



Title of Report:	Skateboarding in Portrush
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 September 2022
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	All
Outcome	
Lead Officer	Director of Leisure and Development
Cost: (If applicable)	

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Less than £1000
Included in Current Year Estimates	n/a
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	Tourism and Recreation
Staffing Costs	Included

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	n/a	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	n/a	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	n/a	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	n/a	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	n/a	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	n/a	Date:

1.0 The Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to present to Council a proposal for a temporary designated space in Station Square, Portrush to create a safe, controlled and inviting environment for skateboarders, whilst maintaining public access to the surrounding businesses and established Rights of Way.

2.0 Background

The case for the provision of a permanent designated space for Urban Sports in Portrush has been championed by Causeway Association of Urban Sports (CAUS) for a period predating the formation of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

In this period the popularity of urban sports including skateboarding has grown significantly. Prior to the 2020 Olympic Games (held in 2021), the growth in skateboarding had emerged as an unlikely outcome from the covid lockdown, with its perfect match with quarantine restrictions, requiring simply a skateboard and a patch of flat ground, meaning that skateboarding can be practiced anywhere.

However, it is reported that millions watched as Sky Brown flew around the Olympic skatepark in Tokyo. Not only did the performance earn a bronze medal for the 13-year-old, but it also sparked a newfound interest in the sport, with more people purchasing skateboards and searching online for skateboarding lessons.

Sky Brown's success added to what had already been a great year for the popularity of urban sports.

Locally, Portrush has become the hub for urban sports in the Borough with Station Square being the focus. The upper tier of Station Square is informally established as the preferred site for urban sports and will routinely see hundreds of children and their families and adults participating in skateboarding. Currently, CAUS has in excess of 1000 Followers. Furthermore the 3 best skateboarders in Northern Ireland (national competition winners) are all based in Portrush.

Obviously, there is local economic benefit when such additional numbers congregate regularly in Portrush, but skateboarding is not just a sport, it is often considered to be an art form, a lifestyle, and a culture, not unlike surfing (the fit in Portrush is obvious).

Instead of skateboarding being a divisive and dangerous activity, the reality is that skateboard culture values individuality, creativity, and freedom. Skaters are known for their unrelenting dedication to progressing the sport holistically. The community is built on mutual respect; instead of 'one-upping' each other, skaters often encourage their peers and embrace their differences i.e. cross community.

3.0 Events Proceeding this Report

Following communication from HSENI, Council was compelled to act to mitigate the risk at Station Square following the discovery of skateboarding furniture, specifically ramps, rails and jumps. As the removal of furniture became confrontational, Council decided to cease any further action.

In order to resolve the situation, three meetings followed:

- DEA Council Meeting on 30th Aug 2022.
- Skateboarding / Urban Sports 'Wider' Stakeholder Meeting on Mon 5th Sep 2022.
- Skateboarding / Urban Sports Working Group on Wed 7th Sep 2022.

4.0 DEA Councillors Meeting

Having discussed the situation, it was agreed that:

Station Square is not a safe, controlled and inviting environment for skateboarders to use, whilst pedestrians have unfettered access.

It was also agreed that whilst the current arrangements are not safe and suitable, to exclude skateboarding completely is not desirable.

Council therefore intends to work with the skateboarding community to establish a temporary option for urban sports, whilst the Recreation Grounds construction is nearing completion and the site at the Metropole Corner is being considered.

Consequently, the meeting on the 5th Sep was arranged.

5.0 Skateboarding / Urban Sports 'Wider' Stakeholder Meeting

20 persons (representatives from CAUS, parents, skateboarders and commercial organisations) attended this meeting on Monday 5th September at which it was agreed that 4 possible options exist:

- i. The 'As Is Position'. It was agreed that Station Square is not a safe, controlled and inviting environment for skateboarders to use, whilst pedestrians have unfettered access.
- ii. Exclude Skateboarding. It was also agreed that whilst the current arrangements are not safe and suitable, to exclude skateboarding completely is not desirable.
- iii. Council therefore intends to work with the skateboarding community to establish a temporary option for urban sports, whilst the Recreation Grounds construction is nearing completion and the site at the Metropole Corner is being considered.
- iv. Identify an alternative site.

Two outcomes were agreed:

- i. The development of Option 3 – A temporary designated space in Station Square to create a safe, controlled and inviting environment for skateboarders, whilst maintaining public access to the surrounding businesses and established Rights of Way (subject to Risk Assessment, Insurance and Council agreement).
- ii. The creation of a Working Group to include the following nominated persons:
 - Relevant Council Officers.
 - 2 x Parents: Represented by Ricky Martin and Danielle Murphy.
 - 2 x CAUS: Represented by Jonathan Farley and Jesse Gordon.
 - 2 x RAWEE (including GB Qualified Skateboarding Instructors based in Portrush): Represented by Stuart Cullen and Darren McGinley.
 - 2 x Skateboarders: Represented by Callum Green and Wesley McMullen.

