

Minutes of a meeting of the Skateboard Working Party held in the Boardroom, Hawthorn Villa, Main Road, Onchan on Wednesday 30th July 2008 at 7.40pm.

Present: Mr Steve Babb (ODC) (in the chair)
Kerry Tear (Parent)
Robin Turton (Parent)

Apologises: Brian Callow (Onchan AFC)
Mark Corkish (IOM Skateboard Association)
June Kelly (ODC)
Aaron Murphy (Under 18)

None Apologises: Rebecca Halliday (Onchan Silver Band)

In Attendance: Peter Kelly (Clerk to the Meeting)

1. Site Visit

A site visit took place at 7.15pm when the committee met with three youths onsite. The weather was inclement and therefore the skate park was not in use. The meeting was joined during the site visit by Mr D. Crellin JP (Chairman ODC). Mr Crellin did not attend the meeting that followed.

The youths commented that the facility was brilliant when dry but obviously slippery when wet. They would prefer the use of concrete jumps which are far more durable than metal and wood. Movable equipment tends to get broken but at the same time there needs to be the ability for the course to be altered from time to time to provide some variety. They recommended that professional advice be sought when it comes to planning the layout. There should also be an area for small children so that they can practice and eventually progress onto the larger jumps. The temporary arrangement had been mainly used by bikes and scooters rather than skateboards and no one came using rollerblades.

The lads felt that something was needed in Onchan and the School Road Recreation Ground was the perfect venue. Given the potential of the equipment at Douglas being replaced and updated it was probable that the more advanced skaters would go to Douglas.

A discussion took place on the hypothetical placing of the equipment in relation to the layout at The Rec but this was a matter for discussion by the working party back at the boardroom.

2. Minutes

Copies of the minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2008 had been circulated prior to the meeting and were noted.

3. Written Comments/Observations Received

The Clerk to the Meeting advised that a request had been made of the Deputy Clerk to provide a copy of the letter from Mr Tim Norton. Nothing had been passed on as yet.

A resident at Springfield Court had telephoned on the Friday of the first week that the equipment was in use. They advised that did not wish to complain about the equipment and fully supported

that something should be provided for the youth of Onchan. Their concern was, however that the noise of the skateboard equipment was going on until 11pm or 11.15pm which was late for the residents of that area. Mrs Teare commented that the weather had been good and were lots of parents at the skateboard park during the evening even until quite late.

A skateboarder telephoned following the article in the Isle of Man Examiner to advise that they didn't see the point in Onchan providing a skateboard park if a very good facility was to be provided in Douglas at Nobles Park. If Onchan doesn't come up to the standard of Nobles Park then the skateboarders would go to Douglas. They also felt that the facility should provide for young skaters to improve their abilities by having varying sized jumps. Ramsey was currently the best facility on the Island.

An Onchan ratepayer was in touch following the Examiner article to advise that a two week trial was not long enough. They felt anything new would be popular initially and eventually interest would wane. A two week trial would give a false impression that could result in expenditure that may not be necessary if in reality it comes down to half a dozen users.

The Clerk to the Meeting advised that a letter had been put through the door of all properties facing or backing onto the School Road Recreation Ground with the exception of Springfield Court which he felt was sufficiently far away and screened by trees to be affected. The chairman commented that he had been going around the doors to gauge people's reaction but had not covered everywhere as yet.

It was noted that a girl had fallen off the equipment and broken her collarbone. Warning notices had been requested to be erected on similar lines to those which were at Laxey and also a sign restricting use after a certain time at night had also been requested from the Surveyor's Department but none of the signs had been put up.

Mrs Teare passed on comments from Aaron Murphy who regrettably was off island that day. He had advised that there was initially a litter problem but litterbins were provided on the Tuesday and the problem was overcome. Obviously when it was wet or damp less people were using the equipment. Aaron had made six more friends during the previous four days. It was confirmed that more bikes were in use compared to skateboards but this may be due to the fact that those who have bikes can also use them on the road and therefore they are more likely to be owned by a greater number of people than skateboards.

4. Planning Application

A request had been made to the Surveyor for an update in respect of the planning application but nothing had been forthcoming.

5. Comments on Other Skateboard Parks on the Island

The Chairman reminded members that they had been requested to view other skateboard parks in their own time and to comment thereon. It was reported that Aaron Murphy had viewed Port Erin but there was just one jump there and nothing else. Mr Turton had visited Ramsey which he described as being "a nice set up". He understood that vandalism in the rest of the Mooragh area had remarkably decreased since the provision of the skateboard park. The Chairman commented that having youngsters of a similar age together appeared to stop vandalism. Mr Turton advised that parents were also present.

The Chairman commented on having spoken with adults at Ramsey and they advised that the location of the skateboard park was such that they could be in the vicinity with their younger children on play equipment whilst their elder children were close by on the skateboard park. At Castletown the set up was not quite the same and the skateboard park tended to be used by a smaller group of more dedicated skaters. There had been some social issues at Castletown in respect of noise, litter and pieces of broken skateboard left lying around.

