

Alexandra Play Area Consultations April/May 2016

Introduction

In 2015 it was necessary to remove a timber trawler play-boat from Alexandra Play Area in Penzance, which was over 17 years old had perished structurally and was no longer suitable for repair.

Alexandra Play Area in Penzance was included in the list of play projects approved for funding from Cornwall Council's Capital Programme. The Public Space Team is undertaking the specialist task of project development, climaxing in the ordering of new equipment, at which point Cormac will assume control of the delivery stage.

Phase 1 consultations

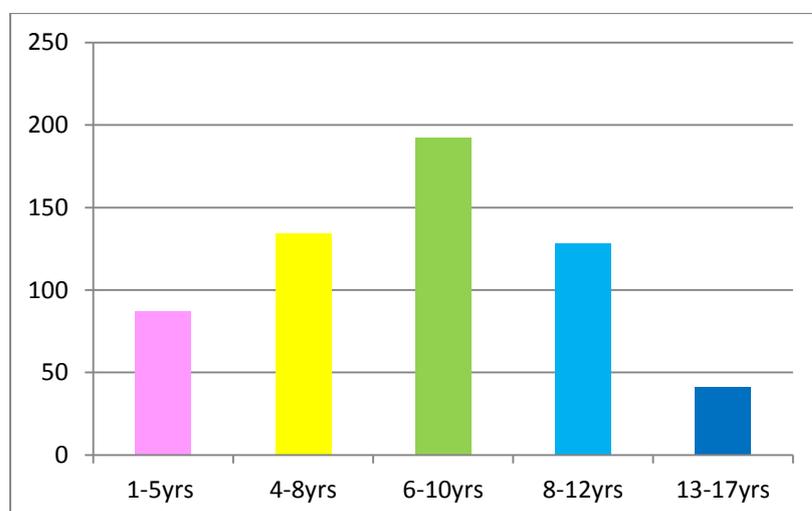
The following report summarises the results of the initial consultations to determine the type of equipment to be installed.

- Children face to face survey – 28
- Children (Reception to Year 6 Pupils) preference vote – 127
- Family groups face to face survey – 17
- Individual parent or carer questionnaire - 61

Total people consulted: 250+

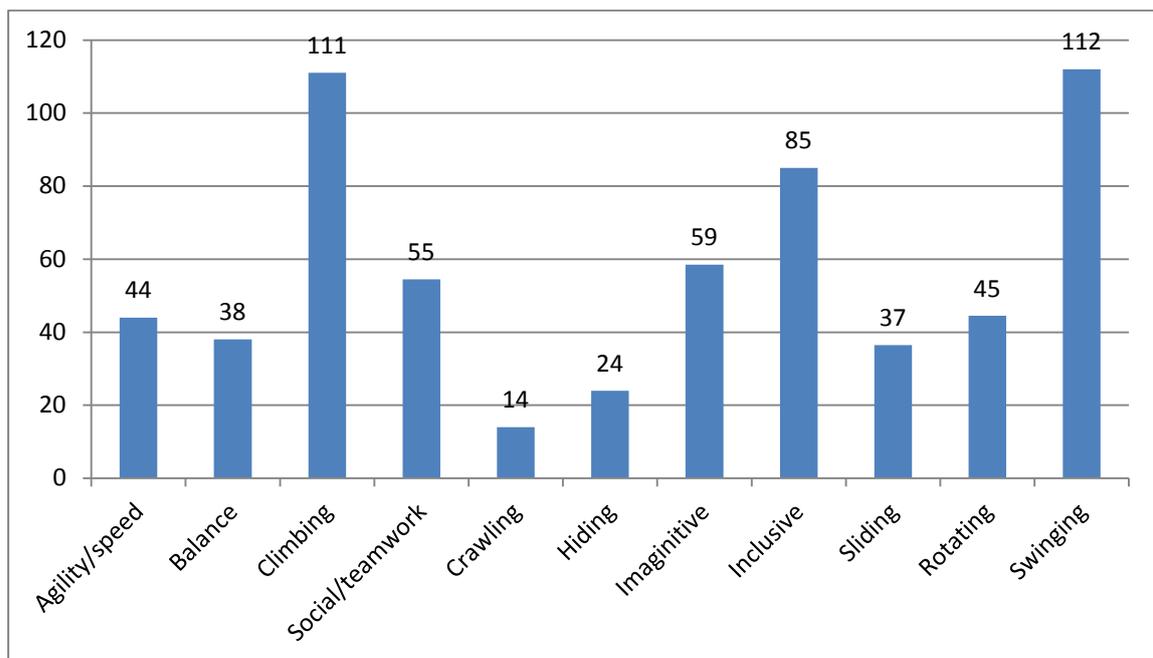
1. How should we prioritise the ages of children served by the new play equipment?

