

Highland Council

Play Sufficiency Assessment

Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Measadh Pailteas Cluiche

January 2026



Draft for Consultation

www.highland.gov.uk



Document Overview

The Play Sufficiency Assessment Report for consultation has five sections. Feedback on the findings presented in **Section 4** are sought through this consultation.

1- Introduction

This section introduces the importance of play and what a play sufficiency assessment is. It describes the spatial scope and key terms used in the PSA.

2 - Play Context

This section presents the international, national and local context and how play is considered and supported through Council planning and amenities activities.

3 – Play Sufficiency Assessment Methodology

This section outlines the approach to assessing play sufficiency in Highland.

4 – Statements of Play Sufficiency

This section presents findings about the quantity, inclusivity, quality and accessibility of play spaces in Highland. Feedback on this section is the focus for Consultation

5 – Setting the Standards for Play

This section summarises the applications of the Play Sufficiency Assessment findings in Highland, including the Local Development Plan, Play Park Strategy and Local Place Plans

A separate Glossary document is provided, to explain terminology used throughout the Play Sufficiency Assessment.

Consultation on the Highland Play Sufficiency Report is open from **16 January to 27 February 2026**. Feedback should be provided in the [online submission portal](#).

0 Executive Summary | Geàrr-chunntas Gnìomhach

What is the Play Sufficiency Assessment?

A Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) is the assessment of play spaces to provide a clear understanding of quantity, inclusivity, quality and accessibility of play. A PSA must be completed in accordance with the [Town and Country Planning \(Play Sufficiency Assessment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations](#)¹ and [Scottish Government Planning Guidance for Play Sufficiency Assessment](#)².

The Highland PSA has considered two categories of play space: Formal Play Spaces (FPS) and Informal Play Spaces (IPS). The assessment will both benefit Highland communities and stakeholders of play spaces, and Council officers and elected members who are involved in decision-making around play provision. The PSA findings also form part of the evidence base that will inform the preparation of the Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP).

Our Approach

The Highland Council approach to assessing play sufficiency was developed with reference to the statutory guidance, other best-practice guidance and toolkits about play. This approach has five general steps, outlined in Figure 0:1, which assist the Council to develop an understanding of four dimensions of play sufficiency: quantity, inclusivity, quality and accessibility.

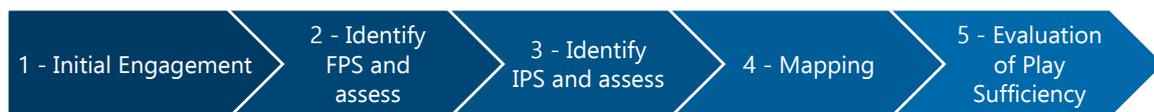


Figure 0:1 Summary of Play Sufficiency Assessment Process for Highland

The quality of formal play spaces was assessed using six categories (Figure 0:2), each with a range of criteria.

¹ [The Town and Country Planning \(Play Sufficiency Assessment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023](#)

² [Play Sufficiency Assessment Regulations 2023: planning guidance](#)



Figure 0:2 Categories used for assessment of Formal Play Space Quality in Highland

Spatial mapping and analysis supported the assessment of quantity and inclusivity of play. The Local Living Tool provided insight on accessibility of Council-owned play spaces.

Summary of Findings

A total of 451 formal play spaces were identified and surveyed across Highland Council area. The assessment has focused on Settlement Development Areas within Local Committee Areas, within which 351 formal play spaces (29.9ha) and 2,263ha of informal play space have been identified.

Play opportunities across Highland, and the sufficiency of these opportunities vary significantly across the dimensions of quality, quantity, inclusivity and accessibility. The assessment highlights that each play space offers different functions and opportunities for play. As such, in assessing play sufficiency context is a critical consideration and play spaces should not be considered in isolation. To support a context-based understanding of play sufficiency, PSA findings are reported by Totality (Highland) and Locality (Local Committee Areas) in this PSA, and spatially presented in the online map:

The Interactive online map is accessible via link:
[Highland Play Sufficiency Assessment Map](#)

The individual play space **quality** scores can be viewed in the online [Play Sufficiency Assessment map](#), by clicking the point for an FPS to reveal the dashboard, as shown in Figure 0:3.

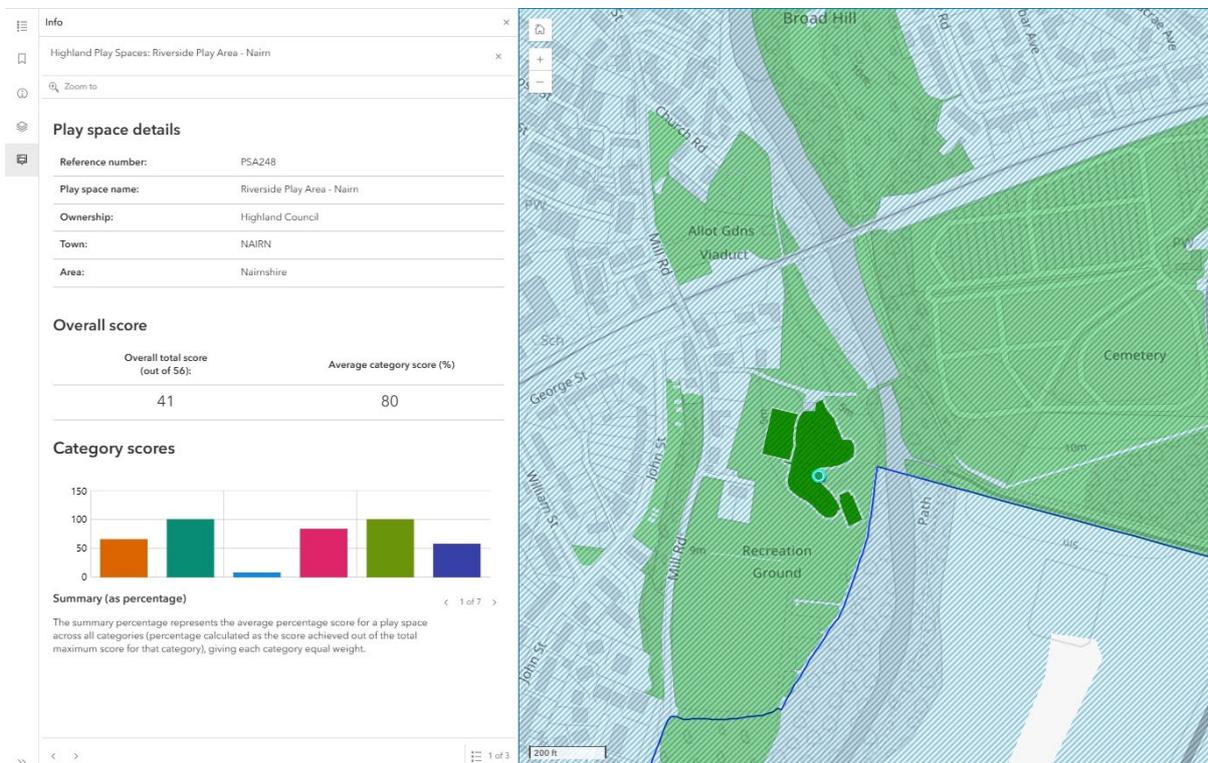


Figure 0:3 Example dashboard of play space details from online PSA Map

Quantity and Inclusivity

- A total of 451 formal play spaces were identified in Highland through this play sufficiency assessment. Of those 325 are located within Settlement Development Areas.
- On average the provision of play space areas (m²) as a proportion of the area of Settlement Development Areas (m²) in Highland is 0.23% formal play spaces and 17.2% informal play spaces (of those identified).
- The highest proportion of FPS area provided within an SDA of a Local Committee Area is in Sutherland (0.43%) and, the lowest is in Lochaber (0.04%).

Following consultation on the draft PSA, inclusivity analysis is proposed to be completed, and analysis of the square meter provision per resident in an SDA to enable comparison with the Open Space in new Residential Development Guidance standard for provision.

Quality and Accessibility

All formal play spaces were assessed for **quality** and categorised into one of four quality classes overall - Very High, High, Moderate or Low – based on the average FPS category performance (%). The percentage of spaces within each quality class for each Local Committee Area is provided in Table 0:1.

Table 0:1 Summary of Formal Play Space Quality ratings, by Local Committee Area in Highland

| Locality: Local Committee Area | FPS Quality Rating Class (% of spaces) | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------|------------|------------|
| | Very High | High | Moderate | Low |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 8% | 31% | 54% | 8% |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 5% | 39% | 44% | 13% |
| Caithness | 9% | 58% | 31% | 2% |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 8% | 20% | 52% | 20% |
| City of Inverness | 6% | 32% | 47% | 15% |
| Lochaber | 10% | 64% | 26% | 0% |
| Nairnshire | 18% | 55% | 27% | 0% |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 11% | 26% | 58% | 5% |
| Sutherland | 5% | 53% | 40% | 3% |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 6% | 52% | 26% | 16% |
| Totality: Highland | 7% | 42% | 41% | 10% |

- In terms of the average across Localities, 7% of FPS achieve the Very High rating (75% or more average category score for quality), 42% of FPS achieve the High rating (50-75% average category score), and 51% of FPS are rated as Moderate or Low quality (<50% average category score).
- The Local Committee Area with the greatest proportion of very high-quality FPS is Nairnshire (18%) and the lowest proportion are Black Isle and Easter Ross (5%) and Sutherland (5%).
- The Local Committee Areas with the greatest proportion of high-quality FPS are Lochaber (64%), Nairnshire (55%), and Caithness (58%). The Local Committee Areas with the largest proportion of low-quality FPS are Dingwall and Seaforth (20%), Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (16%) and City of Inverness (15%).

Within each quality category assessed, there are a range of scores achieved by FPS in Highland (Table 0:2) which demonstrates the range of play qualities provided in each Local Committee Area. Play sufficiency is a consideration within a given context, informed by the combination of qualities within play spaces in a particular area. This means that, for example, not all play spaces are expected to offer all equipment types, and different spaces may offer more specialised equipment that is accessible or nearby space for informal play.

Accessibility analysis for play spaces owned by the Council, using 800m walking catchments, was completed as part of the Local Living Tool mapping also undertaken by Highland Council. Areas within an 800m buffer (10 min walk) from any Council-owned play area are highlighted in the Highland Play Sufficiency Assessment Map.

Table 0:2 Summary of average category scores for Formal Play Spaces in each Local Committee Area in Highland

| Locality: Local Committee Area | Average Category Scores (%) | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | Equipment Types | Features for informal play | Accessibility features | Context and Location | Environmental qualities | Additional |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 47% | 57% | 30% | 66% | 70% | 24% |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 32% | 50% | 34% | 66% | 74% | 23% |
| Caithness | 38% | 49% | 56% | 78% | 85% | 25% |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 37% | 46% | 23% | 55% | 70% | 18% |
| City of Inverness | 37% | 43% | 37% | 64% | 71% | 24% |
| Lochaber | 49% | 55% | 48% | 73% | 79% | 39% |
| Nairnshire | 48% | 64% | 45% | 74% | 92% | 38% |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 44% | 36% | 57% | 68% | 70% | 26% |
| Sutherland | 36% | 44% | 51% | 73% | 90% | 27% |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 48% | 48% | 42% | 62% | 79% | 30% |
| Totality: Highland | 39% | 47% | 41% | 67% | 76% | 26% |

Conclusion

Statements on the sufficiency of play provision in Highland in totality and by locality have been presented in this Play Sufficiency Assessment, providing an evidence base to support the preparation of the new Highland Local Development Plan and implementation of the Play Park Strategy. To support the ongoing provision of play opportunities in Highland, the context of play provision and findings of this PSA are key considerations along with the demand for play (e.g. new development areas). Detailed findings of the PSA can be analysed in a myriad of other ways to support future planning and place-based investment decisions.

Consultation Note:

A summary of insights from this consultation on the draft PSA report will be considered and added to the final PSA report following the consultation period.

1 Introduction | Ro-ràdh

1.1 Why is Play important?

This Play Sufficiency Assessment has been undertaken in alignment with the Scottish Government vision for play in Scotland and recognising the importance of play spaces for children in Highland. Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Play Sufficiency Assessment³ states:

- The Scottish Government wants Scotland to be the best place to grow up. Scotland's Play Strategy⁴ sets out a vision which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people.
- Through play, children and young people can explore the world around them in a creative and engaging way.
- Research shows that children experience a range of health, wellbeing, developmental and educational benefits from outdoor play, and through learning in and connecting with nature.
- According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) General Comment 17, play is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development.
- Ensuring children's access to play and engaging children in the planning system upholds their right to play and relax; their right to freedom of association and their right for their views to be heard and be given due consideration under UNCRC Articles 31, 15 and 12 respectively.

1.2 What is a Play Sufficiency Assessment?

A Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) is the assessment of play spaces to provide a clear understanding of the provision and quality of play spaces, gaps in provision and an indication of possible barriers children face in accessing and using play spaces.

In Scotland, statutory requirements for preparing a PSA are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997⁵ section **16D Play Sufficiency Assessment**, and supplemented by the Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment)

³ Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Play Sufficiency Assessment

⁴ Scotland Play Strategy

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8/contents>

[\(Scotland\) Regulations 2023⁶](#) (PSA Regulations) and Scottish Government Planning Guidance for Play Sufficiency Assessment⁷ 2023 (PSA Guidance).

