

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	6
Report No	CIA/16/25

Committee: City of Inverness Area

Date: 19 May 2025

Report Title: Scottish Government Play Park Funding

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Members agreed at Communities and Place Committee in November 2021 to allocate the funds received from the Scottish Government's play park renewal fund, £60m over the lifetime of the parliament, be apportioned to Area Committees based on a blend of play park conditions and the criteria used by Government. In 2021/22 this was based on 95% 0 –14-year-old population and 5% on rurality and in 2022/23 and future years based on 93% age and 7% rurality. The Council's allocation to 2026 is £2.9m.
- 1.2 This report proposes Members agree the allocation of the funding for the specific projects in the seven Inverness Wards as discussed at the Area Service Supported Business Meetings.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **agree:-**

- i. In Ward 12 £102,336 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.5
- ii. In Ward 13 £72,225 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.6
- iii. In Ward 14 £55,000 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.7
- iv. In Ward 15 £73,304 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.8
- v. In Ward 16 £56,000 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.9
- vi. In Ward 17 £93,187 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.10
- vii. In Ward 19 £60,000 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.11

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – In 2021 £2,918,000 of capital grant was allocated to the Council as part of the Scottish Governments commitment to play area renewal. The principles for investing this funding and reporting on its use were confirmed in October 2022.

Members agreed at Communities and Place Committee in November 2021 the allocation of the funds received from the Scottish Governments play park renewal fund be apportioned to Area Committees based on a blend of play park conditions and the criteria used by Government which was 95% based on the 0-14-year-old population and 5% on rurality and in 2022/23 and future years is based on 93% age and 7% rurality.

- 3.2 **Legal** – Play areas are not a statutory service; however, where they are provided, we must comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability (Scotland) Act 1960 for employees and members of the public attending play areas. We must also comply with our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Fairer Scotland Duty.

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to relax and play, and participate in a wide range of cultural, artistic and cultural activities. The Council's approach to support these rights was set out in the Play Park Strategy agreed by Communities and Place Committee in November 2023. This recognises the value of informal spaces for play as well.

- 3.3 **Risk** – Inspecting and maintaining and/or replacing play park equipment will prevent injury to children and claims being made against the Council.

The approach to engaging locally on play area options with Members and other community bodies and children will enable honest conversations about prioritising resources. This not only reduces the risk of unreasonable public expectation given the importance of an affordable play estate, but it also enables joint problem solving and the identification of external funding and volunteering support.

- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no risks arising from this report.

- 3.5 **Gaelic** – There are Gaelic implications for any new signage required ensuring it has bi-lingual content in keeping with the Council's policy.

4. Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

- 4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. Background

- 5.1 Playparks have positive social and mental health benefits for children and young people.
- 5.2 The Council has 319 play parks and over 2083 pieces of play equipment. Inverness has 58 play areas and 561 pieces of play equipment.
- 5.3 The provision of play parks is not a statutory duty; but the inspection and maintenance of equipment once installed, is a mandatory requirement. For this reason, play parks are subjected to daily, weekly, fortnightly or monthly inspection based on usage and risk, and an annual inspection carried out by a qualified playground inspector.
- 5.4 A place-based review of play parks is well underway and being taken forward in discussions with Members locally. This is aligned to the Council agreement in January 2021 that:

“budget and decision-making are devolved to Area Committees to enable a place-based approach that uses local knowledge, community effort and resources alongside Member views and staff advice to solve problems together and to identify possibilities for a more sustainable approach to the play estate.”
- 5.5 To comply with the conditions of capital grant from the Scottish Government’s play park renewal programme, wider engagement is required along with reporting back on how the investment is being deployed. Wider engagement will align well to the principle of inclusion above and support Members in their local decision-making. In some Wards interested groups have already been involved.
- 5.6 Any refurbishments and upgrades will require to be in line with the approved Play Park Strategy agreed at the Communities and Place Committee on 29 November 2023, to consider the needs and expectations of communities and supports the active play, wellbeing and social activity of our children and their families.