Play equipment comes in a variety of scales and each model will be aimed at a different age range, it is important to get the balance of ages served by a play area right. Respondents were asked to disregard their own needs & age, and instead consider what age group they felt was in need of satisfying. For instance this could be where there were now gaps in the provision owing to recent removals.



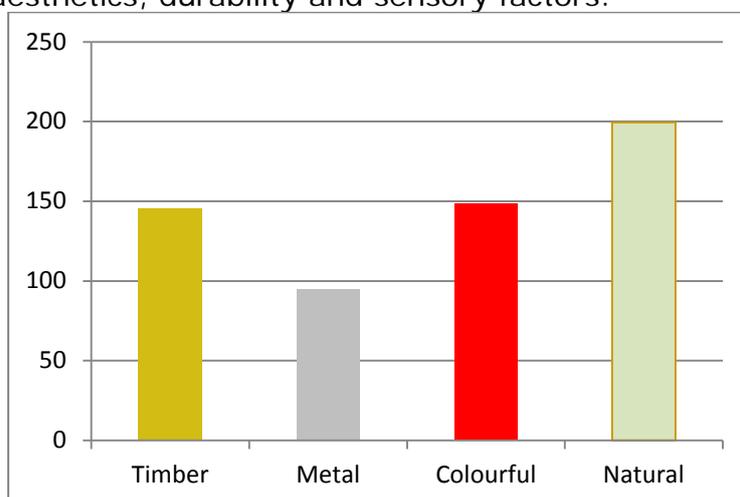
2. What play experiences are most missing from the current play area?

Similarly play equipment offers a considerable range in play experiences. These represent different challenges, new skills to learn and they trigger varied cognitive & physical impulses. Different children are attracted to different play opportunities at different times, and it is good practice to ensure a wide range are available in a significant play space such as Alexandra Play Area. It would be less beneficial to install new items that duplicated the play experiences already available.



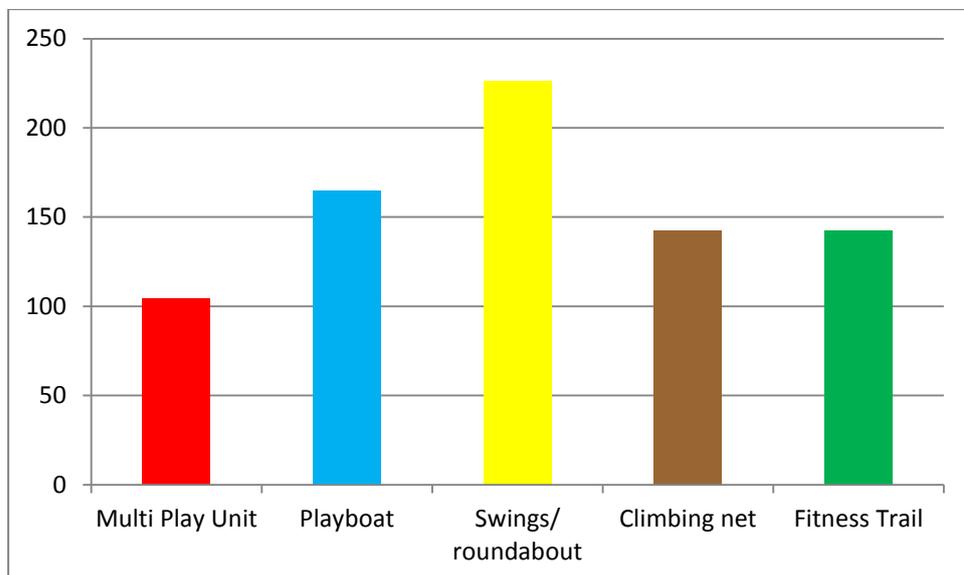
3. What style of new children's play equipment would you prefer?

