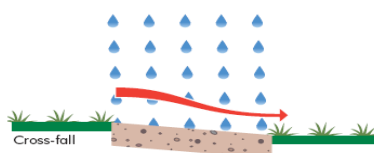
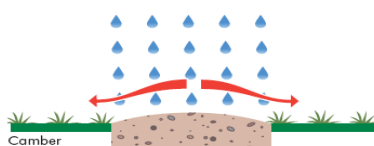
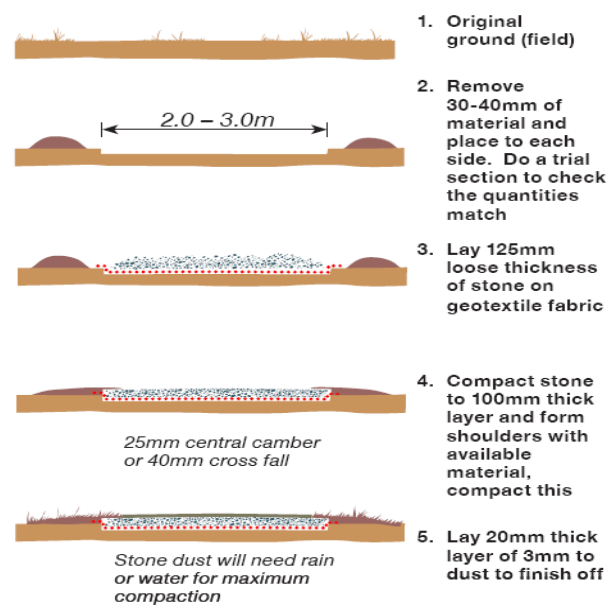
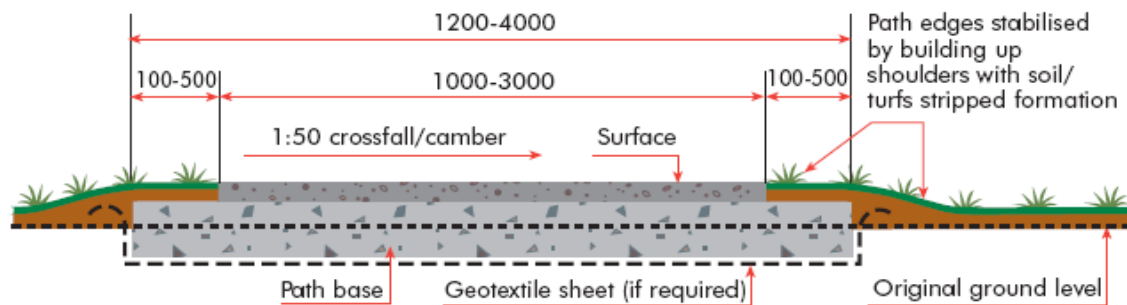


Specifications

A suggested design specification in keeping with the rural setting for footpaths and cycleways should be considered and should as a minimum include provision for footpaths of maximum 1.8 metres wide with construction being of a hard core base with a crusher dust blinding layer. Picnic areas and

viewing points should be a hard core base with crusher dust blinding layer. All paths and trails will require a camber for surface water run off.

The below figure illustrates a technical cross section of an unbound surfaced footpath:



Camber and Cross-fall

Cycle tracks should have a cross-fall of between 2.5% and 3% to ensure there is adequate drainage. Falls below this range may not drain the track properly and those exceeding it can be uncomfortable and unsafe for some disability-specific cycles.

Excessive cross-fall can also create difficulties for cyclists in icy conditions. On straight sections, the track should ideally fall to either side from the centre. On bends, the track should always fall from

the outer edge towards the inside of the curve. Additional super-elevation to assist cyclists to manoeuvre around bends is generally unnecessary.

On no account should the track fall to the outside of a bend (negative camber). If using a camber, the middle of the camber should be 50mm above the path edge. For narrow track sections, a fall of greater than 1:50 will be required to achieve this height difference.

Other aspects that have to be considered in the designing of the drainage system for the track will include aspects such as ditches, drains and culverts. These should be used where appropriate to ensure track usability and to limit possible water flow damage.

Cycle tracks should have a cross-fall of between 2.5% and 3% to ensure there is adequate drainage. Falls below this range may not drain the track properly and those exceeding it can be uncomfortable and unsafe for some disability-specific cycles.

Footpath Maintenance

All footpaths and hard surfaced areas will require a sustainable maintenance regime to be established. The Footpath Trust offer guidance on what would be considered best practice in the development of such a regime and it is recommended that should this option be developed then their guidelines be followed.

As footpaths were the most popular suggestion from the consultation and the council's inability to adopt and maintain these we feel it is important to demonstrate that we know what is involved in maintaining footpaths.

A comprehensive guide to a suggested footpath maintenance regime and policy is attached as Appendix 2 to this document.

As a rough guide a type 1 path with crusher dust could cost around £20/linear metre.

SWOT Analysis: Landscaping

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the attractiveness and ambience of the area• Can be enjoyed by all the community• If it is permanent landscaping it needs attention only once or twice a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offers no real practical use for community• May pose a maintenance burden
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further landscaping developments in future if proposed changes are successful• Links in with green policies and local and national environmental policies/plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Could be affected by vandalism• If wrongly located could pose a safety concern

6.3 Allotments



The south side of Inverness has a very limited supply of allotment gardens, however the demand for such facilities is clearly in existence given the number of references to allotments as a potential development option for the site.

Highland Council Allotment Policy

Allotment gardening offers the benefit of a healthy lifestyle all year round that is active, sustainable and socially inclusive. The Highland Council is committed to working with all stakeholders in order to increase the provision of allotments in line with demand across the Highlands. In doing this, the Council aims to achieve the following:

- Aim 1: to increase the provision of allotments across the Highland Council area. Performance towards this aim will be measured by the number of new allotment sites established and the maintenance of existing sites. Our target is to establish at least 4 new sites and have identified suitable land for a further 4 sites by April 2014.
- Aim 2: to improve local environments through increased biodiversity. New allotment sites will provide an increased diversity of habitats. This policy encourages planting of new hedgerows to further enhance biodiversity. Baseline measurements of hedgerow length will be performed on new allotment sites and reviewed annually.
- Aim 3: to promote the social inclusion and health benefits of allotments. To assess performance towards this aim, Allotment Associations will be asked to participate in using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale to measure any difference in wellbeing before and after allotment sites are established. The Council will seek to work with existing community groups to promote the development of allotments in areas of concentrated multiple deprivation.
- Aim 4: allotment sites are well used and effectively managed by empowered community groups. Performance will be measured by the number of interventions needed from the Council regarding site management and by the level of allotment plot usage. Targets are that there will be no interventions needed, and at least 90% of available allotments are in use.

