Multi Use Games Area
Project Plan
2007 - 2012

South Lakeland

Project Partners; -

South Lakeland District Council
Cumbria County Council
Cumbria Police
Neighbourhood Watch
South Lakes Housing
Young Cumbria

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**Introduction**

It is important that young people have quality space where they can play and take part in activity in their own communities. Places that are easily accessible that will encourage them away from anti-social behaviour, where they can socialize with their friends and feel safe. Multi Use Games Areas are designed to provide an accessible space for young people and can have a real impact on these issues.

A Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) is a hard surface recreation area with marked pitches and/or courts to enable a range of activities to take place, for all sections of the community. They vary in size and cost, depending on a range of variables, including lighting, fencing, number of courts etc, and can be designed around the space available. In order to establish a coordinated approach to developing MUGAS, the South Lakeland’s Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) agreed to convene a project Steering Group of potential partners to lead the development of the Project Plan and delivery that Project Plan over the life of the scheme. The following plan states the intention of this Steering Group and identifies how the group aims to take this project forward.

The idea to develop a number of MUGAs in South Lakeland came from the “Kick Off” project, an inter-estate football competition that has now run for 3 summers, in partnership with SLDC, Police COPS Team, Westmorland FA and Young Cumbria. This is a football based deterrent, structured on the provision of activity for young people. Some of the existing estate football fields, for example at Rinkfield and Hallgarth had proved unsuitable for use due to flooding, dog fouling etc and in order to make the project sustainable, a request was made to South Lakes Housing (SLH) to fund the installation of all weather surfaces. A MUGA would provide a hard standing facility for community use to suit the size of land available and funding. Research has shown that not only do such facilities reduce crime levels in the locations where they are sited, but that the deployment of police resources in these locations can also be reduced. Although initially the Steering Group had focused on building one MUGA on the Hallgarth estate in Kendal, the group soon realised the potential of the scheme to combat anti-social behaviour and decided to concentrate on establishing five MUGAs across the whole of South Lakeland during a five year period, 2007 – 2012. The intention is that these MUGAs will sustain the working done by the Kick Off project by providing a much needed community orientated facilities for young people to use and enjoy.

**So Why is the Project Needed?**

The CDRP identified Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) as one of the priority themes in all 3 published strategies. The current Strategy 2005 – 2008 outlines a 3 strand approach to ASB of education, diversion/prevention and enforcement and projects are focused on young people aged 17 and under. Key objectives in the Strategy are:-

- Ensure opportunities are available for young people to have their views and opinions heard
- Engage with young people and offer diversionary activities
- Maintain community cohesion and quality of life for South Lakeland residents
- Include young people in action within their own communities

The ASB task group identified a number “high profile” wards, based on analysis of youth disorder data from Cumbria Police. These have consistently included Kendal Underley and Highgate wards, Ulverston East ward and Windermere Town and Bowness South wards. In addition, there are some locations that see rises in levels of calls for service or youth disorder at certain times. These include Sandylands and Kirkbarrow in Kendal, Burnside and more recently, Heron Hill in Kendal. Discrete projects have run in these areas through Young Cumbria, in particular Detached Youth Work provision and as part of a range of tools or solutions. Enforcement action through enhanced police patrols is only one deployment option used to tackle youth nuisance.

Through a range of consultations and survey work, (Streetsafe, Young Cumbria, Police Authority survey) ASB and youth disorder have featured as problems, although perceptions vary between age groups. In addition, fear of crime is out of proportion when compared with actual crime.
statistics. This is not confined to South Lakeland but is a national issue. Less than 10% of young people in South Lakeland cause problems, but a negative attitude towards young people in general, can lead to negative behaviour.

Strategic Link

Various other strategies and action plans have identified a need to tackle anti social behaviour; -

South Lakeland’s Community Strategy – The main focus of this MUGA project is reducing anti social behaviour using accessible facilities. Within the Community Strategy the reduction of Crime and Disorder is a cross cutting theme. The Strategy states, “prioritising and focusing on hot spots, specific problems and closer working between the CDRP, Drug Action Team and other local agencies, we can effectively deliver actions within local communities. The Action Plans will be integrated into the Community Strategy process” Sitting under the strategy, the Crime and Disorder Reduction partnership have created an action the deliver against the Community Strategy. Objective 4 “Engage with young people and offer diversionary activities” identifies MUGAs as a priority, Action 4.1.2 Scope installation of Multi Use Games Areas in South Lakeland.

SLDC Cultural Strategy – This strategy has identified eight priority areas for culture across South Lakeland, two of which are creating space for young people and increasing participation in physical activity. The strategy states that, “It’s imperative that we: identify, recognise and understand youth culture in South Lakeland, devote physical space and space in programming to it, find space to accommodate young people’s own programmes and increase their ability to access existing cultural spaces and activities.”

