

Windermere Park For All Project Need and Proposal



Who Are We?

'Windermere Park For All' is a community fundraising group established in November 2017 with the aim of raising the necessary funds to refurbish, extend and revitalise the public play areas at Queen's Park in Windermere. Our plan is to create a more exciting and inclusive activity space, catering to a wider range of age groups and physical abilities thereby improving the health of our young people through increased physical activity and time spent outdoors.

Our committee has six core volunteer members made up of local parents and residents and is chaired by our local councillor, Ben Berry. Our Facebook page has over 300 followers. We are well supported by local businesses, residents, primary and secondary schools, local youth groups and play experts who have been involved since the project's inception. Our team is also being advised by Active Cumbria and the local Police Community Support Officers who fully support the project and its aims.

We work closely with the park owners (SLDC), to represent the voice of the community. Our objective is not only to raise the required funds, but also to keep local children and residents involved at every stage of the process. This will ensure that the final play space takes into account their needs and wishes.

Project Proposal and Current Status

The play equipment in Queen's Park in Windermere is over fifteen years old and has been so well used by the local community and tourists alike that it is now in desperate need of an upgrade. The equipment is outdated, does not provide good play value for all ages and is not exciting or challenging. There is very little for the 8+ age bracket, nor for children with different physical abilities. Over the past few years, there have also been instances of anti-social behaviour due to the lack of provision for older children.

Our plan is for the refurbishment to happen in two phases. In the first phase the existing playground will be fully replaced, a brand new cycling/pump track will be built and new landscaping will provide a wildflower garden, wild play area, football kickabout zone and picnic areas. The total budget for this is £170,000 broken down as follows:

Playground	£100,000
Pump track	£50,000
Landscaping, wild play, kickabout zone, benches and seating	£20,000
Total	£170,000

In the second phase the current metal skate ramps will be removed and replaced with a redesigned skate park. The budget for this is £150,000 and fundraising will start once the first phase has been completed.

To date we have raised over £121,000 towards the first phase with a further £49,000 of bids currently under consideration (please see the attached spreadsheet for more details). Decisions on these bids are expected at the end of October.

If successful, this will complete our fundraising for Phase One and enable us to start the tender process, which will take approximately 6 months. If this can start in November, we will be looking at an installation in Spring 2021. Once installed, SLDC has committed to funding and managing all ongoing maintenance of the new play areas.

How do we know this project is needed?

We know that Windermere needs this because the initial impetus for the project came from local parents who regularly visit the park. They noted the tired and inadequate state of the play area and wanted to do something to improve it both for their own children and for the wider community.

One of our group's first tasks was to hold a public consultation so that local residents could find out more information about the project and share their views. We also held sessions at local primary and secondary schools to find out from the young people what their priorities were and what elements they would like to see included. This feedback has been incorporated into our designs.

For the older children (age 11+) the pump track, skate park and kickabout area were the most important as there is currently very little provision for their age bracket. The younger children (primary age) were unanimous that the current play area is 'boring' and needs to be more varied and challenging. They were also concerned about instances of anti-social behaviour from 'teenagers' and liked the idea of more open and inclusive play areas.

Who will be the beneficiaries of this project?

- ✓ approximately 1400 children of school age in Windermere and Bowness and their families
- ✓ families in lower income brackets
- ✓ young people with different physical abilities
- ✓ local schools, youth groups and sports clubs
- ✓ young people who need a safe place to cycle and scoot together
- ✓ children struggling with the effects of being overweight or obese
- ✓ people from all sections of the community
- ✓ locals suffering instances of anti-social behaviour
- ✓ families with children over a range of ages

How will this project benefit local people and help to address local issues?

There are approximately **1400 children of school age** in Windermere in around 800 families who live either within walking distance or a very short drive of Queens Park (i). All of these would benefit immediately from an improved activity space. **Families and young people** who live here gravitate towards the local park in their free time but there is currently very little which will help create regular activity habits and a love of an active lifestyle.

The playground, pump track and other new play zones will be an important free and safe local resource, that all **families in any income bracket** can easily access all the time. While the surrounding area does have many outdoor attractions, these are often tourist-oriented and away from the town with parking and admission prices geared to the visitor market. In addition, both of the children's play centres in nearby Ambleside and Bowness have closed down recently, making it even more difficult for local families to find affordable options for children to burn off energy.