The proposed site within Milton of Leys could provide for a number of allotments which would support the sustainable ethos of the Braes of Balvonie development and encourage the uptake of healthy living among all members of the community in Milton of Leys.

6.4 Children's play area

6.4.1 Play Provision: Strategic Context

Playspaces, play services and provision can contribute towards local and national policy objectives across a range of areas. The inclusion of play in law and national policy documents underlines the importance of a play provision which integrates social, environmental and economic objectives. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) is the statement of the Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters. It values play and states: "the Planning system has a role in helping to create an environment where physical wellbeing is improved and activity made easier. Providing play space and other opportunities for children and young people to play freely, explore, discover and initiate their own activities can support their development." SPP places responsibility with local authorities to support, protect and enhance open space and opportunities for sport and recreation, which includes outdoor play spaces.

Let's Make Scotland More Active: A Strategy for Physical Activity

This strategy, prepared by the Physical Activity Task Force for the Scottish Executive and NHS Scotland and published in 2003, is strong on both promoting physical activity and improving the environment to encourage activity. This strategy cites play as one of many types of physical activity that can contribute towards the goal of increasing and maintaining the proportion of physically active people in Scotland.

The strategy recommends that all children and young people, including children with disabilities, should accumulate at least one hour of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. The national strategy sets targets to achieve 80% of all children aged 16 and under meeting the minimum recommended levels of physical activity by 2022.

Active play can significantly contribute towards the national targets. The Scottish Health Survey details that 'playing' accounts for the greatest proportion of children and young people's physical activity. Even in early teenage years, young people 'play' more than they take part in formal sports or exercise.

One objective of the strategy is to develop and maintain long-lasting, high quality environments to support inactive people to become active. It recognizes that all children and young people, including those with disabilities, should have the opportunity to be physically active and have access to a range of physical activities including play.

It promotes well designed, safe and accessible parks and play areas, use of school facilities by communities, play activities and clubs, changes to the built environment, such as traffic-calming and safe routes for active travel, as ways in which better local services could contribute towards encouraging young people to be more physically active.

The Highland Council Play Strategy: 'All to Play For'

Children's right to play is to ensure all children have access to rich, stimulating play experiences, with safeguards from inappropriate risk, but full of challenge, offering them opportunity to explore, through freely chosen play, both themselves and the world.

The strategy has six key objectives:

- promoting a child/family friendly ethos
- access to play for all children
- incorporating appropriate challenge in play
- encouraging outdoor play
- encouraging community involvement in play areas

- ensuring consultation with children

Highland Council: Physical Activity and Sports Strategy

This strategic document is set in the context of national policy on physical activity. It is a strategy that complements the NHS weight strategy and pulls together physically active opportunities within all Highland Council Services, NHS Highland and the voluntary sector.

The vision of the strategy is to create a healthier and more active Highland population who are able to understand and enjoy the benefits of being physically active and who are able to access services and facilities which enable them to participate in, and feel included.

This strategy's purpose is to:

- Set the vision for the population of Highland in the context of national policy on Physical Activity
- Identify when opportunities can be maximised for the population to be more physically active
- Develop a coordinated approach to joining up strategic documents policy and practice in the areas of physical activity, healthy weight and reducing health inequalities
- Support participation for young people adults who are less active in a way that combats stigma and promotes self esteem

Two of the main strategic issues identified in this strategy that must be addressed in Highland in relation to homes and communities settings are to;

- Work with communities to improve the quality of existing play areas, to improve facilities for all ages to play and ensure that they are able to be accessed by walking and cycling
- Secure better new play facilities in new developments

6.4.2 Benefits of Play Provision

The following table outlines some of the benefits associated with providing play provision to children and young people:

Benefit	
Places to play	Children need and have the right to play, and play provision offers them places where they can play freely in the ways they choose, without direction from adults
Space to meet and hang out	Children and young people actively seek out places to meet and hang out, and facilities for them are high on the list of local priorities in many neighbourhoods. There is widespread agreement that in many areas young people in particular have a poor choice of leisure activities
Space to have fun	Like adults, children need to enjoy their lives- to have fun times and spaces where they can simply have fun. Good play environments offer a range and choice of play experiences
Support for parents and carers	Good, accessible play provision helps parents and carers to extend their children's play experiences. It can help to reduce conflict and

	relieve stress levels inside the home be providing other places where children can spend their time
A community gathering point	Centrally located play facilities can bring different age groups together and foster interactions and connections between children, and between children and adults. Good multi-functional provision can help build neighbourliness and a sense of community
A chance to encounter nature	Children value the chance to interact with nature, and such experiences help them to appreciate the importance of the natural world and environment. There is growing evidence of the health benefits of access to green, outdoor environments
A place to make friends	The opportunity to make new friends and develop friendships is one of the most important experiences in childhood. In addition to this, such opportunities help children build their confidence and social competences
Encourages physical activity	Most children are naturally physically active when they play outdoors. Comparative studies have shown that children can be as active in spontaneous outdoor play as in structured sport activities.
Learning how to manage risks	Rich, challenging, engaging play environments allow children to test themselves and explore their abilities. They can learn the penalties of misjudging a risk- or simply having bad luck- in managed environments that reduce the likelihood of serious harm
Developing a sense of one's abilities	Self-directed play experiences give children the opportunity to try out for themselves ways to solve problems and achieve goals, without the interference of adults.
Catering for the adventurous	Some children and young people actively seek out risky situations. Play provision can give them the chance to satisfy their search for excitement in a managed context, potentially reducing the risk that these children will spend time in truly dangerous environments

Highland Council Play Provision for Children and Young People

The following tables outlines the provision standards that would have to be considered if new play provision was to be developed in Balvonie Park:

Highland Council Play Provision Standard	
Quality Standard	2 sq m per person
Distance Thresholds	Amenity greenspaces in housing areas: 5 minutes walk (300 m straight-line distance)

	Local equipped play areas: 10 minutes walk (600 metres straight line distance) Strategic equipped play areas: 20 minutes walk (1200 metres straight line distance)
Minimum Size	Local equipped play areas: 1,500 sq m, typically with at least a dozen items of equipment. Inshes Park in Inverness is an example of a local play area. Strategic equipped play areas: 2,500 sq m, typically with at least a dozen types of equipment. Whin Park in Inverness is an example of a strategic play area.