This Highland Play Sufficiency Assessment considers two categories of play space: Formal Play Spaces (FPS) with formal equipment such as swings, slides, climbing structures; and Informal Play Spaces (IPS) which are open spaces with potential to support informal, unstructured play. These types of spaces are further described in the **Definitions for Assessment**.

The purpose of this PSA⁸ is to evaluate and present evidence on the quality, quantity, inclusivity and accessibility of formal and informal play spaces for children (aged 0-17 years) in Highland. It develops understanding on the distribution of formal and informal play spaces in Highland, what facilities and functions are on offer in different localities and where they may have limitations. Evaluation of inclusivity and accessibility of play spaces has also been undertaken.

The PSA is intended both for the benefit of Highland communities and stakeholders of play spaces, and for Council officers and elected members who are involved in decision-making around the provision, improvement, and long-term management of play spaces.

The findings from this PSA form part of the evidence base that will inform the preparation of the Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP). This evidence will assist in identifying where new play spaces may be required and where existing ones could be enhanced to better serve communities, helping to deliver high-quality, accessible, and sustainable play environments that promote children's health and wellbeing.

1.3 Spatial Scope and Approach

The Highland Council administrative boundary overlaps with part of the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) area, including most of the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Committee Area. The spatial scope of the PSA is the Highland Council Area (Figure 1:1), including the Cairngorms National Park Area (CNPA). The **quality** assessment of formal play spaces in Badenoch and Strathspey is reported in both the CNPA Play Sufficiency Assessment and the Highland Play Sufficiency Assessment, for completeness. The Highland Play Sufficiency Assessment does not include a **quantity**

⁶ [The Town and Country Planning \(Play Sufficiency Assessment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023](#)

⁷ [Play Sufficiency Assessment Regulations 2023: planning guidance](#)

⁸ [PSA definition by Play Scotland](#)

assessment of formal or informal play spaces in Badenoch and Strathspey: this is reported in the CNPA Play Sufficiency Assessment.

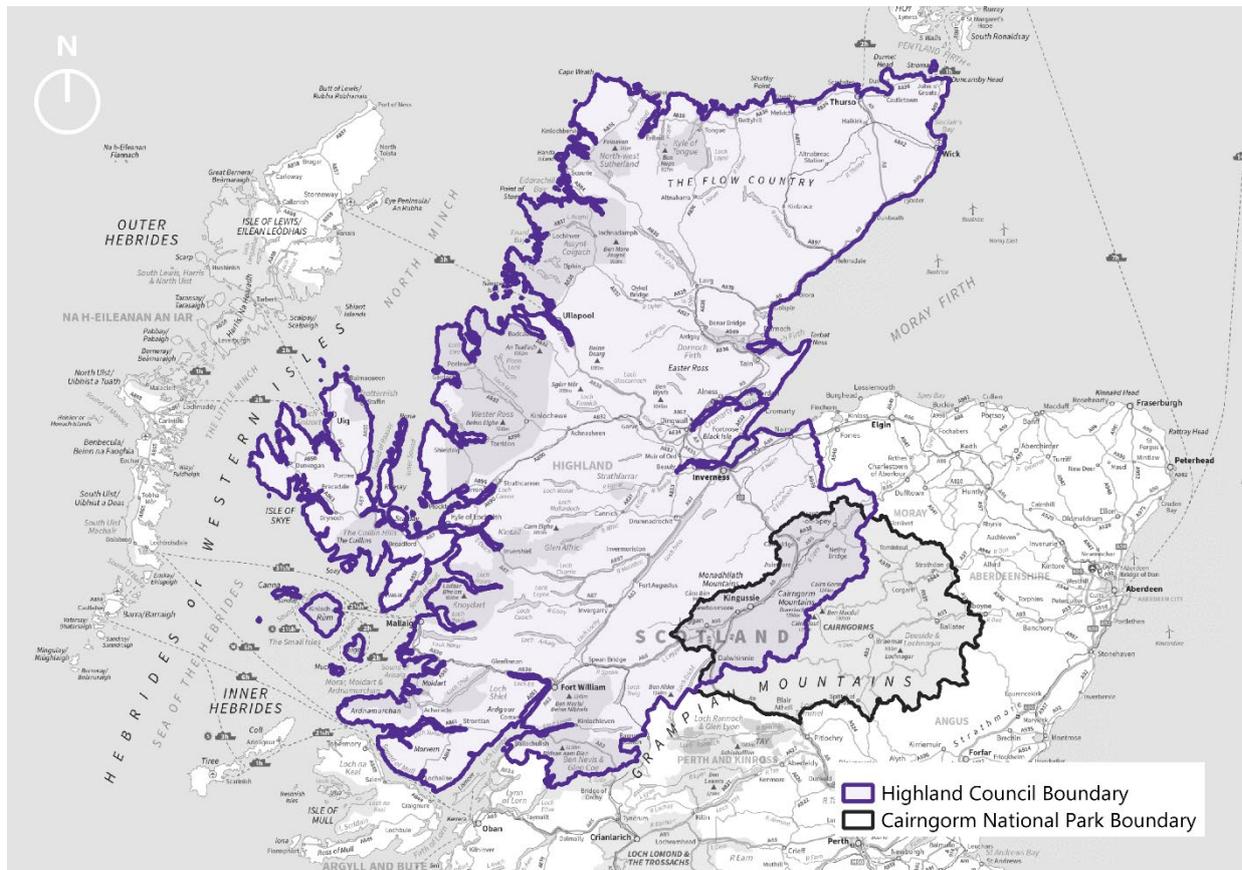


Figure 1:1 Spatial Scope of Play Sufficiency Assessment: Highland Council's Boundary

Cairngorms National Park Authority

The CNPA has prepared its own [Play Sufficiency Assessment](#)⁹, which was recently consulted on, which will inform the preparation of the CNPA Local Development Plan. The CNPA Play Sufficiency Assessment has adopted the Highland Council assessment of formal play space **quality** within CNPA, and a completed an independent evaluation of play **quantity**, including informal play spaces using the Ordnance Survey Open Data Greenspace layer and sportscotland data.

1.4 Definitions for Assessment

1.4.1 Play Space Types

Play opportunities for children are wide ranging and cover different settings. The Highland PSA adopts the PSA Regulations definition of “play spaces” as outdoor

⁹ Cairngorms National Park Play Sufficiency Assessment 2025

spaces, which are accessible by the public and offer play opportunities for children, with a focus on Formal Play Spaces and Informal Play Spaces which are defined as:

- **Formal Play Spaces (FPS)** are areas specifically designed and maintained for the purposes of play, in line with the PSA Regulations. FPS are often found in play spaces and playgrounds and are typically characterized by structured equipment, defined boundaries, and a focus on physical activity and structured play.
- **Informal Play Spaces (IPS)** are play spaces that are, or are within, open space areas and are not specifically design or maintained for the purposes of play, in line with the PSA Regulations. IPS may include natural environments such as woodlands, open green spaces, or quiet residential streets that allow children to explore, interact, and be creative without fixed equipment or defined boundaries.

In Highland, the extensive landscape provides many opportunities for informal play, including outwith settlements. However, for this PSA the focus for assessment of IPS is on areas within Settlement Development Areas and generally within or associated with an open space. For example, in the online PSA map, the area extent of identified informal play spaces and formal play spaces are shown (Figure 1:2).



Figure 1:2 An example of Informal Play Spaces and Formal Play Spaces as shown in the online PSA Map

1.4.2 Children (play space users)

In the PSA Regulations, “children” is defined as persons under the age of 18 years. This is in line with the definition under Article 1 of UNCRC, an internationally mandated children’s rights framework. Also, there is a wider policy connection between outdoor play, education and health, which supports the consideration of children as those aged 0-17, including babies, children, and teenagers - from birth right up to completing formal primary and secondary school education in Scotland. For these reasons the Highland PSA has adopted the definition of children as those aged up to 18 years.

1.4.3 Totality and Locality

The Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 requires local authorities to include statements about overall quality, quantity and accessibility of formal and informal play spaces in each **locality** and by **totality**.

The whole Highland Council area (including CNPA) is used for the **totality** assessment of play sufficiency.

PSA Regulations apply Locality to have the meaning given in section 9(2) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015¹⁰. PSA Guidance sets out that “Locality” must be defined, but with necessary flexibility for planning authorities to define the size and scale of the settlement or neighbourhood basis that is suitable for their own area. For the Highland PSA, Local Committee Areas have been defined as the “Locality” geography for analysis and reporting within the PSA, with a focus on the provision of play within the areas where most people live – Settlement Development Areas (see **Settlement Development Areas**). The ten Local Committee Areas (Figure 1:3) in the Highland Council area are:

1. Badenoch and Strathspey
2. Black Isle and Easter Ross
3. Caithness
4. Dingwall and Seaforth
5. City of Inverness
6. Lochaber
7. Nairnshire
8. Isle of Skye and Raasay

¹⁰ [Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)

9. Sutherland

10. Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh

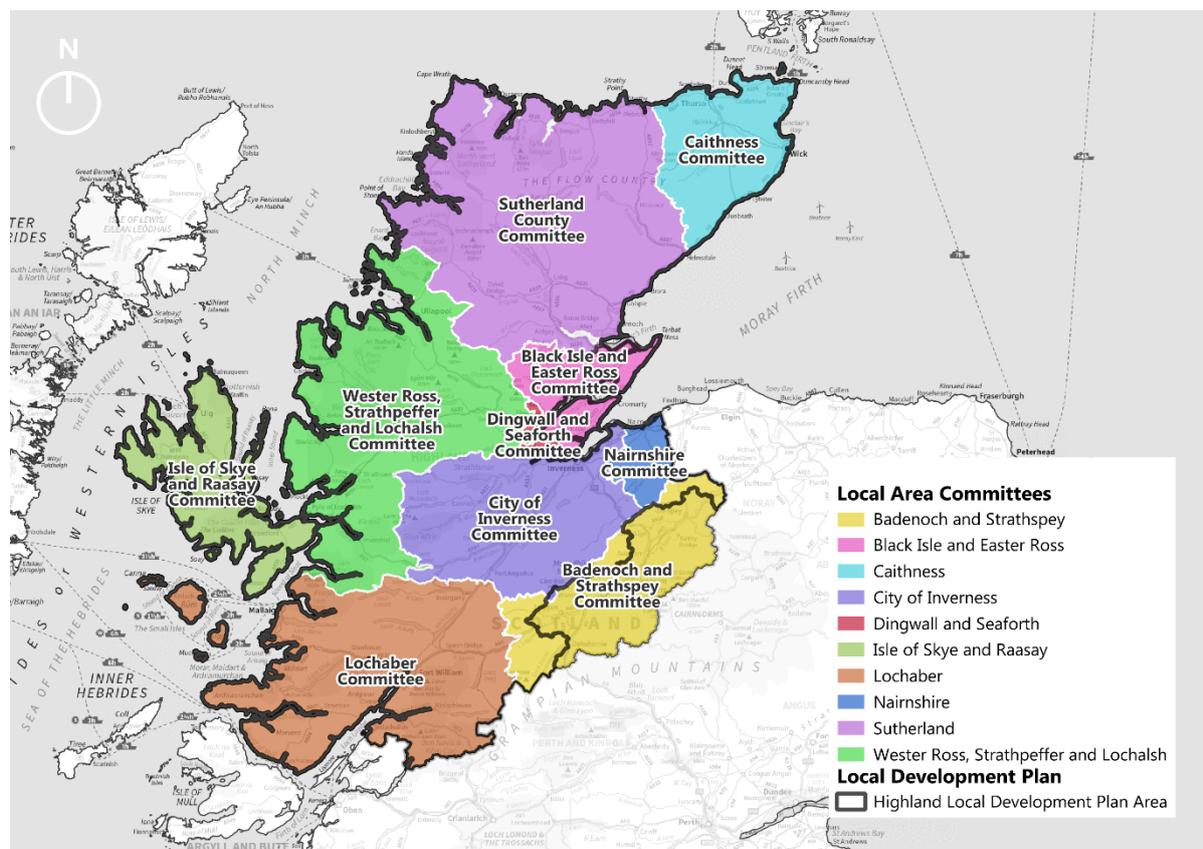


Figure 1:3 Localities for PSA, the Local Committee Areas in Highland (with HLDP area overlaid).

1.4.4 Settlement Development Areas

Settlement Development Areas (SDAs) were the spatial focus for identifying and assessing play spaces within Localities in Highland, as they represent the areas where the most people live and where future development sites are generally allocated. SDAs are defined in the current 'Area' Local Development Plans – Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan), West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan) and Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2). These SDAs were identified from consideration of a range of factors that indicated community demand for growth at the time of preparing those LDPs, including factors such as settlement size, range of facilities provided and capacity of existing infrastructure.

It should be noted that using the defined SDAs to assess play spaces it is merely a geography applied to identify and focus the evaluation of play spaces where the majority are located. Some FPS outwith SDAs, such as within smaller Growing

Settlements¹¹, have been identified and assessed using the criteria for play quality. However, a full evaluation of play space quantity, inclusivity and accessibility outwith SDAs is not presented in this report. This does not indicate that a Growing Settlement has or needs less service and facility provision for play than an SDA settlement does.

¹¹ The other categorisation for settlements in Local Development Plans of 'Growing Settlements' also depends on several factors, but these tend to be much smaller, have less facilities and less potential for allocated development.

2 Play context | Co-theacsa Cluiche

2.1 International Context

The importance of play for child development is internationally recognised. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)¹², play is a fundamental and vital dimension of the pleasure of childhood, as well as an essential component of physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development.

