

Murton Green Pump Track

Bishopston Skatepark Project (BSP) is a constituted group of local young people, parents and skating enthusiasts looking to create an outdoor space for children of all ages to meet, socialise, play, and have fun in a safe, free-to-use environment.

Children are spending more time indoors, on screens. Their mental and physical well-being is suffering, so they need a fun and engaging outdoor space for activities, to interact with one another and build vital social and interpersonal skills. This will have long term benefits and a positive impact on our community.

We have listened carefully to feedback generated from surveys completed in the community and local schools. Our vision is for a local **pump track**.

What is a Pump Track?

A pump track is an asphalt trail designed for all things on wheels. By combining rolling bumps with turns they are accessible for all. Teaching the basic skills of carrying momentum, balance, and speed by using your arms and legs to pump your bike/board/scooter/wheelchair around the track. A feature that a 5-year-old can roll through can be used as a jump for someone more experienced.

Asphalt pump tracks are cheaper, quieter, safer and arguably better looking than concrete facilities. They are not sunk into the ground like a typical concrete skatepark; instead, they are raised with dirt topped with grass. This means the facility is aesthetically pleasing, both from a distance and up close.

A pump track is an increasingly popular way to encourage kids to exercise, whilst developing balancing and bike handling skills in a safe environment, away from traffic. It can be used by any type of bicycle, skateboards, scooters, roller blades, even wheelchairs. In fact, it provides a great exercise workout for the whole family. The photo below tracks of similar sizes to the one that is proposed for Murton.



Well-engineered pump tracks have unique features that allow kids and adults of all skill levels to enjoy them at the same time, without fear of injury. A feature that a 5-year-old can roll through can be used as a gap jump for more advanced riders. All riding surfaces and edges are low to the ground, so riders are not at risk of falling from a high point.



Rounded edges, gentle embankments and perfect geometry guarantee a safe ride. This video of a pump track (a much bigger one) shows how children and adults of various ages and skills can ride safely together. bit.ly/communitypumptrack or scan the QR code.



What are the advantages of asphalt pump tracks?

Clearly, the durability and all the other benefits that come with it. Asphalt pump tracks are extremely low maintenance and do not require much upkeep. The facilities are very durable and, accordingly, resistant to most types of vandalism. A key advantage that is often not directly recognized is the low noise pollution of asphalt pump tracks. Pump tracks are one of the "quietest" sports facilities around.

Location

Over the past 4 years we have looked at numerous locations for this facility throughout the whole ward however it still comes back to “middle field” of Murton Green being the most suitable option for numerous reasons.



Mansel Green Site Pre-Planning: As part of the Swansea Councils planning officers said recreation proposals in the open countryside, like Mansel Green, would only be allowed if they could not be situated within or adjoining an existing settlement. We were also told we would have to get all the necessary ecology reports.

Officers said the land opposite, on Murton Green playing fields, was considered a better location, and was located within the defined settlement boundary.

The report also had a comment from the designing out crime officer who stressed how important a visible location is because of natural surveillance which is another reason why the middle pitch on Murton Green is the best location for our community as its visible from the road and users of the park and football fields. It is also near to the community centre so CCTV can be placed there as a further deterrent for antisocial behaviour.

Highways was concerned about the unsafe access to Mansel Green as there is no crossing which is a safety hazard for children and adults. The site on Murton Green has much safer access for the community. Users who need to drive with less mobility such as wheelchair users will be able to park on site however most people who use this facility will be children and teenagers who will walk cycle, skate, or scoot to facility. It's also important to mention that the site is located near a bus stop so it can be lined in with Swansea Active Travel plan & the access track along the common.

We paid for a preliminary ecology report to be done on the Mansel Green site and it showed that a pump track would potentially have a negative impact the local ecology which we would not want to do as a project. The ecologist suggested the site opposite the road reiterating what the Swansea Council planners said as it's an existing recreational site with no biodiversity as its already getting mowed and it's not in the open countryside.

The community council asked the project to speak to the Gower Commoners Association as they have rights over the land. The project spoke to Peter Lanfeir who is the Chair of the Gower Commoners Association on Wednesday 20th April at 7:10PM and he said the commoners would have no objection to using the middle site on Murton Green for the Pump Track. The commoners are even more supportive for middle field to be used as its not open countryside or SINC and already an existing recreational ground.

Top of carpark

A location for the pump track on top of the carpark was also brought up in meetings we have had however after speaking to local football coaches and visiting the site. It would not be possible to build a pump track without impacting the Football and Cricket. We don't want to take away land that is already used for a new facility. We would rather utilise the land that is unused on the middle of Murton Green. It's impossible to reconfigure the top site without impacting the current sports that already go ahead on the site.



It's so important to understand that we need more facilities to promote Skateboarding, BMX, Mounting Biking and Scootering as these are now Olympic Sports. It has taken us 4 years to gather all this information about our community and what is best for the young people (and older) of the Bishopston and Murton Ward. The community has been consulted many times at May Day, Christmas Tree Switch on events, In Schools, Bike Marking, By Post, On the Facebook Community group and more... We have addressed all the concerns that people have about this Pump Track and lots of them are related to common misconceptions or stereotypes. All the positive effects of this facility far outweigh the concerns as we have shown through all the community skate sessions, we have hosted in the community with hundreds of local children attending. A facility like this is more important now than ever before with increasing obesity rates in the UK among primary aged children and so much more.