In addition to satisfying these standards, any play provision that is developed must take into account the following factors:

- The whole of the outdoor environment should be visually stimulating for both children and adults and offer opportunities for children to play in imaginative ways, close to home or in other greenspaces which can be accessed without crossing a major road.
- Amenity greenspaces in which children are likely to play should be unique and designed to offer a varied, interesting and physically challenging environment, accessible to everyone, which offers opportunities for running, jumping, climbing, balancing, building or creating, social interaction and sitting quietly.
- The design of amenity greenspaces that will be used for play should derive from and reinforce the character and levels of the site and incorporate any natural features there may be on it such as rock outcrops or water courses. This will also help to encourage and facilitate use by children of all ages.
- Amenity greenspaces that will be used by children for informal outdoor play should be designed generally to encourage them to explore their home environment and so incorporate hiding and “secret” places and links to nearby parts of the green network, especially woodland and other natural areas.
- Play provision should stimulate the senses of sight, sound, touch and smell and offer opportunities for children to manipulate materials. Accordingly play spaces should incorporate variations in level and a range of materials of different kinds, textures and colours, such as timber, sand, rocks, dead trees and other natural materials and incorporate trees, shrubs and grass. Examples of other materials or forms that can be used include old car tyres (eg for swings or tunnels); logs (eg for climbing and balancing); ropes (for ladders, swings and bridges); tunnels and mounds or hollows (for various forms of play); tarmac areas (for ball games or other games such as hopscotch); grass surfaces (for ball games and sitting); low walls (for skateboard manoeuvres, sitting on, balancing or jumping off); sand (for digging, building and sifting); shrubbery (for dens, places to hide or look for small animals and insects); rocks (for hiding and climbing); trees with low branches (for climbing or swinging); and bollards (for leapfrogging).
- Passive surveillance from the windows of nearby buildings is essential
- Equipped play areas must be located in a position that will not create disturbance for the occupants of nearby dwellings and separated from the nearest dwelling window by an appropriate buffer distance, dependant on the size and location of the play area, which is not less than 25 m.
- It must not be necessary for any child to cross a distributor road in order to gain access to a local play area
- All surfaces within play areas, and the access to them from nearby path systems, must be free draining so they do not become waterlogged or boggy after heavy rain

6.5 Outdoor Sports Facilities

6.5.1 Bowling Green



The development of a bowling green was raised by several respondents to our community consultation survey. Of particular importance was a sense that much sports facility development focuses on sports that tend to attract or be used by younger people with little for all ages to enjoy. Bowling offers an opportunity to develop provision that can be used over a much wider age group.

Inverness currently has 5 outdoor bowling greens plus one indoor bowling green (at Castle Heather). It is uncertain what the likely demand might be for the introduction of another bowling green in Milton of Leys, particularly given the likely long lead time prior to any significant levels of play being available. The cost of a bowling green could be around £125,000 and a clubhouse £250,000.

6.5.2 Crazy Golf/Putting Green

A further suggestion within the context of outdoor sports areas for a wide age group was the idea of developing part of the open space into a crazy golf course or putting green.

6.5.3 Sports Pitches

Playing field/area options

There would be two possible options available for introducing a playing field or area in Balvonie Park. The first would be the creation of a traditional grass based surface, however these would require regular maintenance/grass cutting and can be expensive when assessed against the likely income they can generate. The cost of a grass pitch could be £150,000.

The second option would be to an artificial sports pitch. The cost of this is initially high and there would still be a maintenance requirement even though grass would not be getting cut. These provide a way of maximising the use of a sports area by providing a surface on which a number of

different sporting and recreational activities can take place. The cost of an artificial pitch could be around £400,000.

Benefits of sports pitch provision

Outdoor playing pitches have 2 main functions:

- To provide quality playing venues
- To increase the number of participants and subsequent sporting success in the City

These in turn can provide both health, social and economic benefits. They can encourage a healthier lifestyle, promote physical activity and subsequently improve both physical and mental wellbeing. They can provide social interaction by bringing people together and by encouraging and increasing participation in group activities and interaction. They also support social inclusion by providing local accessible facilities that all members of the public can participate on.

If popular the pitches in time would require consideration to be given to changing rooms, showers and toilets and again the initial costs of these could be in the region of £300,000.

SWOT Analysis: Pitch Provision

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages participation in physical activity and sport • Health and social benefits for the community • Helps in attaining local and national policy goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of installation and maintenance • Large initial capital cost • Drainage issues
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To raise awareness and profile of sport and physical activities • Host community sports events • To get more young people more physically active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The issue of overuse can deteriorate the playing surfaces • Reduction in budgets for maintaining facilities

7.0 Strategic Context

7.1 Reaching Higher: Sportscotland

This Strategy sets out the long term aims and objectives for sport until 2020 and outlines its delivery and evaluation. It aims to deliver the Sport 21 visions of a Scotland where sport is more widely enjoyed and available, where talent is recognised and nurtured, and where world class performance is achieved and sustained. One of the national priorities identified in Reaching Higher is the provision of quality sports provision:

"Quality facilities are fundamental to the strategies delivery. The availability, accessibility and quality of facilities influences whether people take part in sport, which sports they enjoy and how often they participate and perform"

7.2 Let's make Scotland More active

The vision for the Let's Make Scotland More Active strategy is that "people in Scotland will enjoy the benefits of having a physically active life".