6. Budget and Investment

- 6.1 The annual revenue budget for play parks for the Inverness Area 2025/26 is £65,200. This includes labour, plant and fleet, materials, and some contractor costs.
- 6.2 Following consideration at the Community and Place Committee on 25 November 2020, the Council agreed in January 2021 that budgets and decision-making for play parks would be devolved to Area Committees. This has involved more local discussions with Members within their Ward, given the Ward funds available and to enable a more local consideration as part of the place-based approach.
- 6.3 The total allocation from the Scottish Government play parks renewal programme for the Inverness Area is £838,162, which has been split equally between the seven Wards £119,737 per Ward over the five-year programme.

6.4 The remaining budgets for each Ward are shown in the table below

Ward	SG Budget Remaining
12 – Aird and Loch Ness	£113,232
13 – Inverness West	£89,772
14 – Inverness Central	£57,358
15 – Inverness Ness Side	£101,518
16 – Inverness Millburn	£56,171
17 – Culloden and Ardersier	£115,194
19 – Inverness South	£67,669
TOTAL	£600,914

6.5 At Area Service Supported Business Meetings in early 2025 the following proposals were discussed:

For Ward 12 a total commitment of £102,336

- Balnain Road Play Area; £26,350 for a refurbishment project
- Aird Road Play Area; £20,000 to install inclusive items
- Strathglass Play area; £3650 to contribute towards a community refurbishment project
- Abertaff Play Area; £2,500 to contribute towards a community refurbishment project
- Jenkins Park Play Area; £2,500 to contribute towards a community refurbishment project
- Milton of Drumnadrochit Play Area; £151 to remove and replace fence
- Kiltarlity Play Area; £47,185 to contribute towards a community refurbishment project

6.6 For Ward 13 a total commitment of £72,225

- Whin Park Play Area; £8,225 to complete the refurbishment project
- Lawers Way Play Area; £22,000 for a refurbishment project
- Blackpark Terrace Play Area; £10,000 for a new bench and inclusive slide
- Mile End Place Play Area; £20,000 for a carousel, monkey bars or zipline
- Charleston View Play Area; £12,000 for a slide or basket swing

6.7 For Ward 14 a total commitment of £55,000

- Benula Road Play Area; £35,000 for a refurbishment project
- Hawthorn Drive Play Area; £15,000 for a teenage climbing unit, hammock and zip line
- Lochalsh Road Play Area; £5,000 to replace bark with grass matting surfacing

6.8 For Ward 15 a total commitment of £73,304

- Castle Heather Play Area; £4,990 for MUGA panels
- MacDonald Park Play Area; £25,450 to resurface MUGA and carry out footpath works
- Holm Park Play Area; £3,350 to replace goals and reseed
- Ardbreck Play Area; £34,514 for a refurbishment project
- Evan Barron Road Play Area; £5,000 to remove swings and install pretend road

6.9 For Ward 16 a total commitment of £56,000

- Grebe Avenue Play Area; £40,000 for a refurbishment project
- Walker Park Play Area; £6,000 to replace bark with grass matting surfacing
- Lochiel Road Play Area; £10,000 to add an inclusive item

6.10 For Ward 17 a total commitment of £93,187

- Cameron Drive Play Area; £53,187 for replacing the wetpour with grass matting surfacing
- Smithton Pitches Play Area; £40,000 for a refurbishment project

6.11 For Ward 19 a total commitment of £60,000

- Inshes Park Play Area; £30,000 for a replacement cable runway, springy, basket swing and parkour equipment
- Burn Brae Play Area; £30,000 for a refurbishment project

6.12 The remainder of the allocation if the above spend is agreed is shown in the table below

Ward	SG Budget Remaining (after proposals)
12 – Aird and Loch Ness	£10,896
13 – Inverness West	£17,547
14 – Inverness Central	£2,358
15 – Inverness Ness Side	£28,214
16 – Inverness Millburn	£171
17 – Culloden and Ardersier	£22,007
19 – Inverness South	£7,669
TOTAL	£88,862

It is proposed to retain these allocations in each Ward for contingency and once all projects are completed final recommendations can be proposed by Officers for consideration and agreement by Members.

6.13 Following approval, orders will be placed, and the money committed. Members will be updated with timescales on delivery and installation.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 6 May 2025

Author: Debbie Sutton, Strategic Lead Community Operations and Logistics

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None