Play Sufficiency Assessments are a useful tool to support progress towards several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG¹³), particularly those related to child wellbeing, education, and inclusive societies. The Council's Play Park Strategy¹⁴ also aims at delivering the UNSDG.

2.2 National Context

Scotland's Play Strategy protects a child's right to play within their community and has been written in alignment with many national and international guiding documents including the Equalities Act, Disability Discrimination Act and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Scotland's Play Vision Statement and Action Plan¹⁵ published in 2025 outlines the steps the Scottish Government will take within that time to achieve their vision and aims. It recognises that to meaningfully enable children and young people to play outdoors more readily and to play in their communities, the planning system should promote and support provision for a variety of both formal and informal play spaces¹⁶.

Undertaking a Play Sufficiency Assessment is a statutory requirement for planning authorities in Scotland. The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019¹⁷ inserted a new section 16D Play Sufficiency Assessment into the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997¹⁸ with regard to LDPs, which sets out that a planning authority must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities for children in its area, in preparing the Evidence Report for the LDP.

¹² https://www.playscotland.org/resources/print/UNCRC-General-Comment-17-on-Article-31.pdf?plsctml_id=20587

¹³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

¹⁴ [Play Park Strategy](#)

¹⁵ [Scotland's Play Vision Statement and Action Plan](#)

¹⁶ [Scotland's Play Vision Statement and Action Plan](#)

¹⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/13/contents>

¹⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/8/contents>

The Evidence Report for preparation of the new HLDP for Highland Council will be subject to independent assessment at the Gate Check¹⁹, which will check that the information provided is sufficient for THC to incorporate play-related aspects into the new LDP.

National Planning Framework 4²⁰ (NPF4) **Policy 21 Play, recreation and sport** aims to encourage, promote and facilitate spaces and opportunities for play, recreation and sport. The policy sets out that LDPs should identify sites for sports, play and outdoor recreation for people of all ages. This should be based on an understanding of the needs and demand in the community and informed by the planning authority's Play Sufficiency Assessment (this report) and their Open Space Strategy. These spaces can be incorporated as part of enhancing and expanding blue and green infrastructure, taking account of relevant agencies' plans or policy frameworks, such as flood risk and/or water management plans. New provisions should be well-designed, high quality, accessible and inclusive.

The Highland PSA seeks to align with the national policy objectives in NPF4 around Policy 12 Play, recreation and sport as well as Policy 14 Design, quality and place and Policy 15 Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods, and the right to play.

2.3 Local Context

2.3.1 Highland Council Play Park Strategy

Highland Council actively supports children and youth by valuing, protecting, and developing their individual and unique skills as they journey towards learning the skills of adult life and the workforce. One thing that all children know what to do well, and is totally self-directed and free, is to play.

The Highland Play Park Strategy 2023–2033²¹ was developed to set a vision and long-term plan for all Council-owned play spaces in Highland. In November 2023, the Play Park Strategy was agreed and adopted by Council, setting out the key aims, visions and actions to support the implementation of the strategy. This strategy underwent consultation with children of all ages (through a Highland-wide

¹⁹ Gate Check – is carried out by a Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) Reporter, makes an independent judgement of whether the evidence report contains 'sufficient information' to inform the preparation of the LDP.

²⁰ NPF4

²¹ https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/29605/play_park_strategy_and_action_plan_2023-33

questionnaire sent to all schools), and in turn this engagement has informed this PSA.

2.3.2 Local Development Plan

The LDPs that are currently operative in Highland are part of the policy context that influence the provision of play spaces. They are the Highland-wide Local Development Plan, Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan), West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan) and Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2), supplemented by the Open Space in New Residential Development Supplementary Guidance.

Highland Council is currently preparing the new Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP). There are three key stages in local development planning: evidence gathering, plan preparation and delivery²². The legislative duty set out in the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that a planning authority must assess the sufficiency of play opportunities in its area for children in preparing an evidence report. As such, the PSA forms part the evidence base within Chapter 13: Design, Wellbeing, Local Living and Placemaking of the HLDP Evidence Report. The new HLDP will replace the existing LDPs and the Supplementary Guidance and may be accompanied by non-statutory planning guidance.

The preparation of the PSA is intended to help ensure there is a good understanding of the sufficiency of both formal and informal play spaces for children across the Highland local authority area.

In addition to the PSA, an Open Space Audit has been undertaken in Highland to provide evidence of open space provision to inform the new HLDP. This audit also focused on Settlement Development Areas and identified informal play spaces, open space, amenity and other recreation facilities such as playing fields.

2.3.3 Local Place Plans

Local Place Plans (LPP) are a potential additional, emerging set of evidence about play demand and aspirations from communities. For example, some LPPs will contain community priorities about play spaces in their area. This evidence will continue to emerge as the preparation of LPPs progresses in some communities and it will be

²² See Figure 4 of [Local Development Planning Guidance](#) for overview of LDP process

taken into account in the preparation of the new HLDP as and when LPPs are registered²³.

2.3.4 Demographics and Diversity

In 2024, Highland was home to 42,252 young people aged from 0-17 years old, representing 17.9% of the local population²⁴ - slightly lower than the Scotland-wide child population (18.5%). Highland's population of children and young people is complex, from 2017 onwards Highland's population has shown a natural decrease with deaths exceeding births most recently by just over 1,000 per annum²⁵, but conversely Highland has experienced net in-migration of adults in their mid-30s and children aged 0-14²⁶, as it is viewed as a desirable location for bringing up younger children. With the significant rural and remote geography of Highland, one in three children live in remote rural areas²⁷.

Children have a range of play interests, needs and abilities, which arise from a range of factors such as community or family context, culture of origin, developmental stage, health, disability or neurodiversity, for example. In this Play Sufficiency Assessment, a particular focus on inclusivity and accessibility of play has been taken to understand how these dimensions of play sufficiency are provided for within Highland play spaces.

In Highland, there are 15,897 school pupils²⁸ of which 3.57 children per 1,000 are declared or assessed to have a disability (Pupil Statistics). Pupils have a range of support needs for learning at school, which can also provide an indication of their needs for play. Of the 5,562 Highland pupils with reported reasons for additional support at school, there are 66 pupils with hearing impairment, 66 with a visual impairment, 157 with physical or motor impairment, 361 with autism spectrum disorder, 458 with a physical health problem.

Socioeconomic circumstances may also impact a child's access to play spaces or opportunities for play, based on the provision of formal play spaces in their local area

²³ Registered Local Place Plans are recorded online at [Local Place Plan Register | The Highland Council](#).

²⁴ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/publications/mid-2024-population-estimates/#>

²⁵ NRS [Births](#) and [Deaths](#) Time Series Data 2024

²⁶ [NRS Migration Flows 2024 – Table 8](#)

²⁷ [Highland Children Young Peoples Needs Assessment 2023](#)

²⁸ [Pupil census supplementary statistics - gov.scot](#)

or opportunities for informal play based on their neighbourhood context, unique family or household situation.

Figure 2:1 provides a summary of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation in Highland. In Highland, Pupil Statistics (2024)²⁹ report that 3,121 pupils attending a local school live in the most deprived (20%) areas (out of total 15,897 pupils). The online interactive [Highland Play Sufficiency Assessment map](#), which offers the viewer the ability to zoom into settlements of interest, also shows the most and least deprived areas of Highland which are all situated within Settlement Development Areas.

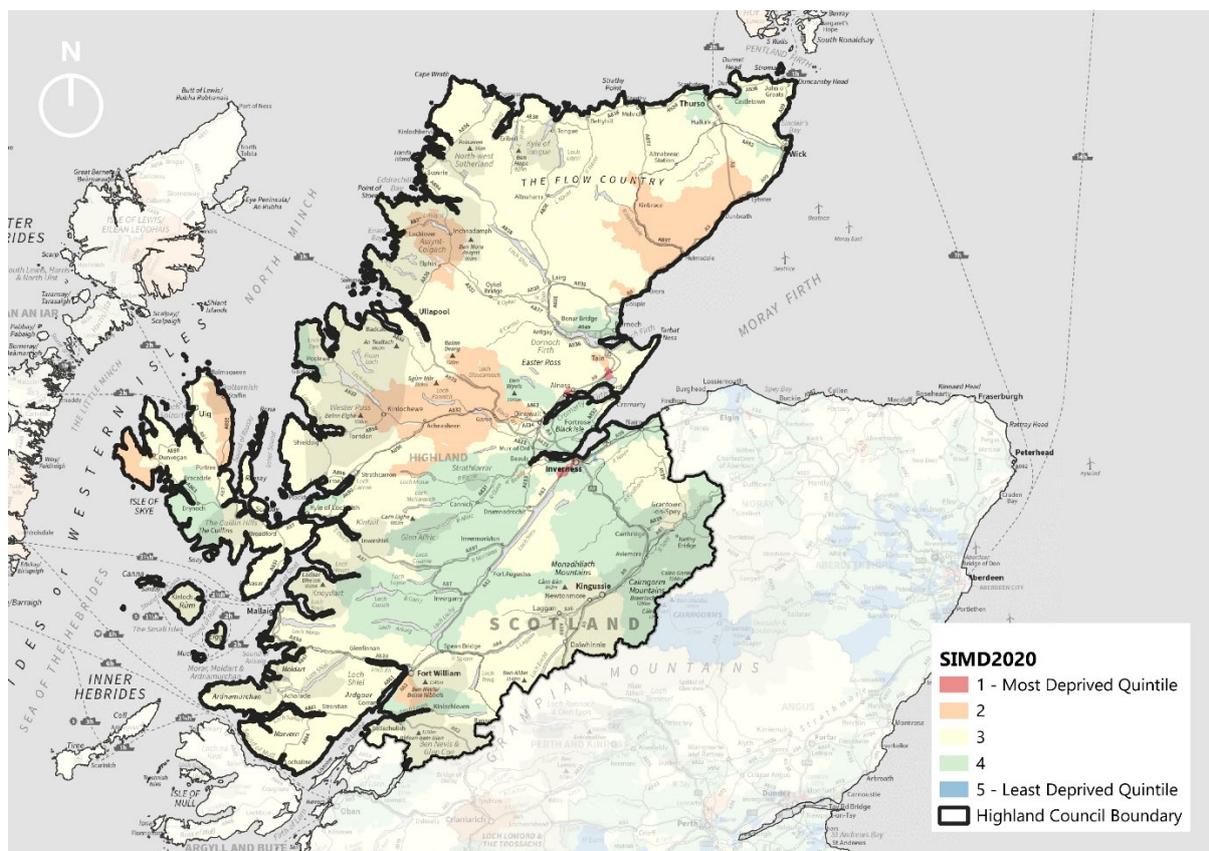


Figure 2:1 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, Highland overview

Creating inclusive environments for children with mobility issues as well as those from socio-economically disadvantaged households is a priority. Considering these factors and the importance of supporting child & community wellbeing, this assessment offers an opportunity for the Council to improve its understanding of play space inclusivity and accessibility.

²⁹ [Pupil census supplementary statistics - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/pupils-statistics)

3 Play Sufficiency Assessment Methodology | Modh-obrach Measaidh Pailteas Cluiche

This PSA has been prepared collaboratively by Highland Council’s Development Planning and Amenities functions, and the assessment approach was developed with reference to:

- Scottish Government Planning Guidance: Play Sufficiency Assessment³⁰,
- Play Sufficiency Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 2023³¹, and
- Play Scotland – People, Places and Play³²
- The Getting it Right for Play Toolkit³³ was also referred to evaluate local play opportunities for children and young people in Highland.

Our approach to preparing the PSA followed five general steps, shown in Figure 3:1.



Figure 3:1 Summary of Play Sufficiency Assessment Approach for Highland

The detailed assessment methodology included:

- Engagement about play space provision with children, schools, stakeholders including youth organisations;
- Identifying and assessing the present condition (quality, quantity and accessibility) of FPS through desktop analysis and site surveys;
- Identifying IPS through desktop analysis and site surveys (as part of Open Space Audit) and assessing the provision;
- Online spatial mapping of assessment findings, and spatial analysis of quantity and inclusivity analysis using SIMD;
- Statements of play sufficiency.

³⁰ Planning guidance for PSA

³¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2023/97/contents/made>

³² <https://www.playscotland.org/playful-communities/people-places-play/>

³³ https://www.playscotland.org/resources/print/Power-of-play-Toolkit.pdf?plsctl_id=13148

Further to this, consultation is being undertaken on this draft PSA and any feedback received will be taken into consideration for the final PSA Report. An account of the full methodology will be included in the final PSA Report.

The approach to assessing play spaces in Highland varied by type, which impacted the spatial scope for reporting on play sufficiency as shown in Table :2 for each of the dimensions of play sufficiency. In short, the **quality** of FPS was identified and assessed across all of Highland, IPS were only identified and assessed within SDAs, and the polygon extent of both these space types were only collected within SDAs³⁴ so the **quantity** analysis (spatial) is only reported within SDAs of Local Committee Areas.

Table 3:1 Overview of play sufficiency assessment by spatial scope and dimensions of play.

| Dimension of Play Sufficiency | Play Space Type | Area of Assessment | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| | | Only SDAs of Localities | All areas |
| Quantity & Inclusivity | FPS | ✓ ^{**} | |
| | IPS | ✓ ^{**35} | |
| Quality & Accessibility | FPS | | ✓ |
| | IPS | ✓ ^{*36} | |

* Only IPS adjacent to FPS were evaluated, as part of the Informal Play Features category.

