

King George V Park, Blackburn



Community Consultation Survey Report



King George V Park, Blackburn – Community Consultation Survey Results

SUMMARY

Introduction

A consultation was held from mid-April to early May 2024, in order to gain feedback on what the community thought about King George V Park in Blackburn. This is part of Community Choices, the council's participatory budgeting tool to assist focussed investment as part of the Open Space capital investment programme in parks. Suggestions were also sought from the community for proposals that would enhance the park. The survey was conducted on-line. Feedback was sought via a simple questionnaire. Nine responses were received by the deadline of 6 May 2024.

What people like about the park

The park's location and variety of features is liked.

What people don't like about the park

Elements of the play area and general condition of the park are not liked.

Proposals

A number of proposals have been drawn up for the community to Agree or Disagree with. A second consultation is, therefore, planned prior to requesting costings for the implementation of any "Agree" works.

Next Steps

Proposals have been drawn up to enhance the park. A second consultation will be undertaken in order for the community to vote on whether they agree or disagree with some of these proposals. The remaining proposals will be carried out to meet park standards and for maintenance purposes.



Introduction

An online consultation was held to gain feedback on the community's likes and dislikes about King George V Park in Blackburn with suggestions also sought to enhance the park. The consultation was available on the council's website from 15 April 2024 until 6 May 2024.

This exercise forms part of the council's Community Choices process. West Lothian Community Choices is West Lothian Council's version of Participatory Budgeting - a democratic process which empowers people and communities to have a greater say in how public money is spent. West Lothian Community Choices empowers everyone from community groups to individual service users to get involved in local decision making via a democratic Participatory Budgeting process. This consultation is being used by Open Space to focus spend as part of the capital investment programme in West Lothian's public parks.

King George V Park is a public park owned and maintained by the council. The park is just over 1.1 hectares in size and is located within a residential area of western Blackburn. It is regarded as a Local Park by the council. The majority of the site is designated as Land Safeguarded for Open Space in the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan, 2018.

The park's name was given as part of a nationwide project in memory of King George V, providing space for communities to access land in which to play and take recreation.

Pedestrian access is available into the park from the north, west and south sides of the site. There are no formal vehicular access points into the park for the public. Access for authorised inspection and maintenance vehicles is available from the south-western boundary.

The park is surrounded by residential properties on its northern, eastern and southern edges. Pedestrian routes run between properties off Ladeside Road and Riddochhill Road from the north and south, respectively. Open, metal railings, approximately 1m above ground, form the western boundary with an additional two pedestrian access points available through them. All exits connect with pavements to surrounding areas.

A sealed and lit path runs north-south, splitting the park in two. A number of seats and bins are located off this path section. Two sealed and lit paths link from this path to the western boundary. A sealed path also forms a circular route around the eastern half of the park, off the north-south path.

The eastern part of the site contains a play area, two small goals with artificial surfacing at the goal mouths, a basketball hoop on a hard surface and a climbing cube. A tree trunk with a "face" carved into it creates a unique placemaking feature.

The western half of the park is mainly amenity grassland with paving slabs forming curved access routes through it. Seating is also available in this area of the park. Wooden posts have been used to add structure and interest in the park.

The park has a number of conifer and broadleaf trees planted throughout with shrubs also located near the north-eastern corner. A swale (natural drainage area) is situated near the south-east boundary. It was planted with wetland plants and has been left to naturalise.

Information gathering

An on-line survey was used to gather comments and feedback from local stakeholders. This was posted on the Council's website and available for completion between 15 April 2024 and 6 May 2024. Emails were sent to the local ward members and a number of Council officers advising of the park survey and encouraging their completion and/or sharing. Posters were put up in and around the park which included a link to the survey along with a QR code connecting you directly to the survey. Forty-one properties adjacent to the park boundary were also leafleted with a copy of the consultation poster.

There were 9 surveys completed by the closing date.

Feedback

Full responses to the survey are available in **Appendix 1**. A summary of answers to each question is as follows:

What people call the park

Most respondents call the park King George or King George's. It is also referred to as "sad place" and "the wee park" or not called anything specifically.

What people like about the park

The location of the park is liked as it is close to houses, in the middle of a built-up area and easy to get to. There is lots of space to run about. It has different things for different people and some details which are particularly liked, including specific play features.

