

Ribble Valley Play Strategy

Introduction

Play is an important part of every child's life and is key to their development as healthy, happy individuals.

Play covers a huge range of activities from after school clubs to play areas, parks and open spaces, from back gardens to friends' houses. By developing a strategy we are investing in the future of our children as well as providing opportunities for the play resources of the Ribble Valley to be developed. The Strategy has been produced by a group of the partners in the Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership that has become the steering group of the Play Alliance.

In the Ribble Valley we understand Play as being '***What children and young people do when they follow their own ideas and interests in their own way and for their own reasons***'.

The purpose of the Play Strategy

There is currently no identifiable key provider and facilitator of play provision for children and young people in the Ribble Valley and so it is vital that the Play Alliance works with other providers to improve the planning and delivery of local play opportunities.

The Play Strategy is a guide for the future based on a thorough understanding of the current picture, and the opportunities and issues.

The purpose of the Strategy is to:

- Establish a Play Alliance
- Address the play needs of children and young people, under 15, in the Ribble Valley
- Provide increased play opportunities
- Help identify current play provision
- Promote consultation and community involvement
- Provide clear aims and objectives for future delivery and development
- Ensure the sustainability of play provision
- Promote creative and innovative approaches to play
- Assist in attracting funding for improved play opportunities
- Communicate and raise the profile of play provision in the Ribble Valley

The case for play

It is widely accepted that play has a vitally important role in aiding the development of, and helping to shape the characters of our children.

Experiencing a variety of play opportunities can help children to develop socially, physically, imaginatively and emotionally, as well as encouraging physical activity and contributing to the child's physical and mental well being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, and capacity to learn.

The importance of providing good quality play should not be underestimated. It promotes social inclusion, generates community cohesion and provides

occasions for social events whilst directly contributing to the health and well being of our children.

We endorse the principle of the “three frees” – play should be free of cost and children should be free to choose and free to come and go as they like.

Context - the local picture

The Ribble Valley Borough is situated in the North East of Lancashire and with an area of 585 square kilometres is the largest district in the County. Over seventy percent of the Borough is in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a clear reflection of the landscape quality of the area.

The borough has a population of around 56,900 with Clitheroe, the main administrative centre having 13,200 inhabitants. Clitheroe lies at the heart of the Borough whilst Longridge, the other main town, lies in the west. Longridge has a population of approximately 7,500. The remainder of the area is mainly rural with a number of villages ranging in size from large villages such as Whalley, Sabden and Chatburn through to small hamlets such as Great Mitton and Paythorne.

Currently around 18% of the borough’s population is under 15 years old and there are 39 schools. Much of the play and leisure facilities are distributed widely around the district. Some areas are well provided for, others seem to have limited opportunities and there are obvious gaps in the provision.

It is important to go back to the principle of why play is good for children and young people. From a Ribble Valley perspective we feel play is good because it –

- Promotes health and well-being
- Increases community safety
- Promotes enjoyment and socialising
- Contributes to community cohesion
- Involves young people in decision making
- Our local community feel it is important
- It supports wider strategic objectives

1. Promotes Health and Well-Being

The general health and well being of young people across the Ribble Valley is better than that of its East Lancashire neighbours. Participation in sport and physical activity is high, as is sports club membership (Year 9 Survey 2003) and good progress is being made on initiatives such as healthy schools and school travel plans. There is concern however that such provision is biased towards formal activity, has an emphasis on younger children and is not geographically equitable.

This pattern is not dissimilar to that promoted in 'Choosing Activity' (Department of Health 2005) where the vast majority of solutions to increasing physical activity are based on formal activity. Although there is some reference to the importance of play there are significantly fewer suggestions on how play can contribute to improving activity levels. This is important in the Ribble valley as, although we have relatively high participation levels, there are significant numbers of young people who are turned off by sport and formal activity (Year 9 Survey 2003).

The vast majority of fixed play facilities in the Borough (Play Facilities Audit) are aimed at younger children- 90% for under 10's, 8% for under 12's with only 2% for under 14's. Although there are concerns over the standard, accessibility and play value of some play areas, they are evenly spread across the Borough, which, considering its rural nature, is encouraging. Facilities for older children and young people are not however as prevalent.

Rural deprivation presents a number of challenges to us in improving access to play opportunities. Economic deprivation exists within the Ribble valley but tends to be in isolated pockets. Income, car ownership, and access to public transport all contribute to inequity of opportunity. Innovative approaches to delivering services are therefore required and, where direct services to rural communities is not possible, better access to more central services needs to be considered. The Bowland Youth project is a good example of how this can work with young people picked up from outlying villages by community transport and taken to Bowland High School to take part in a range of sports and arts activities.

