

An open letter to Bishopston Ward,

Following concerns expressed recently on social media regarding young persons and children's recreational facilities within the ward, Bishopston community council would like to clarify and hopefully update residents as to what has been happening over recent months and outline our key priorities moving forward with respect to these facilities.

As a community council, we have been acutely aware for some time that the playground facilities in Bishopston park (just off Wellfield) and Murton park fall well below what we would consider to be an acceptable standard to provide a fun, engaging space for our young residents. Whilst minor upgrades and repairs have been made over recent times it is clear both parks are in need of complete redevelopment.

With this in mind, for the last 18 months, the community council has spent considerable time and effort in preparing and submitting a robust bid to the national lottery to aid the funding for these essential upgrades. Unfortunately, and to the councils extreme disappointment, we were notified 4 weeks ago that our recent bid was unsuccessful.

Bishopston community council remain undeterred and are currently in the process of submitting an enhanced revised bid for significant funding as we recognise this development is of key importance to our local children.

Whilst we have engaged the services of an external specialist to help compile our bid, we would very much welcome anyone who feels that they have any special skills or expertise to offer, to get in touch if they would like to contribute positively to the process.

Hopefully, once funding is secured, we will be in touch for your thoughts regarding what pieces of equipment everyone might like to see included in the redeveloped park. We are delighted to see the success of the new playground in Underhill park, Mumbles and this adds to our motivation.

In summary and hopefully in way of reassurance, we are viewing the park redevelopments as a key priority moving forward.

In addition to the above and to help facilitate good and effective communication with our younger residents we are also in the early stages of developing the idea of a community youth council project. The aim of which would be to have a number of local 10 to 16 year olds working with council members to help develop age appropriate events and to ensure people of this age "have a voice" within the community.

This idea is in the early stages and more details will follow in the near future regarding details of its development.

Several months ago the community council was delivered a presentation, by young representatives of the "Bishopston skatepark project". The proposal suggested the development of first a Skate Park and then a Pump Track, essentially a circuit of banked turns, humps and dips. The proposed site of the facility was the area of Murton green just above the existing children's playground. The presentation was well received and a lot of time and thought had clearly gone into it.

The proposal was discussed at length in some considerable detail across several community council meetings.

Bishopston community council are not against the concept of a pump track but strongly feel that the siting of such a facility is of key importance, it was decided that the area of Murton green in question was not appropriate for the following reasons :-

- The community council, and indeed many local residents, view Murton green very much as a "jewel in the crown" of our village, it is one of the very few remaining, green, open, public recreational spaces left in the village for anyone to use for virtually any purpose at any time. This we feel needs to be valued and preserved.
- This section of land is already utilised on a daily basis by a large cross section of the community, young and old, for a diverse range of leisure pursuits, it is not merely unused fallow land.
- Community events which we know people value, such as fireworks night and mayday are located on this area and to find alternative sites would prove problematic.
- We have also considered environmental impact and drainage issues around the site.
- The lack of a supportive infrastructure around the site, for example the lack of any adequate toilet facilities and car parking issues on the weekend when the football and cricket matches are being played are also of concern.
- The proximity of the site to the infant playground is also of concern for practical and safety issues.

- The very proximity to residential housing has also been considered.
  
- In the context of local strategic planning, we are aware of the proposed plans to build a large, competition standard skatepark on Mumbles front. As most people are aware, a new 12 foot wide cycle/walk way across Clyne common is being developed which would provide direct and safe access to this large scale facility from our village. Having two similar facilities within such close proximity may excessive.

We as a council hope this clarifies our position in respect of our efforts to facilitate move activities in the area for local children of all ages, and our stance in respect of the proposal by the skatepark project and other local issues at the present time and we would like again to assure you that the development youth facilities are very much an acute priority. We reiterate our invitation to anyone who feels that they have any special skills experience or expertise to offer in respect of funding applications or youth project work, to get in touch if they would like to contribute positively to the process and ask that you look out for details on the formation of the Bishopston youth council.

Faithfully

Bishopston community council