The Bishopston Skatepark Project would like to move forward and apply for pre-planning on the middle site on Murton green to get formal advice if it's possible to build this community facility before further community consultation or a vote with the landowners. Then we would like to work with our local children, residents, community council to draw up plans for the Murton Pump Track with Clark & Kent contractors who will design a bespoke track for the communities needs minimising noise, ensuring room for other Mayday etc... Finally, we would like to submit a full planning application for the pump track and when it gets approved, we can further investigate funding. All the community grants like the National Lottery Community Fund require full planning permission to be in place before you apply so therefore funding must be done after planning permission, but we know funding is possible as we have had many meetings about funding with different potential funders. We hope you can understand why this the location is the best for the community and we have addressed all your worries. Please email us if you want to arrange a meeting to discuss these plans bishopston.skatepark@gmail.com

Target groups of pump tracks

It is not without reason that the asphalt pump track is referred to as a multifunctional sport facility. Due to the characteristics of the facility, an extremely broad target group is reached, making it the perfect sport facility for all ages in the community.



**Mountain
bike**



Skateboard



BMX



Scooter



Dirtbike



Inline Skates



**Balance
Bike**



Wheelchair

Social Return

Riding a bike is fun. Anyone who likes to ride a bike or has seen children smiling from ear to ear after their first few laps on a pump track knows this. Biking makes us happy, but how far do the positive effects go and how can they be recognized? Our answer to this is social return. By this, we mean the social added value that is generated by the construction of bike trails and facilities.

It is precisely these problems which social re- turn addresses as an overall concept. There are four central areas in which the positive effects of riding can be seen: Education, social integration, competitive sports, and health. All these four elements generate a consistently positive effect and address many of the social problems of our time.

Education

Simply speaking: If you spend more time doing sports, there is less time for negative activities such as watching television, smoking or drinking alcohol. Sports provide a healthy balance to studying. In addition, sports support the development of positive social functions and non-cognitive skills such as motivation and self-discipline. Thus, contributes passively to the learning and educational process of children and young adults.

Fact: After school sporting activities increase the probability of obtaining a bachelor's degree at a later date.

Social Integration

Sports create a sense of community, social commitment and solidarity. Sports are particularly important in childhood and adolescence. They teach values such as fairness, respect, willingness to perform, promotes self-development and supports the learning of basic democratic values.

"Sport in particular can help to break down existing prejudices and fear of strangers through the personal and active encounters of young people."

Otto Schily,
former German Federal Minister of the Interior

SOZIALE RENDITE

Competitive sports

Competitive sports, which can only be promoted through appropriate sporting facilities, have an unprecedented role model function for economically relevant values such as motivation, creative personal achievement, initiative and performance. Competitive athletes are idols and convey collective feelings such as satisfaction, joy or pride.

Fact: Following friends & family, competitive athletes are among the greatest role models for Millennials in Austria.

Health

Sport keeps you healthy! A lap on the bike contributes to our well-being, physically and mentally. Not only do they prevent widespread illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases or obesity, participants are also demonstrably happier.

Mens sana in corpore sano—a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Fact: Up to 16% of total health costs are due to physical inactivity.

Community Consultation

Since 2018 the Bishopston Skatepark Project is the only youth led project in Bishopston who have ensured to consult with members of the community every step of the way.

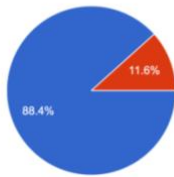
October 2018: The project was started with a change.org petition that currently has over 850 signatures in support of a skate facility in the community.

October 2018: The project also did a hand signed petition knocking on doors where over 100 houses were consulted

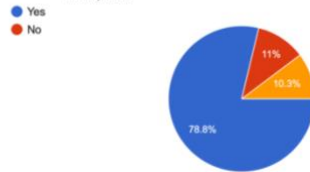
October 2018: Presented idea to Bishopston and Murton Community Council

November 2018: The project continued to consult the community attending the Christmas Light switch on where we had over 140 respondents fill out the survey.

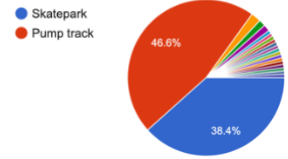
Would you like a skate facility for all to use in Bishopston?
146 responses



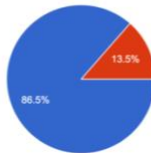
If there was a skate facility in Bishopston, would it encourage you and (or) your children to get outdoors exercising?
146 responses



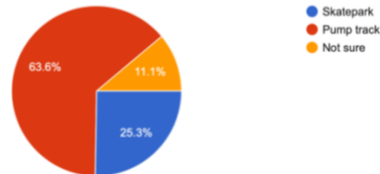
What would you prefer in Bishopston?
146 responses



If there was a skate facility locally, would it encourage you to spend more time outdoors exercising?
96 responses

