

Colvend Recreation Field Final Report

1. Background

A study carried out in 2015 by the D&G Public Health Department, into the physical activity of primary school children feeding into Dalbeattie High School showed that only 39% of boys and 17% of girls are getting the recommended daily physical activity of 60 minutes/day. A local survey carried out by the Community Council in April 2016 showed that 97% of a total of 146 responders were in favour of a project to provide improved physical exercise facilities for children somewhere in the Colvend area. The Community Council subsequently set up a Subgroup to examine the feasibility and costs of providing improved physical exercise facilities for local children.

In February 2017, the Community Council received a formal request from the Colvend Primary School Headmistress and Parent Council to improve the playing field facilities at the school.

A subcommittee was established jointly with the Colvend Primary School Parent Council to scope out possibilities and provide budget costs. An initial proposal for a larger scheme was not supported by the D&G Planning Dept because of road safety concerns. Subsequently a proposal to consider approval of a project to spend up to £89,000 on a 3-phase project to enlarge and improve the Colvend Primary School Playing Field facility. This was referred back for cost savings by the Community Council and subsequently a revised proposal for £50,769.60p was approved. The project had the support of:

- Colvend & Southwick Community Council
- Colvend Primary School
- Colvend School Parent Council
- Healthy Dalbeattie
- D&G Public Health Department

Initial funding of £22,000 was provided by the Community Council from the Eon Robin Rigg Community Benefit Fund and £12,500 from the D&G Stewartry Area Committee. Funding of £16,269.60 was awarded by the D&G LEADER programme.

2. Project Experience

The project took place between 25th of January 2018 and the 31st of December 2019. The project team was entirely voluntary and was led by an experienced project manager. The team had the pro-bono services of:

- A professional architect
- A solicitor
- A health & safety professional
- Representatives of the landowner
- Drainage design assistance from Colvend Golf Club.

The project was hampered by uncertainty over the long-term future of rural schools. To ensure a long-term future for the investment, the Community Council took out a legal agreement with the landowner which assured that should the school close prior to October 2037, the Community Council would have the option of taking over the lease of the recreation field from the D&G Council.

This agreement was pivotal in getting the funding agreements and provided sustainability in relation to the future of the Colvend Recreation Field. A further challenge arose from the need to reduce the project expenditure from almost £90,000 to £50,000. This was largely achieved by changing the shelter design from a specialist bespoke shelter to a propriety design. A consequence of using the propriety design is that the shelter had to be relocated which created a problem with the angle of the disabled access ramp. This was resolved after considerable re-design work and getting agreement from the landowner to extend the length of the recreation field by a further 14 metres.

The project implementation was planned to minimise the period that the playing field was unavailable for use by the school. It was planned that work should start at the beginning of the Easter holidays 2018 and should be handed back in time for the start of the 2018 Autumn term.



The project was designed to maximise the amount of voluntary work done, in order to both minimise the cost and to give ownership of the project to both the schoolchildren and community. On 24th March 2018, a Community Council working party removed all the old fencing and installed safety fencing to isolate the construction site from the school children. Old fencing was recycled, old fence posts were used as fuel for log fires and the old paving slabs were re-used for the kissing gate access steps.

One of the contractor selection criteria specified by the Community Council was that it should benefit local contractors and if possible, they should not be VAT registered. The contractor work commenced on 2nd April 2018. Initial work was hampered by very wet weather in the first 3 weeks.

The increased gradient of the access ramp resulted in a risk that children may short-cut the ramp by going down a fairly steep grassy and potentially slippery bank. To minimise this risk, it became necessary to install a safety rail along the first section of the ramp. It also became clear that the northern boundary wall had the top capping stones cemented in place. As the new field was now 14 meters longer than the original (in order to accommodate the minimum slope of the disabled access), there was a length of the capping stones that were not cemented in place. There was a risk that these stones could fall on children using the field and so additional work was needed to cement these in place. Other additional work identified was that because of the lowering of the field level, the mower access gate was in the wrong place and had to be moved by approx. 5 metres. The unexpected level changes created a problem with access to the Community Orchard and so a short new paved access path had to be provided. These additional safety requirements posed a problem in terms of budgeting. In order to free up additional funds the project manager decided to split the work of installing the running track. Instead of the specialist contractor bringing a sub-contractor from Lancashire to do the foundation work for the running track, a local contractor was used, saving over two thousand pounds. The track contractor was only then used to lay the specialised rubber surface. The track was completed in the second week of June 2018. The shelter was installed on 7th July with the access ramp to the shelter being installed & provided by a Community Council working party. A team of local volunteers and school parents & children undertook the de-stoning & finishing of the pitch surface.