The goal is to "increase and maintain the proportion of physically active people in Scotland". The target is to achieve 50% of all adults aged over 16 and 80% of all children aged 16 and under meeting the minimum recommended levels of physical activity by 2022. This will mean an average increase of 1% per year across the population and if this percentage is adhered to then it will lead to a decrease in the number of deaths due to activity by 157.

The economic benefit associated with the number of life years saved due to preventing these deaths is estimated to be at £85.2 million. To achieve these aims the Scottish Executive pledged to:

- Develop and maintain long-lasting, high quality physical environments to encourage and support inactive people to become active
- Provide accurate and evidence-based advice to staff who are involved in government policy and service delivery and who work in the private and voluntary sectors
- Raise awareness and develop an understanding about the benefits of physical activity and provide access to information
- Carry out research, monitoring and evaluation.

7.3 National Audit of Scotland's Sports Facilities (2006): Sportscotland

- This National Audit provides a snapshot of the condition of sports facilities and highlights the cost needed to bring Scotland's sporting infrastructure up to an acceptable standard. In particular the report highlights the following points:
- Outdoor facilities had a wide range of quality with a number being rated as poor, particularly natural grass pitches and their associated changing accommodation
- Low levels of routine and remedial maintenance also affected the quality of both indoor and outdoor facilities
- General problems with vandalism were highlighted, especially in outdoor facilities with inadequate fencing and pavilions on playing fields
- Over a third of indoor sports halls were built in the 1970s, with many lacking sufficient refurbishments
- The standards of indoor changing accommodation were often found to be poor, particularly showers, lockers and general décor

7.4 Highland Council: Physical Activity and Sports Strategy

This strategic document is set in the context of national policy on physical activity. It is a strategy that complements the NHS weight strategy and pull together physically active opportunities within all Highland Council Services, NHS Highland and the voluntary sector.

The vision of the strategy is to create a healthier and more active Highland population who are able to understand and enjoy the benefits of being physically active and who are able to access services and facilities which enable them to participate in and feel included.

8 SWOT Analysis

An analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the potential development of land at Balvonie is as follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land is available for community use with very few restrictions on the form of use • Access is good for Milton of Leys residents, within walking distance of whole community • Land is available at zero cost to the community • Large resident community with limited range of community assets already in place • Strong and dynamic committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location beside the A9 would require safety considerations • Car traffic to site would require to be controlled • Land is not centrally located within the community but could be considered to be on the periphery
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in quantity and quality of community assets • Increase the opportunities for a greater degree of community activities • Opportunity to cater for varying age ranges • Potential to develop a community focus • Creating greater equality opportunities particularly relevant for income deprived sections of the local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to meet raised expectations • Anti-social behaviour and misuse of park from intended purposes • Popularity/demand exceeds carrying capacity • Potential disruption to neighboring properties • Feeling that this is for Balvonie Braes residents only, not everyone in Milton of Leys

9 Risk Assessment

The following risk register considers the various risks associated with developing Balvonie Park for community use. This register considers those hazards and the means by which they may be mitigated against.

Balvonie Park			Risk Register			Date: June 2014	
		Risk Categories:	0-8 Low Risk		9-17 Medium Risk	18-25 High Risk	
Risk Area	Risk Identified (Describe the risk to be managed)	Probability Factor (1-5, with 5 being most probable)	Impact Factor (1-5, with 5 being most severe)	Risk Ranking (probability x impact = probability)	Risk Management (how the risk will be managed)		Risk Responsibility (describe who will be responsible for managing the identified risk)
Organisational							
1.1	Lack of continuity due to a decrease in number of volunteers	4	5	20	Volunteers and community activists in general are decreasing. Balvonie Park Association will require to consider succession planning to bring forward a new generation of volunteers.		BPA Committee
1.2	Inability to agree on a shared vision of potential development	3	5	15	A shared vision for the development of Balvonie Park should be developed and communicated as soon as possible.		BPA Committee

1.3	Resistance from local residents to see anything developed locally	5	5	25	Some discussions will need to be held particularly with Balvonie Braes Residents Association who appear set against any development in the area of open space	BPA Committee
1.4	Agreeing a prioritised list of projects to reflect community needs and aspirations	4	4	16	A public meeting should be held to present the main findings of the consultation exercise and to invite the public to prioritise the projects most important to them	BPA Committee
1.5	Securing capital funding to deliver the approved projects	4	5	20	Balvonie Park Association should engage the services of a fund rasier on a self employed basis to try to secure adequate capital funding for those projects which the community has prioritised	BPA Committee
1.6	Identifying the revenue implications of maintaining the approved projects	5	5	25	Discussions should be held with Highland Council initially to confirm uner what circumstances the council might consider adopting and maintaianing any proposed projects.	BPA Committee

10 Potential Funding Sources

When considering grant aid, the following table lists the potential sources of capital funding under which applications may have some probability of success. As with all aspects of grant aid however there can be no guarantee that any applications will be successful, particularly given the current financial climate.

Funding Source	Description	Likely	Possible
Big Lottery Funds:			
Investing in Ideas	£500 - £10,000 Development of feasibility planning for new concepts, testing ideas	Yes	
Awards for All	£500 - £10,000 General support for all activities	Yes	
Communities and Families	£500 - £10,000 Giving Young children(0-8) the best start in life	Yes	
2014 Communities	Up to £2,000 Encouraging new participants in physical activity	Yes	
Young Start	£10,000 to £50,000 Helping young people (8-24) become more healthy, connected, confident, enterprising. Could be used to support marketing, organising, assisting in civic events. Also potential to host specific aspects of sports development for young people.	Yes	
Celebrate	£500 - £10,000 Support for events/activities celebrating the Commonwealth Games. Could be linked to the development of new activities		Yes
The Scottish Land Fund	£10,000 - £750,000) The Scottish Land Fund is aimed at supporting rural communities to become more resilient and sustainable through the ownership and management of land and land assets. It will provide practical support and funding to enable local people to work together to develop their ideas and aspirations, put in place effective structures and plan and complete viable land and land asset acquisition projects.		Yes
Community Spaces Scotland	Up to £250,000 available for eligible projects to make better uses of spaces and places		Yes
Investing in Communities			
Supporting 21st Century Life	£10,000 - £1,000,000		Yes
Investing in Communities			Yes

