

Souldern Playground Restoration

Notes from First Open Meeting

1. Chair: Nick Oakhill, Chairman Souldern Parish Council.

Update with regards to the recent closure of the big slide and removal of other playground equipment following RoSPA report (please see souldern.org for RoSPA report). Thanked those involved in playground maintenance and future project to refurbish playground.

2. Presentation by Lucy Cornish, Coordinator of Souldern Playground Advisory Group. Subject: Refurbishment of Souldern Playground.

Discussion of problem with existing equipment, solution to fully refurbish playground, fundraising options, outcome of consultation, ways of saving big slide, invitation to working party Sat 21st March 2020. Please see slides uploaded to souldern.org for presentation and results of consultation.

There will be two teams involved with Souldern playground - maintenance of existing playground to be lead by Emily Pheasant and Hannah Twynam, and Fundraising team launched this evening. Audience invited to sign up to maintenance and fundraising teams.

3. Forum:

- Discussed that the existing fenced area for under 10 years is safe to remain open whilst fundraising takes place.
- The big slide will need to remain closed due to the ground rot affecting the legs and sleepers. Big slide now 45 years old. Looked at original designs. Problem with rot is not new, and was hard to avoid as has come up from the wood beneath the ground. The decking also needs replacing but not worthwhile/ possible when the underlying structure is compromised.
- Several ideas for the big slide were put forward. We all agreed that we should try to make a new structure for the metal slide that remains in good condition. One idea could be a mound of earth with a fort-like structure on top and steps up the back. The earth could come from a cycle/ running path (see below). Lucy Cornish mentioned that Cutteslowe Park in Oxford had a similar example, and will send around photos.
- Discussed that the new recreation facilities should be as inclusive as possible. A zip wire is the preferred piece of equipment for older children and teenagers mentioned by Amanda Sharman. A cycle/ running path around the playing field with exercise equipment path is preferred for adults, and was a very popular idea with those attending the meeting. Briefly discussed the surface that may be required for a path. Forum suggested that there were recreation field with paths we could research at Aynho, Kingsmere and Bucknell.
- Discussed time scale - the path could be completed first to allow earth to be available for big slide renovations. Overall time scale for refurbishment 18 - 24 months.
- Enquiry regarding use of football pitch. Brackley Town will be using again next season once goal posts replaced by them. Agreed best for the playing field to be used.
- Susan Jones mentioned that she has found 24 places that we could consider applying for funding. Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association have also provided a list.
- Agreed it would be a good idea to ask local MP to give support to project.
- Discuss sources of local funding - donations and Souldern United Charity.
- Ben Williams expressed a view that we should try to keep the surface for the equipment as grass, rather than rubber matting, wood chip or sand. Marie Malins advised that Tackley have a good example of a well equipped playground with grass surface.
- **Agreed action:** There would be a first meeting of the fundraising team arranged by Lucy Cornish. The first meeting will discuss organisation of the team and a proposed timeline for the restoration project. Before the meeting each member of the team will research equipment at other parks and available funding.