** Excluding Badenoch and Strathspey

Further analysis of play spaces by settlement or neighbourhood can be undertaken to understand place-based play sufficiency if desired to inform decisions for a particular context, with reference to any aspirations expressed in a Local Place Plan. The application of the statements of play sufficiency, within the local policy context, is further discussed in **Setting Standards for Play: Conclusion and Next Steps**.

³⁴ Polygons defined as part of the Open Space Audit, which considered a wider range of spaces within SDAs including formal and informal play areas.

³⁵ Badenoch and Strathspey are excluded from the Highland Council Open Space Audit, and so IPS are not reported for that Committee Area. The CNPA Play Sufficiency Assessment adopts a desktop-based approach to evaluate informal play quantity.

³⁶ As above.

4 Statements of Play Sufficiency | Aithrisean airson Pailteas Cluiche

This section presents the key findings about the quality, quantity, accessibility and inclusivity of FPS and IPS. These statements should be read in conjunction with the [Highland Play Sufficiency Assessment Map](#) which offers an interactive and detailed spatial representation of the Play Sufficiency Assessment findings for Highland.

The interactive online map is accessible via link:
[Highland Play Sufficiency Assessment Map](#)

The quality assessment scores of individual formal play spaces can be accessed by clicking on the point for the space in the map. An example of how the summary of category scores is presented in the online map is shown in Figure 4:1.

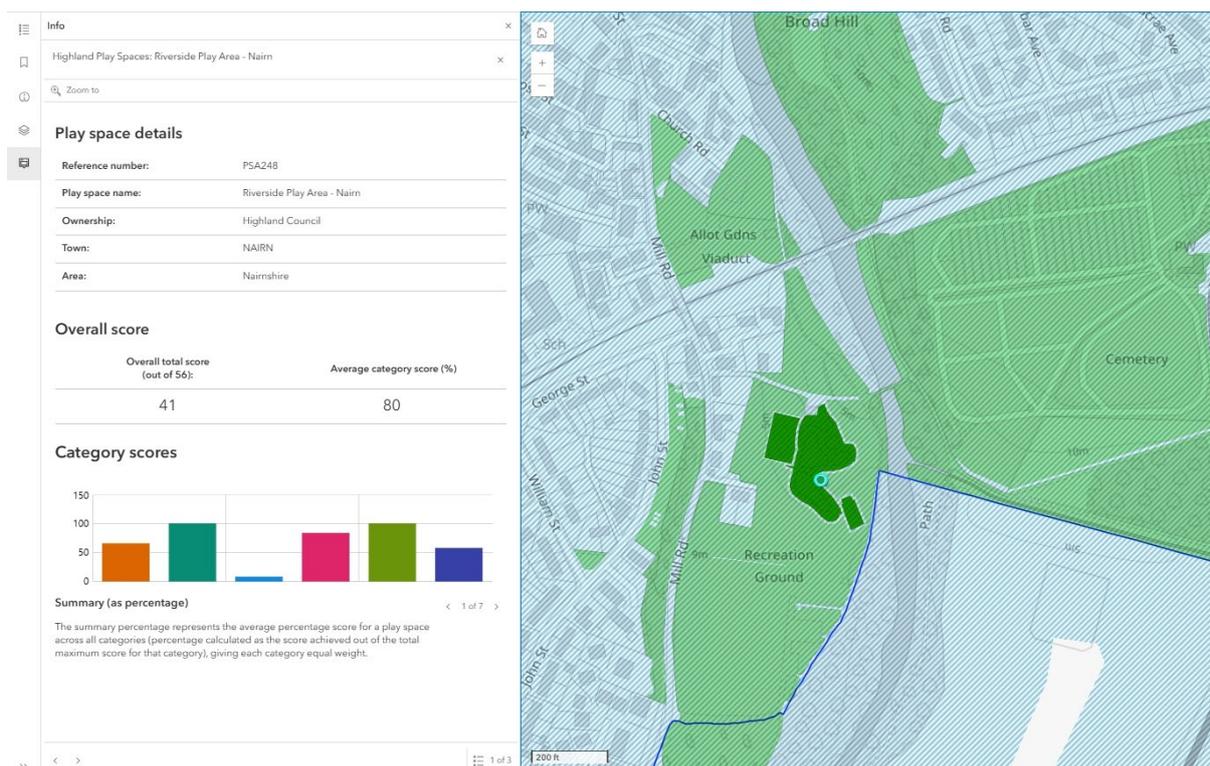


Figure 4:1 Example dashboard of play space details from online PSA Map

The quality of FPSs were scored against six categories (see Figure 4:2) to evaluate the quality of FPS and IPS (where situated next to FPS).



Figure 4:2 Categories used for assessment of Formal Play Space Quality in Highland

A high score against criteria in every quality category is not the goal, nor considered an appropriate measure of play sufficiency, but instead serves as an indication of the qualities and strengths of a particular play space in isolation across the six categories. The Highland PSA takes the view that play sufficiency should be considered in context, with consideration for overall provision for play in a Locality or a Settlement Development Area and consideration for all the elements that contribute to play sufficiency, including quantity, quality and accessibility.

Notes on data presentation

In summary tables in the following statement sections, the maximum and minimum percentage score has been highlighted for each criteria, to demonstrate the variability and spread of play quality within each category assessed. The overall Highland average (bottom row, in blue) is also included in summary tables, to indicate the average score or percentage achieved across Highland FPS, which serves as a benchmark.

The average percentage scores of play spaces in each locality are reported using the rating classes in Table 4:1, with each rating class assigned a colour. These coloured rating classes are also used in the online interactive PSA map.

Table 4:1 Formal Play Space Rating Classes, based on average percentage score bands

| Rating | Average percentage score (%) |
|----------|------------------------------|
| Low | < 30% |
| Moderate | 30% - 49% |

| | |
|-----------|-----------|
| High | 50% - 75% |
| Very High | >75% |

4.1 Quantity and inclusivity of play provision within Highland

There are 325 FPS within SDAs totalling 29.9 ha (excluding Badenoch and Strathspey). Table 4:2 presents the spatial provision of FPS as the number of FPS within the SDAs of each locality. This supports the comparison of **quantity** of FPS provision between Local Committee Areas.

Key findings about the quantity of FPS are:

- The Highland average provision of FPS within a settlement area is 0.23%.
- The greatest proportion of FPS area provided within SDAs of a Local Committee Area is Sutherland (0.43%) and the lowest is Lochaber (0.04%).
- The highest average provision of FPS by SDA is Dingwall and Seaforth (123,456m²) and the lowest is Lochaber (4,720m²).

Table 4:2 Quantity of Formal Play Spaces in Highland, within Settlement Development Areas of Local Committee Areas

| Locality: Local Committee Area | Total | Within SDAs | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----------------|-------------------------|
| | # | Percentage (%) | Total (m ²) |
| Badenoch and Strathspey ³⁷ | | - | |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 49 | 0.23% | 38,587 |
| Caithness | 30 | 0.31% | 42,630 |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 132 | 0.27% | 123,456 |
| City of Inverness | 23 | 0.13% | 10,914 |
| Lochaber | 12 | 0.04% | 4,720 |
| Nairnshire | 30 | 0.22% | 32,485 |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 10 | 0.15% | 9,519 |
| Sutherland | 24 | 0.43% | 26,966 |

³⁷ The evaluation of quantity of play spaces in Badenoch and Strathspey is reported in the Cairngorms National Park Play Sufficiency Assessment.

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|--------------|----------------|
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 15 | 0.11% | 9,678 |
| Totality: Highland | 325 | 0.23% | 298,952 |

The **quantity** of Informal Play Spaces (IPS) within SDAs was evaluated as part of the Highland Open Space Audit, identifying a total of 2,262ha, as shown in Table 4:4. It is important to note that within and outwith settlements there are numerous opportunities for informal play in Highland, such as woodlands, which support nature-based play and quiet residential streets that allow children to explore, interact and be creative. As such, figures in Table 4: should not be considered in isolation.

Key findings about the quantity of IPS are:

- Of the IPS identified, the Highland average provision of IPS within a SDA is 17.2%. The actual figure is likely to be higher.
- The greatest proportion of IPS area provided within SDAs of a Local Committee Area is Sutherland (22.4%) and the lowest is Lochaber (4.0%).
- Of the spaces identified, the highest average provision of IPS by SDA is Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (12,046,967 m²) and the lowest is Lochaber (461,602 m²).

Table 4:3 Quantity of Informal Play Spaces provided in Highland, within Settlement Development Areas of Local Committee Areas

| Locality: Local Committee Area | IPS provision within SDAs | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Percentage (%) | Total (m ²) |
| Badenoch and Strathspey ³⁸ | - | |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 18.4% | 3,143,151 |
| Caithness | 13.2% | 1,812,571 |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 21.3% | 9,550,369 |
| City of Inverness | 18.0% | 1,457,407 |
| Lochaber | 4.0% | 461,602 |
| Nairnshire | 16.6% | 2,449,239 |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 17.8% | 1,145,785 |

³⁸ The evaluation of quantity of play spaces in Badenoch and Strathspey is reported in the Cairngorms National Park Play Sufficiency Assessment.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Sutherland | 22.4% | 1,403,342 |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 13.8% | 12,046,967 |
| Totally: Highland | 17.2% | 22,628,164 |

Consultation Note:

Following consultation, further analysis is proposed to enable comparison with the Council's Open Space Requirements Calculator³⁹ quantity standard of 2m² of equipped play area per person for new residential developments. This would offer a benchmark against which to compare the quantity of FPS provided per person within Settlement Development Areas of a Locality. An assessment of **inclusivity** is also to be conducted after consultation. This would analyse where FPS and IPS are located within the most and least deprived quintiles. Highland social deprivation data from 2020⁴⁰ shows that 15.4% of Highland's population resides in the most deprived quintile, which indicates that overall, Highland is tending towards low levels of deprivation.

4.2 Quality and accessibility of play provisions within Highland

FPS across Highland have been identified and assessed for their **quality** and **accessibility**, helping to identify high-quality play experiences, where there are gaps in facilities or where FPS require better provision or improvement in facilities.

The total 451 FPS identified across Highland, were evaluated on six key categories. The analysis and statement of sufficiency for each category is presented in the following subsections.

*NB: Highland Council assessed the **quality** of play spaces in Badenoch and Strathspey, all situated within Cairngorms National Park, following the methodology used across Highland. For completeness, both the Highland PSA and the Cairngorms National Park PSA report play quality scores in Badenoch and Strathspey.*

³⁹ [Open Space Supplementary Guidance | Open Space Requirements Calculator](#)

⁴⁰ [Highland Social Deprivation \(2020\) SIMD](#). Based on Overall Rankings Highland is tending towards low levels of deprivation: 36,193 residents (15.4% of the local authority population) are living in areas corresponding to the three most deprived deciles in Scotland (deciles 1 to 3) comprising 50 zones for this local authority.

4.2.1 Summary of Formal Play Space Quality Ratings

For the assessment of **quality**, a summary of the average FPS category performance (%) by each Rating Class (refer Table 4:1) for each Local Committee Area is provided in Table 4:.

Table 4:4 Summary of Formal Play Space Quality ratings, by Local Committee Area in Highland

| Locality: Local Committee Area | FPS Quality Rating (% of spaces) | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Very High | High | Moderate | Low |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 8% | 31% | 54% | 8% |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 5% | 39% | 44% | 13% |
| Caithness | 9% | 58% | 31% | 2% |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 8% | 20% | 52% | 20% |
| City of Inverness | 6% | 32% | 47% | 15% |
| Lochaber | 10% | 64% | 26% | 0% |
| Nairnshire | 18% | 55% | 27% | 0% |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 11% | 26% | 58% | 5% |
| Sutherland | 5% | 53% | 40% | 3% |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 6% | 52% | 26% | 16% |
| Totality: Highland | 7% | 42% | 41% | 10% |

Table 4:5 shows that on average 7% of localities meet the Very High rating for FPS (75% or more average category score), 42% of FPS achieve the High rating (50-75% average category score), and 51% of FPS are rated as Moderate or Low quality (<50% average category score). The Local Committee Area with the greatest proportion of very high-quality FPS is Nairnshire (18%) and the lowest proportion are Black Isle and Easter Ross (5%) and Sutherland (5%). Local Committee Areas with the greatest proportion of high-quality FPS are Lochaber (64%), Nairnshire (55%), and Caithness (58%). Local Committee Areas with the largest proportion of low-quality FPS are Dingwall and Seaforth (20%), Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (16%) and City of Inverness (15%).

Table 4:5 Summary of average category scores for Formal Play Spaces in each Local Committee Area in Highland

| Locality: Local Committee Area | Average Category Scores (%) | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | Equipment Types | Features for informal play | Accessibility features | Context and Location | Environmental qualities | Additional |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 47% | 57% | 30% | 66% | 70% | 24% |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 32% | 50% | 34% | 66% | 74% | 23% |
| Caithness | 38% | 49% | 56% | 78% | 85% | 25% |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 37% | 46% | 23% | 55% | 70% | 18% |
| City of Inverness | 37% | 43% | 37% | 64% | 71% | 24% |
| Lochaber | 49% | 55% | 48% | 73% | 79% | 39% |
| Nairnshire | 48% | 64% | 45% | 74% | 92% | 38% |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 44% | 36% | 57% | 68% | 70% | 26% |
| Sutherland | 36% | 44% | 51% | 73% | 90% | 27% |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 48% | 48% | 42% | 62% | 79% | 30% |
| Totality: Highland | 39% | 47% | 41% | 67% | 76% | 26% |

Within each Local Committee Area and settlement there are a range of FPS qualities, which can be seen in the online [Play Sufficiency Assessment map](#): individual scores for each FPS can be accessed by clicking the point or polygon for a FPS. Every FPS is different, as are the qualities that could be improved, or areas that are adequate.

