

Burghmuir Park, Bathgate



Community Consultation Survey Report



Burghmuir Park, Bathgate – Community Consultation Survey Results

SUMMARY

Introduction

A consultation was held from the end of May to mid-June 2024, in order to gain feedback on what the community thought about Burghmuir Park in Bathgate. 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. Thirteen responses were received by the deadline of 16 June 2024.

What people like about the park

The community enjoys the open space, the fact that you can easily get to the park and its central location. It's good for walking dogs and isn't too busy.

What people don't like about the park

Rubbish and number of bins, dogs off leads, boggy and no path across the park were all things not liked about the park. The fact that vehicles get into the park and some anti-social behaviour was also mentioned.

Proposals

A number of proposals have been drawn up following the community consultation.

Next Steps

A quote for the proposed works will be obtained. External funding will also be explored for proposed tree planting. If the cost of the proposals is within budget, the works will be undertaken with completion scheduled by 31 March 2025.



Introduction

An online consultation was held to gain feedback on the community's likes and dislikes about Burghmuir Park in Bathgate with suggestions also sought to enhance the park. The consultation was available on the council's website from 29 May 2024 until 16 June 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.

Burghmuir Park is a public park owned and maintained by the council. The park is just over 1.57 hectares in size and is located within a residential area of central Bathgate. It is regarded as a Local Park by the council. The site is designated as *Land Safeguarded for Open Space* in the adopted West Lothian Local Development Plan, 2018.

Pedestrian access is available into the park from two points along the northern boundary and one each from the south-western and south-eastern corners. There is no formal vehicular access into the park for the public. Access for authorised inspection and maintenance vehicles is available from the north-eastern and south-western park edges.

The park is surrounded by residential properties on its northern, eastern and southern edges. A mixture of residential properties and Bathgate West Nursery School are located along its western boundary. Pedestrian routes run within the park's western and southern edges. These are sealed and lit paths leading to surrounding residential areas and onwards to commercial and town centre facilities. There is a woodland edge forming the northern and eastern boundaries.

The woodland is formed by a mix of mature, broadleaf trees. Some wildflowers are found through the woodland and woodland edge. Bulbs have been planted in the south-eastern corner to add spring colour and variety.

The remaining park is amenity grass. A small play area is located centrally within the grassed area comprising formal play equipment for younger children. A seat is located near the play area. Two mixed waste and one dog waste bins are located in 3 corners of the park.

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 29 May 2024 and 16 June 2024. Emails were sent to the local ward members, Bathgate Community Council, Bathgate Community Development Trust, Bathgate West Nursery School 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.

There were 13 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

Some call the park the Wee Mair/Wee Mair Park or Wee Mare while others refer to it as Burghmuir or Burghmuir Park.

What people like about the park

The open space is the most popular thing about the park. Its central location means it can be easily accessed and also has good access to the nursery, town centre and nearby residential areas. It is good for dog walking. The fact that it is quiet and not too busy is liked. Its size, play area and mature trees are also positive elements.

What people don't like about the park

The rubbish and number of bins is not liked. People let their dogs off leads in the park. It is boggy with a wet play area. It can be accessed by cars or used as a turning area. There is no path across the park and not enough seats. Anti-social behaviour within the park is a negative as well as no grass collection after it is cut.

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 or other feedback, are as follows

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- Path across the park – The only surfaced routes within the park are along the western and southern edges. Access to the play area or across the park is over grass which is boggy during, or after, wet weather and is not easy to cross if you have mobility problems or a pram.

A windust path between the south-western and north-eastern access points would create a new, accessible route benefitting park users.

- Barriers off Millburn Road – Access controls off Millburn Road would restrict unauthorised vehicle access, making the park safer for users. This would be particularly beneficial if a new pedestrian path was constructed across the park (as above). Barriers that have removable padlocks would still allow council vehicles access for park inspections and maintenance.
- More bins – The Cleaner Communities team within the council determines the number of bins within the county. There is one dog waste bin near the south-eastern entrance and two multi-use waste bins near the south-western and north-western entrances. This is considered sufficient for the park area.

The latter two bins are a short distance from the path edge and you need to cross the grass, which can often be muddy, to use them. By moving these two bins to the path edge it would make using them much easier.

