

SUBJECT:	Monmouthshire Play Opportunities for All and Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital Funding
MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	16th July
DIVISION/WARDS	ALL
AFFECTED:	

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval of Monmouthshire's, Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan for 2025 to 2028.
- 1.2 To similarly seek Cabinet approval of Monmouthshire's All Wales Play Opportunities Grant Capital Funding programme for 2025/26.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve Monmouthshire's Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan for 2025 to 2028.
- 2.2 To receive an annual update of the Play Sufficiency Action Plan.
- 2.3 Approve the proposed prioritised schemes to benefit from the All Wales Play Opportunities grant 2025/26 Capital Grant for Play Spaces and Playgrounds across Monmouthshire.

3. KEY MESSAGES:

- 3.1 The Council's Community and Corporate Plan has as one of its six objectives the aim for Monmouthshire to be a "*connected place, where people feel part of a community and are valued*". As part of that the Council strives for Monmouthshire to be a healthy and active place where loneliness and isolation are reduced, well-being is promoted, and people are safeguarded.
- 3.2 Play positively impacts on children and families who are vulnerable. The provision appeals to families who benefit from early preventative systems. Play is a vital element in children's development and something that can provide a strong protective factor in children's lives.

- 3.3 Recognising the importance of play and its statutory guidance Monmouthshire has undertaken Play Sufficiency Assessments (PSA) in 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2022.
- 3.4 The 2025 – 2028 PSA (**Appendix 1**) sets out in more detail the background, progress and proposed areas for actions for the next three-years. The actions aligns to those of the Corporate and Community Plan objective of A Fair Place and the action within the plan contributes to *promoting healthier lifestyles, which reduce health inequalities, through increased physical activity, nutritious food and access to open spaces*.
- 3.5 Monmouthshire Play Strategy group is responsible for the PSA and action plan. The group's membership includes cross-departmental offices and is supported by WGLA & WG officers.
- 3.5.1 Membership of the Play Strategy Group: Active Travel; Community infrastructure; Community Focused schools; Community and Wellbeing team; Early years and Childcare; Flying Start; Sport and Community; Play Development; Leisure Services; Children's Disabilities team; Youth service and Neighbourhood services officers.
- 3.5.2 It has been recognised by Welsh Government that Monmouthshire is sector leading in its approach to cross departmental collaboration. It is noted that in so many areas play fits heavily within agendas. This is particularly noted in Active Travel, Heritage and Culture and Sport Development.
- 3.6 Using the 'playing out survey', officers attended every primary school in Monmouthshire. The survey was delivered through the PlayMakers Award program. The playmakers (young children) at each school supported their peers to complete the survey. Further information was gathered on children's views on play in schools.
- 3.6.1 To gather parents and carers thoughts on play for their children, we used the Play Wales parent survey. Further opportunities were available at the councils' main facilities through QR codes and paper copies, if requested.
- 3.6.2 The responses from both surveys have been considered within the assessment. However, questions regarding spaces locally for children to

play, asked to parents did not marry with the same question asked to children.

3.6.3 The annual Play Action Plan (**Appendix 2**), details the actions to address the issues/ shortcomings recorded in the Play Assessment to secure sufficient opportunities for play.

3.7 Playing helps children to develop their inner resources and build resilience to difficulties and uncertainties in their home and other parts of their lives. Through school holiday periods, Monmouthshire has established opportunities for supervised play, under the umbrella of Active Play and Stay & Play. Children's services through their holiday clubs support families with children with disabilities to access suitable play provision.

3.7.1 The School Holiday Enrichment Programme, 'Food & Fun' is delivered in the school summer holidays. A school-based scheme providing healthy meals, food and nutrition education, physical activity, and enrichment sessions to learners in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. (**Appendix 3**).

3.8 Monmouthshire neighbourhood services manage and regularly maintain more than 100 fixed play areas and open spaces across the county. Most fixed play areas are developed and installed by officers within the team.

3.8.1 Fixed play areas are categorised by 'Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP's) and Local Equipped Areas for Play' (LEAP's). Monmouthshire has a mix of play areas and ownership included Monmouthshire; Town and Community Councils and Housing Associations.

3.9 The 2019 independent play value assessment of Monmouthshire's fixed play areas was a comprehensive evaluation aimed at understanding and improving the quality of play opportunities across the county. **Appendix 3a**, outlines the specific assessment criteria and provides insight into the methodology and principles used.

There is a commitment to review this assessment more frequently and as a minimum when making improvements to these facilities the play value is reassessed.

3.9.1 When the opportunity arises to upgrade or replace play areas, two of the important considerations at the forefront of our thinking are accessibility and sustainability.