Life Transitions	£10,000 - £1,000,000		
Investing in Communities			
Growing Community Assets	£10,000 - £1,000,000		Yes
Other Funds:			
Sportscotland	The National Agency for Sport has a number of capital and revenue funding streams available in relation to sports facility provision and redevelopment	Yes	
Sportscotland Legacy 2014 Active Places Fund	£10,000 to £100,000 Improvement to physical infrastructure to support more people taking part in sport. This could be used to support developments in the games hall and the gym, e.g. construction of an indoor climbing wall	Yes	
	Development of civic performances and events, involvement of young people and development of sustainable arts programmes.	Yes	
SSE Sustaible Development Fund	The overall fund is worth £1,000,000. For projects, you can apply for funding from £10,000 up to a maximum of the fund’s total value (£1,000,000 in this round). In the funding of revenue projects, the panel also has the discretion to draw down from future rounds. In exceptional circumstances, we will consider applications up to 100% of total costs but would generally encourage groups to leverage other external funding towards the project. This will strengthen your chance of an award from the fund.		Yes
Robertson Trust	Up to 10% of capital costs and up to 3 years funding of salaries and running costs	Yes	
	Revenue funding to allow activities to be developed in a more sustainable fashion.	Yes	
Various small grant bodies, e.g. Tesco Community Fund, Coop Community Fund, Lloyds TSB Foundation, etc.			

11 Recommendations

- 1) That an open and transparent meeting be held with Braes of Balvonie Residents Association to consider all the missgivings they have on the future uses of Balvonie Park
- 2) It is recommended that a public meeting be called to consider the main community aspirations for the future use of the land adjacent to the A9 (working title Balvonie Park)
- 3) From such a meeting a prioritised list of projects and a notional timescale for each should be drawn up
- 4) That subject to community approval a formal approach be made to Highland Housing Alliance and Highland Council to transfer the ownership of the land to Balvonie Park Association.
- 5) That Balvonie Park Association engage the services of a fundraiser on a self employed basis
- 6) That membership of Balvonie Park Association is increased to reflect local needs and concerns.

12 Appendices

12.1 Appendix One – Comments from Public Consultation Surveys

Q8 Other potential uses of site:

- Outdoor barbeque area
- Gazebo
- Allotments & left as farming land
- Leave the site as it is
- Green gym/outdoor gym equipment
- Dog walking area must be separate to avoid fouling of children's play area e.g. Walker Park
- Consider allotments
- Pitch and putt golf area – daily use
- Gardens/coffee house
- Crazy golf or putting green
- Outdoor/indoor bowling
- Community allotments I think would be great for the space
- Allotments
- Allotments
- Lets not be ageist! This is mostly about sporting facilities. It should include facilities that everyone can use!
- Sheltered picnic/BBQ areas
- Pitch & putt
- A café/bar
- A young children's area (under 2)
- There is already floodlit outdoor sports facility
- Beehive enclosure
- Community wood fuel area on managed rotation could provide an income stream for the park
- Coffee shop
- Nothing here to encourage intergenerational activity – it is all segregated according to age. Also nothing to reflect the nature of the Braes of Balvonie development – why not environmental activities like forest school, community allotments, more trees. The wildlife (badgers, deer, foxes, etc) will be affected by intrusive development and noisy activity.
- We need nothing other than to be treated with respect and allowed our privacy
- Allotments
- Indoor running track and facilities
- Football pitches

Q10 Are there any other comments...

- Poor outdoor areas for children, the sand park has animal(sic) feces(sic) in it
- I think priority has to be given to older kids who need somewhere to go that is not costly. There is nothing in MOL & poor bus service elsewhere does not help them.

- The area between the school & Co-op ought to be open space and the stopping area at the Co-op should be better maintained
- I think there should be indoor facilities for teenagers
- I lived in Castle Heather where the park was full of broken glass, litter and used by unsupervised teenagers underage drinking and smoking. I feel this will happen if teenage facilities are put in the field behind my house. I have to live with this on my doorstep. This “park” will be unsupervised and vandalised immediately as has happened with all other unsupervised parks. Take a look at castle heather and the new park beside Milton of Leys Primary School.
- Council as indicated it will NOT maintain any facilities built on this site. The Inshes Park is boggy and woefully underused and within the same catchment area.
- Please remember “Balvonie Park” will be at one end of the Milton of Leys development and not accessible to most by foot.
- Most of questions are repeated and not relevant
- Restaurant/eating area would be good for all ages, young and old
- The quality of the outdoor amenity facilities are disgraceful. The poorest in this city. Other children’s outdoor facilities are required – but this is not the location for them
- Will require proper fencing especially the side next to the A9. It is a pity that it is approximately 1 mile away from at least half the houses in Milton of Leys
- We would use any facilities indoor or outdoor. I think there are plenty areas locally for dog walking. A grass pitch for playing football on, perhaps a tennis court. A path suitable for teaching kids to cycle as MOL is so hilly! And if you could incorporate some ramps, etc for kids to go over on bikes and skateboards that would be lovely. And a picnic table and shelter (v. important!) would be great.
- Anything to stop dog fouling and school children’s litter – especially on the school route and the school sports field land/hill
- Try and keep children safe in a designated area so adults have time to enjoy the other facilities in the area
- With many young families now living in M of L there is an urgent need for outdoor recreational facilities
- A good bowling club would help bring many of the senior citizens together in Milton of Leys
- The nearby woods give ample dog walking areas. The priority has always been good areas for the children to use safely and locally. Children of all ages – teens included
- I have made no comment on rest of this as I think allotments would be ideal on this site for all young and old. To(sic) near to A9 for children play area
- Leave it as it is
- It would be good to see as natural a theme as possible: e.g. use a planted hedge for a boundary rather than a metal fence and the more tree planting the better
- Would like to see an area put aside for allotments
- We think that all facilities are sadly lacking in the Milton of Leys area and the developer has apparently been allowed to take over land that was originally designated as for public amenities
- We definitely need community indoor facilities like a community centre to run clubs etc – youth club. School is expensive to hire
- The emphasis must be on “the community”. What about a community centre where young and old can meet? M of L weather (windy++) doesn’t lend itself to tennis facilities – look at Tomatin facility (hardly used!). This questionnaire appears to have been designed with the young, fit and active in mind! What about the less young, less fit and less active? They are also part of “the community”
- Costs to hire such facilities need to be realistic