The park is regularly litter picked and the bins emptied. If you would like to report an overflowing bin or litter on site please use <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/32091/Report-Litter>

If you want to report dog fouling that needs cleaned up, want to report a damaged dog waste bin or have an existing one emptied, please use the council's online form at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/32095/Report-a-Dog-Fouling-Issue>

- Drainage – The majority of the park surface is grass. This can get boggy during or after wet weather. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide drainage throughout the park due to the cost and restricted park budget. By creating a new windust path across the park (as above) this would create an improved surface for walking on and enjoying the park.
- Maintenance – The grass within the park is cut 12 times per year, approximately from April to September, weather dependant. The cut grass is not collected here according to park standards which is the same across the county.
- Play area and features – There were a number of comments suggesting various new play assets including goals, basketball hoop 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. Comments will be kept on file and if any play area budget becomes available in the future for play assets then these, and any other consultation feedback, will be used to inform proposals.

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 Burghmuir Park play area. Fencing will not, therefore, be considered around this play area.

- Fenced area for dogs – The council has considered fenced off areas for dogs before and will not be implementing such areas in parks. This is mainly due to the high level of dog fouling likely to be generated and the health issues associated with this.
- Anti-social behaviour in parks - 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>
- More seating/new picnic tables – There were suggestions for more seats. There is only 1 seat situated within the park, on the edge of the play area. The park is large enough to accommodate more seats. This could be situated off a new path through the park, if budget allowed.

The installation of a new picnic table would also provide an opportunity to rest as well as provide an opportunity to socialise, play games and eat within the park. This could also be located centrally within the park, close to the play area and new path (if implemented), if budget allowed.

- More plants/nature – Suggestions for more trees, colour and nature were made.

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, do 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 are 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 for structure, shade, colour and tree succession.

If funding can be obtained from an external source then new trees are proposed for planting close to the path edges.

No mow areas of grass would create new habitat within the park as new grasses and wildflowers slowly establish themselves. This would create areas for small mammals and insects to collect nectar/pollen/food and new habitat to shelter and hunt within. The park is large enough to introduce no-mow areas and still provide plenty of shorter grass for walking, playing and exercising on. Some areas of the cut amenity grass will not be used frequently, or at all, by park visitors so leaving some areas uncut should not interfere with park users' overall experience of the park.

If new trees are planted it is proposed to leave the areas immediately around them unmown to enhance biodiversity. Where this is near a path then a strip would still be cut along the path edges for amenity.

An area near the eastern boundary, close to the existing mature trees is also proposed as a no-mow strip. Again, this would enhance biodiversity but still leave sufficient shorter grass for walking/playing in this part of the park.

Park proposals

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

- New path – A whindust surfaced path running from the end of Millburn Road, diagonally across the park to the north-eastern entrance off Muir Road, is proposed.
- New vehicle barriers – Three bollards at the north end of Millburn Road are proposed. These would be padlocked and managed by the council when access was required by authorised vehicles.
- New seat – a new seat is proposed off the new path through the park, near the higher part of the path. If the path was not created then a new seat would be considered elsewhere within the park.
- New picnic table – a new picnic table would be installed off the new path (if installed) near the play area.

- Move bins – the multi-waste bins are proposed for renewal/re-location. The current bin near the north-western entrance, off Muir Road, would be removed. A new waste bin would be located off the path edge for better access. The bin opposite the Nursery School, currently located away from the path within the grass, is proposed for relocation to where Millburn Road ends and meets the sealed surface path, that runs in front of the Nursery.
- New trees – If external funding was secured then new trees could be planted along the existing paths and proposed new path running through the park.
- No-mow grass areas – A strip of grass is proposed to be left un-cut near the mature trees on the eastern side of the park. This would enhance biodiversity as well as reduce maintenance resources needed in the park.

The grass areas around the new trees, if planted, are also proposed to be left uncut to enhance biodiversity. The grass edges nearest the paths (existing and proposed) would still be cut for amenity.

- Support wooden fence – The loose and leaning section of fence along Newlands Court would be supported with additional fence posts. There is not sufficient funding to allow the fence to be renewed.
- New park signage – A new park sign is proposed for installation at the entrance off Millburn Road and the eastern entrance off Muir Road. This would include details of how to report any issues to the council.

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

A layout plan showing the above proposals is shown below.