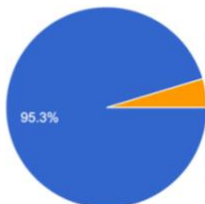


Which would you prefer?
99 responses

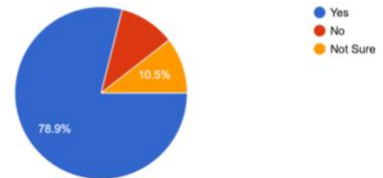


December 2018: The project ran surveys in the Bishopston Primary and Secondary schools to get the children's views on this facility in Bishopston

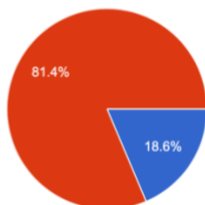
Would you like a place to cycle or skate near school?
43 responses



Would you like a skating facility for all to use in the community?
95 responses



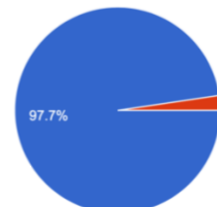
Which would you prefer?
43 responses



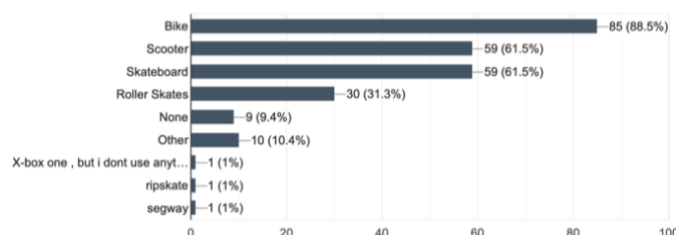
If there was a place to skate locally, would you like to spend more time outdoors exercising?
43 responses



Do you own a skateboard, scooter or bike?
43 responses



Do you own any of these?
96 responses



January 2019: The Project attended the Bike security marking stall organised by Cllr Lyndon Jones to raise awareness for the project and consult the community gathering feedback.

February 2019: First skate session with Park Lives at Bishopston Primary with over 150 local people turning up throughout the day showing the need for this facility

March 2019: After all the community consultation the Bishopston Skatepark Project changed their vision from a concrete skatepark to an asphalt pump track because of the survey results and the community council agreed that it looked more aesthetically appealing and had less noise.

April 2019: Met up with PC Richard Jeavons & Cllr. Lyndon Jones to discuss the project and address the concerns about Antisocial Behaviour.

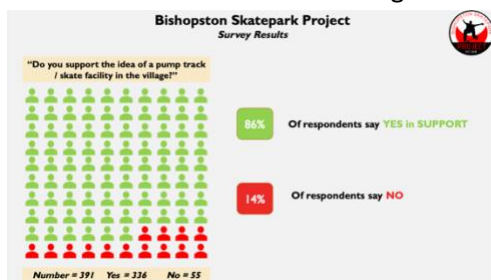
May 2019: May Day stall at Murton Green. Very positive feedback from residents who were fully behind us.



May 2019: The projects 2nd skate session with a fantastic turnout emphasising the support the project has.

March 2020: Whole Community Survey Completed

We have presented our vision to the Bishopston Community Council three times. The first meeting we attended was in October 2018. We presented our original idea – a concrete skatepark. This was turned down for a few reasons including drainage and potentially increasing antisocial behaviour. A few months later after consulting the community via online feedback surveys and hand signed



petitions, we returned to Bishopston Community Council with our new idea: a pump track. We chose a pump track because it suited more people of all ages and abilities. It would also cater for Bikes, scooters, and skateboards. Also, it looks more aesthetically pleasing. We spoke to the local Police officer, and he said that a facility would potentially negate anti-social behaviour in the area. This has also happened in other communities.

After going back for the 2nd time, the Community Council suggested that we run a survey through the whole community to demonstrate support for or against the pump track. So, we delivered surveys to every house in the Bishopston ward. An outstanding total of 36% of the community responded, of which 86% support a pump track in the Village. When we presented these results to the Community Council in November. The full responses from the survey can be viewed on our website - <https://www.bishopstonskatepark.com/2019consultation>

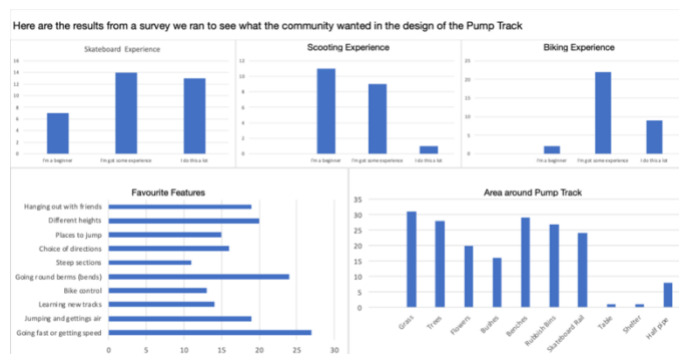


August 2020: Met with Gower Commons Association, Community Council, Bishopston Play Association, Karen Jones, Helen Nicolas & Down to Earth to discuss Copley Common Regeneration plans brought forward by Lucie Sudbury

September 2020: Letters from Bishopston Community Council & Commons association for Pump Track to go ahead on Mansel Green

September 2020: Launched crowdfunding page to pay for the design and planning costs we raised £4000 from the community which shows the need and support from the community for this facility.