Mrs Teare advised that along with Aaron Murphy she had taken people's names at the temporary facility at Onchan and over 90 names were recorded. The good skaters preferred to go to Nobles Park as the temporary facility at Onchan was not exciting enough. There were 40 repeat visitors to the facility according to their records.

Mr Turton advised the facility at Nobles Park was good and he had come to the conclusion, having viewed this and Ramsey, that things could not be done "on the cheap". If Ramsey was categorised with an A then Onchan needed to be A plus.

The Clerk to the Meeting had spoken with Laxey Commissioners that day and they had not received any complaints or comments that the skateboard equipment had gone from Laxey.

6. Site Meeting

The Chairman commented that members had held a site meeting and seen the equipment, had spoken to skateboarders and in some cases used the equipment themselves. He then asked for members views.

Mrs Teare was of the opinion that a skateboard park would be good for children. She had noticed a lot of those using the facility were either footballers or members of the band. Several had gained new friends and she was surprised how quickly people got to know one another. She would certainly miss the facility when it went.

Mr Turton admitted that when he joined the working party he didn't really know whether the facility was needed or not. He still had reservations but not as much as previously. He accepted that its use during the winter months would be less than in the summer. He understood that somebody had said that the pirate ship facility at Birch Hill was not used during the winter months. If the Onchan skateboard park was going to be first rate facility then he would go along with the idea. The working party/commissioners should certainly be looking into costs and grants available, there needed to be an in-depth study before proceeding.

The Chairman advised that he thought there would have been more complaints from the neighbours. He was surprised at the diversity of people using the facility with different people appearing on different days. He was stopped by somebody who said there needed to be a facility for their 4 year old. At work he had carried out a survey in relation to people living in Onchan and discovered that people were using the facility for the first time and the facility seemed more family orientated than just for youngsters.

Mr Turton had spoken with users of the facility and was of the opinion that fixed units could become boring. If the facility was provided for smaller children to use then they did need to be moved from time to time to provide a greater challenge. He also felt there was a need to sell the scheme to the widest group possible. The Chairman agreed that the commissioners should be looking to provide a Rolls Royce not a mini but at the same time not paying and providing a facility

for the top notch skaters but instead to go for the majority of users. He summed this up as being from beginners to intermediate stage skaters.

7. Evaluation List

The Clerk to the Meeting had prepared a list of all sites proposed and tabulated the pros and cons of each site. This was distributed to members. The Chairman took the members through the sites that were shortlisted at the previous meeting.

- **Lakeside Gardens**

Mr Turton didn't think that this site should be thrown out. Mrs Teare felt it was better used for football although admitted she had not visited the site. Mrs Teare advised that Aaron Murphy was of the opinion that Lakeside should not be ruled out. The Chairman commented that whilst he felt the land had potential it was on the wrong side of Main Road.

- **Onchan Park – Tennis Courts**

Mrs Teare suggested that everyone was thinking that the court nearest Royal Avenue West was to be used whereas it could be the one furthest away.

Mr Turton was of the opinion that if the courts were being used for tennis then they should be left for tennis.

- **Onchan Park – Miniature Golf Course**

Mrs Teare felt there would be too much objections to any planning application for this site and that members should look at it from the objectors' point of view.

Mr Turton liked the idea but only as part of a larger scheme.

The Chairman advised that since the last meeting there had been a meeting of the Board of Commissioners at which the overall development for Onchan Park had been discussed. Whilst there is an ongoing review of the park as a whole he felt it was the wrong time to introduce his bigger scheme when it comes to a skateboard park. He had personally gone off the idea of a ramp park in Onchan Park.

- **The Rec – Site Near Band Room**

Mrs Teare favoured this site and commented that it would be better if the band could purchase the former Methodist Chapel which would give them more room and the commissioners could buy the present band room. That building could then be used to provide toilets for the School Road Recreation Ground and also she had approximate 12 volunteers who would be prepared to operate a "munch place" within the building to raise funds. Furthermore there was always the possibility that Kenyon's Café could be moved into that building as well.

Mr Turton thought that the area outside the band room was a "rubbish site" he referred to the necessity of cutting into the embankment in order to get a level site and then being left with drainage from the upper area coming down onto the site.

The Chairman agreed that there were geographical reasons why the site was not right.

- **The Rec – Adjoining the Wembley Arena**

Mr Turton felt that this was the preferred site providing an earth bank could be built nearer to the School Road houses to kill the noise.

Mrs Teare suggested the car park be moved to this site and part of the car park be used for the skateboard park.

The Chairman favoured the site alongside the Wembley Arena or alternatively a swop of sites. Alternatively the area could be left in grass but with improved drainage, fencing etc to provide a grassed area for footballers.

The Clerk to the Meeting offered to circulate a sketch plan with the next agenda indicating the alternative schemes available in this area for further discussion by the full working party.

8. Next Meeting

Thursday 14th August 2008 at 7.15pm.

Meeting terminated 9.03pm.