

# Huge cash grant improves playpark life

Messenger  
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By Robert Downes

FIVE Trafford parks will get a share of £371,000 to improve play equipment.

The money was allocated by the Department for Education as part of the Playbuilder scheme, although a further eight parks which had been hoping for cash will get nothing.

In July the council announced Playbuilder funding from the Government had been cut. It means now only Flixton Park, Sale's Walton, Ashton and Hornbeam parks, and Stretford's Lostock Park will see improvements.

Plans for those parks were, said the town hall, already at an advanced stage when news of the cuts in the summer were made, which determined why they have got the cash.

Commenting, executive councillor Christine Turner said: "This funding will allow us to complete five projects, providing many young people with significantly improved, challenging, exciting play opportunities in their local neighbourhoods."

"We all recognise the role play has in child development. When complete the sites will give them chance to climb, relax and play with friends in attractive, natural and challenging environments."

Under Labour, the DfE put aside £235m to either build or upgrade 3,500 playgrounds nationally, and town halls were asked to consult with youngsters on the types of equipment they wanted.

The eight parks who've lost out are Victoria Park, Stretford; Stokoe Avenue Play Fields, Altrincham; Abbotsfield Park, Urmston; Humphrey Lane, Urmston; Davyhulme Park, Gorse Hill Park, Gorse Hill; Seymour Park, Old Trafford; Kelsall Park, Sale.

The news, which was announced last week, was greeted with dismay at parks which had missed out. Mum-of-two Tracy Reid said: "It does seem a bit unfair."

"The play equipment here is a bit past it's best now. I think the money should have been split equally, that would have been fairer."

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## Skate bowl in line for cash boost

SKATEBOARDERS are among park users celebrating after hearing they will benefit from a playground cash U-turn.

A bid to enhance Lostock Park's skate bowl, the only one in the north west, is among five schemes in the borough given a reprieve by Whitehall.

The bids were rejected in August when ministers announced plans to scrap the £1.1m Playbuilder grant due to be given to Trafford but they have had a change of heart.

Flixton Park and Old Trafford's Hornbeam Park will also benefit from the money but other park friends groups were left bitterly disappointed this week after learning six other projects will be put on hold.

The successful schemes will share a £370,000 pot with parks in Sale and Altrincham.

Maureen Reilly says the

by Bethan Dorsett

cash will attract more visitors to the Lostock Park's most popular feature, its skate bowl.

The Lostock Community Partnership chairwoman said: "It's an absolute relief to know we will get the money."

"It will allow us to make the skate bowl more inclusive for everyone. We have skateboarders travelling from as far as Bury, Bolton and Leeds to use the skate bowl as it is the only one in the north west."

"The additional work will allow us to create a safe flat surface that can be used by rollerbladers, cyclists and people who may have physical difficulties but can use an adapted skateboard."

Projects at Victoria Park, Stretford, Urmston green spots Abbotsfield Park, Humphrey Lane Park, Davyhulme Park, Gorse Hill Park and Seymour Park in Old Trafford have been

put on hold. For Shelly Quinton-Hulme, the Friends of Victoria Park chairwoman, it means a search for new funds for its climbing wall proposals.

She said: "We're absolutely gutted. We will look to find the funding elsewhere but the way it has happened, I would have preferred not to have gone for it."

Once the five approved Trafford Playbuilder schemes are completed next March, the council expects to have a surplus of around £86,000.

Deborah Brownlee, director of children and young people's services, said: "We will be reviewing how this money can best be used to enhance play facilities for local children and young people."

Kate Green, Stretford and Urmston MP, said she 'will be insisting the council use this money to invest in improving facilities for children across Trafford'.



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