

# The Highland Council

Agenda Item	7
Report No	LA-22-25

**Committee:** Lochaber Area

**Date:** 11 August 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 Lochaber Ward 11 as discussed at the Local Area Business Meeting.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to **agree** in Ward 11 £20,000 to be allocated to the agreed project as outlined at in Section 6.4.

## 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 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening was undertaken on 23 July 2025. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.
- 4.3.1 The Screening process has concluded that there are many positive impacts from this proposal. Encouraging more outdoor play and enhancing play areas in rural communities will have a positive impact on health. This proposal aims to provide higher quality, more accessible, and inclusive play park equipment and surfacing. While the installation of new equipment may have a minor impact on climate change, this will be mitigated by selecting equipment with sustainability in mind, using durable, environmentally friendly materials that extend the lifespan of the equipment and reduce the frequency of replacements.

Members are asked to consider the summary in **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

## 4.3.2

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and Young People – <i>Positive impact</i></li> <li>Children affected by disability – <i>Positive impact</i></li> </ul>
Socio-economic	<i>Positive impact</i>
Human Rights	<i>Positive impact</i>
Children's Rights and Well-being	<i>Positive impact</i>
Island and Mainland Rural	<i>Positive impact</i>
Climate Change	<i>Negative impact</i>
Data Rights	<i>No impact</i>

## 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. Lochaber has 33 play areas and 192 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 inspections 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 Lochaber Area 2025/26 is £13,000. 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. The total allocation from the Scottish Government play parks renewal programme for the Lochaber Area is £494,674, which has been split equally between the two Wards £247,337 per Ward over the five-year programme.
- 6.3 The remaining budget for Ward 11 is £43,211.
- 6.4 At the Local Area Business Meeting in June 2025 the following proposal was discussed:-
- For Ward 11 a total commitment of £20,000:-
- Fort William Road Play Area; £20,000 for a renewal of equipment project
- 6.5 The remainder of the allocation if the above spend is agreed will be £23,211 for Ward 11. It is proposed to retain this allocation for contingency and once all projects are completed a final recommendation can be proposed by Officers for consideration and agreement by Members.
- 6.6 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: 10 July 2025

Author: David Lamont, Amenities Services Manager (South)

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment Summary

## **Integrated Impact Assessment Screening – Summary**

The proposal has been screened for impact and the following summarises the key findings:-

The screening identified overall positive impacts on the community, including benefits for many protected characteristic groups, particularly through the installation of inclusive and accessible play equipment. Additionally, the enhancement of play areas strengthens the Council's commitment to Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which affirms children's right to rest, play, and engage in cultural and artistic activities. While a negative impact relating to climate change was noted, mitigation measures have been outlined to ensure this impact is minimised as much as possible.

### **Equality**

The introduction of new accessible and inclusive play equipment will have a positive impact on all children and young people by enhancing play areas and recognising the importance of informal spaces for play. Children with additional needs and disabilities will particularly benefit from the improved accessibility of both the equipment and surfacing in the designated play areas.

By providing safe and engaging spaces for outdoor play, these enhancements will contribute to better health and wellbeing for children and young people.

### **Children's Rights and Wellbeing**

This proposal has a direct positive impact on children's rights. Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms that children have the right to rest, play, and engage in a variety of cultural and artistic activities. The Council's commitment to upholding these rights is outlined in the Play Park Strategy, which was approved by the Communities and Place Committee in November 2023.

### **Rural**

Ensuring accessible and inclusive play areas in rural locations is essential, and by delivering improvement works across all areas of Highland, rural communities will benefit from this additional investment.

### **Climate Change**

A negative impact related to climate change has been identified, as the installation of new play equipment and surfacing will contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. However, this impact will be mitigated by selecting equipment which has as low an impact as possible on the environment. Choosing items which are made of robust, sustainable materials such as steel and robinia wood. designed to minimise environmental harm. Preference will be given to items made from durable, sustainable materials such as steel and robinia wood, which offer greater longevity and reduce the need for frequent replacements.