January 2021: Pump Track Design Survey to ensure the design was suited to the communities needs



July 2021: Lots of Letters received from Bishopston primary school in support of the pump track to help the project gain support from Bishopston Community Council and Swansea Council Planning. - www.bishopstonskatepark.com/updates

September 2021: Negative preplanning "But council planning officers said recreation proposals in the open countryside, like Mansel Green, would only be allowed if they were economically viable, helped improve tourism, and could not be situated within or adjoining an existing settlement. Access and impact on residents were also key considerations.

Officers said the land opposite, on Murton Green playing fields, was considered a better location, and was located within the defined settlement boundary."

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/bmx-skate-project-backed-teenagers-21535545>

December 2021: Ecology report completed on the Mansel Green site which showed that a pump track would potentially impact the local ecology which we would not want to do as a project. The ecologist suggested the site opposite the road reiterating what the Swansea Council planners said as it's an existing recreational site with no biodiversity as its already getting mowed and it's not in the open countryside.

March 2022: We met with Ian Davies from Swansea council planning, and we were spoken through the Swansea councils pre planning response.



So many children are not able to get out and enjoy the freedom their parents and grandparents did. A community pump track facility will encourage children to be able to go out under their own steam. Take their bike or skateboard and meet their friends. Encouraging the free play which is often lost in the adult led (but also brilliant we might add!) clubs and activities so many of our children attend. Helping them gain life skills such as independence and confidence.

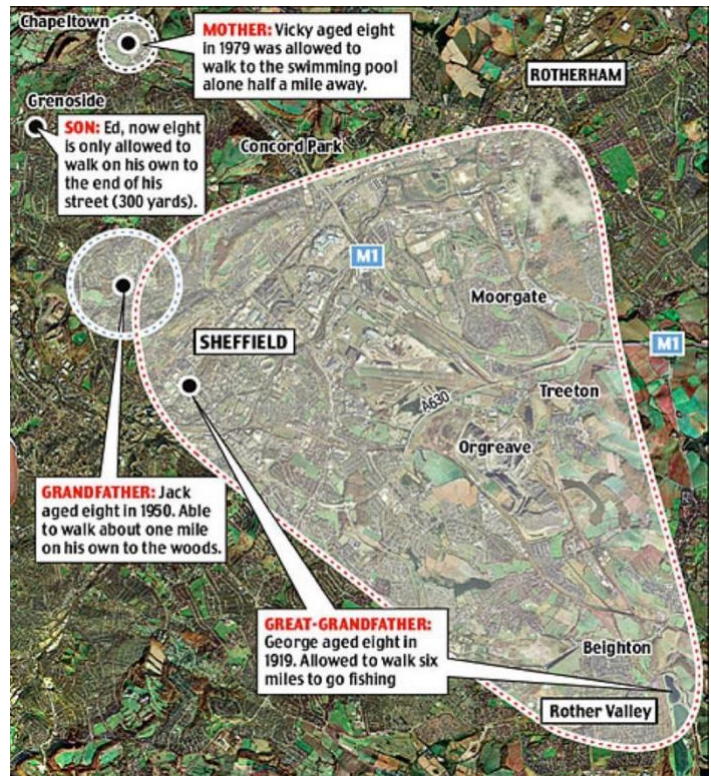
How children lost the right to roam in four generations

“When George Thomas was eight, he walked everywhere.

It was 1926 and his parents were unable to afford the fare for a tram, let alone the cost of a bike and he regularly walked six miles to his favourite fishing haunt without adult supervision.

Fast forward to 2007 and Mr Thomas’s eight-year-old great-grandson Edward enjoys none of that freedom. He is driven the few minutes to school, is taken by car to a safe place to ride his bike and can roam no more than 300 yards from home.”

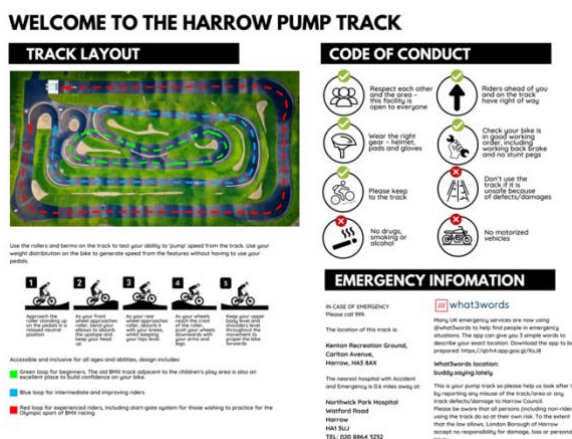
<https://www.standard.co.uk/hp/front/how-children-lost-the-right-to-roam-in-four-generations-7264441.html>



Concerns

We have pulled together this list of concerns that have been brought up over the past 4 years since campaigning for a Pump Track in the community. We have made sure to get the views of all and address all the worries as best as we can.

- **Carbon footprint of tarmac, too urban:** The track is of limited length, and will be designed to set into the landscape. The carbon footprint will be offset by wildflower meadow planting in and around the track. The tarmac has a high recycled content and is extremely hard wearing.
- **Safety:** pump tracks are very safe, with few accidents reported. These are usually the result of not wearing a helmet. Helmets are essential and anyone seen not wearing one will have to leave the track.