What people don't like about the park

Elements of the play area are not liked: not enough to occupy users; goals too small; it is not fenced. The park is regarded as run down or lacks care. Anti-social behaviour is a negative aspect as well as dog poo. Trees are hitting overhead cables affecting broadband.

Suggestions to enhance the park

A number of suggestions were made to enhance the park or improve the enjoyment of park users. These, and any relevant comments relating to them, are as follows –

- Play area and features – There were a number of comments suggesting various new play assets including equipment, goals and outdoor gym equipment. Park enhancements and play asset improvements are funded from different budgets. The current budget allocation is for park enhancements which excludes play equipment and assets.

There is, however, some investment in the play area planned in the current programme. The removal of the existing roundabout is already scheduled and will be replaced with an inclusive roundabout and a surfaced path to access the roundabout. The re-surfacing of the area under the basketball will also be considered pending a quote. There is no further budget allocated for play in the current programme. If a budget does become available for King George V Park then the comments relating to play equipment received during this consultation will be considered along with any future consultation feedback.

There were a few suggestions for fencing off the play area to safeguard younger children. The council does not have a policy to fence all play areas. Fences are erected if a play area is within 15m of a road or other danger. This does not apply to King George V Park. Fencing will not, therefore, be considered around this play area.

Playtime doesn't have to be focussed on traditional play equipment. Informal play is as important for the development of children with the exploration of different

environments offering adventure and educational benefits, either as a solo or group activity. Simple artwork can stimulate ideas and play. The stepping stone path nearest the play area could be painted up with colours, shapes, numbers, animals etc. to generate games and adventures.

- Monitoring behaviour in parks - There are no resources to “patrol” parks or play areas as a mechanism to curb anti-social behaviour.

The Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004 defines it as, *“acting in a manner that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress.”* For behaviour to be classed as “antisocial” it must be persistent, this means that one- off incidents may not be classed as antisocial behaviour, however, these incidents could still be criminal. It is important that you contact Police Scotland if you have been the victim of a crime. For additional information, including how to report anti-social behaviour, please visit the council’s webpage at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/anti-social-behaviour>

Signage has just been installed at the play park which requests that dogs are kept on a lead. The council does not have powers to enforce that dogs are on a lead or be removed from certain areas. The council does have a webpage at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/47563/Dogs> to report dog fouling, or other dog related issues.

- More seating/new picnic tables – There was a suggestion for more seats. There are 9 seats situated within the park which is regarded as adequate for a Local Park. The installation of a new picnic table would, however, provide an opportunity to socialise, play games and eat within the park as well as increase resting opportunities. A disabled access picnic table with an extended table end would not only serve those in wheelchairs but also pram users.
- Street lighting – More street lighting was suggested. There are street lights along the central and western path edges. The main reason for this provision is for active travel allowing for the park paths to be used as routes to surrounding areas without having to take a long journey around the streets. Many parks do not have any lighting and there is no policy for this provision. The eastern area of the park will not, therefore, be considered for lighting.
- Improved biodiversity/additional planting – More biodiversity measures were suggested along with requests for more planted up areas.

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act (2004), all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities.

Natural features, like any other park assets, still need to be managed. Some features are managed by leaving them alone, perhaps for wildlife or other reasons, but generally resources are needed in the form of funding and/or workforce. The sustainability of any new plant, therefore, needs to be considered from a maintenance point of view: what and how much maintenance is needed with the ideal scenario resulting in no more, or ideally less, resources than currently required. A new tree for example, once planted, will require little or no resources compared to a new shrub or hedge which is likely to need to be cut regularly.

The existing trees on site provide shelter from the wind and shade from the sun. They provide habitat for birds, insects and mammals to source food and seek shelter. Trees also mitigate flooding and reduce soil erosion. All of these benefits, to wildlife and humans (known as ecosystem services), multiply with each tree planted whether grown as a single specimen or woodland group. Additional tree planting could be accommodated within the park.

Bulbs can also provide pollen, colour and habitat variety. The park is large enough to plant additional areas with bulbs particularly early flowering varieties for insects seeking food in February/March when sources are limited. Flowers at this time of year would also not affect grass cutting too much with only one or two grass cuts being missed in order for the bulbs to die back naturally and replenish energy for the next year's display. Native Daffodils and early flowering Crocus species would complement the existing bulb areas on site.