3.9.2 As part of the Welsh Government Final Budget 2025-26, there was an agreement to focus on a series of shared priorities. This included £5m of capital funding to local authorities to improve the quality of play spaces, refurbish playgrounds and support the creation of accessible play spaces and opportunities for children. Monmouthshire has been awarded **£128,619.28** of this fund.

3.10 People's Scrutiny Committee.

In June, the People's Scrutiny Committee received a presentation from officers representing the Monmouthshire Play Strategy Group, outlining the "Monmouthshire Play Opportunities for All" report and the associated Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital Funding proposal.

3.10.1 The committee highlighted the critical role of effective communication, particularly with town and community councils, local members, and residents. Refer to points 7.6 to 7.9.1 in the report.

3.10.2 The committee stressed the need to consult residents on the proposed investment and to ensure that the outcomes reflect their priorities and preferences. Refer to points 3.6.3 and 7.8 to 7.9.1. in the report. Notwithstanding the criteria of the funding, in point 7.8.

3.10.3 The committee inquired about the possibility of holding a few outreach sessions each year in rural communities, particularly in areas where investment has been made in play parks. Refer to point 7.4.2 of the report, highlighting the collaborative approach and furthermore an opportunity for officers within the Play Strategy Group to explore this further.

3.10.4 Clarification regarding the reporting within the Play Sufficiency Assessment, along with any other matters raised during the meeting, has been provided separately by the designated officers.

3.10.5 Following reflections from the meeting, officers have incorporated into the Play Sufficiency Action Plan a commitment to engage with town and

community councils, map play parks in each area, and initiate discussions on future priorities and potential investment.

3.10.6 The Cabinet will review the committee's feedback and make a final decision on the approval of the report and associated investment.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

- 4.1 Approval of the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan provides direction and vision in delivery. It allows access to All Wales Play Opportunities Grant and associated funding and will build on collaboration, joint outcomes and future workstreams identified under the Annual Play Action Plan.
- 4.2 The Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital funding programme has seen an objective and evidence-based assessment result in a prioritised number of projects and deliverables proposed achieved within the financial year 2025-2026.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- 5.1 The assessment criteria for the PSA measures are set out in Statutory Guidance/ the PSA Toolkit prepared by Play Wales on behalf of Welsh Government and the requirement to undertake an annual review of achievement against the action plan.
- 5.2 The annual update on Actions for PSA action plans is completed by the Play Development lead and submitted to Welsh Government on the 1st of June each year of the PSA Cycles. These annual reports are reviewed and approved at the Play Strategy group meetings.
- 5.3 The sport, community and play outcomes within the delivery plans are identified as measures within the Corporate and Community Plan within Fair Place; Connected Place; and Learning Place and are reported quarterly.
- 5.4 The Award of funding is subject to successful delivery of the agreed outcomes in the application and delivered by March 2026.

6. REASONS:

- 6.1 "Wales: A Play Friendly Country" is statutory guidance to local authorities on assessing and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. It gives detail to the duty under Section 11 of the Play Opportunities, Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.

- 6.2 The duty on local authorities is to undertake a full review of the Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) every three years and update the Play Action Plan on an annual basis.
- 6.2.1 Each local authority is responsible for managing the Play Sufficiency Assessment and Play Action Plan. This includes engagement with a range of partners, data collection and analysis to help inform the assessment. Partnership working, collaboration and participation are core elements of conducting the Play Sufficiency Assessment against the criteria outlined within the Statutory Guidance.
- 6.3 The Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital funding provides us with the opportunity to build on our cross-departmental collaboration, whilst making improvements to our identified play areas and project. Providing children with better opportunities to play within their local communities.
- 6.4 The PSA outcomes and deliverables contributes to the objectives set out within the Corporate and Community Plan.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 The Play development lead has established effective cross department working. A key element of success has been embedding play within the sport, play and community team and wider customer, culture and wellbeing directorate.
- 7.2 The Play development lead has recently been trained to deliver the L2APP, a playwork qualification for those who work in provisions that support children and children's play.
- 7.3 The children's disabilities team has made a commitment to deliver additional needs training annually to all school holiday site assistants and staff across, customer, culture and wellbeing, where staff are delivering provision to children and young people.
- 7.4 Funding streams and opportunities.
- 7.4.1 The Play Strategy group collaboratively seeks funding opportunities to ensure there are sustainable opportunities for play in Monmouthshire and to support the delivery of the play action plan.
- 7.4.2 Annual funding and support has included revenue contribution and grants from our stakeholders including;
- a. Town and Community Council contributions,
 - b. WLGA - Play Works Holiday Project and Food & Fun Holiday enrichment programme.

- c. Children and Communities Grant (CCG) 2024/25. Inclusive grant. Used to support Action for Children to deliver Playscheme sessions to children who are referred by the Children's Disabilities team.
- d. **Appendix 4** highlights the activities programme for the summer of 2024.