2. Increases Community Safety

The Ribble Valley is officially the safest place to live in the North West. This however is not reflected in 'fear of crime' statistics and young people are often cited as the cause of criminal damage and anti-social behaviour

The provision of skate parks in Clitheroe and Longridge has provided evidence where good quality play facilities provide safe places and help reduce both incidents and perceptions. Prior to the facilities being provided young people used the town centres as their skate parks. This not only had an effect on actual and perceived juvenile nuisance but also produced unacceptable levels of risk taking behaviour with examples of skateboarders hitching rides in the back of buses leaving the interchange.

Since their introduction the Community Safety Partnership have noted a reduction in the number of reported anti social incidents and a general acceptance by the local community that they have had a positive impact.

3. Promotes enjoyment and socialising

There is no doubt that play should be enjoyable and offers an opportunity for young people to socialise without the constraints associated with other

environments such as school or sports club. Play does not only act as a catalyst for children to interact. It is equally important as a means for parents to interact through taking their children to the play group or play area.

The rural nature of the area means that many young people are reliant on parents to take them to central locations or rely on public transport, which, at best restricts the time they can meet friends or in the case of villages such as Bolton by Bowland, does not offer any service.

4. Promotes Community Cohesion

There are numerous examples where villages have come together to provide play facilities for their communities. Volunteers, both young and old have undertaken village surveys, carried out local fund raising, applied for grants to develop at least 5 new or re-developed play areas across the borough within the last 3 years.

Although there are minority communities within the Ribble Valley one of the biggest barriers identified by the Community Cohesion sub group of the Local Strategic Partnership is the relationship between older and young people. Older peoples' fear of crime and its association with younger people dominate this. We need to build a positive image in any future provision.

5. Involving Young People in Decision Making

Whilst we have isolated examples where young people have been involved in the development of play facilities this is by no means a consistent feature. Parents' views tend to be sought for children's provision rather than the children themselves and, when we compared the responses of parents and young people to the consultation exercise, their opinions are not always compatible. The best examples of comprehensive consultation with young people are the development of the two skate parks in Clitheroe and Longridge. The identification of sites, the design of each park and their ongoing operation were key features, which have given young people a sense of ownership and therefore contributed to their successful operation.

6. The Local Community feels it is Important.

In the recent General Household Survey residents were asked what factors made the Ribble valley a good place to live and what most needed to improve. In terms what makes it a good place to live the top 5 responses were:-

1. Level of Crime – 59.9%
2. Health Services – 49.6%
3. Education Provision – 42.1%
4. Affordable Housing – 42.0%
5. Clean Streets – 40.6%

When asked what most needs improving the top 5 responses were :-

1. Activities for Teenagers – 44.8%
2. Road and Pavement Repairs – 42.1%
3. Affordable Housing – 39.2%
4. Level of Crime 22.0%
5. Clean Streets – 21.4%

Facilities for young children achieved a mid range score at 11.9% feeling they were important and 13.8% feeling that improvements were needed.

It is very encouraging to see activities for teenagers as the number one priority for the local community. Apart from a recognition that they are less well served than younger children, it shows a preference for positive activity, rather than a controlling one on the back of juvenile nuisance perceptions.

7. It Supports Wider Strategic Objectives

The provision of play contributes to a number of strategic outcomes, both generally and locally. The specific links are :-

- Every Child Matters
- Community Plan
- Borough Council Corporate Plan
- District Wide Plan

Every Child Matters

The Children's Act 2004 requires all those working with and for children to develop a collaborative approach, including information sharing, accountability and governance arrangements. The development of children's trust arrangements on district footprints across the county has already shown a marked improvement in joint working from what was previously very fragmented.

Within the Ribble Valley we see our strategy contributing to 4 of the 5 outcomes under Every Child Matters –

- Be Healthy – The strategy provides opportunities for informal physical activity, safe environments to play, and positive alternatives to unhealthy activity around smoking and drug abuse.
- Stay safe – The strategy provides safe environments in terms of managed risk, reducing anti-social behaviour and places where young people can go without the fear of bullying
- Enjoy and Achieve – The strategy plugs some of the gaps in provision identified by young people, particularly in providing a more challenging environment than currently provided.
- Make a Positive Contribution – The strategy provides opportunities for young people to contribute to decision making, to present a positive image of young people and provide social environments where young people can develop self-confidence.

Community Strategy

The Ribble Valley Sustainable Community Strategy recognises the need for a more joined up approach for the provision of services for children and young people. Primarily set up to provide a framework for the emerging children's trust arrangements, the children and young people's theme group will host the Ribble Valley 'Play Alliance' who will be responsible for ensuring that the identified outcomes in the Action Plans are met.

Corporate Plan

Although Play is not specifically mentioned within the Council's Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan there are several references that tie the portfolio to the Council's key ambitions. Making Peoples Lives Safer and Healthier is one of the Council's 3 ambitions. Areas that are relevant to the portfolio under this ambition are –

- Aligning activities to support LAA outcomes for children and young people
- Aligning relevant activity to support Every Child Matters
- Prioritise activity programmes in accordance with identified priority groups – older people, women, and teenagers.