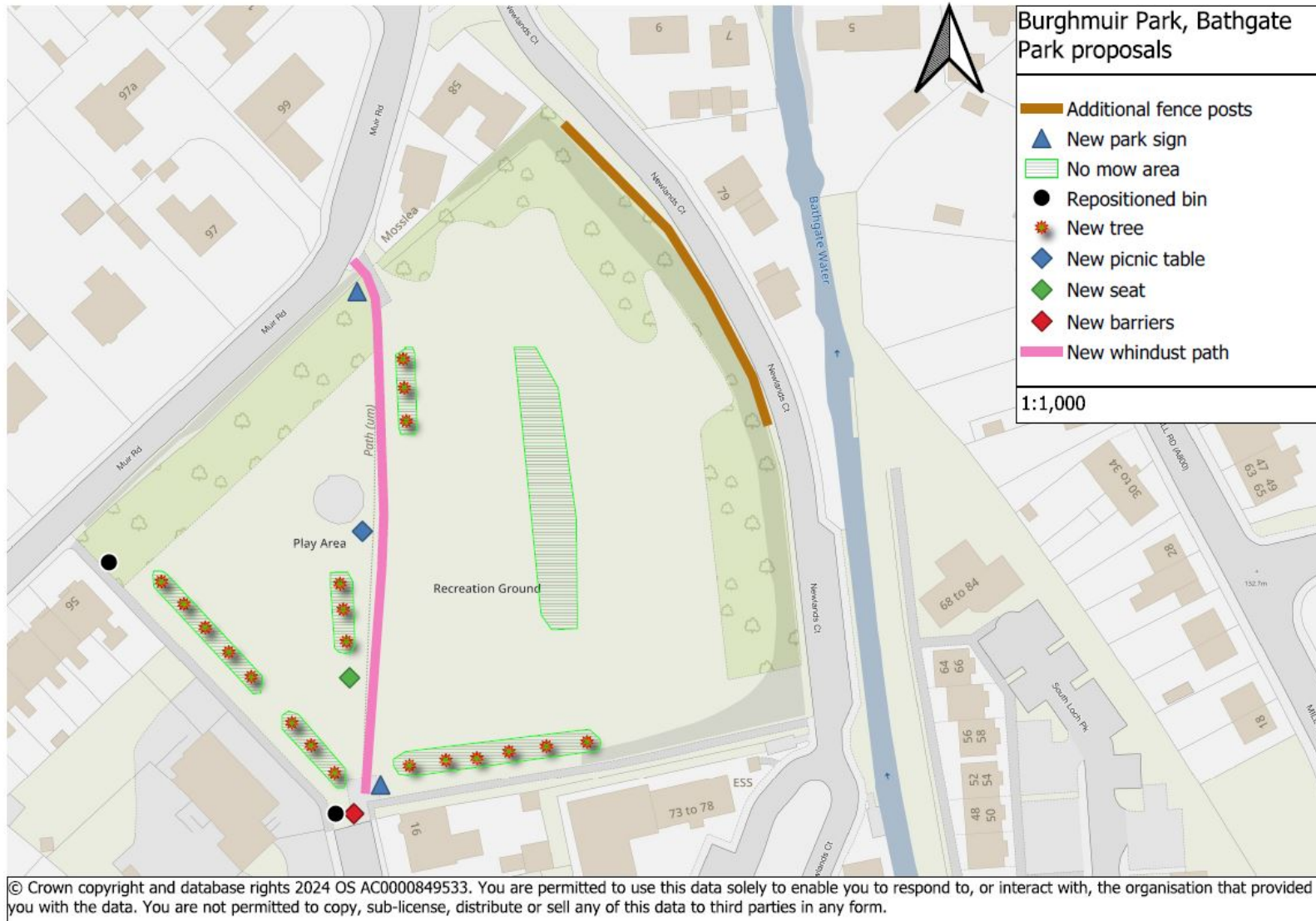
Next Steps

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

A quote for the above proposals will be sought. If the cost of this is within the park budget then the work will be implemented. External funding will also be sought for the proposed new trees. If this is secured then the trees would be planted in the following planting season.