- Would like to see more than just football. Also make it safe ie high fence, as children might attend themselves with adults. The area is close to a busy road
- It's a growing area with a lot of young families. We have to travel to go to groups to meet people. We miss out on so much up here. A café for clubs would be greatly used, especially for younger children.
- Family pub/restaurant would be welcomed
- There are none! Any proposed should have a central position, not on the periphery
- The lack of facilities is a disgrace
- As a recent resident in this area I find there is nowhere for older adults to meet, chat etc. The younger adults have school as a focus. Also there needs to be a kick about area for youngsters in out of school hours – and how about a doctor's surgery???
- Stop builders getting permission to build more houses!!!!
- More use should be made of school hall. There is abundant walks and forest trails for dog walking if owners of dogs would pick up the dog poo. BMX and skateboard are just teenage fads, that would attract undesirable youths to the area. The park would increase traffic in the area and the slip road to join the A9 Northbound is not long enough
- An access track into Daviot woods from the roundabout closest to the Co-op would be very beneficial in easing access, particularly for those with push chairs & those who find it difficult to traverse the currently very rough & boggy path. It would encourage greater use of the Daviot woods.
- We live beside the walkway between Balvonie Brae and Pinewood – we would not like to see, or hear, more or lots of people travel past our house to this new area – though I know it will happen.
- Not interested in more landscaped areas that Greenbelt are going to use as an excuse to increase their charges. An enclosed (fenced and gated) area which is safe to let dogs off the lead would be a good idea.
- Only indoor amenity is community room, need somewhere for older kids to go for youth club etc. Need suitable outdoor facilities lots of parks but very babyish – even though there is no baby swings at a single park up here! Again need somewhere for older kids & teenagers.
- Priority should be preserving the open space we have and improving access to it. There should be more planting of trees and shrubs both native and decorative. The area south of Milton of Leys Primary is particularly lacking in this respect.
- None of the above if yearly maintenance budget funding can't be provided – It does not make sense of having a one of investment in a public park with no regular maintenance and supervision budget!!!
- There is a lack of any. A community centre is need for all ages or even a pub/restaurant
- Lots of play area exist for young children. There is a floodlit pitch at the school and indoor community facilities to hire for older. Nearby are Inshes Park, the soft play area/nursery at Inshes retail, proposed indoor play centre at Asda and sports pitches at the high schools. Milton of Leys is part of the wider Inverness community and not a separate enclave that needs to duplicate facilities available 1-2 miles away. Better to travel to quality facilities than have unmaintained on doorstep.
- Public money should be spent to develop existing facilities, like the playpark near the Co-op and pitch next to the school in the middle of the community. Especially when the park in Balvonie will be for residents only use.
- Is the designation "Eco Housing" legal terminology? This area is already treated like an exhibition. Highland Council and RGU hosted two coaches last week full of rude individuals pointing and taking photographs, a complete invasion of privacy. We do not need more facilities here or additional intrusion caused by individuals parking and slamming car doors

and using the area as a free park and ride meeting point. Some of us actually have to live here we do not need additional facilities which will require ongoing subsidy whatever the outcome

- Safety for all the kids close to A9
- Don't think there is enough for older children in area. I realise that it is a primary school catchment area but teenagers need to be provided for also. Short tennis/badminton courts, the facility is there but we can't use it without paying a fortune. £30 an hour to hire the astro-turf at the school, £70 if floodlights are required to be on!! It should be available to the community to use for a reasonable price. If astro-turf at school was available for public /community use e.g. Highlife. Facilities are already there but the community cannot get use of them without paying £30-70 per hour. I can think of 3 play areas for children aged 0-7 within walking distance of my house but nothing for older children. Fitness classes at the school are great. We love staying up here, we use Daviot Woods daily for dog walking, biking and running but feel that the area would benefit from something for older children and sports facilities that would bring community together.

12.2 Appendix Two – Footpath Maintenance Plan

Paths Maintenance Plan

What is maintenance?

Maintenance is the process by which a balance is sustained between use for public access and the condition of the route and the site that it crosses. If we wish to continue 'taking out' the benefits of public access to the site, we need to continue 'putting in' continued effort to maintain the site and paths in good condition. The level of effort needed to strike a balance between use and condition is the amount of maintenance that is required each year.

Maintenance work has several key features that distinguish it from path construction, improvement or upgrading. Some of the key features of maintenance are that it is:

- **regular** – carried out periodically and continuously, and usually several times each year;
- **routine** – work takes place because it is predicted that the route will require attention, rather than being reactive and waiting for the route to fall into poor condition;
- **work is to a standard** – a clear decision is made amongst site managers, owners, users and funders about the expected use of the route, the type of use intended and the quality of the route that needs to be maintained;
- **sufficient** – the level of effort each year is enough to keep the path in the desired condition long-term, and not allow it to deteriorate.

Maintenance usually entails relatively small-scale works, carried out on a regular basis, and is usually revenue funded. This contrasts with construction work, usually referring to larger scale, one-off activities that are usually capital funded. Maintenance work often requires a variety of different small tasks to be carried out and collectively; this effort keeps the route in good condition. Maintenance is not about changing the nature of the route through intensive work or widespread improvement.

Ideally, maintenance work takes place continually and at a level commensurate with the impacts of use. There are some routes that have been maintained continuously for many years, with effort increased as the levels of access has increased. On these routes the path condition is generally good, and the path has not required major rebuilding, as the level of maintenance has kept pace with the level of use and site change. Far more frequently, and on the vast majority of paths in Scotland at present, maintenance work takes place after the path has been rebuilt. The need to rebuild the path is due to the lack of long-term maintenance in the past, which has allowed the condition to deteriorate to such a stage that major rebuilding is required. As more paths are repaired, and new paths built or come into use, the total maintenance effort for access to Scotland's countryside is rising steadily.

However, it has traditionally been very difficult to generate grant funding for Revenue-based works. It may be well worth identifying other methods of raising funding for this type for maintenance.