District Wide Plan

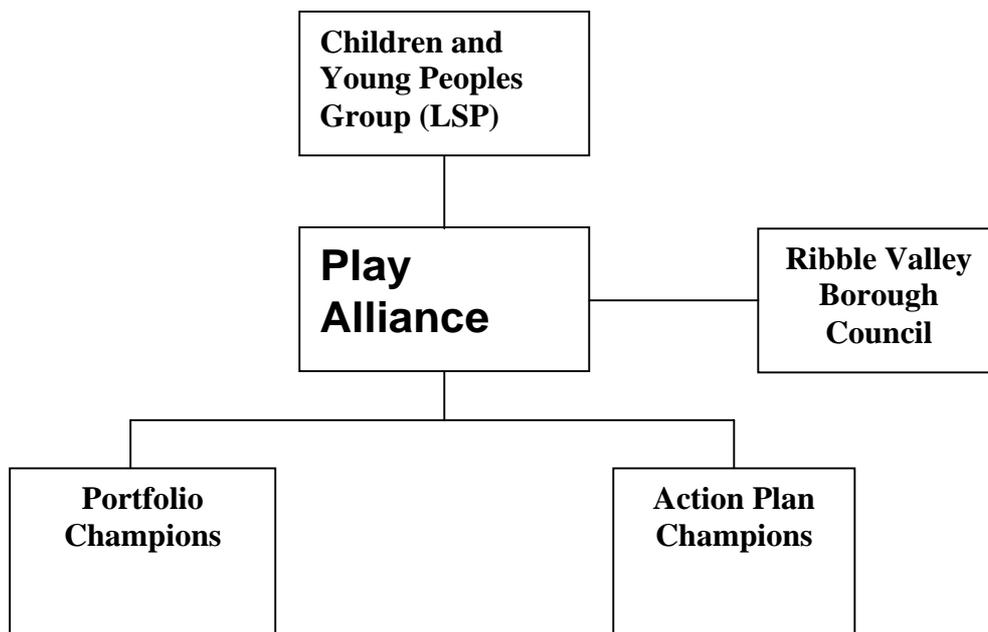
Within the overall planning framework the plan sets standards for the provision of open space and, specifically children's play areas. Although the measures are out dated (NPFA Standard) they do recommend that provision be made to react to changing circumstances and that a more co-ordinated approach is needed to better understand these.

The Play Alliance

A robust performance management framework will be developed for the wider actions contained within the strategy itself.

Performance management in the long term shall be the responsibility of the Play Alliance but we recognise that, until it is formally constituted, support will be required. The Borough Council's Community Development Manager will provide this.

The diagram below shows the reporting mechanism that will be in place



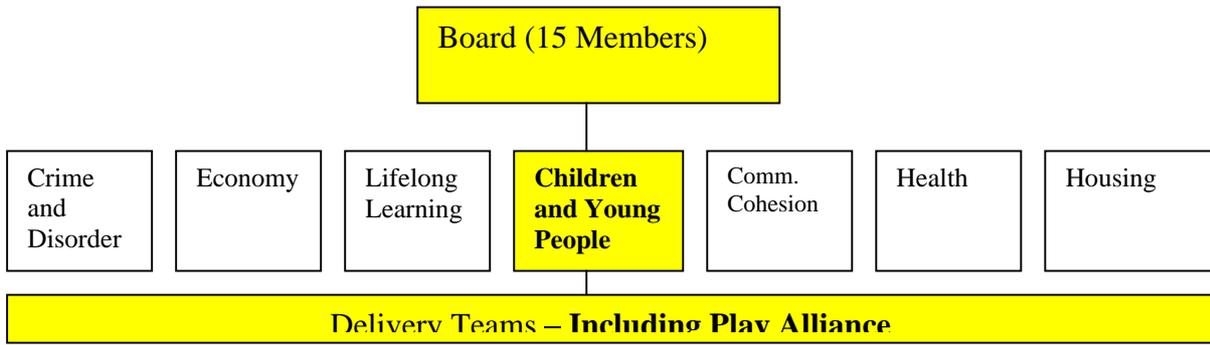
The Play Alliance shall be responsible for two areas of performance management – delivery of specific and the actions contained in the play strategy. In each case, each project or each action within the plan shall have a champion or responsible person/organisation. Levels of performance, milestones and timeframes shall be agreed for these with each champion reporting progress to the Alliance. In the case of the projects this will include aspects such as procurement, budget monitoring and delivery of agreed outcomes.

It will be the responsibility of the Play Alliance to report progress to both the Borough Council (as accountable body) and Strategic Partnership (as the key strategic driver for children and young people).

