

Westrigg Park, Blackridge



Community Consultation Survey Report



Westrigg Park, Blackridge – Community Consultation Survey Results

SUMMARY

Introduction

A consultation was held in June 2024, in order to gain feedback on what the community thought about Westrigg Park in Blackridge. Suggestions were also sought from the community for proposals that would enhance the park. 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. The survey was conducted on-line. Feedback was sought via a simple questionnaire. Twenty five responses were received by the deadline of 23 June 2024.

What people like about the park

The community enjoys the large open and green space, the play area and the football pitch and the park's location in relation to the wider village.

What people don't like about the park

The dog fouling is disliked. Some think that there is not enough in the park or play area needs more or newer equipment. The drainage is also a negative factor.

Proposals

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

Next Steps

A quote for the proposed works will be obtained. If the cost of the proposals is within budget the works will be undertaken with completion expected by 31 March 2025.



Introduction

An online consultation was held to gain feedback on the community's likes and dislikes about Westrigg Park in Blackridge with suggestions also sought to enhance the park. The consultation was available on the council's website from the 6th to the 23rd of 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.

Westrigg Park is a public park owned and maintained by the council. The park is just over 1.4 hectares in size and is located in the eastern area of Blackridge. It is regarded as a Neighbourhood 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 west, south and north-eastern access points. 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 southern park edges.

The park is roughly rectangular in shape with residential properties on its western and eastern boundaries. The main road between Blackridge and Armadale forms its southern edge with a mature tree line and fencing separating the park from the road. A mature woodland runs along the north-western park edge with agricultural land forming the north-eastern boundary.

Single trees are planted in the western half of the park with clumps of shrubs planted in the park's north-western corner. A football pitch is located in the eastern part of the park on a flat area. The park rises up steeply from the pitch on its northern and western sides and then levels out slightly but still rises up towards the north. There are no surfaced paths within the park with the exception of a small connecting path between the play areas. All other access is taken over amenity grassland. Two small play areas are located in the north-west of the park with formal play equipment for toddler and senior children. There are two picnic tables, eight seats and four small "perching posts" around the park for resting and socialising. Dog and dual purpose bins collect rubbish for 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 the 6th and 23rd of June 2024. Emails were sent to the local ward members, Blackridge Community Council 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 25 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 people call the site Westrigg Park. Others refer to it according to what happens there such as Gala Park or what you can do there i.e. “swing park” or “park with the football pitch...”. The park’s location is used to describe it by others: park by the doctors or Doctor’s park.

What people like about the park

The large, open, green space is liked as is the play park and the football pitch. The park’s location in the centre of the village and near the community hall along with easy accessibility are all positive aspects of the park. Some like it because it is quiet, good for small children and that the Gala Day is held here.

What people don’t like about the park

There were various negative comments about the play areas and the equipment in them. Some people believe that there is not much in the park with some saying they like nothing about it. The amount of dog fouling is not liked along with dogs off leads. Smashed glass, the trees and the grass not picked up after cutting are also negative park aspects.

Suggestions to enhance the park

A number of suggestions were made by the community 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 –

Play area and features – There were a number of comments suggesting various new pieces of play equipment and other assets including a basketball court, a pump-track, bike/skate park and a multi-use area.

Park enhancements and new or updated play equipment and assets are funded from different budgets. The current budget allocation is for park enhancements which excludes play equipment and assets. Comments relating to play will be kept on file and if any play area budget becomes available in the future for play assets in Westrigg Park then these, and any other consultation feedback, will be used to inform proposals.

More dog bins – The Cleaner Communities team within the council determines the number of bins within the county. There is one dog waste bin at the western park entrance and one multi-use waste bin near the steps at the edge of the football pitch which also takes dog waste. This is considered sufficient for Westrigg Park.

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>

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>

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.

Grass maintenance – The grass within the park is cut 12 times per year with the football park receiving 16 cuts per year, approximately from April to September, weather dependant. The cut grass has not been collected for many years which accords to park standards. This is the same across the whole county.

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 in one area and the health issues associated with this and its management but also the loss of active open space that is available to the public.

CCTV – The council does not install CCTV in parks primarily due to the capital cost of installation but also the on-going revenue cost to maintain and monitor cameras. (Some buildings in parks may have CCTV or security cameras installed on them but this is in association with the property e.g. Xcite gyms.)