If funding can be obtained from an external source then new trees and bulbs are proposed for planting.

More paved areas – There is a paved path around, and cutting through the middle of the park. Amenity grass and paving slabs also offer alternative surfaces for park users. It is recognised though that not everyone can take safe and easy access unless on a sealed path surface. A circular access route is currently not available on sealed surfaces unless you go outside of the park boundary and use the pavement parallel with Ladeside Avenue. This provision could be improved if the slabbed path nearest Ladeside Avenue is replaced with a Bitmac path. This would then create a circular route within the park.

Park maintenance – There were various comments about grass cutting, litter and the emptying of bins as well as general park condition etc.

The park receives 12 cuts of grass per year, approximately from April to September, weather dependant. The cut grass is not lifted. These standards are for all parks maintained by the council.

The park is regularly litter picked and bins emptied. If you would like to report an overflowing bin or litter on site please use [Report Litter - West Lothian Council](#)

There are a number of wooden features in the park which need to be removed as they are now loose, split or rotting. If left in-situ they will further deteriorate and eventually cause health and safety issues. This includes the wooden posts in the west of the park, wooden edging around tree and shrub areas in the centre and north-eastern corner and the small fence at the back of the southern goals.

There is an "empty" signboard located off the central path by the play area. It is no use as an interpretation or signboard.

There are two metal panels at the southern entrance to the park, off Riddochhill Road which reference the connection to King George V. The lettering on both panels is now almost illegible and the paint on the panels and railings is faded.

There are two circular areas within the central path route near the entrance/exit points. These are now empty and are muddy/boggy after heavy rain. They attract weeds which is currently controlled with herbicide. The area could be planted with trees or bulbs but these may get damaged due to footfall, which is likely what happened to previous

plants here. Creating a new hard surface would link into the path route and would be a good re-use of some of the slabs, if uplifted, from within the park.

One of the park benches is loose and requires to be secured in-ground.

Community involvement and events - There were suggestions to involve the local community or use the park for events. Open Space does not have the resources to organise, lead-on or manage events in parks but will consider any proposals from community groups to undertake volunteering or environmental activities in the park such as litter picking. Any activities would need to be community led with any equipment etc provided by them.

If you would like to organise an event/activity in the park please refer to the council's webpage at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo> for information and an application form under **Events in public parks**.

Park proposals

Based on the community suggestions that can be implemented within the park (and likely to be within budget) a number of proposals (excluding the play area proposals) have been drawn up:

- Remove slabs and replace with Bitmac – the western slabbed path (nearest Ladeside Avenue) would be removed (with slabs re-used within the site, if possible). A new Bitmac path would then be created from the north to south paths, connecting with the existing seat, to create a circular, sealed path around the park.



- New picnic table – a new picnic table would be installed to the north of the play area. This would have an extended table top at one end for use by those in a wheelchair or pram. The slabbed path from the central path would be removed and replaced with a Bitmac path to assist disabled access. The picnic table would be

placed on a Bitmac surface to allow wheelchair movement and assist with grounds maintenance.

- Remove wooden posts – The wooden posts in the western section of the park would be removed.
- Paint King George V panels – The panels and their railings at the southern entrance would be painted.



- Paint slabs near play area – Some of the slabs on the path between the new picnic table (if installed) and the south-eastern path would be painted with different colours, numbers and shapes etc to add interest for children in order to encourage their own games and play.
- Infilling of “circles” – The circular areas at each end of the north-south central path would be filled in using the slabs lifted from the path sections proposed for Bitmac.



- Remove wooden edging around trees and shrub area – The wooden edging would be removed from around the base of 5 trees on the western edge of the central path. Wooden edging would also be removed from around the shrub area behind the northern goal.



- Remove wooden fence – The loose section of fence would be removed from behind the southern goal.
- Fix loose seating – One of the seats off the central path is loose. This would be re-fixed in-ground.
- Remove signboard – The metal signboard off the central path would be removed.



- Install park signage at entrances – Three new park signs would be installed on the existing boundary fencing at the northern, southern and western entrances. This would include details of how to report any issues to the council.
- New trees – If external funding was secured then 5 new trees could be planted along the western boundary, parallel with Ladeside Avenue. Species such as Rowan, Cherry or Crab Apple would be considered for colour but also flowers to provide pollen and berries.
- Additional bulbs –If external funding was secured then additional bulb planting would be planted within the grass area to the west of the park. This would be a band of early- flowering daffodil and crocus.