Play equipment comes in a variety of styles principally based on the materials used in their construction. When choosing play equipment or setting a brief for manufacturers it is important to determine from the start, what the style should be, in order to go to appropriate manufacturers and to avoid wholly unsuitable models being suggested. There are advantages and disadvantages with the different materials, and it is useful to understand how people value & compare aesthetics, durability and sensory factors.



4. What type of new children's play equipment would you prefer?

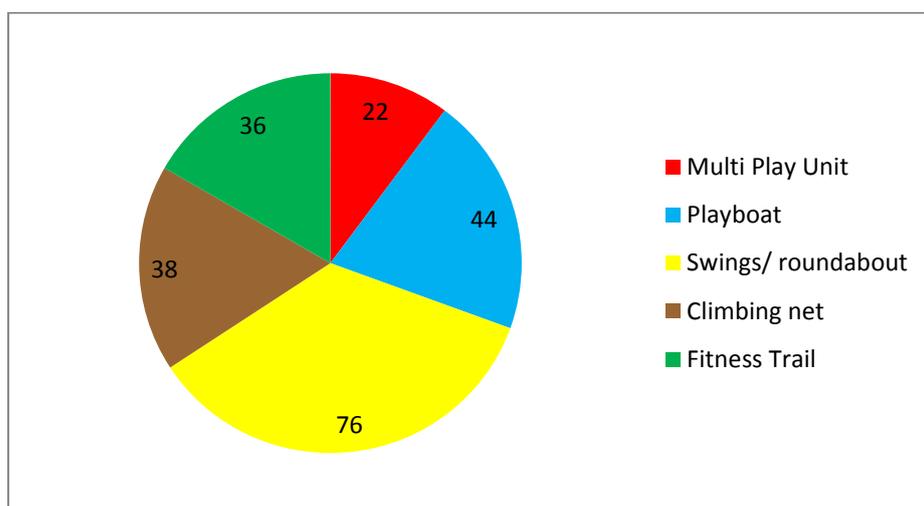
Chosen from a selection of 5 options identified as main item types suitable for the space. (See appendix 1)



Swings and roundabouts, including cantilevered nest swings scored the highest in the survey. This is probably not so surprising as 'swinging' scored highest in the choice of play experiences in question 2. Since the removal of the popular tyre swing over two years' ago, there are no moving pieces of equipment except for the zip-wire. Also they could represent the most suitable for inclusive (play for all abilities) as well as social interaction. But the choice does spring up some anomalies, as swings & roundabouts usually incorporate mainly metal components and offer no real climbing potential.

If we analyse first choices only, the results have a similar spread as follows: -

What type of new children's play equipment would you prefer? First choice only



It is interesting to note also that the same item as was originally in the currently empty space (the wooden trawler play-boat), was most popular with

the adult respondents for first choices, whilst being joint 3rd in the children's (Reception to Year 6 Pupils) preference vote.

Recommendation

The results of the survey demonstrate a significant diversity in opinions. They have not provided a clear & overwhelming steer one way or another. In balance though, based upon the findings, we would recommend that the following form the basis of the brief to appropriate play manufacturers: -

- Principal target age range – 6-10year olds
- At least two large items of play equipment comprising elements of the following functions:
 - Swinging.
 - Climbing and/or Rotating.
- All of the following criteria must be fulfilled by one or more of the items:
 - Inclusiveness (for all abilities).
 - Imaginative play.
 - Co-operation / social interaction / teamwork.
- Durability. High warranties will be demanded especially for moving components, in view of the significant pressures experienced seasonally.
- Equipment should be suited to the location and the ground conditions. There is considerable exposure to winds and salt water, and the water table is very near the surface. Equipment should be designed and installed to withstand these and require minimal maintenance.
- Aesthetically the items of play equipment should blend in with mainly natural setting. Preference will be given to the use of natural materials (eg. debarked tree stems), providing that they can satisfy the above two requirements.
- In accordance with Cornwall Council's policy all equipment must conform to EN 1176 safety standards.

Appendix 1

Qu.4 What type of new children's play equipment would you prefer? See images below.

4.1 Multi-play unit with platforms



4.2 Play boat



4.3 Swings and roundabouts



4.4 Climbing net



4.5 Fitness trail