4.2.2 Equipment types

Providing a range of play equipment types offers a variety of play opportunities which meet the needs of different ages and support stages of child development.

Each formal play space in Highland was assessed for provision of eight play equipment types - swings, slides, climbing frames, rocking, twirling and spinning, hanging, jumping and balancing - with scores assigned based on the presence of

each equipment type and the range of age groups served⁴¹. The three age groups used for the assessment were Nursery, Primary and Secondary. The average provision of play equipment by the number of age groups served⁴² is shown in Table 4:

Table 4:6 Provision of equipment in FPS across all 8 equipment types, by the number of Age Groups served in Settlement Development Areas of each Local Committee Area

| Locality: Local Committee Area | Total FPS | Average provision of equipment of any type (%) serving 1-3 Age Groups in FPS | | | Number of equipment types provided in FPS (max 8 types) |
|--|--------------|---|------------|------------|--|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | Average |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 26 | 14% | 24% | 30% | 5 |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 62 | 8% | 27% | 14% | 4 |
| Caithness | 55 | 1% | 24% | 23% | 4 |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 25 | 18% | 32% | 12% | 5 |
| City of Inverness | 143 | 11% | 25% | 20% | 4 |
| Lochaber | 39 | 7% | 31% | 29% | 5 |
| Nairnshire | 11 | 11% | 36% | 23% | 6 |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 19 | 5% | 30% | 26% | 5 |
| Sutherland | 40 | 4% | 23% | 21% | 4 |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 31 | 5% | 36% | 25% | 5 |
| Totality: Highland | 451 | 8% | 27% | 21% | 5 |

Key findings for age provision of equipment in FPS are:

- Across Highland, the average number of equipment types provided is 5 types of equipment (out of the total eight), however the average provision by FPS ranges from 4-6 types of equipment, which indicates that the provision of number of equipment types is not highly variable between Local Committee Areas. One Local Committee Area has an average number of equipment types

⁴¹ FPS containing an equipment type suitable for only one age group received a score of 1, those with equipment suitable for two age groups received a score of 2, and those catering for all three age groups (Nursery, Primary, and Secondary) received a score of 3.

⁴² Due to limitations of the methodology, analysis of provision for individual age groups was not possible. However, it is recommended that the methodology is adapted to enable this for future PSA.

provided in FPS of 6, five Areas provide an average of 5 equipment types, and four Local Committee Areas have an average of 4 equipment types.

- In Highland, the average provision of equipment in FPS serving 3 age groups is 21%, serving 2 age groups is 27% and serving 1 age group is 8%.
- Local Committee Areas with the fewest FPS providing equipment for all 3 age groups are Black Isle and Easter Ross (13%) and Dingwall and Seaforth (12%), while the highest provision of FPS equipment for all age groups is in Badenoch and Strathspey (30%).
- Local Committee Areas with the lowest provision of equipment for 2 age groups are Sutherland (23%), Badenoch and Strathspey (24%), and Caithness (24%) and the highest average provision of FPS equipment for two age groups is in Nairnshire (36%) and Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (36%).

It should be noted that the provision of a broader range of equipment types varies among individual play spaces, but this does not necessarily reflect that an FPS is of poorer quality or sufficiency. For example, while smaller scale neighbourhood parks may provide fewer equipment types, that is expected due to their scale, and these spaces still fulfil an important play function in their local area. Considering the provision of equipment types on offer across a Local Committee Area provides a useful generalised view of the diversity of play opportunities provided.

Figure 4: and Table 4: demonstrate the range of equipment types provided in general across FPS in each Local Committee Area. Key findings are:

- Swings, Slides, Rocking and Climbing Frames are the most prevalent equipment types, and across Highland are present in at least 67% of FPS. Further, over 90% FPS in Badenoch and Strathspey, Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh, and Nairnshire have Swings.
- The provision of Jumping and Balancing equipment is lower across Highland. Lochaber provides the highest proportion of Jumping (56%) and Balancing (62%) equipment in FPS.
- The average provision of Hanging equipment in FPS across Highland is 47%, with the highest average provision in Nairnshire (73%) and the lowest in Sutherland (25%).
- The average provision of Twirling and Spinning equipment in FPS across Highland is 47%, with the highest average provision in Nairnshire (64%) and the lowest in Black Isle and Easter Ross (35%).

Table 4:7 Percentage of Formal Play Spaces which provide each equipment type in Settlement Development Areas of Local Committee Areas of Highland

| Locality: Local Committee Area | Twirling and spinning | Jumping | Balancing | Hanging | Rocking | Slides | Swings | Climbing Frames |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 58% | 58% | 38% | 54% | 85% | 81% | 92% | 77% |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 35% | 23% | 29% | 44% | 66% | 61% | 71% | 65% |
| Caithness | 55% | 15% | 18% | 35% | 58% | 69% | 85% | 53% |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 52% | 32% | 40% | 68% | 76% | 72% | 80% | 76% |
| City of Inverness | 47% | 41% | 41% | 50% | 66% | 64% | 73% | 64% |
| Lochaber | 36% | 56% | 62% | 54% | 72% | 87% | 85% | 82% |
| Nairnshire | 64% | 55% | 45% | 73% | 73% | 73% | 100% | 82% |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 47% | 32% | 42% | 42% | 89% | 74% | 84% | 68% |
| Sutherland | 48% | 18% | 28% | 25% | 65% | 53% | 83% | 60% |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 45% | 52% | 39% | 55% | 68% | 87% | 94% | 87% |
| Totality: Highland | 47% | 36% | 37% | 47% | 69% | 69% | 80% | 67% |

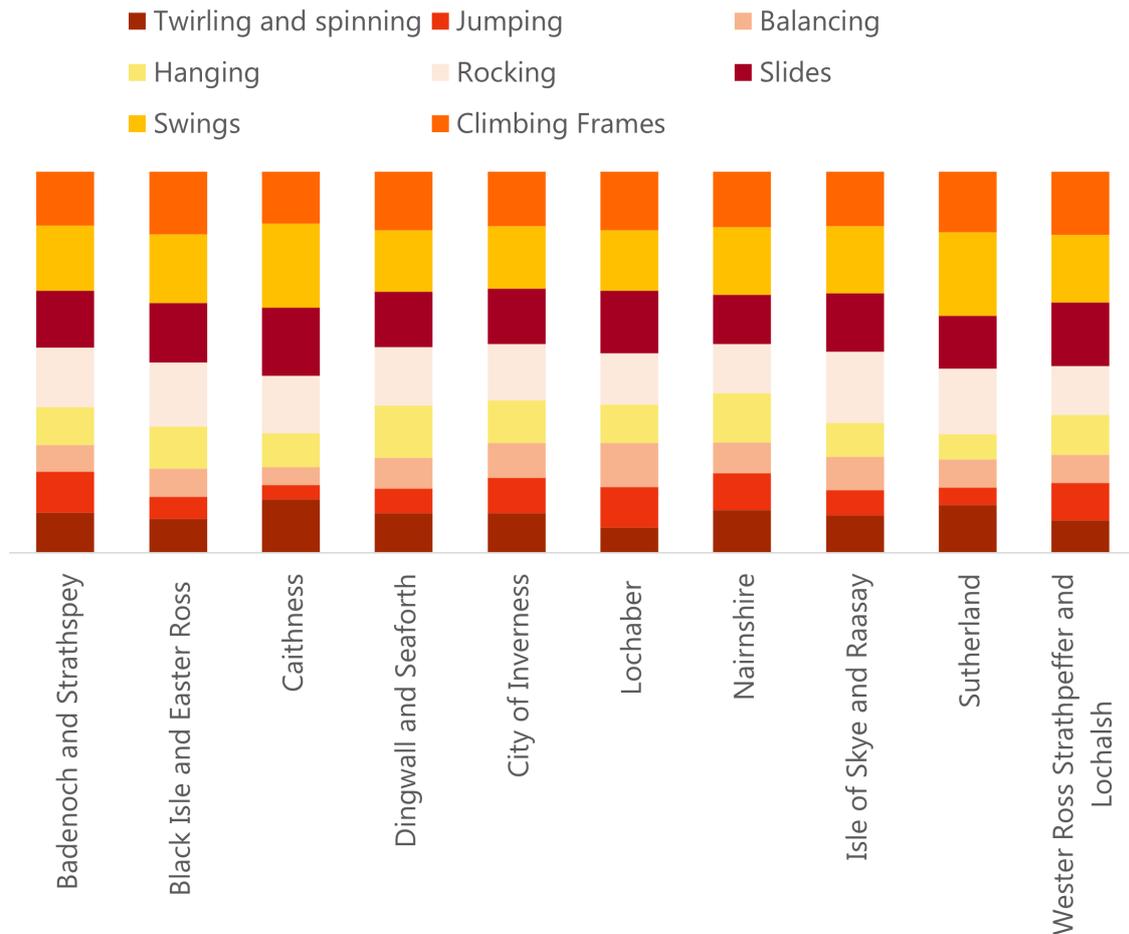


Figure 4:3 Relative proportion of different equipment types provided by FPS across Local Committee Areas in Highland.

Equipment in FPS was also evaluated to determine if it was nearing the end of its usable life, in terms of the play equipment condition, and how many pieces of equipment would need replacing within 12 months. A score of 0 meant no equipment was nearing end of useable life, a score of -1 meant that 1-3 pieces of equipment were nearing the end of their usable life and a score of -2 meant that 5+ pieces of equipment nearing the end of their usable life.

Table 4:8 Number of equipment pieces nearing end of useable life (scored 0, -1, -2) in Formal Play Spaces, by Local Committee Area in Highland.

| Locality: Local Committee Area | Pieces of equipment nearing end of useable life | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| | 4+ | | 1-3 | | None | |
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | - | 0% | 5 | 19% | 21 | 81% |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | - | 0% | 11 | 18% | 51 | 82% |
| Caithness | - | 0% | 13 | 24% | 42 | 76% |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | - | 0% | 1 | 4% | 24 | 96% |
| City of Inverness | 2 | 1% | 15 | 10% | 126 | 88% |
| Lochaber | 1 | 3% | 4 | 10% | 34 | 87% |
| Nairnshire | - | 0% | 2 | 18% | 9 | 82% |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 1 | 5% | 1 | 5% | 17 | 89% |
| Sutherland | - | 0% | 5 | 13% | 35 | 88% |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | - | 0% | 1 | 3% | 30 | 97% |
| Totality: Highland | 4 | 1% | 58 | 13% | 389 | 86% |

Key findings regarding equipment nearing the end of useable life:

- Across Highland, 86% of FPS have no pieces of equipment nearing the end of their useable life (and requiring replacement or upgrades in the next 12 months).
- Isle of Skye and Raasay has the highest proportion of FPS (5%) with 4 or more pieces of equipment nearing the end of their useable life, followed by City of Inverness (1%) and Lochaber (3%).
- Caithness has the highest proportion of FPS (24%) with 1-3 pieces of equipment nearing the end of their useable life.

4.2.3 Features for informal play

While open spaces for chasing, running or ball games are not classified as equipped formal play spaces, they remain a vital component in the overall provision of play opportunities and are considered as informal play spaces. These spaces provide children with the freedom to use the space in diverse and creative ways, encouraging imagination, exploration, and social interaction. These areas allow children to run, chase, play freely, and engage in unstructured activities experiences that are essential for their physical, social, and emotional development. Moreover, open play spaces are particularly valuable for children with mobility challenges or those from different socio-economic backgrounds, as they provide inclusive, flexible environments that require little to no equipment and can be enjoyed by all. In this sense, open spaces contribute significantly to the overall quality and accessibility of play provision across Highland through providing informal play opportunities.

Informal play features associated with a formal play space were assessed for all age groups including: spaces for running and chasing, spaces for ball games, areas for natural play, places to be quiet and go relax, and places for teenagers to hang out. This assessment category links informal play spaces and formal play spaces and evaluates the quality of IPS *which are adjacent to* FPS for a range of age groups.

Each FPS with was evaluated against five criteria, with a score of 1 assigned for the presence of each component that supports informal play. Consequently, any FPS that meets all five criteria receives a total score of 5, indicating a comprehensive range of informal play opportunities within or adjacent to the FPS. Conversely, a play space that meets only three criteria receives a score of 3, reflecting a more limited provision. The results of this assessment are illustrated in Figure 4:3.

This does not provide the full picture of informal play opportunities that children and young people have access to in Highland. Highland has rich provision of areas for nature play, for example, within and outwith settlements. Due to resourcing, a comprehensive evaluation of a wider range of informal play opportunities has not been completed, but it is a relevant consideration for play sufficiency and planning for play provision in the Highland context.