7.5 There have been several successful projects delivered and funded through S106 contributions or commitments; Lottery Bids; third sector grants and cross-departmental funding and outcomes. Several play areas have been upgraded in the period 2019 to 2024.

Location	Site	Comment
Abergavenny	Bailey Park	S106 funding
Caldicot	KGV Playing Field	Town Council funding
Chepstow	Castle Dell	Chepstow Town Council National Lottery Community Fund Transforming Towns Grant Programme
Monmouth	Chippenham	S106 funding Monmouth Town Council and Wye Valley AONB
Usk	Maryport Street	National Lottery Community Fund
Magor with Undy	Sycamore Terrace	Town Council funding

7.6 Welsh Government has stated that local authorities should consider the outcomes of their Play Sufficiency Assessment when allocating the money to projects:

- **Matter B** – *Providing for Diverse Needs, which* directs local authorities and partners to aim to offer play opportunities that are inclusive and encourage all children to play and meet together.
- **Matter C** – *Space available for children to play, which* directs local authorities to undertake access audits at all designated play spaces and implement proposals to improve access and safety, and assess its play value; and,
- **Matter H** - *Community engagement and participation* which directs local authorities to consult widely with children, their families, and other stakeholders on their views on play provision. This includes engaging with relevant groups to enhance play opportunities for children in their area.

7.7 To identify where the Play Spaces and Playgrounds Capital funding for 2025/26 should be allocated, the Play Strategy Group invited officers from the group to be part of a 'task and finish group'.

7.7.1 The task and finish group membership were officers from departments who contribute towards play/playgrounds. Officers have whole authority knowledge of need and contributors to the recent Play Sufficiency Assessment. In addition, support was given to, finance and monitoring to ensure the funding criteria was met.

7.7.2 Data and insight included;

- Grant criteria,
- Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan,
- Play Value Assessments for Play Parks,
- Future opportunities for funding or known improvements, S106, RLDP, partner funding,
- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019,
- List of all play parks within Monmouthshire.

7.8 Based on the criteria of funding which stated that;

- All projects need to be **completed** by March 2026. Funding cannot be allocated to projects that won't be ready to use by March 2026.
- The grant must be used to support actions of the 2025 PSA.
- WG would like the money to be used, as far as reasonably practicable, to encompass a wide range of users including a range of ages. In relation to this it is concluded that this grant would have better value if invested into larger neighbourhood playparks (NEAPS) rather than LAPS (local areas for play). The funding would then cover a wider range of ages and needs whereas LAPS focus more on lower age groups, mainly the pre-school under-5s.
- WG would like to see funding being utilised to support cross policy objectives e.g. active travel, community.
- Supporting areas of deprivation is desirable but can be used in lower deprived areas if there is rationale to do so.
- Current Play value should be considered when making decisions with a view to improving play value. A score between 0-29 is considered LOW play value.

7.8.1 The group reviewed all data and information of parks and concluded that in line with the criteria stated above the funding should be allocated to the following projects, **Appendix 5**.

7.8.1.1 Improvements to Burntbarn Road, NEAP (also known locally as Western Avenue) and Bulwark Park, NEAP (also known locally as Piggy Hill).

7.8.1.2 Improvements to the skatepark (separate funding).

7.8.1.3 Improvements to the routes, where match funding could be achieved.

7.9 Consultation on the proposed plans to improve the identified play parks would be achieved through Let's Talk Monmouthshire and local drop-in sessions. These can be administered throughout the school summer holidays 2025 with analysis to be completed by end of September 2025.

7.9.1 This engagement will include children and young people who attend summer holiday provisions across play, youth and leisure centres in the identified area for the funding allocation.

8.WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING & CORPORATE PARENTING)

8.1 The statutory matters mean that the PSA includes an assessment of the extent that play opportunities are inclusive and recognises the positive impact that securing sufficient and accessible play opportunities can have on children, families and communities. **Appendix 6.**

9. CONSULTEES:

People Scrutiny Committee.
Strategic Leadership Team.
Customer, Culture and Wellbeing DMT.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Wales: A play Friendly Country](#)

[Play Sufficiency Assessment Toolkit](#)

[Creating accessible play spaces – a toolkit - Play Wales](#)

Appendix 1 – Monmouthshire Play Sufficiency Assessment Form 2025-2028.

Appendix 2 - Monmouthshire Play Sufficiency Action Plan 2025-2026.

Appendix 3 - Food and Fun Programme 2024 impact infographic.

Appendix 3a – Play Value Assessment Template 2019.

Appendix 4 - Summer Holiday infographic.

Appendix 5 - Funding Panel Assessment document.

Appendix 6 - Integrated Impact Assessment.

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