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>

Path around the football pitch - A new path around the football pitch would not be possible due to the cost and the available park budget. A Bitmac path over part of the park, including to the play area would, however, create an improved surface for walking on and enjoying the park rather than having to walk over the wet, grass surface.

Due to the topography of the park in this area it would not be possible to create a flat path throughout but "spoil" from any path excavations could be used to in-fill dips or create platforms that assist with levelling out any new path.

More seating/new picnic tables – There were suggestions for more seats and picnic tables. There are eight seats and two picnic tables already situated within the park. The park is, however, large enough to accommodate more seating. If a new path was created then a new seat could be installed at the top of the steps for resting or watching activity in the park.

Memorial seating or plaques – Some suggestions were made to commemorate those who were from, or involved in, Blackridge. The council does not have a formal policy to install new memorial benches or plaques upon request, and does not offer a formal service to install memorial items. The council can, however, approve the installation of memorial park furniture by the public (at their cost), where appropriate. The material, design and location would need to be approved by the council and any memorial furniture then installed by a contractor approved by the council. All on-going maintenance, repair, replacement or removal would be at the expense of the member of the public.

Flower beds – 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 and maintained. 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 new shrubs, hedges or flowers which may need to be cut, weeded or watered.

Bulbs provide flowers and require little attention once in the ground. They also provide pollen, nectar, colour and habitat variety. The park is large enough to plant bulbs in the western half, particularly some 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 along the new path would enhance biodiversity and provide flowers in the park for part of the year.

Access to nets and facilities – The council does not manage the football activity within parks with regards the provision of nets etc. Community groups can request the lining of a football pitch at the start of the playing season and the club then maintains the lines for playing. The nets and corner flags etc. are all supplied by clubs themselves.

If you would like to use the resources of an existing team it is suggested that you contact them directly to discuss and agree this matter.

The council is currently considering the leasing arrangements of pavilions in its ownership with any that are identified as surplus to requirement being demolished. The pavilion located on the north-eastern edge of Westrigg Park is included in this review. If a community sports club is interested in leasing the pavilion then this will be explored further. If not, the pavilion will be considered for demolition.

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 new Bitmac path starting at the edge of the western park entrance is proposed to head towards, and go in front of, the two existing seats in the grass area to the south of the play area and link into the top of the steps which lead down to the football pitch. A spur is also proposed to come off this path and link into the lower play area. This would improve accessibility particularly to the play area for those with prams and young children providing a wide, surfaced path rather than over grass, which is often wet and can be difficult to negotiate for those with mobility issues. One of the existing metal barriers at the entrance would need to be shortened to allow a 1.5m wide path through the entrance gap.

New seat – a new seat is proposed off the new path (proposed above) near the top of the steps. This would provide an additional resting and viewing spot for park users.

New bulbs – Daffodil bulbs on both sides of the proposed new path nearest the steps would enhance biodiversity and brighten the park with colourful flowers.

In addition to the proposals drawn up from suggestions by the community there is also work required to replace or remove features in order to maintain park standards or required for health and safety reasons. This comprises the following –

New park signage - The existing park signs at the access points in the west and south-east need to be replaced. These will be removed and two new park signs will be installed which will include details of how to report any issues to the council.

Removal of damaged fencing and barbed wire – A section of wooden post and wire fencing and barbed wire along the central area of the northern boundary will be removed.

Removal of dead trees – There are two dead trees located to the south of the play area. These will be removed.

Steps infilled and loose handrail fixed – The existing treads on the steps will be filled to their original levels with compacted whindust.

The metal railing down the side of the steps is loose. This will be secured.

A layout plan showing the above proposals is shown below.

