

# Undertaking Our Strategic Review of Play Areas

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Debbie Sutton, Amenities Manager  
The Highland Council

# Timeline

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- October 2019; Commenced strategic review of Amenities
- January 2020; Approval given by Resources Governance Board to insource annual inspections
- August 2020; Appointment of team
- October 2020; Agreement for unspent Covid funds to be redirected to play projects
- November 2020; Play Inspection App procured and downloaded

# Timeline

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- March 2021; Start of annual inspections identified serious issues with surfacing and numerous closures instructed
- April 2021; Commenced monthly briefings with Ward Members to review all sites
- September 2021; Scottish Government allocation confirmed

# Timeline

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- December 2021; Scottish Government allocation divided between Wards and Community Toolkit launched
- Ongoing; working with communities and Ward Members, carrying out repairs and making improvements

# Highland Council Play Areas

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- 339 equipped sites
- 139 non equipped sites
- Not a statutory function, legal Duty of Care once installed to maintain safety of equipment

# Budget

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- Reduced by £255k (40%) since 2016
- No Capital budget
- Revenue budget (21/22) of £177k
- Ongoing annual maintenance budget required (based on asset value £2.47m)
- Operating on a 'Care and Maintenance' basis only

# The Importance of this Review

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- Need to try and reflect our budget against our priority assets
- Improve our performance
- Identify opportunities for partnership working with communities



# In House Technician Team

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- Reduce payments to external service providers
- Improve service delivery
- Generate additional income
- Provide professional, reliable and affordable Amenity services to Highland residents

# Legislation and Inspections

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- Legal duty of Care
- If deemed unsafe; legal duty to address risks immediately
- High priority is safety defect repairs
- BS EN1176 HSE and EN 1176

# Gathering the Data

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In order to present the current situation accurately we had to gather data for every site

- Name, location, Ward, Town
- Quality, play value, usage level, estimated asset value
- Repairs required, estimated costs, potential budget
- Completion records, actual costs, actual budget used
- Agreed closures, greenfield sites
- Spend allocations

# Engaging and Collaborating with our Communities

- Working with Community Support Co-ordinators
- Participatory approach
- Encourage them to fundraise for improvements
- Discuss alternative uses for sites



# Considering Priorities

- Equalities
- Inclusive play being promoted
- Socio-economic inequalities
- Geography
- Affordability vs Quality



# Scottish Government Funding

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- £234k for 21/22
- Scottish Government expectations
- Refurbishment
- Engagement of children and young people
- £245k for 22/23

# The Use of Technology



The Play  
Inspection Co.

- Purchased App in November 2020, rolled out for use in January 2021
- Runs on any device
- Numerous benefits
- Website;  
[www.highland.gov.uk/  
playareas](http://www.highland.gov.uk/playareas)



# Community Toolkit

- Play Area Upgrades Flowchart
- New Equipment Prices
- Equipment Suppliers
- Potential Funders
- Play Area Sites



# Outcomes of the Review

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- Reduced asset
- Awareness of current 'state of play'
- Increased investment
- Play Team
- Improved reporting
- Community involvement
- Toolkit and website



# What's Next?

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- Community Support Co-Ordinator for Play Development
- Play Sufficiency Assessments
- Play Strategy for Highland
- Natural Play
- Next round of annuals has commenced...

# Thank You

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