

Teenagers at work on restoration of King George V Park



Local unemployed teenagers are very much enjoying the opportunity to learn new skills on a project which is also improving Edinburgh's King George V Park in an effort to restore the area to its former award-winning glory.

The six-week project will see youth facilities revamped in a collaboration between The City of Edinburgh Council, Lothian and Borders Police and Action for Children, whose Edinburgh Youthbuild Project is supported by Capital City Partnerships.

A new concrete table tennis table is set to be installed, along with bespoke seating and a new path to be laid at the Scotland Street Tunnel entrance.

Local 16-18 year olds are being put to work and given the opportunity to learn not only important work skills, but also how to manage their finances, as they will be paid by Rathbone Training Edinburgh.

The initiative is part of the Youth Challenge project, highlighted by the Scottish Government as one of the best ways to help disadvantaged young people.

We spoke to some of the teenagers to see what they thought of the opportunity and to those behind the idea and its execution:-

[King George V Park 1 September 2011 \(mp3\)](#)

Councillor Aldridge, Environment Leader, said: "Supporting


Edinburgh's young people has always been at the heart of this project, and I am pleased to see that the whole community has been behind this all the way.

"It is great news that the funding is now in place to provide King George V Park with brand new facilities."

King George V Park was developed in the 1980s from sports playing fields and the former Scotland Street Goods Yard, into a park that won awards in its era for innovation.

In recent years the park has badly needed a revamp, and eventually funding for improvements was secured from three Neighbourhood Partnerships – Inverleith, Leith and the City Centre.

Local community police officers had raised concerns about the lack of facilities for young people, and the resulting anti-social behaviour, and recommended improving the park's facilities to provide a safe and attractive area for young people to meet. The first phase of works was recently completed at King George V Park, and a big part of the work is yet to come with the idea that the disused entrance to the Scotland Street Tunnel will be converted into a youth shelter.

Local Community Officer, PC Simon Daley, said: "This is a  fantastic project that has won broad support from within the local community, and I am delighted that it has progressed to the point where funding is now in place to improve facilities in the park.

"The involvement of local young people in the project is central to our aim of reducing antisocial behaviour in the area, and they can take real pride from what has been achieved so far."

The Friends of King George V Park's Secretary, Judy Conn, said she was delighted to see their vision taking shape and praised the Council and police for their support.

She said: "There is definitely a feeling in the community that the park is really picking up and is now rather a nice place to be.

"We are particularly pleased at how popular the youth club is and how it has helped to reduce under-age drinking and disorder in the area.

"It has also inspired some of the young people who founded the club to return as volunteers working with the new generation."