Next Steps

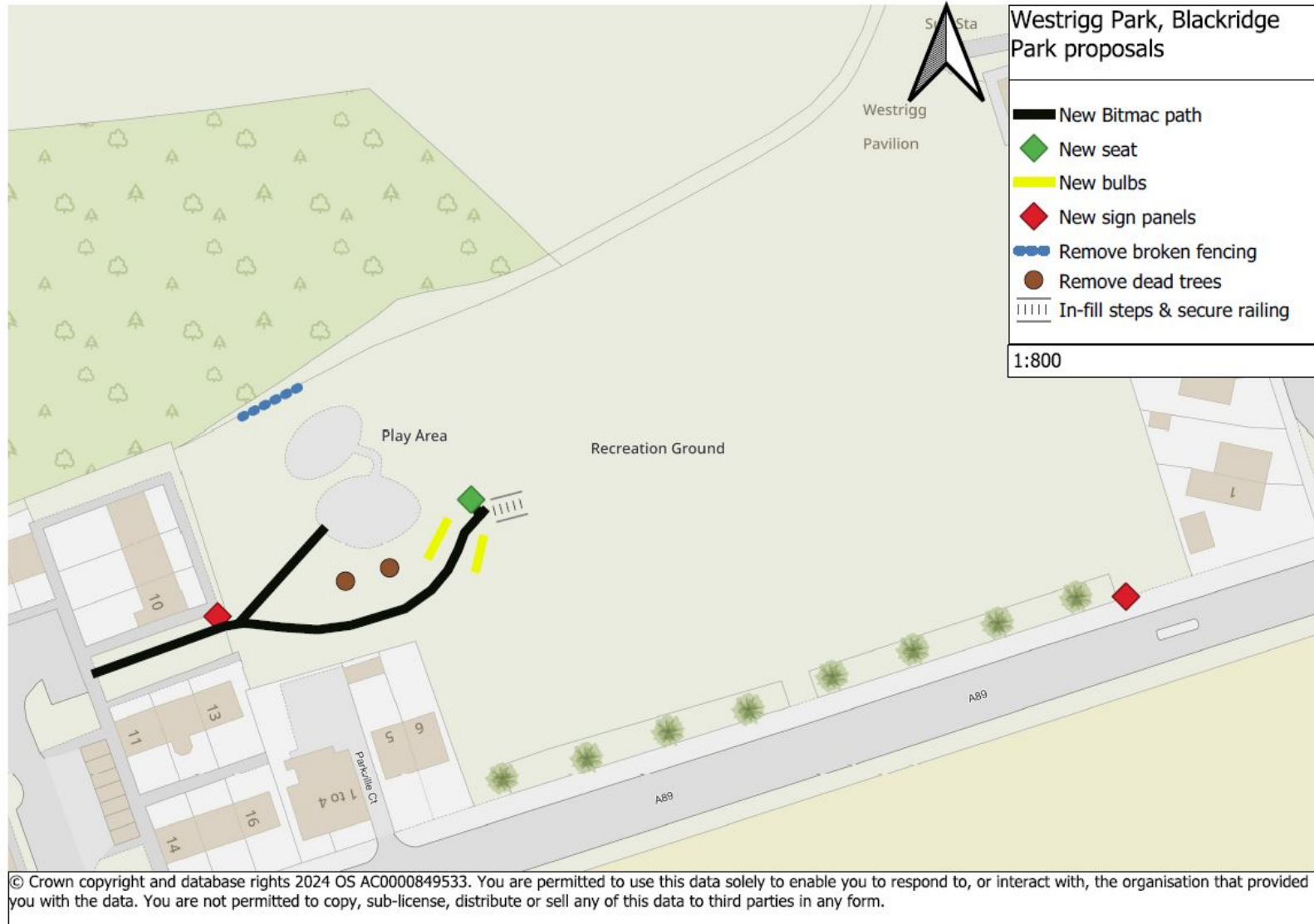
This report will be made available on the Council's webpage at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/parkinfo> under **Reports**.

The implementation of any of the above proposals depends on their costs being within the park budget. A quote for the above proposals will now be sought. If the cost of this is within the park budget then the work will be implemented. It is hoped that all work can be implemented by the end of March 2025.

The 18 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 this park?

- Westrigg Park
- Westrigg park
- Westrigg Park
- Westrigg
- Full of fun equipment for children
- Gala park
- Swing park
- Westrigg park
- Westrigg Park
- Westrigg Park
- Blackridge park
- Westrigg Park
- This is a small park
- Westrigg Park
- Westrigg Park
- Westrigg park
- Westrigg park
- Westrigg park
- Park with the football pitch on main road
- Westrigg Park
- Park by the doctors
- Doctors park
- Westrigg park
- Westrigg park
- Westrigg park
- Westrigg park
- Westrigg Park

2. What do you like best about this park?

- Lovely green space.
- Open grassy areas, the play park.
- The galaday being held there.
- It's a big area of green space.
- Its the park akl good teams from blackridge played
- How small it is and view
- It's located as near to the centre of the village and is near the community hall at the Craig inn centre. It also has good access from the main road for easy access.
- My children love playing here
- Good where it is. It's a great park for kids to play in. Keep them off the streets. Also a great park for the football teams to use.
- Nothing
- Loads of space
- The field has great drainage and glad we should be able to use it more
- Good park for small kids.
- Is very quiet
- Football pitch
- The football park.
- Plenty choice for younger kids