It continues to be the case that path maintenance work is under-resourced and there is difficulty meeting the current maintenance need for existing routes. Path managers need to make the best use of the resources they have available for maintenance, and be inventive about the ways in which this work is enabled. There is current debate about improved mechanisms to enable path maintenance to take place, and a gradual shifting of emphasis from the construction of paths to the maintenance of paths, as the process and extent of path repair continues.

There are four key reasons why path maintenance is essential:

- **Continuing use** – without maintenance, the continuing use of your paths may be in jeopardy. This may be due to deteriorating path condition, making sites inaccessible, particularly for less mobile users, or deterring use as the site is physically scarred and unattractive. Continued maintenance enables continued public use of the site, with more maintenance being required for high use or multiple use routes.
- **Environmental impacts** – poorly maintained paths and long-term undermaintained paths lead to soil erosion, habitat damage, and visual scarring in the landscape. Continued maintenance prevents this environmental damage taking place, and enables a balance between continued public access and high environmental quality, particularly on sensitive and high use sites.
- **Resource protection** – newly constructed or recently rebuilt paths require continued maintenance. Without this, the investment of time, effort and money will be put in jeopardy. Different paths require different levels of maintenance to keep them in good condition, and benefits of rebuilding a route may be only temporary if maintenance is not adequately carried out.
- **Value for money** – path maintenance work requires relatively modest resources each year, but needs those resources to be available continuously. The cost of reconstructing a path once it is severely deteriorated can be as much as the maintenance bill for 20-30 years of regular maintenance. The cost of maintaining both rebuilt and existing routes in fair condition represents good value for money, in the long-term.

What is your policy on maintenance?

Maintenance work is not an 'add-on' to the process of access management after construction: it is an integral function of access management and decisions across the site. Do not build a path if you do not have future resources to maintain it in good condition.

Maintenance is an integral part of managing access. Thinking about maintenance should start at the very beginning of deciding how to manage access on any one route or site. The frequency of maintenance that will be needed, the type of maintenance work to be carried out, and the extent of maintenance needed are determined by the level of anticipated use of the site, the environmental conditions on the site, and the style and extent of construction work that is taking place. In planning access to a site, maintenance, more than any other aspect of access management, is controlled by wider site management – the level of promotion, the size of carparks, the sort of use that is encouraged, will all help to determine the level, timing and types of access use.

If you have limited resources to put towards path maintenance, then you may want to consider avoiding certain types or levels of use, moving public access to less sensitive parts of the site, or seeking more resources to rebuild the site robustly. All of these will

help minimise future maintenance. If you have good availability of resources for access – such as an income coming from carparking or available volunteer groups, maintenance work may enable the level of use to be built up over a long period of time, as your maintenance abilities gather pace. If possible, increase the annual maintenance effort in preference to major capital construction.

Each site and each organisation will need to strike a balance between path construction and path maintenance. Whatever that balance is for your site or organisation, you should have a clear maintenance policy that reflects your emphasis, the commitment of your organisation to continued maintenance, and the standards of path quality of access you wish to maintain.

What standard are you maintaining to?

Maintenance standards describe the quality of access provision that is required of the site. This is described in words or using photographs and sets out the minimum quality of path required, and the types of action and maintenance work required routinely to keep the path in that condition. Maintenance standards will be very different for different types of route. Upland paths standards will focus on environmental quality, site drainage and secure stonework. Community path network maintenance standards will focus on accessibility, site safety, and impacts on and management for other land uses.

Managing maintenance

Types of work

Practical maintenance of access requires three types of work:

- **Routine inspection** – at least annual inspection of all routes to check their condition and work needed. This also includes an annual safety assessment of the site for public use, and a review of current levels of hazard and risk.
- **Routine maintenance** – at least annual routine repairs to surfaces and structures; clearance of vegetation; clearance of drains and ditches; and other appropriate practical work. Major structures, such as bridges, may require specialist attention and engineering inspection.
- **Minor repair or pre-emptive work** – reactive work arising as a result of use of the site, severe weather condition, or some type of damage, and picked up by either routine inspections or by reports on condition coming in from users, owners and others. This work requires more time than is available during the routine maintenance work, but usually requires an urgent response to stop it deteriorating further.

As a path manager, you will have to estimate the frequency, extent and intensity of maintenance that is required for all three types of maintenance work. Taking into account a number of factors, including the length of the route, the gradient of terrain, the levels of use, the type of use, the standard to which you are maintaining it, and other factors, you will need to estimate the frequency of maintenance inspection and routine maintenance tasks each year, the amount of time you expect each of these visits

to take, including time to write up reports and circulate them to other parties, and the likely level of response work – less if the route has been entirely rebuilt and is currently in good condition, and much more if minor pre-emptive work is envisaged instead of major capital reconstruction.

Cost

The estimated annual costs per kilometre for maintaining different types of path in Scotland at year 2000 costs are:

Path Management Prescriptions costs per metre in Lochaber, compared to equivalent rates for other mountain areas in Scotland						
	Code	Prescription	Cost per metre of path management All at 2000 prices (£)			
		All costs one-off, except maintenance	Lochaber	Loch Lomond	Wester Ross	Cairngorms
1	NS	New path on new or alternative line	32.35	43.00	38.36	87.00
2	NH	New path on existing line constructed by hand	37.01	46.50	38.36	58.00
3	NM	New path on existing line constructed by machine	19.20	24.00	22.65	29.00
4	FR	Full repair	22.85	28.50	22.65	34.00
5	ER	Erosion control	9.09	11.00	8.16	17.00
6	PE	Pre-emptive	7.22	6.00	8.16	9.00
7	MA	Maintain annual cost	0.62	0.90	0.92	1.50
8	MO	Monitor	0.17	0.20	0.92	1.20
9	NO	No action	-	-	-	-
10	CL	Close route	0.96	1.10	1.46	3.00
UPLAND PATHS						
Aggregate and stone pitched paths						
£0.10/m (over entire network)		per year	The Footpath Trust			
Pre-repaired paths						
£1.20/m		per year	NTS Goat Fell			
£1.17/m		per year	NTS Ben Lomond			
Machine & hand-built						
£0.88/m		per year	West Highland Way south			
£0.98/m		per year	West Highland Way north			

Maintenance requires consistent and concerted effort with both clear responsibilities for initiating the maintenance and skilled workers who know the sites. It is therefore

necessary to record in writing the maintenance policy, standards, procedures and annual reports for the sites, so this information can be passed on in the file to future site managers.