The 9 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)

1. What do you call this park?

- The Burgh Muir
- The wee mair
- Wee mare
- The Little Park
- The Wee Ware
- The Wee Mair Park
- The wee mair
- Burghmuir
- Park at the Wee Mair
- The Wee Mare
- Burghmuir Park
- The Wee Mair
- Burghmuir park

2. What do you like best about this park?

- Open space, close proximity to residential and town centre
- Open space available for all with close proximity and access for the local nursery school.
- Good for dog walking
- The open space
- Good for small children and walking dogs
- Good size and relatively quiet for main personal use of walking dog too.
- nice green open space
- Open green space with easy access
- Not usually too busy
- Central location. Useful when children attended the nursery. Mature trees are nice
- Open space. Quiet.
- It's right opposite our house, a wonderful play area..not just the play park itself, but the grass...for our grandchildren.
I love that people picnic on it on a lovely summer's day and that parents bring their children to kick a ball about.
- I don't like the park very much as there isn't fun things for children to do. In addition a number of dog walkers let their dogs off the lead and leave mess in the park. When the grass is cut it is left to rot and it sticks to shoes. A number of years ago the council put a small tarmac path into the park off Muir Road to allow access for cars going to the Highland Games. This path is now being used by dog walkers arriving by car and council workers .

3. Is there anything you don't like?

- No
- the strange hard standing at the Scotmid end of the facility - looks like an old car parking space?
- Not enough buckets
- No
- Not enough seats, not enough bins or dog waste bins. This is a well used play park but it filled with rubbish.

- Tends to get a bit boggy in areas and a bit messy underfoot when dog walking. Some cars tend to be using the park as a turning circle due to no gating or bollards at either road entrance/exit.
- Play Area floods a lot
- no
- The park is well used by dog walkers. Lots of dogs are of lead and allowed to run around freely at times running close to other park users in particular disturbing kids playing in the child's apparatus area
- Rubbish and broken glass
- Very open with two roads either side and no barrier if you have small children. Not very interesting planting. No path across if weather is wet (grass is very wet)
- No.
- Anti- social behaviour. It has greatly improved since the ban on outside drinking was brought in. But on a hot summer's night, when we have our bedroom window open, the cursing and swearing coming from the park stops us sleeping. The police do come out....I think our neighbour calls them. In fact on the Galaday, we have four or five police vans blue lighting to the park after an incident at the shows. By day it is a lovely play park, by night a place for gathering with a drink in your hand.
- Also, since the bollards at the Muir Road entrance were removed, cars routinely use it as a short cut...or park for their children to use the swings. Cars are getting stuck on the grass and churning it up.
- See above

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

- Well maintained open space and grassland areas and properly drained, will continue to help enjoy the park.
- there is a natural path diagonally through the area, this could be formalised and a natural walkway put in place (such as ash, wood chippings etc).
- The area has historically been used for football - therefore reinstatement of goal posts for local youths.
- More buckets and maybe enclosed play area
- Please leave it alone. It works well as is.
- More bins, more seats and an all weather path around the circumference of the grass with seats to walk dogs around.
- Perhaps a walking path around the park itself? Basketball hoop and other sports/gym equipment would be of interest too.
- Wish there was a proper path through the middle where everyone walks, and much more plants, colour and nature
- A fence and secure gate erected around the existing designated kids play park. Similar to the fence in the meadow park. A dividing fence separating owners and off lead dogs from people walking through the park.
- Shifting litter bin next to Muir Road to next to bench at play park. Most folk won't walk far to put rubbish in a bin.
- Having a second bench at play park
- Having a wildlife friendly area. Planting a few different trees.
- Growing opportunity for more interesting planting (more colour). A path across grass. Park of park being secure for small children.

-Bench seats for the old/infirm to sit on. Picnic tables would also be nice.

-I think the bollards at both entrances should be reinstated.

Perhaps goal posts put back up in the summer. In this age when kids sit in front of computers, very few boys play football there any more.

When the posts were up, whole groups of boys used to come for a "game", including our sons and their friends. Great exercise for them.

We need some litter bins, not just dog poo bins, which I have to say is so much less of a problem than it was when our four were wee, since most dog owners carry poo bags.

But littering is a huge problem.

Also one or two seats at the edge of the park for a resting point for the more elderly walkers?

Finally..a no mow policy for the first few metres around the edge of the park to encourage wildflowers for the pollinators.

-Fun play equipment similar to Windyknowe park. The play area fenced off to keep children safe . Bins and benches plus a sign to remind people who use it to look after it.