The boundary fencing, kissing gate, mower access gate relocation, access style and safety fencing on the disabled access ramp were all installed at the end of July, allowing the recreation ground to be returned to the School's responsibility on time, for the start of the new school year in the second week of August 2018. At this stage the running track & shelter were in use for the school, but not the general public. There remained the landscaping works, completion of the shelter seating area and the provision of the sports equipment in order to complete the project. Although seeding of the pitch was completed in August, on the advice of our gardening expert, we were advised to delay the environmental planting until Spring 2019. In the meantime, the volunteer force undertook the laying of bark wood chippings and quarry dust in order to control weed growth and minimise the ongoing maintenance. Materials for this work were provided free of charge by:

- Tarmac Ltd -Craignair Quarry 6tes quarry dust delivered
- BSW Ltd sawmill at Dalbeattie – Wood chippings
- Jewson Ltd Dumfries – Weed Control Membrane
- D.Reilly – loan of dump truck & wacker

Sports equipment to meet the Colvend School requirements was purchased in February 2019 and provided facilities for Football, Mini Rugby, Lacrosse, Netball.

Further volunteers from the Community Council and school parents undertook ornamental planting around the periphery of the field in March 2019. This planting is now well-established, but the project team felt that more was possible. During the summer of 2019 an application was put into the Woodland Trust and 130 small trees and bushes were provided free of charge and delivered for planting by the school children and other volunteers in November 2019.

During the winter of 2018/19 it became clear that the football pitch was flooding after heavy rain. This was a surprise to the project team, because percolation trials carried out in 2017 had shown that the natural drainage was very good. It soon became clear that the new drainage system that had been installed was not working fully. The problem for the project team was that the contractor's solutions entailed digging up parts of the pitch which would put the pitch out of action for 12 months whilst the grass re-established. Various minimum-invasion borehole were installed, but without the required effect. Eventually a specialist drainage consultant was approached, and his analysis was that the ground was too compacted to allow rainwater to percolate to the drainage pipes. In order to minimise the damage to the pitch, a unique "Shockwave Treatment" system was employed in November 2019 to aerate the subsoils without damaging the playing surface. The consultant also recommended treating the surface with a specialised sand dressing. This work has significantly reduced the flooding problem.

The formal opening of the Recreation Field took place on Friday 29th June 2019. The opening ceremony was overseen by the Chairman of the Community Council, Mr Derek Roan, and the ribbon was cut by the Secretary, Mrs Sue Gourlay. The schoolchildren then paraded behind a local piper and the 2012 Olympic torch, before starting to compete in the Colvend Olympics. Medals were presented by Dougie the Doonhamer (Queen of the South's mascot) and the new Community Trophy was presented to Fin Harris. The opening received substantial coverage in the



Galloway News on 27/6/19 and 4/7/19 and the BBC Radio Scotland on 29/6/19. All publicity recognised the contribution made by all three funders.



The project is seen to be very successful by the local community. It has engaged local businesses in the delivery of the project, and the volunteer work has seen community members working together



towards a common objective. In particular the involvement of local children in aspects of completing the project has shown them how much effort is involved in delivering assets for their benefit. The running track is in use almost daily and is proving not only to be great fun but also is reaping fitness benefits. The recreation field is in use by the public anytime outside school hours.

The project has delivered on Local Development Strategy 5.3 “A focus on place – the importance of settlements” and is indirectly linked to SOA theme 2 “We will provide a good start in life for all children and we will prepare our young children for adulthood”. Monitoring shows that it is well used not only by the schoolchildren, but also by the public for such things as rugby training, casual football and running circuits. The shelter / seating has proved to be an asset both during school playtimes and for casual visitors.

In autumn 2019, the school expressed concern about the quarry dust placed on the seating foot area. Although this was compacted, in very wet conditions the dust washed onto the corner of the running track. When it dried out the dust became slippery and was considered to be a hazard for the children. The problem was resolved by replacing the quarry dust in the vicinity of the seating area with car pave. This work was completed at the beginning of December 2019, prior to the LARCs project completion date of 31st December 2019.

The project had a specific end however the recreation field will be managed by the community and could possibly be used as an example of good practice.

3. Finances

The project cash balances and cost control were very challenging because of the need to pay invoices before matched funding was received. This challenge was aided by the school making some purchases and then the project refunding them. LEADER was also helpful by processing the first claim expeditiously to allow sufficient funding to place orders for later work to proceed on time. The splitting of the track contract was the most beneficial project management action in the light of various items of additional work that arose during the project implementation.

At the end of the project the final expenditure was, total costs of £49,913.35, with LEADER providing £15,413.35 and match funding of £22,000 from EON Windfarm Community Benefit Fund and £12,500 from Dumfries and Galloway Council Stewartry Area Committee.