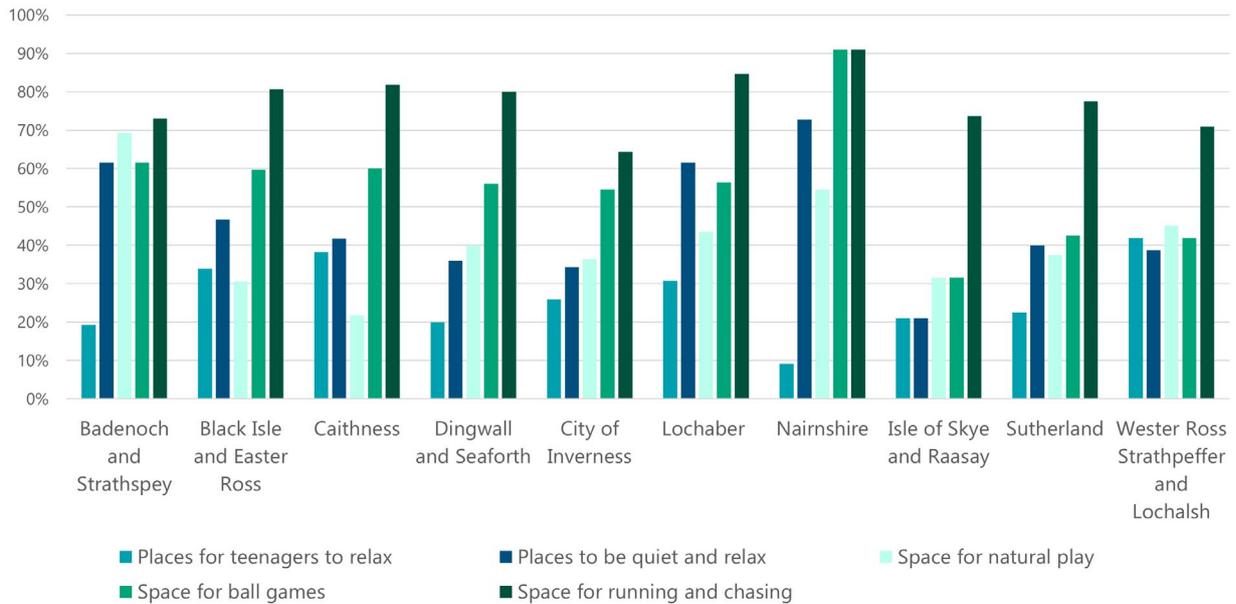


Figure 4:4 Proportion of Formal Play Spaces which provide features for informal play, in Settlement Development Areas of Local Committee Areas in Highland.

Key findings about informal play features in FPS are that:

- Most localities have a high proportion FPS which offer nearby spaces for **ball games** (>50%, with Highland average of 55%) and space **for running and chasing** (>70%, with Highland average of 75%). City of Inverness has a slightly lower average provision of informal spaces for running and chasing (64%). Localities with lower provision of informal spaces for ball games are Isle of Skye and Raasay (32%), Sutherland (43%) and Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (42%).
- **Places for teenagers to relax and hangout** are on average only provided in 28% of FPS across Highland. Localities with the lowest provision of places for teenagers to relax and hangout are Nairnshire (9%), Isle of Skye and Raasay (21%), and Dingwall and Seaforth (20%). Caithness (38%) and Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (42%) have the highest provision of places for teenagers to relax and hangout across local FPS.
- Across Highland, 42% of FPS provide **places to be quiet or relax**. The lowest provision of places to be quiet or relax are within Dingwall and Seaforth (36%), City of Inverness (34%), and Isle of Skye and Raasay (21%).

4.2.4 Accessibility features

Accessibility is a crucial aspect of play space design, ensuring that all children regardless of physical ability and mobility can participate, play, and interact within their communities. Inclusive and accessible play environments promote social integration, independence, and equality, providing every child with the opportunity to benefit from outdoor play and physical activity.

Spatial attributes related to the physical accessibility to or from FPS, from areas where people live, was also assessed and is presented in the next section: **Context and location.**

In this assessment, all FPS were evaluated against seven criteria to determine the level of accessibility within each play space:

- The availability of **accessible parking** in proximity to the FPS: semi-accessible or street parking was scored 1, and fully accessible or onsite parking was scored 2;
- The presence of **wheelchair friendly paths** was scored from 0-2: no paths (0), some wheelchair friendly paths (1) or wheelchair friendly paths to all pieces of play equipment (2);
- The number of pieces of equipment **accessible and usable by children with a high level of mobility impairment** (1-3 pieces of accessible equipment scores 1, and 4 or more pieces of accessible equipment scores 2);
- The number of pieces of age-appropriate **equipment that a child, with a moderate level of mobility impairment, could be transferred from a wheelchair onto**, within 1m (1-3 pieces of accessible equipment scores 1, and 4 or more pieces of accessible equipment scores 2);
- The number of pieces of age-appropriate **equipment that a child with low mobility impairment could partake in**, e.g. difficulty balancing, core body strength, weakened arms and legs (1-3 pieces of accessible equipment scores 1, and 4 or more pieces of accessible equipment scores 2);
- The presence of **appropriate fencing**: no fences (0), some fenced areas (1) or all of play space fenced appropriately (2);

- The presence of **even and good quality surfaces** suitable for the visually impaired, e.g. no rips, holes or tears in surfaces: poor quality of surfaces (0), moderate quality of surfaces (1) and good quality of surfaces (2).

Overall, a rating of 2 for any criteria represents a good level of accessibility and a rating of 1 for any criteria represents a moderate level of accessibility. Table 4: presents the proportion of FPS in each Local Committee Area which scored 1 or 2 across each criterion. Figure 4: highlights the proportion of FPS in each Local Committee Area which provide 4 or more pieces of equipment for mobility challenged children.

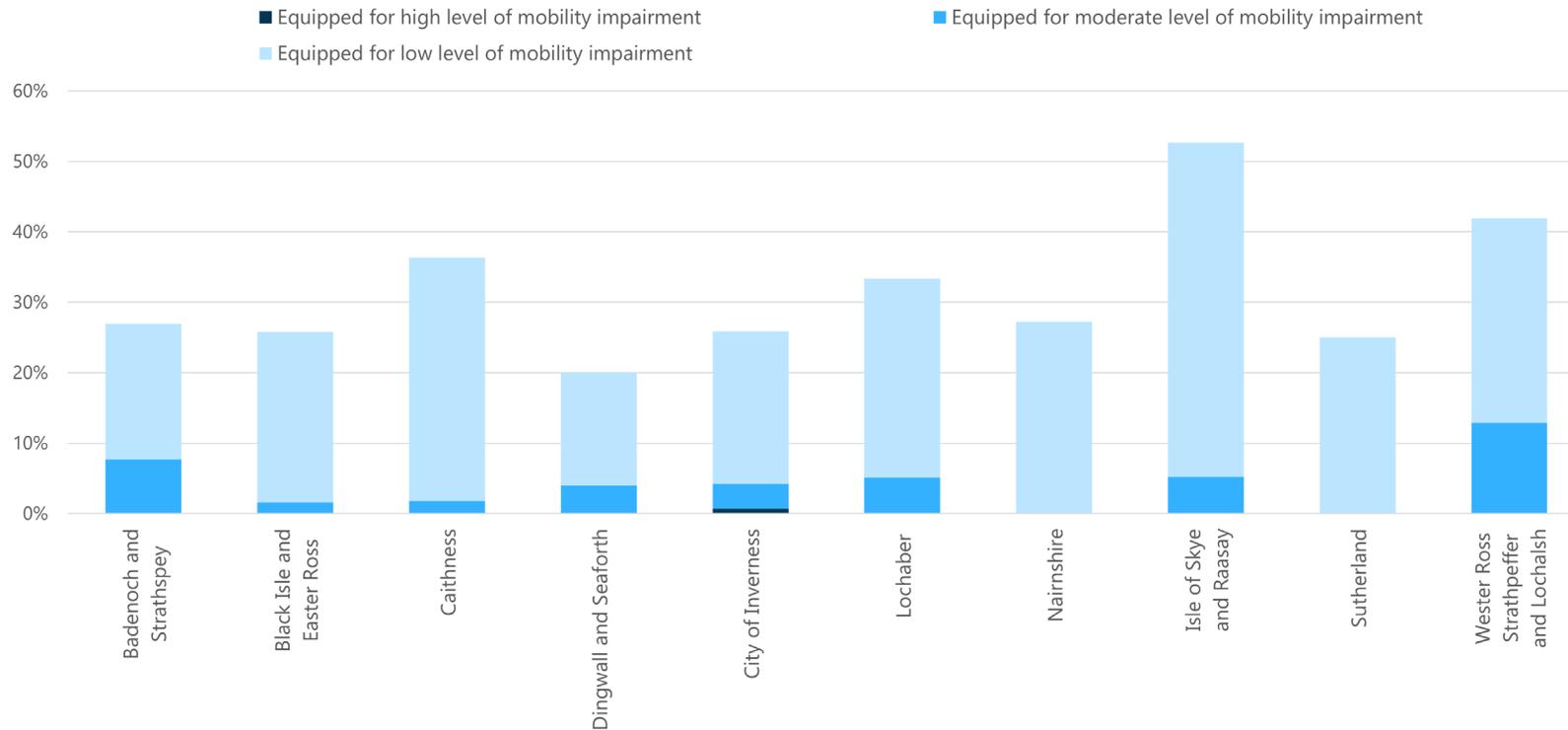


Figure 4:5 Percentage of FPS in each Local Committee Area that provide four or more pieces of equipment for fully, moderate or less mobility challenged children in Highland

Table 4:9 Level of accessibility of play features within Formal Play Spaces (1 – Moderate, 2 – Good), in Settlements of Local Committee Areas in Highland

| Locality: Local Committee Area | Full Accessible Parking | | Wheelchair friendly Paths | | Full mobility challenged equipment | | Moderate mobility challenged equipment | | Less mobility challenged equipment | | Park Fenced | | Even and good quality surfaces | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|-----------|--|-----------|------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 58% | 8% | 8% | 19% | 12% | 0% | 42% | 8% | 58% | 19% | 8% | 35% | 23% | 15% |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 50% | 23% | 16% | 23% | 6% | 0% | 18% | 2% | 39% | 24% | 24% | 45% | 31% | 31% |
| Caithness | 67% | 27% | 4% | 87% | 4% | 0% | 36% | 2% | 58% | 35% | 20% | 67% | 22% | 69% |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 40% | 20% | 4% | 4% | 0% | 0% | 4% | 4% | 36% | 16% | 24% | 44% | 12% | 16% |
| City of Inverness | 52% | 17% | 4% | 38% | 8% | 1% | 27% | 3% | 30% | 22% | 24% | 52% | 23% | 38% |
| Lochaber | 54% | 26% | 5% | 59% | 3% | 0% | 41% | 5% | 54% | 28% | 21% | 72% | 38% | 41% |
| Nairnshire | 45% | 36% | 18% | 64% | 18% | 0% | 64% | 0% | 45% | 27% | 27% | 27% | 27% | 36% |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 21% | 58% | 5% | 68% | 11% | 0% | 58% | 5% | 16% | 47% | 5% | 95% | 16% | 58% |
| Sutherland | 63% | 28% | 23% | 58% | 0% | 0% | 33% | 0% | 55% | 25% | 13% | 80% | 35% | 60% |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 42% | 35% | 6% | 39% | 13% | 0% | 13% | 13% | 42% | 29% | 16% | 55% | 29% | 45% |
| Totality: Highland | 52% | 24% | 8% | 44% | 7% | 0% | 29% | 4% | 41% | 26% | 20% | 57% | 26% | 42% |

- On average in Highland, 24% of FPS provide **fully accessible parking**, and 52% provide **semi-accessible parking** (e.g. on street parking). Local Committee Areas with lower-than-average provision of fully accessible parking are Badenoch and Strathspey (8%), Black Isle and Easter Ross (23%), Dingwall and Seaforth (20%), and City of Inverness (17%).
- On average in Highland, 44% of play spaces provide **fully wheelchair accessible paths to play equipment** and 8% of play spaces provide **moderately wheelchair accessible paths to play equipment**. The highest provision of fully wheelchair accessible paths in FPS are in Caithness (87%), Isle of Skye and Raasay (68%) and Nairnshire (64%). Areas with lower provision of fully wheelchair accessible paths to play equipment are Dingwall and Seaforth (4%) and Badenoch and Strathspey (19%).
- There is only one play space which has 4 or more pieces of **fully mobility challenged equipment** in Highland, which is the Cameron Drive Play Area in Ardersier. In Highland, 7% of FPS provide 1-3 pieces of fully mobility challenged equipment, with highest provision in Nairnshire (18%) and the lowest in Dingwall and Seaforth (0%) and Sutherland (0%).
- Across Highland only 4% of FPS have 4 or more pieces of equipment for **moderate mobility challenged** children, and 29% of FPS provide 1-3 pieces of equipment for moderate mobility challenged children. The highest provision is in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (13%). Dingwall and Seaforth have only 4% of FPS with 1-3 pieces of equipment for moderate mobility challenged children, in contrast to Nairnshire which has the highest proportion of 64%.
- In Highland, 26% of FPS provide 4 or more pieces of **equipment that a child with lesser mobility challenges could partake in**, and 41% provide 1-3 pieces of such equipment. Isle of Skye and Raasay has the highest proportion of FPS (47%) with 4 or more pieces of equipment that a child with lesser mobility challenges could partake in, and Dingwall and Seaforth has the lowest (16%). For 1-3 pieces of equipment for lesser mobility challenged children, Caithness and Badenoch and Strathspey have the highest provision (both 58%) while the lowest provision (16%) is in Isle of Skye and Raasay.
- An average of 57% of FPS in Highland are **fully fenced**, and 20% are moderately or partially fenced. The highest provision of fully fenced FPS (%) is in Isle of Skye and Raasay (95%) and lowest being in Nairnshire (27%).
- The provision of **even and good quality surfaces for visually impaired children** is provided on average in 42% of FPS, and 26% of FPS have moderate quality of surfaces. Caithness (69%) and Sutherland (60%) have the highest proportion while the provision is less than 20% in Dingwall and Seaforth (16%), and Badenoch and Strathspey (15%).