Although Windermere could be seen as an affluent area, as many locals work in the relatively low paid tourist and retail industries there is also a wide disparity in income levels (ii) and Windermere even has its own food bank (iii). Weekly household earnings in Windermere are below the national average both before and after housing costs (iv) while house prices are almost 40% higher than the national average (v). These disparities have only been exacerbated by the financial hardship resulting from the Covid 19 crisis.

When purchasing equipment and designing the play areas we will also ensure that some elements are accessible to **users with different physical abilities**. The pump track can be used by all ages and abilities - experienced riders, four-year olds on balance bikes, in-line skaters, scooters and wheelchair users will all be welcome and able to participate safely.

The park is regularly used by **local schools, youth groups and sports clubs** as part of the schemes they offer, but it is currently not fulfilling its potential and could offer so much more. Our local Beaver Scout leader said “The park is at the heart of our community and is used by all groups in our organisation. At the moment we do the best we can with the limited facilities, but to have a new playground, skate park and cycling track will really help us to deliver sessions and activities that inspire and challenge our youngsters”.

Cycling and scooting are two of the most popular sporting activities for **young people** nowadays but the options for enjoying them in Windermere are limited. Roads around town are narrow, congested and dangerous (vi) and currently the nearest skate and pump tracks are eight and fifteen miles away respectively. Our new facilities will provide a place for local people to safely enjoy these activities.

Obesity is a problem here with **27.3% of children aged 10-11 in South Lakeland overweight or obese** (vii). In addition 23.1% of children and young people here do less than 30 minutes of activity every day (viii). The benefits of taking part in sporting activities on both physical and mental well-being are well documented, especially when this is outdoors. Play areas teach basic skills such as balance and coordination that can cross over into multiple sporting disciplines. But most importantly they are fun!

Playgrounds, skate parks and cycle tracks help to transcend social, economic and language barriers and provide a meeting and social space for **people from all sections of the community** to come together. As one local headteacher said “It should be a safe, yet inviting place to play, relax and meet other children/families in. It is the social hub of the area for the children and their parents, ensuring that families and young children do not become isolated in the community”.

Although Queen’s Park is used by visitors as well as locals, this will not be a ‘destination playground’, as there is not the supporting infrastructure (parking/toilets/cafe) to cater for large numbers of visitors. Rather this will be a facility for the local community who live nearby. The park’s location in the heart of the town makes it easily accessible on foot or by bike to the majority of residents.

The more tailored spaces for **older children** will hopefully help to **combat the anti-social behaviour** and give them a park that they can be proud of. **Families with children over a range of ages** will be able to enjoy an extended visit to the park rather than having to cut short play because there isn’t something suitable for the whole family. Our plans should also encourage more use of the park, in all weathers and at all times of the year, helping to increase the amount of time that children and young people spend doing physical activity.

Letters of support and consultation summary documents can be supplied if required

Sources and references in text:

- (i) Source: Latest Ofsted reports and Census 2011
- (ii) In Windermere 27.3% of residents are employed in the accommodation and food sector and 18.9% in the retail sector. Both of these are specifically linked to the tourism industry in the town. (Source: Bowness and Windermere Economic Profile 2015 - SLDC document) Average salaries in this industry are less than half the national average. (Source: Cumbria Revealed: A county of contrasts - Cumbria Community Foundation publication 2017)
- (iii) Windermere and District Food Bank gave out 241 three day emergency food supplies to people in crisis last year (Source: Windermere Food Bank website)
- (iv) Source: Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) Rural Evidence Project 2013
- (v) Based on median data, the average house price in Windermere is 9.6 times the average household income . (Source: Bowness and Windermere Economic Profile 2015 - SLDC document)
- (vi) Cumbria has some of the most dangerous roads in the North West. South Lakeland has accident figures well above the national average. Source: Cumbria Revealed: A county of contrasts - Cumbria Community Foundation publication 2017
- (vii) Source: National Childhood Measurement Programme 2018/2019
- (viii) Source: Active Lives Survey 2018/2019, Active Cumbria website