The implementation of any of the above proposals depends on their costs being within the park budget, and securing external funding for the trees and bulbs.

A layout plan showing the above proposals is shown below.

Next Steps

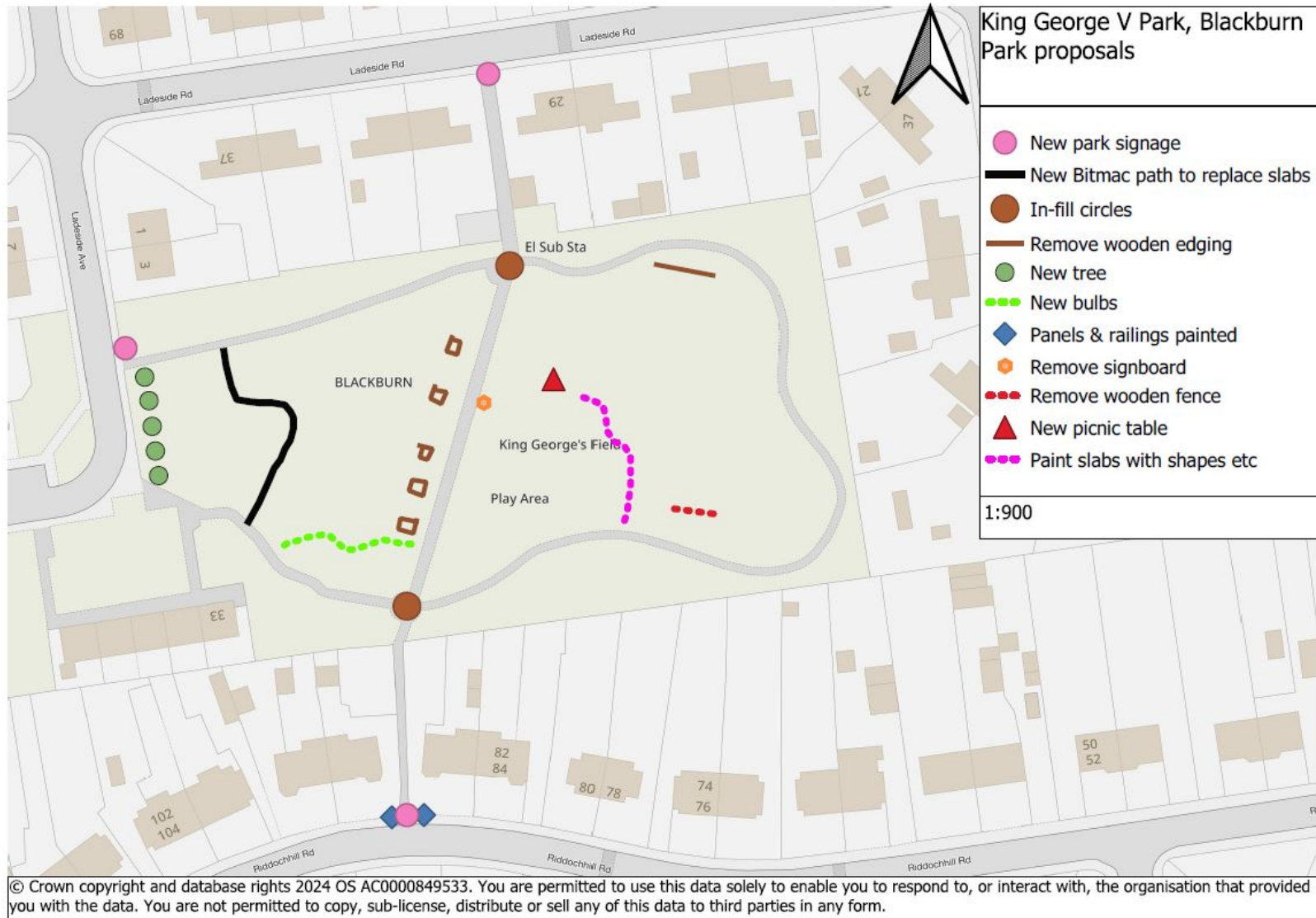
This report will be made available on the Council's webpage at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo> under **Reports**.