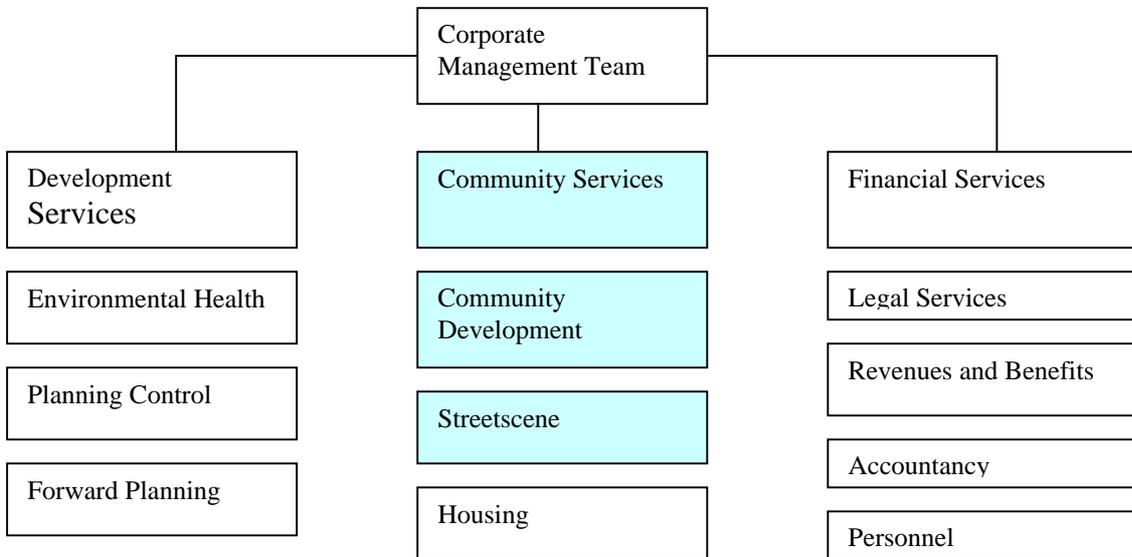
An annual work programme shall be formulated and agreed for the Alliance, which shall contain aspects of the action plan and specific projects. Quarterly reviews shall be carried out to monitor performance.

It will be the responsibility of each champion to ensure they have the necessary support in order to deliver their project.

The organisation taking the lead for the strategic direction of play is the Local Strategic Partnership. The partnership is made up of a main board, key themed groups and delivery teams. The Play Alliance will be a delivery team under the Children and Young Peoples' theme group and have a representative on the group.



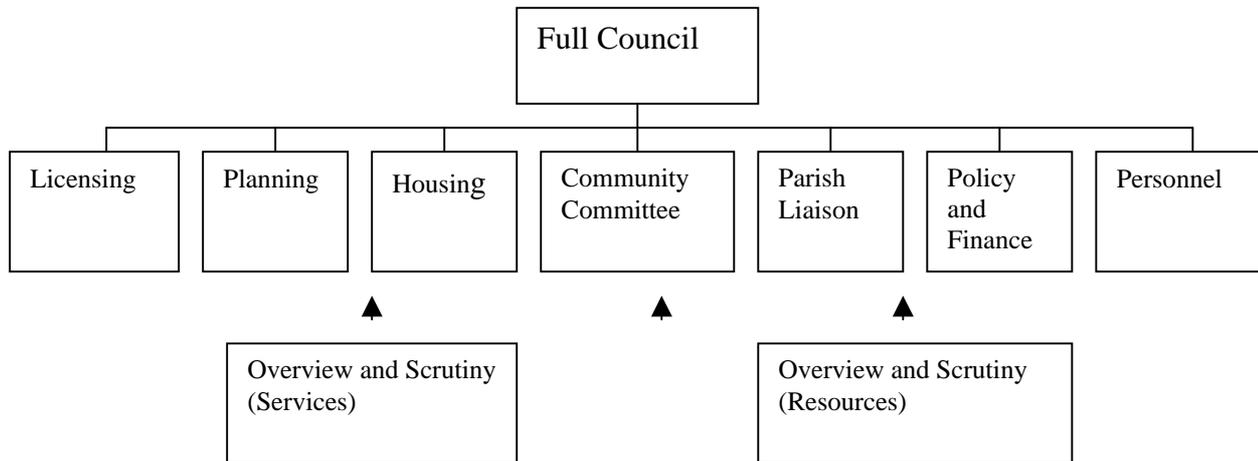
Ribble Valley Borough Council is responsible for the delivery of activities and services for children and young people. The Council's Services are structured in the following way –



The two service units responsible for delivering play are Community Development and Streetscene. The Community Development Manager is responsible for strategic and development issues whilst the Streetscene Manager is responsible for the development and maintenance of play areas. Fortnightly departmental meetings, along with annual service planning ensure that elements are closely linked.

The political structure of the Ribble Valley comprises 40 elected members serving 24 wards. At a more local level Ribble valley has one of the biggest Parish Council Structures with 40 active Councils.

The Council operates a traditional committee system, which is made up as follows –



The Council's Community Committee is the main service committee that deals with issues around children and young people and where all matters regarding the strategy and portfolio will be reported. Any financial matters concerning the Council. As the responsible body, shall be referred to Policy and Finance committee.