The track will be built to RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) and British Cycling standards and inspected before handover. One way signage arrows on the track are included, and a code of conduct is displayed. This signage is an example of what could be erected. We have seen children randomly riding bikes and scooters without helmets on the main road, even in the dark. This is far more dangerous than a pump track (and far less fun). Check out the video mentioned above to see how pump track works in practice.

- **Maintenance:** the tarmac is very high specification with minimal maintenance requirements. With the track been an all-tarmac surface future maintenance will be largely landscape works where arrangements are already being in place for Murton Green.

There will be suitable number of bins on site to ensure that litter is not an issue. The people who use the facility will self-police it to ensure that this not a problem. We will work with users to do litter picks around the site improving the community for all. The Bishopston Skatepark Project will fundraise each year and work with local businesses to sponsor the cost of maintenance for a year e.g., Bin Emptying, Insurance costs...

- **Drainage:** a detailed drainage plan will be drawn up after permission has been granted to go ahead with planning permission. As the middle site is currently boggy this will allow us to fix drainage on the whole site for all year-round use on the pump track and the surrounding area for the current celebrations on the site such as Mayday and the Fireworks.
- **What about May Day and Fireworks?:** The pump track will not take up the whole middle section of the green and only a portion so the 2 yearly events will still be able to go ahead. We are talking about a year-round free to use community facility. In fact, this will enhance Mayday with competitions for the local children.
- **Destroying Green Space:** While we can argue that no green space will be removed, we can say that it is minimised. Assuming the size of the track proposed is 150m in length and on average 1.5m in width. This gives a total area of tarmac of 225m². Which is about the same as the floor area in two average 3-bedroom houses or one tennis court. What this does not consider is that the batters which will be laid to grass on the raised sides of the track that will actually create green space. So the actual number is much less. A small sacrifice for a facility that will be used by lots of people all year round.

- **It will encourage antisocial behaviour:** First thing to say is that no one wants Anti-Social behaviour on their doorstep, and we should try and find methods to stop or reduce this. Having said that out of sight out of mind is also not the answer either. One thing that can be said is that there is no literature that says Pump Tracks are the source of Anti-Social behaviour on the contrary they have been shown to alleviate anti-social tendencies [1,2]. The positive factors which have been identified as giving children resilience against potential anti-social tendencies are:
 - **Social Bonding** – strengthening of bonds between children and friends, family, and other socially responsible adults
 - **Healthy Standards** – refers to having parents, teachers and other community leaders who lead by example.
 - **Opportunities for Involvement** – Giving children a chance to feel involved and valued in their communities.
 - **Social and Learning skills** – Entails equipping children with the social reasoning and practical skills they need to take advantage of opportunities on offer.

There may be some anti-social issues in Bishopston & Murton but we do not believe the addition of a pump track to the recreation ground will increase the problem. A community pump track can in fact encourage some of the positive factors described above.

[1] – <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-23456413>

[2] – [Wishawhill Wood Pump Track](https://bit.ly/wishawhillpumptrack) : <https://bit.ly/wishawhillpumptrack>

In fact, the provision of a safe, active street sports space means young people are less likely to engage in drug and alcohol use. It has been proven on multiple occasions that these facilities reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. Older children tend to take the younger ones under their wing and teach them.

Read the following letter from PC Richard Jeavons who was the local area police officer in 2019.

“I am the local Police Officer for Gower, Bishopston (including Murton), Penclawdd and Three Crosses area.

I met master’s Jake Gates and Jed Wood whilst holding a joint surgery with Councillor Lyndon Jones at Murton Community centre on Monday 29/04/2019. I sat through their presentation to the Community Council and thought they did a thoroughly professional and commendable job, especially given their young age. Their concept and commitment to this project, and all the work they are putting into it, is to be admired I have to say.

From a local Policing perspective, I believe the proposal should be given the attention and consideration it deserves. If such a project can attract local youngsters and they channel their energy into a sporting activity like the Skateboard Park. This will potentially negate them causing antisocial behaviour elsewhere in the locality. That can only improve the quality of life all round for everyone.

I think the zeal shown by Jake, Jed & Elliott is great to see. They are going about things in the correct way, showing courtesy, respect and are clearly passionate about the area and project.”