The community will shortly be asked to Agree or Disagree with the park proposals by voting on some of the suggestions. The remaining proposals will be developed, without community voting, in order to improve park standards and remove items that are damaged/deteriorating. The second consultation will be made available on the Council's website and via the same link as above.

The 5 respondents who requested to join the park email list will be kept updated about the park improvements. Anyone else who would like to join the list can request to do so by emailing Carol.Campbell@westlothian.gov.uk



Park proposals plan



Appendix 1 - All survey results, as returned in surveys (some personal information has been redacted)

1. What do you call the park?

Number of participants: 8

- King Georges
- King George's
- King George
- King George's
- no name
- King George
- Sad place
- The wee park

2. What do you like best about this park?

Number of participants: 9

- The fact its close by to my home. Kids can easily have access to it without having to venture far.
- The amount of space for kids to run about
- Lots of space, close by to other things, i.e, shops, houses,
- Nice little details like stepping stones and paved areas give the park some depth and interest. It's a big space with different elements that can be used by different people
- Space, basket swing
- it exists in the middle of a built area in the village centre
- My son likes the football bit, but it's outdated.
- Nothing
- It's close to my house

3. Is there anything you don't like?

Number of participants: 8

- Yes, the fact there is very little there to occupy smaller kids never mind teenagers. More consideration needs to be given to accomodate all childrens age groups within the area.
- The trees hitting the overhead cables affecting my BB. These need cut back ASAP
- some elements are run down, like paving could do with a clean, some rotten timber elements, derelict signage, makes the park look uncared for
- Goals are small and made of metal (people hit their heads off the top)
- lack of care and lack of use
- it a bit small for the size of the ground. The dog poo , it's everywhere. More signs and more of a force to stop it with bigger fines.
- People go there to take drugs/smoke weed/ drink alcohol. Dogs waste, broken glass, used syringes, cigarette butts are everywhere on the grass. It's disgusting. I'm not letting my kids play in there because I'm afraid of their safety.

-There isn't much for my [REDACTED], it's not fenced in so they can just roam about meaning there is a lot of opportunity to come across dog poo

4. **Please suggest things that could enhance the park or improve your enjoyment of it.**

Number of participants: 9

-I would like some more metal playpark items such as good climbing frame, slide and swings, possibly a seesaw too for school kids The metal spinning bowl that was previously was a popular playpiece A climbing frame and some small items for preschool kids. I would suggest metal so items would be sustainable as previous items were not durable when some teenagers decided to wreck. It is then others who suffer for the sake of a small minority. The goals could also do with a bit of a revamp, as this is also very popular item within the park. Another thing it lacks is a couple of picnic tables, more families might use weather permitted.

-A slide, more swings, updated goal posts and a climbing frame more suitable for you get kids

-Need more street lighting - would be great to see some solar powered lights/bin functions.

Grass cutting regularly, bins emptying, general maintenance could be improved including more "planted up" areas.

More seating to ensure elderly or people who experience physical mobility issues can rest more often more easily.

Make sure pathed areas are extended and maintained in good condition, again for people who require even surfaces to facilitate their movement. Also poor Scottish weather means park is often muddy, more paths make increase people using the park all year round.

Goals for football.

Signage along pathways to encourage people to move or use the park....moving for 30 mins a day reduces chances of a heart attack by xxx, improves mood, lowers risk of type 2 diabetes etc. Signage could also have instructions for games to encourage self led play for children.

Spaces on paved areas for games ie snakes and ladders board etc.

-General tidy up, remove old posts or broken signs, 2 empty circles in the path used to have a feature there, probably a tree - that could be replaced. Add lots more for biodiversity, this big space would benefit from it

-Normal goals (better or just taller/bigger), swings (that are not baby swings)

-tidy up, more things to do and interact with, specific projects involving locals, volunteering groups, link to health and wellbeing of locals, promote it and use it for official events

-More things for the kids to play , up to date football bit.

-First of all park should be monitored. No smoking/dogs allowed. Play area for younger kids should be fenced. Would be nice if more things are added like open slide, tube slide, sensory panels, seesaw, viper swing, merry-go-round, climbing net, inground trampoline, outdoor gym equipment for older kids/adults to enjoy.

-Fenced off , more things for small children

Climbing frame , slide , round about