

Government reform to planning rules will increase the number of play areas

The Scottish Government has announced that new planning reforms are intended to give children and young people more opportunities to play outside.

Under the new policy, local authorities will be encouraged to support planning applications for the development of play spaces, parks and sports facilities.

The changes will also increase opportunities for outdoor activity and help put the commitment of incorporating children and young people's rights into Scots Law and practice. This brings part of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 into effect.

New regulations will be introduced to require that local authorities assess the adequacy of play spaces, and consult local children and communities. This will ensure councils are better informed when making future provision for play in their local development plans.

Planning Minister Tom Arthur visited Figgate Park in Edinburgh ahead of laying the regulations in the Scottish Parliament.

Mr Arthur said: "Children and young people of all ages need more opportunities to spend time outdoors playing safely.

"Figgate Park is a perfect example of what we can achieve in the long-term interests of children and young people by

planning for and investing in outdoor play.

“Much clearer and stronger policy together with these new requirements will give more children and young people opportunities to spend time outdoors, supporting their wellbeing and fulfilling the Scottish Government’s commitment to incorporate children’s rights into law and practice.

“The Scottish Government is requiring planning authorities across the country to consider play provision when preparing their local development plans.

“By working together through planning policy and practice, we will make Scotland a better place to grow up.”

This loosening of planning restrictions comes hot on the heels of a major £50 million funding announcement for play parks earlier on Friday. This means that in Edinburgh there will be double the amount of funding available next year. [Read more on this story here.](#)

Cllr Val Walker, Culture and Communities Convener, said: “We are currently implementing improvements in a number of play areas across Edinburgh.

“This is a very welcome funding boost and our investment programme is structured to target play areas that are most in need of refurbishment and we have recently published summary of details of the projects underway or in progress. We want to ensure we have a first-class range of parks across the Capital, and we want to help communities make the most of these excellent open spaces.”

It was a LibDem motion that sparked an update to action on play parks

in Edinburgh.



Cllr Ed Thornley Drum Brae/Gyle ward PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

Following a motion by Cllr Edward Thornley in September last year an update was made on the council's investment in play areas and confirmed on what basis future investment would be allocated. The council has 189 play areas with more than 900 items of play equipment and the routine maintenance of these is a statutory requirement.

In 2018 the council agreed to spend £200,000 per year for five years until financial year 22/23. And in addition to that the Scottish Government allocated £414,000 in both 2021/22 and 2022/23 of capital funding.

The council stated that the funding for the next three years was going to increase to **£811,000, £1,216,000 and £2,027,000** in the financial years 23/24, 24/25 and 25/26, but the amounts [announced this week](#) are in fact just a little higher than that.

Cllr Thornley said: “So many of our playparks are now in a poor state, and in desperate need of repair, that this funding and plan are both incredibly welcome.

“We need to make sure our playparks are accessible for all, with wheelchair friendly equipment and surfaces being one example. This plan will help us make sure our playparks are accessible and safe for all.”

The council now has a new approach to investment as set out in a report to Culture and Communities Committee at the beginning of the month. The report said: “Priority will be given to the refurbishment of play areas and equipment located within neighbourhoods where deprivation levels are considered high and where the quality and quantity of play provision has fallen below target levels. Prior to this new approach, play park investment decisions have been solely based on asset condition and have not taken account of deprivation factors.”

The extract from the report below sets out what might be planned for each of the play parks in the city:



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