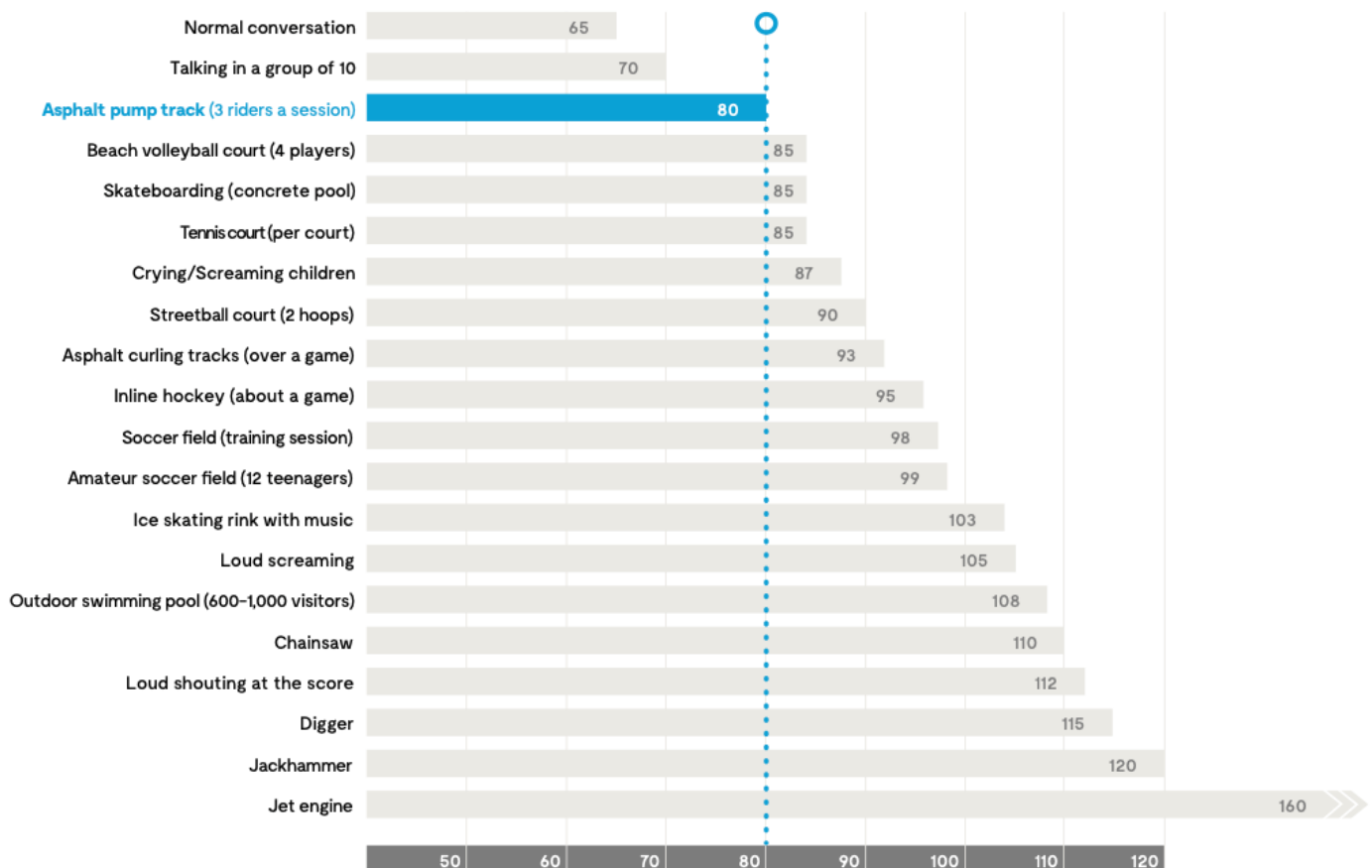
Also, with the Murton Green location so close to the community centre CCTV can be placed towards the track to give piece of mind to the community and to further prevent antisocial behaviour.

The idea that these facilities mean an increase in anti-social behaviour is a popular misconception. A well-designed Pump Track on Murton Green can improve life on the for the whole community. The proposed Pump Track, planned with the involvement of local youth, can reduce Antisocial Behaviour by Taking young people off the streets to engage in an activity they enjoy and inspiring them to be proud of their local facility so that they will want to keep it as a happy, safe environment. Facilities that are remote, secluded or seldom used by the community are the ones that get abused which is why an open location that provides natural surveillance from surrounding members of public is vital. Without a positive environment like a pump track in the community vicinity, skaters, bikers, and scooters are forced into the streets which is very unsafe and causes more accidents.

- Litter:** Like any facility, Pump Tracks will generate refuse. In other communities that benefit from strong community support most litter removal is done by the users themselves. Professional pump tracks allow the users to take pride in their facility. Equipping the pump track with basic site amenities such as bins will also encourage environmental stewardship. Through community ownership and the Bishopston Skatepark Project working with the users to ensure the rubbish facilities are used and that the entire space keeps clean and tidy.
- This sort of facility is ugly and uninviting**
 As a result of all the community feedback received, we decided to concentrate on a facility to suit all abilities using Bike, Skateboard & Scooter. The best facility to suit this was an Asphalt Pump track which was the preferred option in many of the community surveys we ran. Therefore, the focus of the BSP changed from a Concrete Skatepark to an Asphalt Pump track which is more ascetically appealing than a concrete skatepark and blends in well with the surroundings as most of it is grass.
- Too Noisy:** There will not be the annoying noise that people associate with the older skateboard parks. Noise pollution is a major concern when it comes to sport facilities in public spaces and especially for those that are specifically designed for a young target group.

In this respect, the asphalt pump track scores highly due to its low noise pollution. Tarmac is a “low noise” surface, and the pump track will be quieter than the football and cricket grounds or the play park. Obviously, there will be the noise of people enjoying themselves, but is that not spirit lifting?

Noise sources and their sound power (SWL)



- **It will attract people from outside the village:** The track will attract people from outside the village. But is this a bad thing? Are we not a welcoming village? Should we not share facilities? Will it not help people make new friends? One benefit of bringing people to Murton Green is increased use of the pub – who can object to that?

The Plough and Harrow

To whom it may concern,

As a local businessman and the largest employer in the villages, after Bishopston School, I would like to endorse the plans for the above-mentioned projects.

