

Playground Action Committee for Tideford (PACT) feedback to Parish Council

On Sunday 21st August, PACT held an open afternoon for residents of the village and of surrounding areas to come and have a look at the park, share memories of past times and to suggest improvements for the refurbishment for the park. It was a well attended event, which did result to being held mainly in the RBL due to the weather but this created a positive atmosphere where parents and children came together (enticed by cake and tea!) to discuss the plans.

We had some really positive feedback and the most pleasing view which came up several times, was that many people wanted the park restored to its former set up in terms of the adventure rope course. Comments such as 'unique' versatile and fun were used to describe the route that I remember as a child that meant you could start at one end of the park and reach the other end without touching the floor. The basket swing has also been missed by many families and children and can be used, with support, by children with physical disabilities.

There were mentions that although this is suitable for children of mid-primary age to early teens, there was perhaps not as much provision for younger children, older children or in fact children with disabilities.

For younger children suggestions were such as the swings being replaced, climbing frames to promote gross motor strength and also some form of role play equipment such as a wooden boat or tractor which allows children to both climb and use their imagination in which to play. The picnic benches were highlighted as a positive but was suggested that their placement may be in the wrong place. Another suggested some way to sit under the tree that was planted by the famous explorer so that the shade could be enjoyed in the summer.

A round about was also suggested rather than the small stand on stick in the main area that the smaller children are drawn to using but do not have the skill set to use at that young age. It was mentioned by some of the adults that some form of seating in the toddle area as many result to sitting on the block wall which is not very secure. At the last meeting with the councillors when we walked around the area to talk about suggestions, the idea of this toddler area being extended and made larger was also brought up. There are many smaller children in the village and that also use the Montessori Nursery at Bridge Road.

The members of PACT have raised the issue of provision for older children in the village. There are a few teens and soon to be which we purposefully approached and asked about their use of the park and anything they would wish for. In getting this target group on board, we are hoping that there will be an element of respect for the equipment and also an understanding that the village and parish have provided for them. The comments by both this target group and some parents of other target groups suggested the basketball courts being re-surfaced, with a more versatile space for a variety of different sports. Football posts, lower basketball nets as well as the higher nets. One family replied to say that they use that space for hockey practise, iceskating/roller blading practice as well as football, basketball, skipping etc. A covered seating area maybe with a table is one of the features that we discussed would be a good use of meeting space. With that, there does come a risk of misuse of a feature like this from people, not just in this age group. A thought by the members of PACT was that solar powered motion sensor lights would be a deterrent to the misuse of this important feature. Perhaps with it being placed in an area closer to the legion or within easy view of the car park.

Another suggestion by a parent was to mark the floor of the surface with some kind of painted track to allow more skill to be built into the children practicing riding their bikes on. Many children in the village over the years have learnt to ride their bikes on this area and this would also potentially avoid the issue of people moving objects into the area to create assault courses for bikes and roller blades.

Finally, but perhaps, most importantly, was the suggestion of provision for disabled children. At present, none of the areas of the park are suitable for children with disabilities. The basket swing could be used for some children in this target group but is not easily accessible by wheelchair. It is not seen as a necessity for all of the areas of the park to be accessible for this group but at least to have some provision to make the park inclusive for all. Roundabouts that wheelchairs can be driven onto and locked in are accessible for both disabled and able bodied children. A swing in which a grown disabled child or teen could be strapped into would be a huge nod towards the necessity of being inclusive for all.

To summarise these points,

- A larger toddler area with;
 - Seating for parents
 - Swings
 - Climbing to promote gross motor
 - Slide
 - Wooden boat/tractor/shop front to encourage role play
 - Roundabout
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- Adventure playground restored to its original state
 - Basket swing to be reinstated
 - Covered seating area (gazebo/arbour) with table for picnics/teens to sit and socialise
 - Solar powered motion sensor lighting in this area and near RBL or car park to avoid misuse
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- Court/Playground resurfaced
 - Permanent football goal posts
 - Permanent basketball/netball posts for different ages
 - Painted tracks on floor for bikes/skates etc
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- Provision and access for disabled children
 - Swing
 - Roundabout
 - Ramps and bridges wide enough for a wheelchair (can also be used by pushchairs)