

Case Study - Community Parks & Playgrounds Initiative

Introduction

The Community Parks & Playgrounds initiative was conceived to provide communities in the Ballyhoura area with the background knowledge, research and supports required to enable them to research and plan for the provision of village parks and playgrounds as recreational amenities in their local communities. The initiative aimed to facilitate them to provide active and passive community recreation spaces for children, teenagers, and adults which would be used and useful. Communities with existing parks were also supported to upgrade and revitalise their communal spaces.

The process of animating and supporting local communities to develop and apply for funding for quality local recreational spaces highlighted a number of key support needs:

- Exposure to models of best practice in parks and playgrounds development to help identify the specific recreational needs of their local communities;
- Facilitating communities to meet professionals – architects, playground suppliers, etc – and to draw on their expertise and experience in drawing up their own plans;
- Resolution of insurance, maintenance and supervision arrangements, in partnership with Local Authorities.

Activities

A two-pronged approach on the part of BDL was central to this initiative, namely supporting communities on the ground with tangible supports and also negotiating and liaising with Limerick & Cork County Councils around the issues of insurance for parks and playgrounds and agreed procedures for maintenance and supervision of the facilities.

Community Supports

- Facilitation and organisation of a study trip for targeted communities within the area to travel to visit two Community Parks in Co Waterford – Waterford town and Lismore - and to meet with Local Authority officials and other key stakeholders involved in the development of these parks, to discuss their experiences in planning for their respective parks.
- Development and dissemination of a step-by-step guide for communities, outlining the key steps required to bring a project plan for a park/ playground to fruition (see Appendix A attached);
- Facilitation of a consultation and information evening for targeted communities, attended by:
 - an architect with experience in designing village parks, who provided guidance on how to examine the profile of the community, the potential sites available to them and how best to meet the recreational needs of the community;
 - two playground equipment providers who provided technical information on site excavation, surfacing different types of play equipment available. Individual design workshops will also be held on the night.

- Representatives from communities within the Ballyhoura area which had already developed community parks and playgrounds.

Local Authority Negotiations

Ballyhoura Development on behalf of communities in the Ballyhoura area took part in negotiations with Cork and Limerick County Councils on the following issues:

- Insurance
- Supervision of Facilities
- Maintenance of Facilities
- Lease of Council owned land

Success

Development of Step by step Guide for communities who are planning to develop a park or playground in their locality. This guide has been used as a reference point for communities through all stages of their project development.

Successful negotiations with Local Authorities resulting in:

- Nominal lease reduced from €100 to €10 per annum for communities who need to lease land from the local authority.
- Local Authority's agreed to provide insurance for facilities and the local community is indemnified against any claims or losses. The insurance is dependent on provision of weekly inspection reports by the community. Training will be provided to the community by the local authority.
- Limerick County Council will develop a scheme to provide €500 per annum to playground committees from 2011 to support the upkeep and maintenance of the playground.

Conclusion

From the outset the provision of recreational facilities in local communities was recognized as a key priority. This project enabled communities throughout the Ballyhoura area to work towards the provision of parks and playgrounds in their communities and put the structures in place for the facilities to be insured and supervised.

A number of parks and playgrounds have been completed as a result of this project and a there is a number of communities who continue to work on their projects.