The introduction of any new project that will draw more people to the area is always a two-fold benefit to my businesses. Firstly, it will draw people who will use our business at the point of use, while visiting the pump tracks, parents, or guardians, while their children use the facilities. Before and after with their children for food and drinks, made as part of their visit. Secondly, in repeat business from the awareness of the area and the other amenities it offers, as a direct result of visiting the area to utilise the pump track.

Also, the council have made it clear to me previously (when asked to sponsor new external exercise machines for Murton Green) that any amenities that attract people to this area will act as an automatic deterrent to vandals/criminals. The area has previously been subject to vandalism and damage, so along with the proposed new exercise machines, I can see the pump track only adding further to this, by creating yet another activity that will draw local people to the area. In return providing an element of self-policing.

The direct impact of any amenities that draws people to the area is sales growth, which in turn creates more work, and therefore job creation. The impact of any events on the Murton Green in the past such as fireworks displays or May Day celebrations, has increased our sales by 25%. Even the smaller regular events such as weekly cricket or football games only draw a small number of people, but they all come for food and drink after every game to us, again creating sales and jobs. Knowing the valuable impact even these small events have on our business, we can only surmise that the pump track would significantly impact on our weekly sales and in turn create even more jobs in the rural area.

Yours sincerely.

Nick Jones Mbii, MinstLM

Managing Director

Jonesco Ltd

In the business of Food - Drink - Music – Media

The Bishopston Valley Hotel

As a local business owner and tenant of one of the local pubs in the area, I wanted to show my full support for the scheme. I fully endorse the plans submitted and am 100% behind the scheme.

It is vital for businesses like mine and other local businesses in the area that we create extra footfall, in order to maximize the profitability of the business in which has been hit very hard in recent times, especially with the recent pandemic.

This scheme would undoubtedly bring people to the area who would not have done so before and the knock-on effect to businesses like mine will undoubtedly be a positive one.

I thoroughly believe the scheme will increase tourism to the area which in turn will, again, have a positive impact on my business, allowing us to increase turnover, become more profitable and help maintain and create both full and part time jobs.

I also believe the pump track and will be central hub for the community to increase community spirit along with being a great platform to help all involved to improve both physical and mental wellbeing, which surely is only a good thing.

I would very much like you to pass my comments onto the necessary people involved and wish you every success in gaining the permission to develop this very worthwhile project.

Kind Regards

Daniel Evans

Proprietor

Bishopston Valley Hotel

- We know some residents would like the Bishopston & Murton community to be a quiet, retirement village, but that is neither sustainable nor desirable. If Bishopston is to be a vibrant, sustainable community, we must attract families with children to live here to keep the primary & secondary school, nursery, church, and pub going. Especially as we come out of the Covid 19 pandemic facilities like these are so beneficial for local people. In our current situation, we need to be encouraging active means of transport such as cycling and walking. This starts with building children's confidence on their bicycles and a pump track will provide this space, freeing up some of our pathways for those that prefer to walk.

We wanted to find out how local young people had been coping throughout lockdown. We spoke with Becky Jackett who is the Pastoral Support Officer at Bishopston Comprehensive School. "I fully support Project. I work extensively with the young people in our community I am committed to improving their wellbeing both mentally and physically. Covid 19 has deeply affected many of the young people I work with. They tell me that they feel withdrawn and have lost the confidence to interact with friends. Isolation has caused their mental health to decline, and we need to act now to reverse the impact that Covid 19 has had on our young people. Some young people I have worked with have not left their houses for months causing a significant decline in both their mental and physical health. Our community needs a place they can feel free to express themselves with the support of their peers. We need to provide a place where physical activity is fun and accessible where role models within our community can guide the younger generation bridging the gap between the young and old"

PLAY WALES ARTICLE – OLDER CHILDREN PLAY TOO

https://issuu.com/playwales/docs/older_children_play_too

Barriers to play and the potential consequences

Adolescence is an exciting but challenging period of life when children are seeking greater independence from adults but also still reliant on them. For example, given that they are not yet allowed to drive, older children's mobility is still largely dependent on adults making allowances for it. The way in which adults think about them will therefore have a significant impact on older children's ability to find time and space for playing with their friends.

In General Comment 17²⁰, the United Nations Committee of the Rights of the Child raises concerns about decreasing tolerance towards children's presence in public spaces. It emphasises that this is a particular problem for older children who, largely as a consequence of negative media coverage, are perceived as a threat and therefore discouraged from using public spaces. However, as Peter Kraftl suggests '*it is the treatment of and attitudes toward young people... which matters, fundamentally, to their self-esteem*'²¹.

Older children are likely to withdraw from public spaces if they feel threatened or unwelcome, leading to a sense of disconnection from society²². Also, as Professor of Psychology Peter Grey argues²³, a decline in children's time, space and permission for play may be responsible for dramatic increases in adolescent mental health problems.

Providing for play

As Claire Edwards concludes in her discussion about the provision of public space for older children in the UK, there is an urgent need for: '*spaces that allow young people to develop their own, and contribute to shared culture.*

The adoption of a nurturing and civil attitude towards them from institutions, the media and public should be an imperative, as is the need to increase participation rates in the design and development of space'²⁴.

