



REPORT TO: SPECIAL MEETING MORAY COUNCIL ON 24 APRIL 2024

SUBJECT: MORAY PLAY SUFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT 2023

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report asks Council to consider and approve the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment 2023.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section III (E) (2) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the preparation of Local Development Plans and is submitted to Council for efficiency to allow consideration prior to the Local Development Plan Evidence Report.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) note the findings of the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment 2023;**
- (ii) agrees the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment, as set out in Appendix 1;**
- (iii) agrees the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment 2023, as set out in Appendix 1, as a material consideration for future planning policy and planning application decision making from 30th April 2024 and submit this as part of the Local Development Plan Evidence Report; and**
- (iv) delegates authority to the Head of Economic Growth and Development to prepare a StoryMap of the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment and for this to be published online.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Section 16D of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to prepare Play Sufficiency Assessments. Planning Authorities must carry out a Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) as part of the Evidence Report at the first stage in progressing new Local Development Plans (LDPs). The Town and Country Planning (Play Sufficiency Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2023 sets out the form and content of the assessment and who must be consulted in its preparation. Play Sufficiency Assessment Regulations 2023: Planning Guidance was published in December 2023.
- 3.2 National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 21: Play, recreation and sport, sets out that Local Development Plans (LDPs) should identify sites for sports, play and outdoor recreation for people of all ages, and support development proposals that protect, enhance or improve children's access to play. NPF4 recognises that many people, including children and young people, need better places to support their lifelong health and wellbeing and build their future resilience. It seeks to improve the quality of life of people across Scotland through facilitating places that enable local living, including providing access to playgrounds and green or blue spaces where there are opportunities for relaxation and informal play.
- 3.3 Preparation of the PSA is part of the early engagement and data collection for the Evidence Report. The evidence gathered in the PSA will be used to inform the preparation of the new LDP. The PSA provides an understanding of where children can play outdoors, how good the play spaces are, and if play spaces meet children's and young people's needs.
- 3.4 Equipped play areas were identified across Moray using data held by the Moray Council Open Space Management service, play areas identified ENV in the LDP, identifying where children told us they played during engagement and also by reviewing the OS MasterMap Topography layer using GIS. This identified 160 equipped play areas across Moray. This allowed an assessment of the quantity, quality and accessibility of equipped play areas to be completed.
- 3.5 Site visits to all equipped play spaces were completed in the autumn/winter of 2023. Data collected included a description of the play opportunities and an assessment of the quality of the play opportunity using a framework developed with Ironside Farrar. Equipped play areas were assessed and scored against various criteria relating to the play space location, its design, the play opportunities provided, creative play opportunities and social play opportunities. This provided an overall indication of the quality of the play value of the equipped play space. It should be noted that this scoring is wider than the condition of the equipment and a dated or older play area could still score well due to its location, overall design and the range of play opportunities identified. The condition of equipped play spaces managed by Moray Council is monitored by the Open Space team through independent annual condition assessments and regular inspections by Council staff. This is a separate process from, but has informed, the PSA.

3.6 Informal play spaces were identified from where children told us they played during engagement and reviewing LDP ENV's and the Open Space Strategy. This was completed for the primary, secondary and tertiary settlements identified in the LDP spatial strategy (i.e. Elgin, Forres, Buckie, Keith, Lossiemouth, Aberlour, Fochabers and Mosstodloch).

4. **Key Findings**

4.1 A summary of the key findings of the PSA is set out below.

- A total of 160 equipped play areas were identified, including 93 managed by Moray Council. It is noted that not all play spaces that Moray Council are responsible for are included in the Play Sufficiency Assessment. For example, play equipment within school grounds that is not accessible out of school hours has not been assessed due to the restricted access and therefore limited contribution made to play.
- The majority (120) of equipped play areas were Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) that are primarily designed for children 0-11 years with features and equipment for children beginning to play independently close to where they live.
- 43% of equipped play spaces were found to have good or high-quality play value. 39% of equipped play spaces were found to be of reasonable quality play value. 18% of equipped play spaces were found to be of poor-quality play value.
- 79% of households in Moray are within walking catchment of a reasonable, good or high-quality equipped play areas. The 21% outwith a walking catchment is made up of 6% in towns and village and 15% in the countryside (out with a settlement boundary).
- A deficiency in provision for 11-17 years old has been identified.
- Dedicated space for 0-4 was also identified as a deficiency.
- Provision of inclusive and wheelchair accessible play opportunities are very limited across Moray.
- Provision for creative play opportunities within equipped play areas is limited.
- Moray benefits from many and varied attractive natural spaces that provide informal play opportunities. The rural nature of Moray means that most households have good access to informal play opportunities.
- The west of Elgin, east of Buckie Harbour/eastern parts of Portessie, the South of Forres (St Leonards Road and eastern parts of Woodside Drive), the very far south of Aberlour and the west of Mosstodloch were identified as falling out with the walking catchments of a reasonable or better equipped play space.
- The wide catchment of some of the key play areas in Keith, Lossiemouth, and Fochabers meant that all but a handful of households were in the walking catchment of a reasonable or better equipped play area.