SLDC Corporate Plan – The Councils Corporate Plan recognises five key areas of service that SLDC must focus on. Among these priorities “Safer, Greener, Cleaner and Stronger Communities” and “Healthy Community” feature as themes. Within the themes, the Council has set Corporate Objectives for delivery, two of these objectives is as follows; - The Council will play a major role in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and the harm caused by illegal drugs; reducing the fear of crime through the provision of reassurance to the public, and building respect in communities. And Quality of life enhanced through access and participation in cultural, sporting and leisure activities, particularly for young people, older people and rural communities. The installation of these MUGA’s will clearly deliver against this objective.

Feedback from Young People

Through research undertaken by Young Cumbria, we know that young people in various parts of Kendal and South Lakeland, have asked for all weather facilities to play football and other games, as the existing provision was often unusable. Young Cumbria Youth Workers have conducted 3 pieces of consultation work with young people in Kendal. Specifically, the playing fields in two areas, Hallgarth and Sandylands were prone to flooding that made them unusable and there was a perceived need for an area for young people to play and be safe. Typical comments from young people at Kirkbarrow were that although there was play equipment available in the area, this had age restrictions and was not appropriate for teenage young people. These same young people often played football on the street and this created problems with residents, through both noise and the fact that large groups of young people forming were seen as intimidating.

In addition, because of the unsuitability of the playing field at Hallgarth, many young people were now using the hard surface car park area outside the community centre to play football. Although this showed a need for a hard court area with possible lighting, it had also caused a number of complaints to the police by residents and centre users because of vandalism (broken windows) and the intimidation factor caused by a large congregation of young people.
Project Aims and Objectives

Aim

To provide community-based MUGAs that offer safe, modern and youth focused facilities for young people to participate in structured and un-structured activity as a diversion from anti social behaviour. Focusing on areas in South Lakeland that are seen as crime “hotspots”

Objectives

- Create and sustain a project Steering Group that develops and delivers a planned approach to creating MUGAs in South Lakeland
- To develop up to five MUGAs in South Lakeland within five target wards identified by the steering group over a five year Project Plan period. These five wards are Kendal Kirkland, Kendal Farcross, Kendal Underlay, Ulverston East and Windermere Town.
- To develop capacity to deliver activity to young people i.e outreach youth workers and sports coaches
- To reduce to number of crime and fear of crime incidents within identified hotspots.
- To bring investment into South Lakeland.
- To regenerate particular local wards.
- To provide quality facilities for young people.
- To provide accessible opportunities for young people to be active.

Structure

The Steering Group’s role, in partnership with the CDRP, is to identify the hotspot target areas as detailed above and in particular identify suitable sites within target wards. The Steering Group will then seek external funding to build a MUGA in that ward. The Steering Group is not aiming to install just one MUGA in the highest priority target ward, the project will be phased over five year period and target wards identified on statistical basis (crime and fear of crime stats, social rented housing). The group has yet to identify how these MUGAs will be maintained and insured. SLDC is the obvious organisation to undertake these roles, however, current financial restrictions at the Council may mean that the group will need to engage with another management organisation as an alternative.

Planning for the future

The Steering Group understands the planning issues to be considered and where MUGAs can be sited is vital, both in terms of the local community and maximum use. There are a number of options available. They could be sited in a residential area, but not directly adjacent to residential properties, due to potential noise, lighting and other nuisance issues. Land designated for recreation use could be used, or other open green space, but not industrial areas or amenity land for various uses. Issues from a planning perspective included management of the facility, insurance, operational hours and security. There are no criteria on size, but it is anticipated that levels of funding and ward population will determine this. The means to complete consultation with residents and the local community will be a vital part of the project plan.

There is the possibility of some funding through Section 106 and planning gain agreements, whereby planning permission is granted for a large scheme and there is a legal requirement for money to be allocated to community projects. The Steering Group has already make significant progress with planning gain for the Sandyland MUGA in particular. The Steering Group plan the use the private investment to apply for a Sports Match grant from Sport England.
“Hotspot” Ward Selection Criteria

The selection of sites within target wards is crucial and the Steering Group has agreed set criteria in order that the selection process is transparent. The five wards were considered and prioritised using a range of selection criteria that include, in priority order:-

- The percentage of social housing rented in a particular ward
- Crime statistics – ASB figures, calls for service, youth related incidents
- Youth ward population
- Feedback and comment from Young Cumbria and CADAS, those organisations involved with young people
- Feedback and comment from SLH Officers
- Feedback and comment from COPS Team / LPTs
- Feedback and comment from the “Kick Off” project leaders

Cumbria Police provided data on incidents of anti social behaviour, specifically rowdy and nuisance behaviour including youth disorder. These were considered the key incident types to measure, along with the percentage of social housing gained from census. The data is extensive and has been collated to shows the top 10 wards in South Lakeland for ASB. In addition, the steering group would also consider the correlation between the percentage of young people living in a potential site area and consultation undertaken by Young Cumbria with young people. Appendix A shows the information above in a database format and gives ward rating.

