

Langstone Community Council-Centenary Park Equipment Renewal

Overview

This case study examines the process undertaken by Langstone Community Council to renew the play equipment at a local park which the council leases and maintains. The project's key feature was its community-focused, participatory approach, prioritising the feedback and preferences of the young people who are the primary users of the facility. The initiative involved the removal of an outdated pump track and the installation of new, modern play apparatus.

Project Context and Challenge

The existing pump track at the park was identified as being underutilised or reaching the end of its useful life, prompting the council to consider a renewal project. The core challenge was ensuring the replacement infrastructure would genuinely meet the recreational needs of the local youth population. A standard, top-down decision might have resulted in new equipment that failed to engage the target demographic.

Strategy: User-Centred Consultation

Langstone Community Council adopted a "bottom-up" consultation strategy to ensure the new equipment reflected the desires of the young park users.

1. **Direct Engagement with Schools:** LCC representatives proactively visited the local primary school and engaged with the PTA. This provided a structured environment to engage with a broad cross-section of the youth community and their parents.
 2. **Park User Intercepts:** The Council also conducted informal consultations by speaking directly with current park users on-site. This captured feedback from young people already utilising the space, providing insights into usage patterns and immediate needs.
 3. **Feedback Gathering Focus:** The consultation focused on gaining qualitative data regarding:
 - What types of activities they felt were missing.
 - Specific pieces of equipment they would like to see installed.
 - Features that would encourage them to use the park more frequently.
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Challenges Faced and Adaptive Measures

The project encountered two primary challenges that required the council to adapt its initial plans: community opposition and adverse weather conditions.

1. Neighbor Opposition to Park Access

2. Impact of Adverse Weather

Implementation and Outcomes

The feedback gathered through the participatory process directly informed the final design and procurement decisions.

- **Decision:** Based on the consensus from the youth feedback, the decision was made to remove the old pump track and replace it with a diverse range of new play equipment aimed at younger children
 - **Resulting Infrastructure:** The installed equipment was specifically chosen because it was requested or highly favored by the young people and their parents , ensuring its immediate appeal and utility.
 - **Successful Completion:** The project was completed on schedule, resulting in a renewed play park facility that is better aligned with the needs and desires of the Langstone youth community.
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Conclusion and Key Takeaways

The Langstone Centenary Park renewal is a successful example of how community councils can effectively utilise participatory planning.

Key Takeaways:

- **The Importance of Youth Voice:** The project demonstrated that directly consulting the end-users (the children and young people) is crucial for ensuring the relevance and success of recreational infrastructure projects.
- **High Engagement:** By meeting users where they are (in schools and the park), the council achieved high engagement and a representative sample of opinions.
- **Community Cohesion:** This approach fosters a sense of ownership and pride among the young people, as they were instrumental in designing their own recreational space.

The long-term success will be measured by the increased utilization of the new equipment and the positive impact on local youth well-being

Looking Ahead: Phase 2 for Older Youth

The successful completion of the play park renewal marks the initial achievement of Langstone Council's long-term vision. The council is committed to ensuring the park remains relevant to all age groups, and plans are already underway for Phase 2 of the redevelopment, scheduled for the 2026/2027 financial year. This next stage will specifically focus on addressing the recreational needs of older children and teenagers, seeking to install new, challenging equipment and amenities designed to engage this crucial demographic, building on the success of the initial user-centred consultation approach.