

Fees & Charges

Fitness at What Cost?



Laurence Christie
Cleansing, Parks & Waste Strategy Manager

East Renfrewshire

Area:

- 18,000 Hectares
- 75% of this is agricultural land type

Population:

- 1981 80,200
- 2009 89,240 (11.3% increase)
- 2018 89,050 predicted (slight fall)

Local Citizens Panel and Focus Groups support East Renfrewshire and praised it very highly for its use of parks and open spaces. There is a very high public perception of excellent quality of environmental issues and the access to green open spaces. Thus making East Renfrewshire a good place to live and to provide a good quality of life

East Renfrewshire Trend:

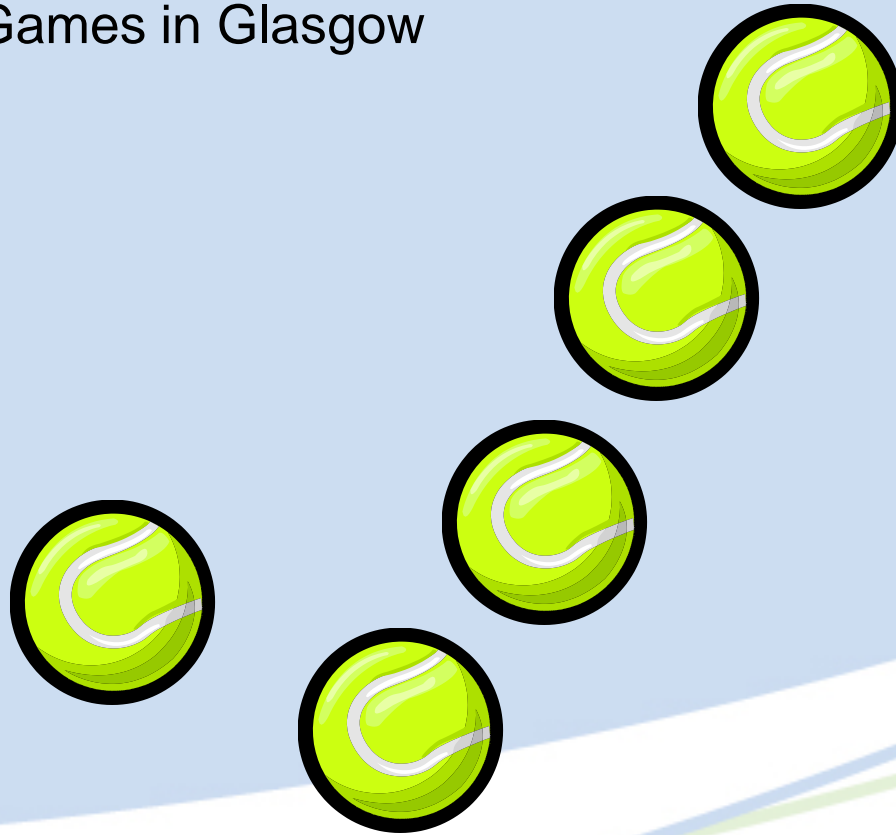
- Earnings 26% higher than Scottish average but 7.5% deprivation
- One of the most ethnically diverse in Scotland
- With 49% sports participation, placed in 2nd quartile of Scottish Councils
- 30% national child obesity in line with all Scotland
- Unemployment 5.5% compared to Scottish average 7.8%
- 18-24 unemployment 29.7% compared to 27.2% nationally
- Over 50s unemployment 17.5% compared to 15.6% nationally

Public Park & Public Health

- Fees and charges within a leisure and recreation environment has some degree of conflict.
- Active encouragement of fitness, well being and social interaction
 - **Free** – a person's basic human right to enjoy his/her environment as he/she deems fit
 - **At a Cost** – the austerity measures of budgeting balanced with the costs of providing and maintaining facilities for a person's basic human right.
 - **Fees & Charges** – balancing out what should be free and what has to be paid for!
 - **Subsidy** - accepting a charge is required but working with groups or national organisations to have fitness and sport for all

Influences

- When Andy Murray won the Olympics in 2012 and then Wimbledon this year, tennis and possible other racket sports more popular with our younger people
- Commonwealth Games in Glasgow



Public Park & Public Health

- East Renfrewshire does not offer a country park but has two main public parks, the most notable Rouken Glen Park in Giffnock.



A PUBLIC PARK

- We see a Public Park as being part of a person's community and thus able to be accessed **free** and pursue leisure interests **free**.