Funding Considerations and Options

The Steering Group has identified four sources for funding to date. The overall scheme cost has yet to be established, as each site will require different levels of cost. However, the Steering Group estimate that each MUGA will be in the region of £100,000. Adding to that the cost of employing part time youth workers and sports coaches, the Steering Group are working to a total estimate of £600,000.

To date, the sustainability element of the SLDC Decent Homes funding, coordinated by South Lakes Housing has contributed £200,000 towards to initial two MUGAs, the South Lakeland Sport and Physical Activity Alliance have earmarked £75,000 and Russell Armour LTD committed £25,000 planning gain, which is related to a planning application in the Farcross ward, hence will need to be spent in that ward. Young Cumbria is also working up a Youth Opportunities Fund bid for £20,000.

South Lakes Housing has indicated that there may be a similar contribution towards two more MUGAs at a later date.

The Steering Group will need to identify other funding to match the above commitment. Below is a list of possible funding sources that may contribute to such a project:-

- Big Lottery Fund
- Football Foundation, up to 50% of core costs
- Barclays Spaces for Sport Fund, potentially half core costs, plus £20,000 for activity provision
- Sport England Community Investment Fund
- Sports Match Funding
- The Foundation for Sport and the Arts from Littlewoods, grants up to £75,000
- Peter Harrison Foundation, from £1,000 to £150,000
- Northern Rock Foundation
- Lloyds TSB Foundation
- Sport Relief
- Local funders – Pilgrim Trust, Hadfield Trust, Francis C Scott Trust, Russell, Holehird Trust

There are other potential funding sources, not included on this list. However, any funding bid is likely to require detailed information e.g. appropriate comparative data, community involvement
and with a clear identified link to relevant local strategies, eg Local Strategic Partnership Community Strategy, South Lakeland CDRP Strategy and SLDC’s Sport and Recreation Action Plan and the emerging Play Strategy, as this Project Plan has initial done.

Specification

Sport England, in conjunction with the Sports and Play Construction Association, has produced a comprehensive guidance document for the design, specification and construction of MUGAs. This document covers all key considerations, for example – choice of site and location, infrastructure, choice of surface, drainage, lighting, fencing, equipment etc. It is anticipated that a model for use in South Lakeland will be derived from this document and would be seen as good practice by potential funders. However, The Steering Group understands that there will be different specifications for different areas and based on relevant information. The Steering Group are also keen that these facilities are as friendly to the environment as possible, hence the group will consider options such as solar powered lighting (dependent on planning permission) and recycled surfaces.

Consultation and community involvement

Once sites have been identified, parish / town, ward and county councillors in target wards will be informed as consultation, with all age groups, is a major part of the process. Some informal consultation has already taken place, as evidenced through work by Young Cumbria and South Lakes Housing. In addition, police led, multi-agency, Streetsafe operations have been carried out in a number of the potential site areas. Those residents who have completed questionnaires highlight youth disorder as one of the main types of anti social behaviour in their communities. The Steering Group, through planning guidelines, will inform and consult residents during each of the five developments.

Repair and Maintenance costs

One aspect of anti social behaviour is vandalism and damage to property of those perceived to be in authority. Criminal damage is one of the key priorities for South Lakeland CDRP and South Cumbria Police. During 2005 / 2006, repairs to vandalised play equipment, bus shelters, litterbins and seats etc in South Lakeland was estimated at £6,500. In addition, the cost of clearing up rubbish, waste and fly tipping from estates in Kendal and West areas was £2,400. This total of almost £9,000 does not include the costs of vandalism to public buildings, public conveniences and repairs to ticket machines in SLDC car parks. Whilst it cannot be stated that young people are responsible for all vandalism, there is a link between the number of calls for service to the police regarding youth disorder and locations for vandalism. At this time, it is only possible to give an estimate of the cost of maintenance as this will depend on the size and type of area provided, the facilities, number of lights, type and height of fencing and other variables that will all have a potential impact on maintenance and repair costs. The annual SLDC budget for play areas during 2005/06 was £55,000 and an estimate for MUGA maintenance costs is £1,500 per annum, per site.

Conclusion

Strategically placed MUGAs have the potential to reduce costs to SLDC caused by vandalism, reduce calls for service to the police and therefore impact on police resources, promote a healthy and active lifestyle for a range of young people and show that partners of the CDRP are committed to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act. Above all, this plan shows commitment to addressing some of the identified needs of young people in South Lakeland through the Every Child Matters agenda and maintaining their involvement and participation in activities in their own communities.