- My [redacted] live in a house adjacent to the park
- Lots of space
- Good size and seating next to the play area.
- The play space. Lots of grass space
- There's a few things for the kids
- Nothing
- It's a large park relaxing when walking in it
- Great grass space and kids swings and slides etc
- Location and open space available.
- Main park of the village ,great size
- Quiet and peaceful

3. Is there anything you don't like?

- The grass cuttings being left after the grass is cut.
- There isn't much on it.
- Dog shite
- Glass smashed in the play park where children can get hurt need more big equipment and a good tidy up and safety for children like a gate being added and shutting of gaps for small children to many wide open gaps and to much rubbish left around and needs more big equipment for different ages
- No.
- The fact it only has one shute
- The trees. They hide the park.Where the goal posts are in front of the houses. People playing golf in the park. It's dangerous.
- Everything
- It is too empty and a wasted opportunity to introduce more activities to youth
- we don't know who to talk to to get access to the park
- Nothing for bigger kids to do
- Children have need for more swings and slides
- Large amount of space not used
- The swing park is outdated.
- Dog poo!!
- Dogs being let off leads to run about the park, fouling and being annoying
- Not enough things in the park
- There isn't enough variety of play frame/ activities
- The burnt out mattress!
- Everything
- There is not enough things in park for the kids
- Drainage in park is terrible, always flooding. This needs to be resolved, also some of the kids equipment in swing park is run down could do with a freshen up
- Often soaked at the top corner, has been for years.
- Would love more sitting especially at other side nearest road
- Play equipment dated. Dog walkers (professional) block the pavement with their van. Too much dog poo.

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

- Please create a flat hard space for games and skateboards, there's nowhere like that in Blackridge
- Skate park
- More benches and dog poo bins
- If there was an area fenced off for dogs and their owners to socialise and exercise. There is funding available from the windfarms, but we have been unable to identify a suitable piece of ground. Could an area be given to the community so that we can make an activity park for

dogs. We can buy equipment and benches at no cost to the Council, and can maintain the area in good condition so that dog owners can enjoy companionship.

- A seat in memory for [REDACTED]
- More equipment for all ages of kids more safety for children
- I would like to see a footpath access from the main road to go round the perimeter of the football pitch with additional seating eg park benches for someone like me who has difficulty walking so additional seating and path would let me go down and watch some of the football. Also be nice to see additional colour in the park in the shape of couple of flower beds in each corner nearest the main road would enhance the park greatly.
- Bigger Shute for bigger kids maybe more things to spin on
- Take the trees away. Open it up like it used to be years ago. Put more benches in it.
- It would be beneficial there was something for all age groups and CCTV for safety
- Maybe build a little skate park to keep the academy school aged children busy and entertained as they all enjoy their bikes/scooters, encourages them more to go outside
- If we could get access to the nets and facilities
- Multi purpose court
- Improve / expand play facilities for children
- I believe the swing park could be updated to suit all kids ages.
- Hard to say as some kids in the area like to destroy things. However, maybe a spider web climbing frame? A high slide/chute. The zip line thingy (can't remember proper name).
- Better access for disabled people
- More park equipment for all ages
- The fence next to trees on the northern side has fallen down in areas - i dont know about ownership but a proper gate into this area (if existing tpaths) would be good. Also in winter for sledging this park gets used a bit - again a route onto the hills would be nice. I would love a pump track for kids bikes/skateboards/scooters ! but realise this might be tricky and expensive.
- As always more play equipment is good - something challenging.
- A Basketball court would be an amazing addition or an area to practice basketball outdoors.
- Also an area that also provides shade, as when it's very sunny...its difficult to remain out playing because of the heat.
- More things for smaller kids, the structure for the older kids isn't great either. Possibly a small bike track for the kids to learn their bikes on.
- At the open field there should be some sort of skate park as there are alot of people I know who are dying to have one including me we all have roller blades, bikes, scooters etc and it would benefit alot of people
- Putting in more things for the kids as the big park can't be touched due to football and gala but up at the play park ot would be nice to some more things for the kids
- New kids equipment and better drainage
- Picnic benches. Some sort of tribute to local people who did a lot for the village and no longer with us [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] something for future ones. Tribute could have name plaques for people view, great to remember them and the fact this is the gala park that so many were involved in.
- More tables benches
- Less dog poo.