The Play Alliance is currently based on representatives from youth groups, schools, children centres and community voluntary groups.

Review of Community Engagement

Wide consultation and a preliminary audit on play, open space, sports and recreation facilities has been completed.

To support the preparation of the Play Strategy further views of local residents and young people were sought to ascertain opinion regarding play provision. A summary of the questionnaire results is in the appendices.

Key Issues Children and Younger People

- Generally, children and young people preferred playing outdoors to indoors, particularly in open spaces
- Personal safety is an important issue for young people who can often feel vulnerable
- The vast proportion of young people visit local parks and play areas that are within a 5 minute walk of their home and generally play in their back or front gardens
- The young people would like more interesting places again within walking distance and would undoubtedly want a say in what should be in these places
- Amongst older (over 11 years) the need was for play areas with more challenging equipment and somewhere safe to meet and chat.

- A surprisingly high number of young people wanted more organised sports and arts activities.

Key Issues Parents and Carers

- Felt that sites were too far away but generally adequate if somewhat lacking in the cleanliness of the site and poor provision for children with disabilities
- Would like areas with challenging equipment and informal/adventure areas
- Particularly keen on cycle paths and safe cycle routes to play spaces
- Wanted more out of school clubs and sports activities with a significantly high interest in more 'arts' activities
- Wanted safe natural play areas for pre school children so that they could have imaginative play alongside traditional playgrounds and safe cycling places

Local Provision Examined

The results of the audit appear in the appendices.

Some of the key points to emerge are:-

Children's Play Space

- There are a large number of formal play areas equipped with traditional swings and slides and a significant number of natural play areas with innovative play features but largely catering for under 11 year olds.
- There are no challenging play areas for teenagers other than for skate boarding and 'very unofficial' mountain bike tracks.
- The most obvious type of play space that is missing is a high quality kick about area equipped for a large range of ages which could also be a safe meeting place with shelter and seating for younger people.
- That local people do not consider that there is adequate play provision currently
- Access to sites needs improving
- School sites are important green areas and through "Extended Schools" will have an important part to play in the future
- There are quality issues in some areas
- Each neighbourhood should have an equipped play area

Areas for Informal Recreation/Amenity Open Space

- There is a demand for safe cycling areas or routes
- Accessibility problems exist on some sites
- There are areas for informal recreation but not enough are formally recognised
- Quality issues and conflict of uses

Outdoor Sports Facilities

- There is a shortage of outdoor sports facilities in the district
- School sites are invaluable where dual use occurs
- Private sports clubs have an important role to play in providing opportunities for young people

Barriers to Play

Sadly the opportunities that children have to play are becoming increasingly limited yet it is known that “play” increases imaginative and social skills. Indeed the Children’s Play Council found in their research that ...“The home habitat of a typical 8 year old in the UK today has shrunk to one ninth of 20 years ago”

Barriers include

- Choice and accessibility
- Fear of litigation in case of accidents
- Cost of play equipment and maintenance
- Lack of staff and resources to enable delivery

And amongst the young people themselves

- Fear for safety
- Bullying, crime and the fear of crime
- Intimidation
- Lack of transport
- Lack of support staff
- Lack of information about what is available

The Strategy

Policy Links

If the recommendations of the Play Strategy are to be successful and sustainable, it is imperative that they link into other plans both on a local and national level. For example the Strategic Health Improvement Plan from the Ribble Valley Sustainable Community Strategy which looks to halt the year on year rise in obesity in young children. There are no current specific strategies on Play and Open Spaces within the Borough Council that can tie in with this Play Strategy.

The following national policy and guidance have been considered in developing this strategy (see appendix)

- Every Child Matters, Change for Children five key outcomes
- Green Spaces, Better Places
- Getting Serious About Play, A Review of Children’s Play
- The Framework for Sport in England

The strategy supports the aims and objectives in the following local documents

- The Lancashire Children and Younger People's Plan
- The Corporate Plan
- The Sports and Physical Activity Alliance Plan
- The Sustainable Community Strategy

Play Policy Statements

The research and consultation confirmed that whilst there are many examples of best practice within the borough and a general commitment to providing high quality play services, there are gaps in provision, lost opportunities and a need to encourage more partnership working in the area of play provision.

The results can be summarised as follows

- The most popular types of outdoor play areas that are needed are large high quality kick about areas and equipped play areas for a wide age range that provide a safe area to meet.
- There is an opportunity to innovate in challenging play activities such as skate boarding, mountain biking and adventure play equipment.
- Open space /informal play areas and the opportunities they offer were highly valued
- There is a need to ensure quality and variety
- Local facilities accessed by foot are very popular
- There is a need for safe cycle routes to the play areas
- There are some deficiencies in the provision of open space and play facilities across the borough
- There is a need to refurbish and improve a large proportion of existing play areas across the borough
- There are issues with quality and accessibility in relation to some open space/play facilities
- Personal safety is of prime concern, especially to teenagers, parents and residents
- Anti social behaviour is a major concern and problem in some areas
- There is a need to tackle and respond to cleanliness and damage issues promptly
- There is a lack of teen focused outdoor facilities and support/opportunities
- There is a problem of access for disabled, disadvantaged and challenged young people
- There is a need to attract more core and external funding

What do we do now?...