4.2.5 Context and location

The context and location of a FPS influences how effectively it serves its community, such as being within easy access & proximity to where people live, its physical integration, visibility and perceived sense of safety within a local area. FPS were evaluated across five location and context-based criteria:

- The **centrality of their placement** within communities (scored 1 for Yes and 0 for No),
- The **presence of passive surveillance** (such as outlook and visibility from nearby homes or streets) (scored 1 for Yes and 0 for No),
- The **availability and proximity to public transport options** (scored 1 for Yes and 0 for No),
- The provision of **vehicle parking spaces** (scored 1 for street parking, 2 for onsite parking, and 0 for no parking) and,
- The presence of **safe crossing points on adjacent roads** (scored 1 for Yes and 0 for No).

Together, these factors contribute to the sufficiency of FPS within local areas, providing locationally accessible, safe, and well-integrated FPS for the surrounding community to enjoy.

Figure 4: illustrates the percentage of FPS in Local Committee Areas which have a central location, good passive surveillance, proximity to public transport options and safe crossing points to nearby roads. In Highland, overall, most FPS are centrally located (89%) and benefit from good passive surveillance (94%) with outlook and visibility from nearby homes. In Nairnshire, 100% of FPS are centrally located. In Dingwall and Seaforth, and Nairnshire, 100% of FPS have good passive surveillance. In Highland, the availability of public transport options near FPS is more limited with only 56% of play spaces benefitting from this feature. Caithness has the highest proportion of public transport availability near FPS (69%) and Nairnshire has the lowest (36%). The provision of safe crossing points near FPS is highly variable across localities in Highland, with high provision in Lochaber (85%) and Caithness (84%) and low provision in Dingwall and Seaforth (24%), Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (23%) and Isle of Sky and Raasay (21%).

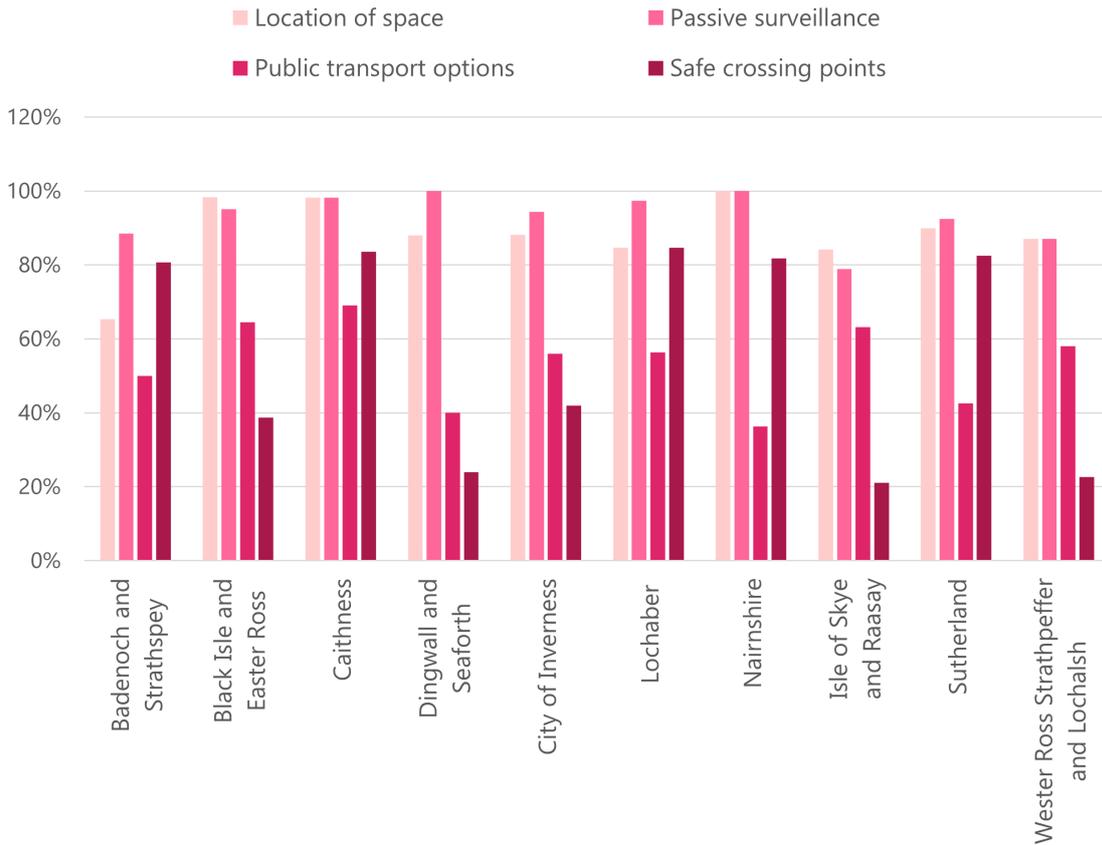


Figure 4:6 Percentage of FPS which include location and context features (excluding parking) of Formal Play Spaces within Settlement Development Areas, by Local Committee Area in Highland

In Highland, 25% of FPS provide onsite parking, and 61% have nearby street parking as shown in Table 4:6. The highest provision of onsite car parking in FPS is in Isle of Skye and Raasay (68%) and the highest prevalence of no car parking provided is in Dingwall and Seaforth (36%) followed by Black Isle and Easter Ross (23%).

Car parking is one locality factor, and does not necessarily indicate that a FPS is inaccessible, as other factors indicate how people might access a play space: play spaces located centrally, for example, would be within walkable distance, and play spaces with good public transport options are not dependent on cars and parking for access.

Work done by Highland Council to develop the Local Living mapping included an 800m buffer analysis for walking access to Highland Council Play Areas. This is included in the [Highland Play Sufficiency Assessment Online Map](#). Parts of settlements within an 800m walk demonstrating accessibility to play parks, without relying on a vehicle, are hatched in blue as shown in the example in Figure 4:7.

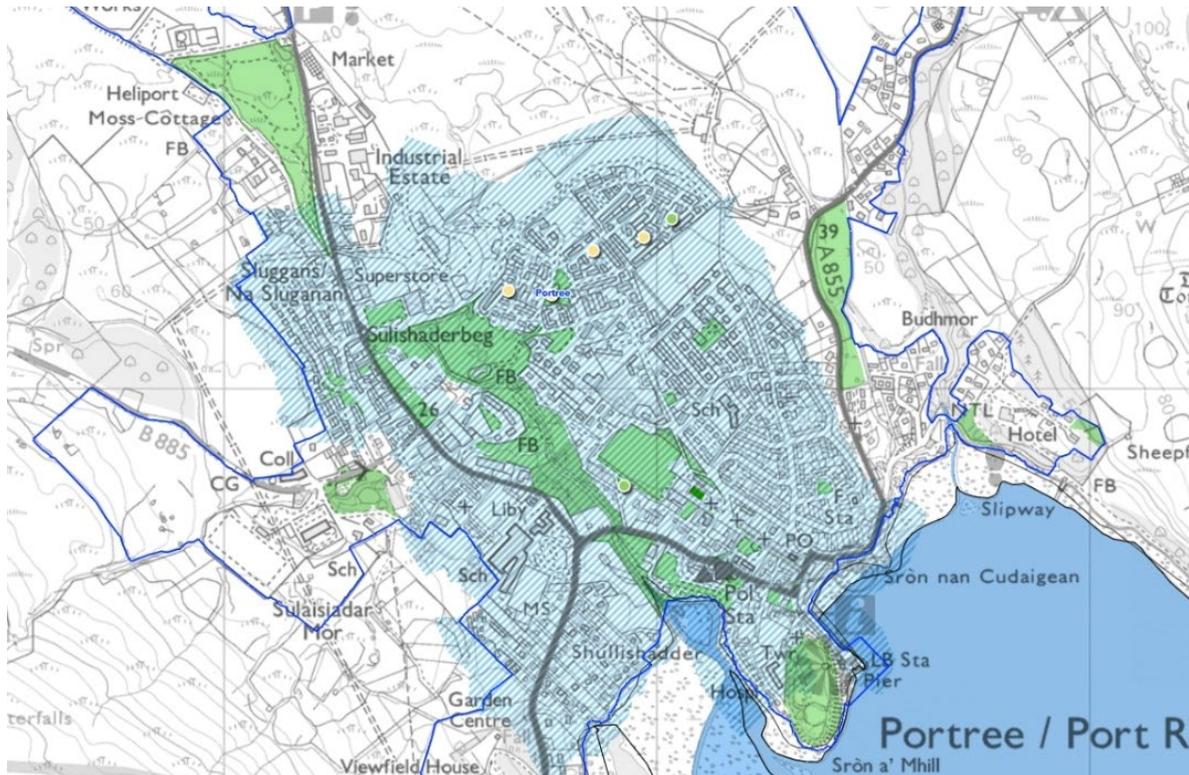


Figure 4:7 An example 800m walking catchment for Highland Council play parks, as presented in the online PSA map

Table 4:10 Parking provision in Formal Play Spaces in Settlement Development Areas of Local Committee Areas, in Highland

| Locality: Local Committee Area | Parking Provision | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| | None | Street | Onsite |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 8% | 73% | 19% |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 23% | 53% | 24% |
| Caithness | 5% | 71% | 24% |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 36% | 48% | 16% |
| City of Inverness | 15% | 67% | 17% |
| Lochaber | 10% | 67% | 23% |
| Nairnshire | 9% | 55% | 36% |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 11% | 21% | 68% |
| Sutherland | 3% | 68% | 30% |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 19% | 45% | 35% |
| Totality: Highland | 14% | 61% | 25% |

4.2.6 Environmental qualities and condition

The environmental qualities and condition of FPS were reviewed to understand how effectively each space supports and sustains a quality and safe play environment.

Criteria evaluated in this category include:

- The **quality and condition of the general environment** - e.g. is a FPS within a pleasant environment that is attractive, clean and tidy, scored from Poor = 0, Moderate = 1 to Good = 2.
- The **standard of maintenance**, scored from Poor = 0, Moderate = 1 to Good = 2.).
- The **condition of surfaces, including play surfaces and paths** scored from Poor = 0, Moderate = 1 to Good = 2.
- The **usage and busyness of the space** is scored as less used = 0, or busy / some level of use⁴³ = 1).

The usage and busyness of spaces was assessed for each FPS, but it was recognised following assessment that it only represented a singular point in time and the scoring was heavily influenced by when the officer assessed the space. Furthermore, assessors made an effort to undertake site surveys outside of 'peak' times (e.g. after school) where play spaces are busy, in an effort to not disrupt play, be perceived as strangers watching children play. It has been concluded that this data has limited use for reporting on play sufficiency and for this reason, this criterion has not been reported here and is not reflected in total scoring. provides a summary FPS that scored 2 (Good) for three criteria: the quality and condition of their environment, maintenance standards and surface conditions. Across these criteria, Highland has a high proportion of FPS with good condition of environment (72%), standard of maintenance (63%), and surface conditions (61%).

⁴³ This criteria was originally scored 0-5 on a scale of busyness, however the application of this scale was variable between assessors and so it was decided to use a binary rating of busy/used and not busy/less used

Table 4:11 Formal Play Spaces with a Good (score of 2) level of maintenance, surface conditions and environmental conditions within Settlement Development Areas of Local Committee Areas in Highland

| Locality: Local Committee Area | Condition of Environment | | Maintenance standard | | Surface conditions | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
| | Score 2 | % | Score 2 | % | Score 2 | % |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 17 | 65% | 16 | 62% | 16 | 62% |
| Black Isle and Easter Ross | 44 | 71% | 10 | 58% | 10 | 55% |
| Caithness | 14 | 84% | 38 | 69% | 38 | 69% |
| Dingwall and Seaforth | 46 | 56% | 16 | 64% | 13 | 52% |
| City of Inverness | 14 | 63% | 83 | 58% | 82 | 57% |
| Lochaber | 30 | 77% | 26 | 67% | 24 | 62% |
| Nairnshire | 90 | 100% | 11 | 100% | 6 | 55% |
| Isle of Skye and Raasay | 30 | 63% | 9 | 47% | 11 | 58% |
| Sutherland | 11 | 95% | 29 | 73% | 32 | 80% |
| Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh | 12 | 71% | 21 | 68% | 20 | 65% |
| Totality: Highland | 324 | 72% | 285 | 63% | 276 | 61% |

4.2.7 Other facilities

Additional facilities and amenities provided in or near FPS, such as rubbish bins, public toilets, seating, picnic tables, shade and shelter, and other facilities (e.g. café, pump track, cycle maintenance tools, bottle bank, defibrillator), enhance the overall user experience and functionality of FPS. They offer comfort, convenience, and protection from the elements which encourage longer visits, cleanliness, and a more welcoming and sustainable environment for children and families to enjoy.

Figure 4: provides an overview of the provision of additional facilities in FPS (%) in each Local Committee Area. In Highland, the average provision of additional facilities in FPS is: rubbish bins 54%, public toilets 4%, seating 64%, picnic tables 30%, shade and shelter 24% and, other facilities 7%.