Public Park & Public Health

- Public Parks established 19th century to help improve living conditions for workers in the new industrialised Towns.
- Urban parks and green spaces have been valued by communities ever since.
- Worldwide research indicates that sport and recreational participation and enjoyment is essential for:
 - human development
 - quality of life
 - reduced anti-social behaviour
 - reduced health care requirements
 - policing and reduced boredom effects
 - Future champions
- Recent (over past 10 years) surveys/research indicate that parks improve many aspects of our lives including helping to provide places for children to learn to play, helping improve health, increasing the economic value of a town and providing space for wildlife.
- East Renfrewshire Council is committed to managing and developing its green spaces and parks for the benefit of all its residents and visitors.



Corporate Visions



Single Outcome Agreement (SOA):

Our people are healthier, more active and inequalities in health are reduced.

Our residents are safer in their neighbourhoods and their homes.

Our communities experience fewer incidents of vandalism, street disorder and serious violent crime.

Our residents have access to improved public transport facilities.

Our local people live in an attractive natural and built environment that is sustainable and enhanced for future generations. The Council and residents are taking steps to reduce their impact on the environment. East Renfrewshire has cleaner streets and improved parks and greenspaces.

Our systems and processes are more streamlined and efficient, make effective use of technology and respond to customer demand more effectively.

Our assets are used more effectively and efficiently. Residents benefit from a Council that complies with financial and legislative requirements and is continuously improving on all aspects of best value.

Our employees have the skills and tools to deliver on our outcomes and managers can respond to workforce changes that arise to support the budget process.

Our customers receive a high level of service from the Council and are satisfied with the services the Council deliver.

Promoting Fitness – at what cost?

East Renfrewshire Examples of Fitness Encouragement

- Two Military Fitness classes use Rouken Glen Park each week and with a lease for 3 years.
- The cost to book a let on all Council 3G pitches is half price during the months of June and July.
- We installed a trim track at Cowan Park in Barrhead and five pieces of outdoor fitness equipment offered free to the public. A possible second track will be installed in Rouken Glen again free use.
- There will be new tennis courts installed at a public park (location to be decided) and will be free to use by the public.
- The Council also offer assistance to Barrhead Youth Football Club in the form of reduced rates for their annual tournament.
- There is a Walking Group and Running Club who use Rouken Glen Park free of charge.
- Several local schools use both Cowan Park and Rouken Glen Park for their cross country events and these are all free.

Promoting Fitness – at what cost?

East Renfrewshire Examples of Fitness Encouragement

- Many local primary schools use our sports pitches throughout the year and there is no charge to the schools.
- Working with our Education Department the Parks Service offer free use of our sports pitches and facilities to promote sports courses.
- The Council are encouraging people to participate in sports either organised or casual. We offer free use of our tennis courts at Cowan Park and open several of our 3G pitches and training areas
- Throughout school holidays we permit free use of pitches to young people as a contribution towards “keeping kids off the street”.

Park User Survey

Two surveys carried out 2011 for users of Rouken Glen Park:

- 63.3% Go for a walk
- 50.4% Get some fresh air
- 35.9% Visit the play areas
- 26.4% Walk dog
- 24.8% Keep fit/improve health
- 24.3% Ride bicycle
- 10.0% Play organised sport or games
- 7.1% Attend gardens, walled garden etc

- 1.6% Cut through park en route elsewhere

Barrier Comment <24s

The distance to get there and basic need for a car journey. Also a lack of events, activities etc. to be of any interest

We believe we have a valuable asset untapped and capable of >500,000 visitors each year.

Currently around 350,000 visitors.

Charging for Fitness

- Each case is looked at on its own merits. An example being:
 - Numbers and visits to the Park
 - Commercial gain (e.g. run as a business with profit)
 - Internal classes (A return on invested capital expense or for the public good)
 - Groups using a facility several times a week may be seen as a business and appropriate agreement and charges set up.
 - Most recreation is informal

Charging for Fitness

How should a Council decide on charging or free use of Parks and Open Spaces?

- Used for organised participation by groups who charge for their service
- Used frequently by groups in a manner that require the Park and Open Spaces to receive more specific maintenance (finer grass cutting, lining, segregated area etc).
- How do we set these charges?
- Is there an element of providing monitoring and managing for these activities?
- Can we develop our own services (not necessarily in competition)?
- What do we offer in return?

Heritage Lottery Fund wants projects to be people-focussed, as well as being heritage-focussed.

According to Historic Scotland, an executive agency of the Scottish Government, it is our heritage that plays a significant role in people's sense of where they live (sense of place) and their enjoyment of different space.

Understanding and valuing our heritage leads to people taking an active part in and making decisions about it. This, in turn, leads to a better understanding and valuing and so the circle of improvement goes on.



HLF support through £3.25m, leisure fitness etc. will be developed into existing infrastructure or as new initiatives ranging from:

Improving pond water quality, refurbished pavilion, installing powered Events Area, path lighting and other attractions such as a heritage walled garden and possibly greater partnerships such as Soccer Pitches

Fees & Charges – A Hit or a Miss?????