The consultation and research involved in developing the strategy has shown how important it is to develop the foundations of play provision for

the future .Whilst there is some excellent partnership work there are significant gaps in the provision.

The areas identified as key themes for development are Teen Provision, Communication, Inclusion, Leisure Centre provision and Anti-social behaviour.

The approach to tackling these areas is laid out in the Action Plans following.

APPENDIX

Case Studies

The Ribble Valley has an excellent history of partnership working and this can be demonstrated in some of the case studies seen below

Case Study 1 Clitheroe Skate Park

The skate park in Clitheroe has been voted as one of the best of its kind in the whole country. It is an exciting place with a vibrant community and culture that is unique in many ways. People of all ages share a common aim and interest, encouraging each other to push themselves to be better in their discipline of skating. There is also a great sense of creativity here, and the freedom for people to express it.

The skate park came about through a unique opportunity and is a good example of partnership working. An obvious demand for a skate park had been apparent for a number of years, as young people persisted to skate on the streets and car parks around the town, often to the annoyance of the public. A group was formed consisting of a core number of local young skaters, local police, councillors, and youth workers, through which the process began to design and see the completion of the skate park.

The Lancaster Foundation generously volunteered the full capital cost for the park to be built and set about sending out designs for tender to reputable contractors around the North-West. Over approximately 3 years, the park designs changed and evolved through improvements and consultations with the borough planning department, into what is now a reality. The build took around 6 months, 2 months longer than originally forecast due to weather conditions, and the park was open for public use from the 19th April 2006. Since the opening, every dry day brings with it at least 150 people, and weekends and holiday days nearly double that figure. The major user group for the park is 12-16 year old males, but people as young as 5 and as old as 55 also come here to skate and be part of it. To date, we have held 3 specialised events here with corporate sponsorship and prizes for competitions and effort, each bringing around 400-700 people over the day. We also run family skate sessions aimed at encouraging under 10's to have a go, whilst providing a place for parents to spend quality time with their kids too. The future of the park is in the users hands to have 'ownership' of it and look after it, so that it will be here for many years to come.

Case Study 2 Clitheroe Castle Labyrinth—"Convex Green"

"Convex Green" by celebrated artist **Jim Buchanan** is the new Labyrinth created for the Clitheroe Castle Grounds, the only one of its kind to exist in Lancashire. The unique large-scale design was chosen as a result of numerous community workshops held in summer 2005. These workshops involved local primary school pupils who learnt about their history and purpose whilst creating their own temporary labyrinths, they also included

public talks, a spectacular night projection event with lantern parade and a custom made labyrinth projection held in the darkened Ribble Valley Borough Council Chambers.

The grass turf design offers one entrance path, which splits into two, designed for walking with a friend or family member. Maybe as a race to the centre, or perhaps it is a harder challenge to walk it slower than the other person. Both will arrive at the centre, and then swap over to walk out on the other person's inward path. The name "Convex Green" refers to its shape, colour and history as a bowling green. To enable the labyrinth to bring you good luck, walk both the pathways, pausing in the centre to make your wish.

Ribble Valley Borough Council, Land, Clitheroe the Future, supported this project Friends of Clitheroe Castle and North West Development Agency.

Land is a project of the East Lancashire Environmental Arts Network (ELEAN), which aims to demonstrate the positive role of the arts and cultural activity in the social and physical regeneration of East Lancashire.

Case Study 3 Sawley Play Area

In 2003 a village appraisal of Sawley was undertaken for the Village Hall Committee by Rural Evaluation & Action for Lancashire. Amongst the findings was a recommendation that facilities for childrens recreation should be established. The following year a field next to the village hall was donated by the Truman Estates and the new recreation committee was set up to obtain planning permission and start fund raising for the play area.

The field was also on the edge of the Sawley Abbey site and so the extra constraints associated with the archaeological importance of the area had to be taken into account with every dig of the shovel, but by the following year the playground was open.

£70,000 had been raised from rural living spaces grants, lottery "Awards for All" money, grants from the Borough and County Councils and donations from local businesses and numerous fund raising events.

After extensive research involving committee members' children and grand children, the equipment was chosen and installed. The swings and adventure features were predominantly made from wood, reflecting the rural nature of the site. The playground has now seen one year of service and continues to attract visitors. It has become a village focal point, the committee continues to meet even after the celebratory "closure" dinner of the task and finish group and the village hall attracts bookings for childrens parties who in turn make use of the excellent play area right next door.

Most importantly there is an ownership and pride in the facility from the residents of Sawley.