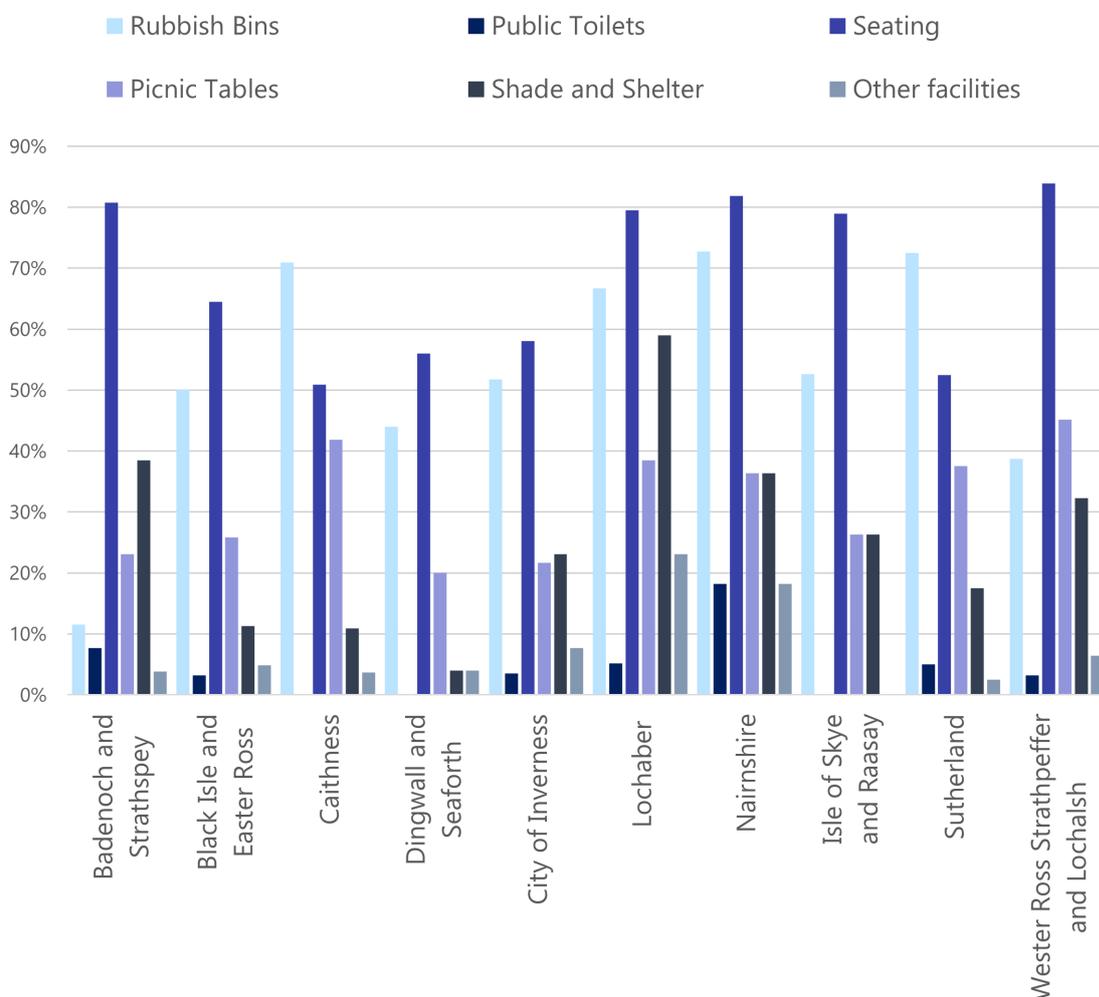


Figure 4:8 Proportion of Formal Play Spaces providing additional facilities, by type, by Local Committee Areas of Highland

- The provision of **rubbish bins** in FPS is lowest in Badenoch and Strathspey (12%), and highest in Sutherland (73%), Nairnshire (73%) and Caithness (71%).

- It is evident that many FPS lack **public toilet facilities**, with an average of only 4% in Highland FPS: the lowest provision is observed in Caithness, Dingwall and Seaforth and Isle of Skye and Raasay (all 0%). Nairnshire has the highest provision of public toilets in FPS at 18%.
- The provision of **seating** in FPS is lowest in Caithness (51%), and highest in Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (84%), Nairnshire (82%) and Badenoch and Strathspey (81%).
- The provision of **picnic tables** in FPS is lowest in Dingwall and Seaforth (20%), and highest in Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (84%), Nairnshire (82%) and Badenoch and Strathspey (81%).
- The provision of **shade and shelter** in FPS is lowest in Sutherland (3%) and Isle of Skye and Raasay (0%), and highest in Lochaber (59%) and Badenoch and Strathspey (38%).
- The provision of **other facilities** was identified on average in 7% of FPS in Highland. The most were identified in Lochaber, 23% of FPS had other facilities, and the least were identified in Isle of Skye and Raasay (0%).

The Highland climate and weather is an important consideration when interpreting the provision of shade and shelter, outdoor seating and picnic tables. For example, high winds and less severe UV than compared to other local authority areas means that shade structures are not always provided.

5 Setting Standards for Play: Conclusion and Next Steps | A' Suidheachadh Inbhean airson Cluiche: Co-dhùnadh agus na h-Ath Cheumannan

To support the ongoing provision of play opportunities in Highland, future efforts should focus on the context of play provision, demand for play (e.g. new development areas) and the range of FPS within the area which all contribute to the sufficiency of play available to inform targeted upgrades or investment to improve play space quality, quantity or accessibility and inclusivity.

Statements on the provision for play in Highland in totality and by locality have been presented in this Play Sufficiency Assessment, providing an evidence base to support local development planning, investment prioritisation and decision making.

It should be noted that the detailed findings of the PSA can be analysed in a myriad of other ways to support future planning and investment decisions, for example with reporting at settlement development area level, or neighbourhood level to support a place-based consideration of play. Both **Appendix 1: Data summary** and the [online Highland PSA map](#) are crucial resources to support the application of the PSA.

5.1 Local Development Plan

NPF4 Policy 21 Play, recreation and sport states that:

LDPs should identify sites for sports, play and outdoor recreation for people of all ages. This should be based on an understanding of the needs and demand in the community and informed by the planning authority's Play Sufficiency Assessment and Open Space Strategy. These spaces can be incorporated as part of enhancing and expanding blue and green infrastructure, taking account of relevant agencies' plans or policy frameworks, such as flood risk and/or water management plans. New provisions should be well-designed, high quality, accessible and inclusive.

We will consider including within the Local Development Plan, policies that explicitly support the safeguarding and enhancement of play opportunities, through the quantity and quality of play spaces, taking into account community needs and

ensuring that new developments incorporate accessible and inclusive play features as part of their design. There is also opportunity for the LDP to promote integration between formal and informal play spaces, safeguard green corridors for recreation, and require developers to contribute to the provision or improvement of local play infrastructure. Areas of deficit or poor provision across Highland could provide the evidence to support improved policies for the provision of play spaces, and equally features or functions that are generally well provided can be supported and sustained through policy.

It is recognised that Highland has a high number of existing parks in its estate, and where several existing FPS are located close to proposed development areas developer contributions could be directed towards upgrading an existing play space. In such situations, provision of an additional play space through developer contributions may not be preferable as it creates additional maintenance burden / repeats provision of similar play space.

5.1.1 Open Space in New Residential Development Supplementary Guidance

The [Open Space in New Residential Development Supplementary Guidance](#)⁴⁴ currently provides guidance on the Council's potential open space requirements for anyone seeking planning permission for four or more dwellings, and as part of that sets out standards for provision of equipped play areas. The Open Space Requirements Calculator⁴⁵ is used to estimate the equipped play area required to be provided for any new housing development. The calculator applies a minimum requirement of 1,500m² per play area, or 2m² per person.

Further analysis following consultation is proposed to compare the existing standards for the provision of new play areas against the quantity of FPS provision in each locality. As part of the HLDP preparation, the development of a new policy and/or new guidance will be considered to support ongoing provision of play spaces. Setting a standard helps guide planning and investment decisions and will help with future monitoring and evaluation of play provision.

⁴⁴ [Open Space Supplementary Guidance- latest | Open Space in New Residential Development Supplementary Guidance](#)

⁴⁵ [Open Space Supplementary Guidance- latest | Open Space Requirements Calculator](#)

5.1.2 Developer Contributions

The [Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance](#)⁴⁶ currently sets out the Council's approach to mitigating the impacts of development on services and infrastructure by seeking fair and realistic developer contributions to the delivery of such facilities. This includes a section on Open Space, which links to the Open Space in New Residential Development Supplementary Guidance and reiterates the principle that open space should be delivered on-site and only in exceptional circumstances will contributions be sought to the provision of new/improved open spaces and/or play areas off-site.

As mentioned above, as part of the HLDP preparation, the development of a new policy and/or new guidance will be considered to support ongoing provision of play spaces. In association with this, the current approach to developer contributions with respect to developer contributions towards open space, including towards play spaces, will be reviewed and a revised approach may be proposed.

5.2 Play Park Strategy

The information about play sufficiency prepared in the PSA can support the implementation of the Council's Play Park Strategy. The [Council's Play Park Strategy 2023-2033](#)⁴⁷ guiding principles were inclusiveness, creative opportunities, holistic play and sustainable play. It set out a settlement-based hierarchy for Council-owned play spaces (referred to as play parks within the Strategy) which aligns with the Settlement hierarchy used in LDPs (Tier 1: Main Settlements, Tier 2: Growing Settlements etc). The three play space categories are:

- **Destination Park:** Within each Area Committee, Members can choose to identify or create one Destination Park.
- **Settlement Park:** Each Main Settlement has one play park equipped to the 'Settlement Park' level
- **Neighbourhood Park:** Within 'Tier 1 - Main Settlements', the Council will ensure that each neighbourhood area is served by a playpark equipped to the 'Neighbourhood Park' level and each 'Growing Settlement' is served by a play park equipped to 'Neighbourhood Park' level

⁴⁶ https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/712087/developer_contributions

⁴⁷ [Play Park Strategy](#)

Key qualifying criteria for each 'park type' are set out within the Strategy, and the application of categories is set out as finances permit. The Strategy proposes a place-based approach with Members agreeing which play parks fall into each category. Findings from the PSA can assist Members to make evidence-based decisions about play park categorisation.

5.3 Local Place Plans

There is an opportunity for community-controlled bodies and community councils to use the PSA to inform future Local Place Plans, as an evidence base about the quality, quantity, inclusivity and accessibility of play in their area.

Glossary | Clàr-mìneachaidh

Accessibility features

Features of play spaces that support children with varying mobility impairments.

Spatial accessibility

Spatial proximity and access to a play space within a local area, as defined by an 800m walking catchment. This is considered in the Context and Location category of the play space quality assessment.

Formal Play Space

Play spaces which are specifically designed and maintained for the purposes of play.

Growing Settlements

The smallest, established settlements where appropriate, limited 'infill' growth will still be encouraged. These are settlements which we think would benefit from a set of guiding factors to direct development to the best locations rather than setting it out as a Settlement Development Area boundary and specifically delineated site allocations.

Informal Play Space

Play spaces which (a) are, or are within areas of open space, and (b) are not specifically designed and maintained for the purposes of play.

Local Committee Area

The area covered by any one of The Highland Council's Local (or City) Committees. As part of its democratic structure, The Highland Council area is divided into ten areas, each of which comprises one or more whole Council electoral wards (of which there are 21 across the Council area). For each of those ten areas the Council has a Local (or City) Committee.

Local Development Plan

Planning authorities must prepare one or more Local Development Plans (LDPs) for their area. The LDP sets out a spatial strategy, being a detailed statement of the planning authority's policies and proposals as to the development and use of land in the plan area. It must take into account the National Planning Framework and any registered Local Place Plan in the area it covers. It must have regard to the authority's adopted regional spatial strategy, if it has one. The LDP must also have regard to any local outcomes improvement plan for the area it covers. LDPs are part of the statutory development plan.

Local Place Plan

Local Place Plans (LPPs) are community-led plans setting out proposals for the development and use of land. They must have regard to the NPF, any LDP which covers the same area, and also any locality plan which covers the same area. LPPs are not part of the statutory development plan but have an important role to play in informing LDPs.

Locality

A sub-regional geographic area selected for its size and scale to support a local assessment of play areas, focused on the most populated areas. For the Highland PSA, Local Committee Areas have been chosen as the Locality with a focus on the Settlement Development Areas within them.

Play Space

In the context of Play Sufficiency Assessment, “play spaces” means outdoor spaces which are accessible by the public, and which offer play opportunities for children.

Play Sufficiency

Play sufficiency is a consideration within a given context, informed by the combined qualities of play spaces in a particular area. This means that, for example, not all play spaces are expected to offer all equipment types, and different spaces may (or may not) offer more specialised equipment that is accessible or include nearby space for informal play.

Settlement Development Area

A delineated boundary that reflects the built-up area and allocated expansion areas for a main settlement. These settlement envelopes are the preferred areas for most types of development.

Totality

The [Town and Country Planning \(Play Sufficiency Assessment\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2023](#) requires local authorities to include statements about overall quality, quantity and accessibility of formal and informal play spaces by totality – i.e. the whole Highland Council area.

6 Appendix 1: Play Quality Assessment Data | Eàrr-ràdh 1: Dàta Measaidh Càileachd Cluiche

All data has been included in the online map for the purposes of consultation. Click any play space to view its play space quality scores.

The Interactive online map is accessible via link:
[Highland Play Sufficiency Assessment Map](#)

7 Appendix 2: Assessment Methodology | Eàrr-ràdh 2: Modh- obrach Measaidh

The Final PSA Report will include a detailed description of the methodology.

Consultees seeking further clarification on the methodology can raise these directly with Council officers via the consultation process.





**The Highland
Council
Comhairle na
Gàidhealtachd**
