

Onchan District Commissioners



The Future of Onchan Park Public Consultation

24th February 2017

Commissioner's Office

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Introduction

The Board of Onchan District Commissioners is aware of their responsibility to provide community facilities and consider that Onchan Park provides a valuable facility to the community and visitors.

In order to ensure that this area continues to provide services which are valued by the community, the Board wishes to refresh their medium to long term view of how the Park should continue to develop to meet the needs to the community.

In order to achieve this they are seeking the views of the community and visitors in a public consultation which will run until the 30th March 2017. The Commissioners hope that this will give the community of Onchan time to consider the future of the park and to let their Commissioners know how they wish this area to develop.

Onchan District Commissioners will continue to exercise the highest standards of financial management and in doing so will balance any suggestions for the future of the Park against whether they can be afforded and will work to make sure there is no additional burden upon the rate payers of Onchan.

Onchan District Commissioners are seeking views regarding anything to do with Onchan Park and the facilities provided; they wish to ensure that it continues:-

- be a safe and attractive environment;
- be accessible to all members of the community;
- to meet the requirements of the community.

In order to provide a framework for this consultation this paper sets out a suggested view for the future of the Park so that this might stimulate ideas and suggestions from the community.

Consultation

There will be many ways in which you can express your views about the future of the Onchan Park:-

- talk to one of the Commissioners representing the community of Onchan;
- write or email to the Commissioners Offices at Hawthorn Villa;
- attend a fortnightly public meeting of the Commissioners;
- attend one of the Commissioners Surgeries;
- message the Commissioners via Facebook or Twitter @OnchanDC.

In providing a review of Onchan Park the area can be considered in four distinct parts –

1. Community Sports - Nivision Stadium, grandstands and changing facilities;
2. Pleasure Park - Recreation & leisure facilities;
3. Central Facilities - Restaurant, café, indoor play area & dance studios;
4. Children's Play Park – play equipment for children.

1) Community Sports

a) Current

This area currently consists of a football pitch, motorsport track, banked track, two grandstands and two equipment sheds. The football pitch is used for senior matches and training between September and May each year by Onchan AFC who also use the changing rooms situated in the main grandstand.

The motorsport track is used between May and September for go-carts and stock car racing by the tenant who also uses the banked track for vehicle rides. The grandstands and open areas surrounding the banked track are used as spectator areas for football and stock car racing.

b) Issues

The stadium has limited access points for the public with few entrances and exits only some of which are easily accessible. This limits the types of event which can be held in the stadium.

The use of the football pitch is restricted by the priority use of the motorsport track by the tenant. Some football games at the start and finish of the football season may be held at different locations.

The secondary grandstand requires work to be carried out to the roof to maintain structural integrity. The cost of this appears to exceed the value which would be gained from carrying out the work.

The banked track is not in a good state and therefore has limited uses.

The continued use of the motorsport track in its current location is a restriction on any development within this area.

The community football club have many junior members and are considering developing an alternative site for their activities including a clubhouse.

c) Potential Developments

Community Sport Facility

There is demand within the community for further sports facilities particularly for all-weather surfaces for football and other team sports. There is also interest in providing a community focussed facility for informal sport and recreation.

Successful examples of community sports facilities can be seen in other areas of the Island and are usually combined with a clubhouse facility. There is anecdotal evidence that there are insufficient facilities to meet current demand in the eastern area of the Island in the evening and weekends.

The Banked Track Area

The area of the former banked track places a restraint on the development of the stadium as it provides a physical boundary making the central area less assessable and it is also a little used area which is not attractive to users.

This area is used during the summer season however the surface has deteriorated and it is unlikely that it can be used for any other purpose except for providing a safe area between the spectators and the motorsport track

If the banked track area is removed it would improve accessibility to the facilities, allow additional sport facilities and possible extension to existing parking areas.

Main Grandstand

Consideration needs to be given to the future use of the main grandstand. The access to this facility is limited and it is perceived there are public safety issues.

The future of this facility should be considered in conjunction with future use of the stadium area for community sports and also together with the future of the central facilities. The grandstand is "back to back" with the restaurant and café facilities within the park and the main access is through this building, any potential development of these facilities would have to take into account the grandstand and in particular the access required.

Secondary Grandstand

If a decision is made to demolish this grandstand the site could be used for the extension of play or sports facilities and/or a community clubhouse.

Community Clubhouse

A number of parties have suggested that a community clubhouse facility would be an appropriate development in conjunction with the additional sport facilities. This facility would support all the sports which use the park providing a clubhouse, new changing and showering facilities, car parking, equipment storage and a base for the associated social clubs.

It is intended that such a facility would work alongside the family restaurant and café facilities which already exist in the park.