But still, there are on going funding needs for maintenance and insurance. A plaque and donation box have been installed recently but this only raises a third of the £1000 needed annually and so the fun and fundraising continues.

Consultation Findings

A comprehensive survey was also carried out to inform both the play strategy and this submission. The consultation was split, one being aimed at the young people themselves and the other, for the parents.

Young People

The findings could be split as under 12 and over 12 and were based on 5 primary schools around Ribble Valley and Ribblesdale High School in Clitheroe. The sample gave us a good geographic spread and included Clitheroe as the main population centre, Whalley as a large village and Sabden as a small rural settlement. The sample was evenly divided in boys and girls at 48% and 52% respectively and the age split was similar at 55% under 12 and 45% over.

The key findings are summarised as follows –

- The main play areas were back gardens, local parks and playing fields
- 71% of play spaces were within 10 minutes of home with 86% of young people accessing such areas by walking or cycling.
- 68% travelled to play areas on their own or with friends
- Although 75% felt that current provision was average or above, 55% felt there was not enough provision.
- When asked why young people did not use existing provision the top two responses were that there was no suitable place nearby or they were not interesting enough. This response was predominantly from the over 12's
- In order to get a greater understanding of the previous response the following question was asked

	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
My nearest outdoor place to play/hang out is too small and not interesting enough	46.9%	30.5%	17.9%
I would be happy to walk a bit further to somewhere that would be bigger, have more to do and be more interesting	65.1%	18.2%	12.8%
I like my nearest place to play/hang out and it is more important to keep it open than have a more suitable facility a bit further away	40.3%	28.2%	25.6%
I would like to have my say in how new areas for play/hanging out should be built, or how they can be improved (where it should be, what kind of equipment should be provided)	64.6%	8.7%	21.8%

- When asked what young people would most like to see improved or see more of their top four responses were –

Local equipped playgrounds (swings, slides, roundabouts, climbing frames etc.	37.4%
Play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers	37.4%
Somewhere safe to meet, sit and chat with friends (outdoor)	36.4%
Wheeled Sports (skateboard, BMX, roller blading, stunt cycling etc.)	28.7%

Parents/Guardians

The vast majority (90%) were female and had children under 12 (0-6 77%, 7-11 48%, 12-16 23%)

- When asked if they felt there was enough unsupervised play facilities parents gave the following responses –

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Play Areas aimed at under 12's	42.3%	50%	3.8%
Informal Spaces for play, e.g. safe grassed landscaped areas	42.3%	44.2%	1.9%
Wheeled Sports e.g. BMX, skateboarding etc.	38.5%	28.8%	23.1%
Informal sports facilities e.g. kick about areas	15.4%	50%	25%

- Most parents felt that the standard of facilities was generally good but there were concerns over the cleanliness of sites, the appropriateness of equipment and provision for children with disabilities. This concerns pretty much mirrors the findings of the play area audit which showed a fairly narrow focus, i.e. inclusive kit, when it came to provision for children with disabilities
- When asked which age group was in most need of extra facilities parents gave the following responses – under 6's 27%, 7-11's 40%, 12-18's 42%
- When asked what type of facilities they would like to see more of their top 4 choices were –

Informal adventure / wild play areas	65%
Areas with challenging equipment	55%
Cycle paths and places to cycle to spaces	55%
Equipped play areas	42%

Play Facilities Audit

1. Formal Play Areas

There are 35 play areas spread across the Borough with the highest concentration being in the main population centres. The best examples however are in outlying villages such as Ribchester and Dunsop Bridge. Ownership is pretty evenly spread with 17 run by the Borough Council and 18 by Parish Councils or independent trusts. There are no significant areas of the Borough where no fixed play provision exists. The quality of play areas varies greatly but there has been a marked improvement in some areas, particularly in village locations. The quality of play areas in villages tends to be linked with the size of the Parish Council and the degree to which they precept to fund children's play. The real driving forces to improvements however are volunteers within their own communities. Local volunteers who are willing to give the time to carry out local consultation, engage with play equipment providers and undertake fund raising have driven nearly all play area improvements. There are examples, such as Sawley where new play areas have been developed. Sawley is perhaps unique in that it has been constructed next to Sawley Abbey which is a scheduled ancient monument and so had to adopt a much more sensitive approach to the provision of foundations and safety surfacing. On the whole the play offer is fairly traditional with most play areas offering the same range of equipment. This is reflected in age range which is predominantly for the under 12's and the play value as there is little in the way of innovation. Inclusive access tends to follow the same pattern. Most play areas have focussed on physical access by providing hard standings between equipment and 'disability friendly' kit. The needs of young people with other conditions such as sensory impairment are largely not catered for.

By far the biggest issues raised by providers are operational. The cost of maintenance and insurance are often cited as concerns, as is a lack of expertise and capacity to carry out safety inspections.