- 4.2 The PSA data and findings will be used to inform the new place based LDP. This could include identifying parks where improvements to the play value are required with a particular focus on addressing the deficiencies set out above. The PSA mapping and data will also be used to identify play requirements in new development. This could be through identifying new play provision within the development or identifying requirements for existing play areas where the walking catchment of an existing park falls within the development. The latter will require further work to develop a robust methodology in respect of Developer Obligations.
- 4.3 The PSA will also link and integrate with wider work relating to green and blue infrastructure including an updated Moray Open Space Strategy. The data and mapping can also help in the consideration of the impacts of changing play provision – for the example what impact changing the role of a play park from a Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) to a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP) or vice versa would have on the quality and accessibility of play opportunities within an area.
- 4.4 It is noted that the Council's Open Space team are currently committed to upgrading a minimum of two council play areas per year. Funding from the Scottish Government Local Authority Play Park Renewal Programme has been used to upgrade parks across Moray with further funding of £282,000 for 2024/2025 and £469,000 for 2025/2026. Parks that have been or are programmed to be upgraded with 2023/2024 funding include Mannachie Park Forres, Letterfourie Park Buckie and Tomnavoulin Play Area. Replacement slides at Tomintoul and Well Road Buckie have been provided, signage at Lossiemouth and landscaping at Morven Findochty. The 2024/2025 prioritised play area renewal projects are Randolph Lane in Forres and Hopeman Playing Field. Moray Council Open Space prioritise sites for upgrade based on risk and safety taking account of independent condition inspections/scoring and also monthly condition inspections.
- 4.5 For the purposes of publishing the PSA online it is proposed to develop a StoryMap format that will allow interactive mapping to be incorporated. This will include the same data and information as the version at **Appendix 1** but allow for mapping to be moved to areas of interest and provide a more engaging format. **Appendix 1** will be submitted as part of the Evidence Report.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Playing is an inherent part of a happy childhood and is vital to children's physical and cognitive development as they grow. Open spaces, green infrastructure and outdoor play spaces are key parts of successful placemaking, helping to create pleasant, liveable, healthy and resilient communities.

(b) Policy and Legal

If approved the Moray Play Sufficiency Assessment would be a material consideration in any relevant future planning applications.

(c) Financial implications

Development of the methodology for assessing play spaces was completed by consultant and was met from Strategic Planning and development budgets.

(d) Risk Implications

Play Sufficiency Assessments are a statutory requirement and required for the LDP Evidence Report. Not having an agreed Play Sufficiency Assessment in place could risk the Evidence Report failing the Gatecheck.

(e) Staffing Implications

Site visits to all equipped play spaces was completed by staff from the Strategic Planning and Development team. The methodology was developed by Ironside Farrar.

Strategic Planning and Development have liaised with the Open Space team during the development of the PSA.

(f) Property

None

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no direct implications from this report as the PSA does not include proposals but sets out the evidence base of the sufficiency of play opportunities in Moray. This assessment has been informed by engagement with children and young people. It has also been informed by a public survey with the survey link emailed directly to community councils and groups working with children and young people in Moray including ASN groups.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

There are no climate change or biodiversity implications arising directly from this report. However, informal and formal play spaces contribute to green and blue networks and there are opportunities for play spaces to contribute more to biodiversity and to be adaptive to expected impacts of climate change. Access to appropriate play spaces locally can also reduce carbon emissions associated with travel. The PSA also links to ongoing work to update the Moray Open Space Strategy.

(i) Consultations

Consultation has taken place with the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance, the Legal Services Manager, Democratic Services Manager, the Chief Financial Officer the Principal Climate Change Officer, the Equal Opportunities Officer and the Open Space Manager.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Preparation of the PSA is a statutory duty with regulations prescribing the form and content of PSA's and who is to be consulted. The PSA forms part of the evidence gathering for the LDP Evidence Report.**
- 5.2 Moray's PSA has been informed by site visits and assessments and engagement with children, young people and parents and carers. The PSA provides an evidence base of where children play outdoors, how good spaces are and if spaces meet the needs of children and young people. The PSA provides an overview of the quantity, quality and accessibility of outdoor play opportunities across Moray and key settlements (Elgin, Forres, Buckie, Keith, Lossiemouth, Aberlour, Fochabers and Mosstodloch).**
- 5.3 It is recommended that Council note the findings and agree the Moray PSA 2023 and agree that it will be material consideration for planning decisions and submitted as part of the LDP Evidence Report.**

Author of Report: Rowena MacDougall, Senior Planning Officer, Strategic Planning and Development

Background Papers:

Ref: SPMAN-813460984-491