Research carried out in Wales to inform local authority play sufficiency assessments identifies that older children need time and space where they can hang out, be themselves and do the things that older children do, without fear of reprisal or intrusive adult controls. Securing sufficient opportunities for play for all children must therefore include addressing the requirements of this older age group alongside those of younger children. Younger children and parents identify that improved provision for older children would help create more space for younger ones²⁵.

Older children are likely to want and need access to spaces where they have some privacy and can avoid being supervised directly whilst also having the sense of security that comes from being in close proximity to other people. But, this doesn't necessarily mean creating separate spaces for specific age groups. If there are enough spaces to share children are often capable of working out who gets to use which spaces and when.

This might include older children temporarily taking over a space and younger children having to find somewhere else to play but perhaps that is just the natural order – as long as there's somewhere else younger children can go then it may not be an issue. The problems arise when there aren't enough spaces or when older children have nowhere to make their own or if they are made to feel unwelcome.

Adults can therefore help by advocating for older children's right to play, reminding people that teenagers are children and that the ways in which they play are likely to be influenced by significant developmental changes in their bodies and brains. By developing a better understanding of what may be going on in the adolescent brain, we might better understand and be more tolerant of older children's playful behavior.

There is also a need for a more balanced approach to intervening in the lives of older children. Risk taking by older children is often used to refer to behaviours adults deem to be dangerous but older children also take all kinds of risks throughout their everyday lives that are highly beneficial to them.

For example, they risk rejection when asking somebody out, they risk injury when skateboarding, they risk the anger of parents when they stay out too long.

Risk taking in the adolescent years is inevitable and whilst children should be protected from serious and long-term physical or emotional harm, they also need permission and understanding to try things out, get things wrong and make mistakes.

Finally the ways in which older children play will also depend on how they experience and feel about the places where they spend their time and the people they come into contact with in those spaces. When it comes to the playful behaviour older children, adults should avoid jumping to conclusions based on negative stereotypes and assumptions about what is developmentally appropriate and try to give a similar level of consideration as is offered to the play of younger children.

SCAN THE QR CODE OR CLICK BELOW TO READ THE FULL WRITEUP -

https://issuu.com/playwales/docs/older_children_play_too

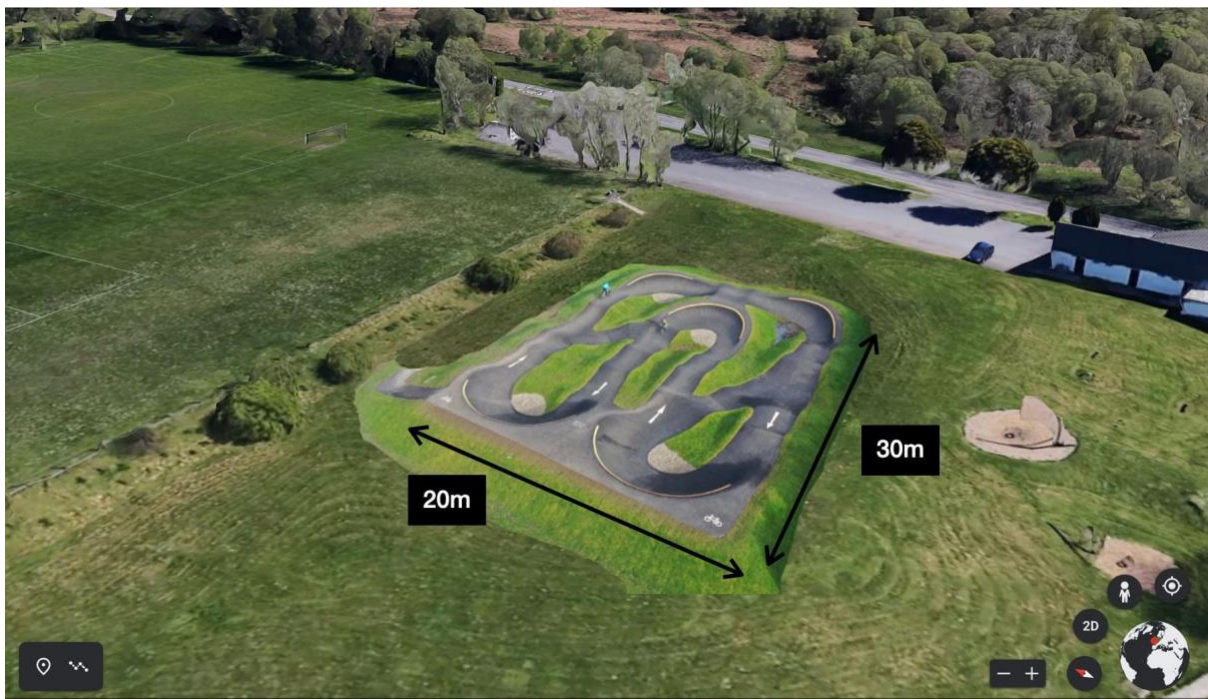




Mock Up Pump Track

Here is what a pump track could look like based on a real pump track in Cheshire.

This track is 20m x 30m around the size we hope to make the one on the Murton Green Site.



Location Plan

Block plan
Scale 1:2500