Maintenance file

Information is contained in the maintenance file, which records the frequency, location and intensity of maintenance work to be carried out, the completed site file on the areas of the site that are likely to require most maintenance attention, and the types of maintenance task that will be needed. The maintenance file need only be two pages long, as it simply records each occasion on which routine maintenance, site inspection, and risk assessments were carried out. The maintenance file should also include all of the information collected in the site file, such as site risk assessment, a set of full site 'as built' drawings and relevant background information.

Each time the path is inspected, or routine maintenance work is carried out, a short report is written up on site, entered into the maintenance file, and circulated to each organisation that holds a copy of the information. This type of report will differ between different types of path, and different people carrying out the work. The two examples here show a site report form for a professional pathworker carrying out repairs on a mountain path alongside a report form for local volunteer path wardens carrying out inspections and minor repairs on a community path network route.

Repairs

In addition to routine inspections and maintenance work, occasional repair work will also be needed. This may range from replacing a crossdrain that has been washed out by a sudden rush of water, to repairing a kissing gate that has been damaged by frequent use, or blocking braids on a path where spreading width has been observed for several years, but has now reached a state at which action is necessary. The response to repair works will vary from site to site, but for all sites a contingency budget should be kept aside for this type of work. The exact location is unpredictable, but the fact that it will occur can be reasonably predicted and estimated. The difficulty of estimating the size and frequency of repair work is made easier if the risk is spread over a large number of sites. For instance, hold a single repair budget for a network of 100km of path network, with an expectation that 12–15 repairs visits will be needed each year across the network in addition to routine maintenance visits. It is important to brief those carrying out routine maintenance work not to undertake lengthy repair work, as this will detract from the time available for maintenance across the whole path. Instead, they should collect detailed information on the location, type of work required, and make an estimate of the time or cost of carrying out the work and, if possible, take photographs of the site.

Skills

Maintenance work does require a wide range of path skills, and should not be carried out by unskilled, or unsupervised staff. The harder part of maintenance is having a mechanism to remind or trigger routine actions to take place at the appropriate time each year, particularly if the maintenance could easily be postponed in favour of more immediate or urgent construction or other site management work. This temptation must be resisted, and programme of maintenance kept up.

There are a number of personnel who may carry out maintenance work, including:

- **Path contractors:** Footpath contractors may be engaged on contract to carry out maintenance inspections, routine work, and repair work if necessary. Usually carried out by a team of two, with a contract that extends over several sites it is not worth setting up a contract for only a few days of maintenance work. It is essential to build up a good working relationship with the maintenance team so that you get the right type of feedback on the condition of the routes, as well as the trust that work is being carried out conscientiously.
- **Dedicated site staff:** On larger, publicly owned access sites, dedicated maintenance teams are employed, for instance on NTS properties or longdistance routes. These teams specialise in routine maintenance inspections, maintenance work and repair work, and build up a good knowledge of the site. This type of provision is only possible with adequate resourcing and with an access route or area that warrants dedicated maintenance staff all year round.
- **Other site staff:** These include countryside rangers, private estate staff, farmers and others. If it is possible to include maintenance duties in the job description of site staff, or to pay an annual amount to on site land management staff, this can often be a very effective way of carrying out maintenance. The route is regularly visited in the course of work, and there is a strong incentive to keep the path in good repair. Such workers will need encouragement, training and supervision to make sure the work is carried out, and to the required standard.
- **Volunteers:** Volunteers have been involved in path maintenance for many years, and with good organisation, supervision, training, tools, and encouragement can carry out a very effective job. There are a number of different models of volunteer involvement, including:
- **Path wardens:** Community path networks may be maintained by a small group of local residents who volunteer during evenings or weekends to carry out minor maintenance work on the routes. Options range from people regularly walking the route providing path inspection reports, through regular Sunday working parties, to a repair team who are trained and equipped to respond.
- **Adopt-a-path:** Several walking clubs have 'adopted' footpaths and taken on the maintenance responsibility, particularly on popular mountain routes. The climbing club receives tools and training, and incorporates visits two or three times per year to the route, as part of their programme of club meets. As with all volunteer work, this input is not free of charge, and does require training, supervision, encouragement and safe working.

Issues

Do not build what you cannot maintain. Identify the likely need for maintenance and the resources as part of the initial project planning, and include this as an integral part of the project proposal and funding package. Do not embark on the project unless you have either secured the resources required to carry out this work in future, or have a commitment to fund future maintenance long term.

When designing the project decide, before embarking on construction, how maintenance work will be carried out, and the balance between construction and maintenance work. It may be possible to reduce the capital investment and the scale of construction work, if you are confident about future revenue and availability of maintenance work. The shift in emphasis of path work in Scotland to a focus on pre-emptive and maintenance work, will only be possible when revenue for continuing 'stitch in time' pathwork is secured and made available for periods of 5–10 years, giving path managers confidence to take this route.

Make sure that the contractors, site staff, or volunteers carrying out maintenance work have the right skills and are correctly briefed. They will be dealing with all types of construction work, and need to report on built structures. They will need a very wide range of skills, and not simply the ability to scrape a spade through a crossdrain! Explain to whoever is carrying out the maintenance work how this fits into the programme of wider management, and make sure you receive back an accurate and comprehensive record of the maintenance work and the condition of the site. This may be the only report you receive on the site for a whole year.

Safety is particularly important during maintenance work – both on site while maintenance work is being carried out, and through the annual audit site safety condition. As for any construction work, no matter how minor, a risk assessment should be carried out, and only trained and competent personnel should perform maintenance work. Path inspections may be carried out by a single member of staff working alone, if they follow the lone working, and logging in/out procedures. All practical maintenance work should be carried out by a team of at least two people for safety, work efficiency and morale. The maintenance visit is usually combined with a safety assessment of the site, from the point of view of the user. This includes identifying any change in condition, site hazards and re-evaluation of the risk assessment on an annual basis.

Start maintenance before path damage occurs, and if damage does occur, pre-empt the need to entirely rebuild the path with small scale and timely repairs.