2) Central Facilities

a) Current

The central area of the park provides indoor facilities which are let to tenants including a ground floor café (open seasonally), first floor restaurant, an indoor play area and dance studio.

b) Issues

Access to the first floor restaurant is by a winding staircase which is not easily accessible.

The frontage of the ground level café is in need to replacement.

There is no central heating available in the ground floor café area and this may limit its use at certain times of the year.

The ground floor area of the building is split between the café and a storage area with a central stairwell of the grandstand. This detracts from the usability of this area and reduces the area available for the café and other facilities.

In spring, autumn and winter evenings the area from the car park to the indoor play area is quite dark and uninviting and it has been suggested that work needs to be undertaken to increase lighting in this area.

Level access needs to be created to the indoor play area and dance studio to make them more accessible.

c) Potential Developments

Consideration should be given to whether the central café and restaurant block should be redeveloped. With the possible removal of the banked track area of the stadium there may be an opportunity to build a replacement facility closer to the car park, nearer to the play park or at the rear of the current stadium.

Café

There is potential to refurbish the ground floor area to provide an improved layout amalgamating the store and café area and either incorporating the stairs to the grandstand or removing them and creating alternative access.

The public toilets could be accessible from within the ground floor café area.

Heating could be provided to the ground floor extending the length of the season where customers would be comfortable in using the area.

The ground floor café area could be provided with a new frontage.

Indoor Play Area

With the removal of the banked track there is a possibility to extend the area of the facility possibly providing a sheltered outdoor area with access to the play park.

New facilities

An extension to the existing building could be considered extending to the current car park the extension could contain community facilities (or it could be the new community clubhouse see above).



3) Pleasure Park

a) Current

Onchan Park has a boating lake, a flat green and crown green bowls, pitch and putt, crazy golf and tennis as "pay as you go" leisure facilities. All apart from tennis are situated within the main body of the park along with a "pay hut" where payments are made and equipment provided.

The "pay hut" is run by seasonal staff and who also assist users on the boating lake.

b) Issues

The tennis courts are outside the main body of the park and are therefore difficult to supervise and ensure all users have paid.

Retaining staff for the pay hut and boating lake is a significant expense and consequently the money raised by these attractions can be less than the cost of providing them.

There is a significant cost to maintain all these facilities which is not met entirely by income.

c) Potential Developments

Tennis Courts

The Board have recently considered other uses for the tennis court area, and have submitted an application for planning permission in principle for public and private car parking. The income from the parking would then pay for the development of replacement sport facilities elsewhere in the Park.

In the medium term this area could be used for house building with the income received being re-invested in the community sports facilities in the stadium area. Car parking could then be provided in other parts of the park area.



Putting

Green

The area in front of the café has been previously used as a putting green but would need considerable investment to return to this condition.

It has been used occasionally as a location for roller skating and other leisure event within a marquee.

Consideration could be given to creating a central area with a hard standing and possibly a marquee style roof. Together with improved power supplies this area could then be used as an outdoor extension to the café and also an area for use by third party organisations to hold events and attractions.

Another possibility is the creation of a wet play area for younger children.



Crazy Golf

Consideration could be given to purchase of new crazy golf facilities; this is a popular attraction for all ages.



Pitch & Putt

One of the possible locations for the replacement sports facilities following the relocation of the tennis courts would be to place all-weather courts at the top of the pitch and putt on the flat area opposite the crown green bowling.

If some of the existing pitch & putt course is removed than it can either be turned into a 9 hole course or enhanced to provide the new crazy golf facility with larger obstacles and a more interactive course in the same manner as urban golf in other countries.



4) Children's Play Park

The children's play park continues to well used and appreciated and it is suggested that little needs to be done in this area apart from continuing the maintenance and investment.

With the remodelling of the stadium and possible removal of the banked track it might be a good time to consider the access from the play area to other areas of the park.



5) Summary

An area such as Onchan Park does require on-going investment to ensure that the facilities provided continue to meet the needs of the community.

Whilst this type of facility will always require some support from the rates, investment to change the mix of facilities within the park will hopefully reduce support from the rates and make the whole area more sustainable for the future.

This document suggests the following substantive changes could be made within the park:

- The landscape of the stadium could be changed to increase accessibility and maximise the community use of the facility and allow the development to a community sports facility;
- The creation of a "clubhouse" with new changing facilities;
- Investment in the café and restaurant area to upgrade facilities or create a new building;
- Creation of a new area in front of the café / restaurant which can be used all year round;
- Relocation of the tennis courts;
- Creation of multi-sport all weather facilities in the main park area;

The Commissioners would now welcome ideas and suggestion from the community of Onchan on how their views for the future of the park.

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