

Wordsworth Park, Penarth

What People Want for their Local Park

SUMMARY OF OPINION SURVEY

October 2011

Introduction

Penarth's Grow and Play project (GAP) has identified a number of priorities for the recreational development of Wordsworth Park in Penarth. These will soon be reported to the landowner, the Vale of Glamorgan Council, for appraisal, feedback and further action by the group, with a view to applying for funding and planning permission if the improvement project proves to be viable.

Survey Methodology

GAP volunteers sought local peoples' views via a questionnaire survey of 1110 households. 16% of those invited took part in this survey, most of them adults. The group also held discussion workshops with local young people. This twin approach helped to determine how the park is currently used by people of all ages and how it is likely to be used in future if facilities are improved. Survey results are summarised below.

Summary of Survey Findings

Frequency of Use The survey revealed that 10% of local residents visit the park daily or several times a week. 12% visit weekly, another 12% visit once or twice a month and 10% visit once or twice a year. 50% do not visit the park at all, although a good 5% said they would visit the park more often if it had better facilities.

Reasons for Use 29% visit the park for play, 21% go there to walk the dog and 10% to relax. 9% go there for exercise, 8% to meet friends, 3% use the park as a through route, 3% for team sports and 1% to go cycling. 16% visit for more than one activity. 50% did not answer this question.

Other individual reasons for visiting included picking sloes and blackberries, sledging, practising your golf swing and watching children play. Some respondents mentioned that they enjoyed the Grow and Play Project's recent party in the park and the Vale's Play Scheme.

The Park's Popularity Two main reasons emerged for liking the park. 15% like its convenience for where they live and 37% like its green open space, although many respondents did not have any strong reason to like the park.

What People Dislike about the Park 41% of people highlight the lack of site facilities and maintenance as their main reason for disliking the park, for not visiting or rarely visiting. They describe the park as bland, boring, scruffy or unkempt: referring to weeds, broken railings and broken glass. People say that there is nothing to do there, but that given better facilities, they would use the park more.

Although 14% have no particular dislikes about the park, a significant 21% feel that there is not enough play equipment. They suggest more swings, a more free-moving roundabout, equipment for age 8+ and outdoor gym equipment for adults (They refer to the range of equipment designed for age 12+ by The Great Outdoor Gym Company, provided at Cardiff Bay Barrage).

12% express strong views about dogs mess in the park. 10% have fears about youth annoyance related to vandalism, alcohol abuse and policing issues if new facilities are introduced.

Improved Site Furniture and Infrastructure

76% suggested that new seats, bins and paths would improve access and use of the park. 10% suggested more park seats be provided, especially for elderly or less able visitors. Picnic tables were also suggested. 8% did not want infrastructural improvements and 9% were either unsure or didn't mind. Some people felt that toilets would invite vandalism and site security issues.

Several people would appreciate all weather access to the park, ie. footpaths with hard surfaces. Some people asked for a dedicated dog walking area separate to the play and sports areas while others wanted free access throughout the park for dogs.

9% felt that site security is inadequate and that activities within the park need to be separated with fencing and/or the site entrance improved to enable locking up at dusk and prevent children or dogs from running out of the park onto the road.

New Play Facilities A clear majority of 81% would like improved play facilities in Wordsworth Park with safer surfacing and dog-proof fencing. Only 4% do not want new play equipment and 8% are unsure or don't mind, either because they feel indifferent or because they have concerns about increased potential vandalism.

76% would like better park infrastructure, for example fixed seats, picnic tables, surfaced paths and improved site entrances, especially lockable gates at the main site entrance.

Community Garden 56% supported the idea of a community garden and 18% did not mind the idea. Only 14% objected. Respondents were concerned that unless this were fenced off to create a secure area within the park, vandalism and theft may threaten its existence. They were also concerned about sufficient policing and long term community input to maintain and sustain the garden.

Multi-Use Games Facilities 58% would like improved facilities for team sports and 12% objected, mainly due to concerns that these would increase youth annoyance and vandalism. 18% did not mind or were unsure. Several people felt that there were already adequate local sports facilities in Penarth.

Although most people understand that the park lacks sufficient space for a formal games court, they ask for a minimum of two fixed goal ends with hoops and solid wear pads for 5-a-side football and informal basketball.

Should the Park Change?

Only 5% did not want the park to change, either due to concerns that new facilities would increase noise levels, vandalism or alcoholism, or simply because they prefer the quiet green open space exactly as it is.

47% did not mind the idea of change or made no comment about it. 45% of respondents applauded the idea of park improvements and the efforts of the group in seeking improvements.