Play Area	Age Range	Inclusive	Equipment Range	Quality	Play Value
Waddington	U12	3	3	4	3
West Bradford	U 12	2	3	3	3
Grindleton	U 12	3	2	4	3
Sawley	U 12	3	3	4	3
Slaidburn	U 12	1	1	2	2
Billington	U 14	1	2	2	2
Langho	U 10	2	2	3	2
Chatburn	U 10	1	2	2	2
Hurst Green	U10	0	1	1	1
Chipping	U 12	3	3	4	3
Gisburn					
Mellor	U 10	1	2	2	2

Read	U 10	1	3	3	2
Ribchester	U 16	3	4	4	4
Rimington	U 12	1	2	2	2
Salesbury	U 10	1	2	3	1
Whalley (Calderstones)	U 8	2	1	3	1
Whalley (Proctors Field)	U 10	1	2	2	2
Whalley (Woodlands Park)	U 8	1	1	1	1
Barrow	U 10	1	2	2	1
Sabden	U 10	1	2	3	2
Clitheroe (Castle)	U 12	3	4	3	3
Clitheroe (Edisford)	U12	2	2	3	2
Clitheroe (Colhurst Drive)	U10	2	1	2	2
Clitheroe (Henthorn Park)	U12	1	2	1	2
Clitheroe (Highfield Road)	U10	2	3	3	3
Clitheroe (Mearley Syke)	U12	2	2	2	2
Clitheroe (Hawthorn Place)	U10	1	2	1	2
Clitheroe (Low Moor)	U 10	1	2	1	2
Clitheroe (Salthill)	U14	2	3	3	3
Clitheroe (Tom Robinson)	U 10	1	2	2	1
Clitheroe (Chester Avenue)	U 12	2	2	2	2
Longridge (Kestor Lane)	U12	2	3	3	3
Longridge (Mardale)	U 10	1	2	2	2
Longridge (John Smiths)	U 10	3	3	3	3
Longridge (Redwood Drive)	U 8	1	1	1	1

- Age range relates to the age to which the majority of equipment on a play area relates to
- The degree of inclusivity has been assessed on the basis of physical access to the play area itself, accessibility between equipment, equipment design and the range of disability considered.
- Equipment range is an assessment of the type of equipment provided.
- Quality relates to the general standard and cleanliness of the play area, age of equipment and maintenance

- Play value is an assessment of challenge both physically and emotionally, innovative approaches taken and the range of opportunities presented.

2. Playing Fields

The Ribble Valley has the equivalent of 109 playing pitches. Once again these tend to be located in the main population centres although there is a reasonable spread of facilities in outlying villages. More than half are part of school premises and, as a result, are not all open access. Private sports clubs take up a further 19 pitches and, once again, open access is limited. The remaining facilities are in either Parish or Borough Council ownership and, whilst they are predominantly used for football and cricket, they are open access for the remainder of the time.

3. Formal Parks

There are 5 formal parks within the Ribble Valley. These are –

Clitheroe Castle – By far the largest and busiest in the Borough, attracting both residents and visitors alike. Its origins are Victorian but there have been numerous changes over the years that have shaped the park we see today. The park hosts a ‘labyrinth’, play area, playing fields and probably the best open-air skate park in the northwest. For the most part the range of users mix well and provide a positive and friendly atmosphere. This is not the case after dark however when the park experiences problems with anti-social behaviour.

Brungerley Park – a less formal and predominantly wooded area, Brungerley is popular with walkers and includes fishing rights to the river Ribble. It is also home to the Ribble Valley Sculpture Trail, which has recently seen some significant additions to its collection. Although not encouraged the park is used by young people for mountain biking and camping during the summer.

Edisford – The park is dominated by the river Ribble and a prime picnic spot for families with young children. It is a natural magnet for young people who take advantage of the playing fields, river, play area and wooded areas.

Kestor Lane – located in the centre of Longridge, Kestor Lane includes a children’s play area, skate park, playing field and acts as host for town events and fairs.

John Smiths – serves the north east of Longridge and includes a play area, orienteering course and a mixture of open and wooded parkland.

4. Skate Parks

The Borough has two skate parks, located in Clitheroe and Longridge. Clitheroe was built and is operated by the Lancaster Foundation, a Christian based organisation. Provision of the park was in response to young people who felt there were no facilities for teenagers and from a range of organisations who felt a facility should be provided, both from a safety and anti social behaviour perspective. The Skate Park, which is said to be the best in the north west, has proved to be very popular and well received by the

community as a whole. Longridge is much more modest but was developed in the same way through requests from young people for somewhere to go and something to do. They were involved in the design of the park and continue, along with a range of agencies, to manage and promote the facility.

5. Informal Spaces

The rural nature of the Ribble Valley means it has a large collection of village greens and commons. These are equally, if not more popular, with children and young people than any formal facility. Playing football, flying kites, chasing ducks or paddling in streams are just a few of the activities catered for. The best examples can be found in Downham, Bolton by Bowland, Salesbury, Copster Green and Dunsop Bridge.