6.0 Skateboarding / Urban Sports Working Group

The Working Group met in Portrush Town Hall on the 7th Sep to consider Option 3.

- Roles and responsibilities.
- Designated area.
- Method of separating skateboarders from non-skateboarders.
- Permitted infrastructure such as ramps / rails / jumps.
- The routine management of the site.
- Risk Assessment and Method Statements.
- Insurance.
- Stakeholder consultation.

The following proposal incorporates consideration of the above points:

7.0 The Proposal for a Temporary Designated Space in Station Square, Portrush for Skateboarding

Based upon a collaborative approach, the Working Group is seeking Council's agreement for a temporary designated space in Station Square, Portrush for skateboarding.

This arrangement is deemed temporary whilst construction is nearing completion at the Recreation Grounds and the business case for an urban sports facility is being developed by CAUS focused upon Metropole Corner.

Site. The site is as illustrated in the following image:



The site provides enough space for skateboarding whilst facilitating access to the adjacent properties in and around Station Square.

- 7.1. Ownership and liability. Ownership and liability will be retained by Council's Tourism and Recreation Service area, however, roles and responsibilities will be agreed through the use of a memorandum of understanding between the Working Group parties.
- 7.2. Risk Assessment and Method Statements. The site and proposed activity have been subject to a Risk Assessment and Method Statements. The controls / mitigation methods form the basis of the proposal.
- 7.3. Barriers. The red line in the above image illustrates the line of pedestrian barriers, which will be modified to include a rubber skirt to prevent skateboards from leaving the designated area. The barriers will be fixed into the existing paver mortar, without damaging the granite stonework.
- 7.4. Signage. Signs will be fixed to the barriers to clearly indicate that this is a designated area for urban sports, however, users do so at their own risk. The Signage will direct pedestrians away from the area with ample pathways around the skateboarding area.

- 7.5. Monitoring of the Site. RAWEE (qualified Skateboarding GB Instructors) will monitor / inspect the site regularly (no less than weekly) to ensure that only equipment (ramps, rails and jumps) which are deemed safe and fit-for-purpose remain in the site. Any equipment deemed to be outside of safe parameters will be removed by qualified Skateboarding GB Instructors. As a general rule, the Working Group agreed that no furniture greater than 1 meter in height will be permitted.
- 7.6. Duration. A period of 12 months is sought by the Working Group, subject to a 6-month review / break period if necessary.
- 7.7. Public Liability Insurance. Council's Insurance Broker has sought Public Liability Insurance for the site as a designated skateboard park. The RAMS has been submitted to support the request. The site has no claims history associated with skateboarding or other related activity.
- 7.8. Consultation. Consultation has been conducted with the owner of the adjacent properties and through Mr RJ Martin, the tenants in those properties. In all cases, we have received full support and no objections for the proposal to create a temporary designated space for skateboarding in Station Square, Portrush.

8.0 Memorandum of Understanding Between the Working Group Parties

The following roles and responsibilities will be established in an MOU between the Working Group Members:

Council will:

- Retain ownership of the site, managed through the Tourism and Recreation Service Area.
- Undertake a Risk Assessment and Method Statement specific to the activity.
- Install suitable fencing (with rubber skirts to retain skateboards).
- Provide public liability insurance.

RAWEE will:

- Apply the necessary RAMS mitigation measures including the inspection of the site weekly (minimum) to ensure that only equipment (ramps, rails and jumps) which are deemed fit-for-purpose by RAWEE. Any equipment deemed to be outside of safe parameters will be removed by RAWEE staff.

CAUS will:

- Act as a conduit for information / communication between all stakeholders in the skateboarding / urban sport community.

The working group will:

- Work together to protect the reputation of the Council, CAUSE and REWEE (relevant to skateboarding / urban sports).
- Agree any press statements or other forms of public communication before publication / posting.
- Meet monthly to ensure that the terms of the MOU are being applied as agreed.
- Consider the use of the site by other users / events as a when required.

9.0 Recommendation

Council is requested to approve the creation of a temporary designated space in Station Square, Portrush for skateboarding, based upon the site illustrated in this report and subject to:

- **The provision of Public Liability Insurance for the site as a designated skateboard park.**
- **Signing of the MOU between the Working Group Parties.**

For a period of 12 months, subject to a 6-month review / break period if required by Council.