

**BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

21 May 2026

Decision Report –

Recommendation that the Committee:

- **Agree to proceed with the Ridley Park play areas as the preferred location for the improved inclusive play area.**
- **Delegate officers to progress the license agreement with NCC, investigate design concepts based on consultation feedback, and investigate external funding opportunities.**

Ward(s)

Wensleydale.

Risk Management

Should a future licence arrangement be agreed there will be no financial implications. Until the time an arrangement comes into being the play areas will remain under NCC responsibility. Alternatively, a community asset transfer may cost in the region of £2000 in legal fees. The maintenance of the wooded area would incur costs that could be met through the Partnership agreement.

Objective

Promoting the environmental, social, and economic wellbeing of the town and its community.

Crime & Disorder Prevention

None.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Improving accessibility is embedded in this project.

Report

Northumberland Parent Carer Forum, on behalf of the Town Council, conducted an eight-week consultation and engagement exercise to identify barriers to play and identify requirements to create a play area accessible to all. The consultation closed on 17 May, and the Forum is expected to provide a comprehensive report on the feedback received in June; this will be shared with members when received.

Pending receipt of this report, it would be prudent for the Council to continue progressing the project by agreeing a preferred location for the play area, considering concept designs, and beginning to explore potential funding opportunities to support the development of improved inclusive play provision. The forthcoming feedback report will also provide valuable supporting evidence for future funding applications.

Proposed Location

As agreed at the Environment Committee meeting held on 18 September 2025, Officers have been in discussions with the Countryside and Green Spaces Team at Northumberland County Council (NCC) regarding potential locations for the project. It was recognised that a strategic park location would be most suitable due to the availability of supporting infrastructure, including car parking and toilet facilities.

Following these discussions with NCC, the Beach Park has been deemed unsuitable because of its proximity to sand. Ridley Park has therefore been identified as the preferred location.

Ridley Park currently contains two play areas: one designed for younger children and another for older children. Both play areas need significant improvement, having not been upgraded for approximately 16 years. NCC has indicated that it would be amenable to Blyth Town Council assuming responsibility for these play areas through either a Community Asset Transfer or a licence agreement. This arrangement would apply solely to the play areas and would not include the wider park estate.

In addition, the Council has requested that NCC provide a significant capital contribution towards the inclusive play provision should the Town Council proceed with taking responsibility for the sites. To improve connectivity between the two play areas and add value to the scheme, it is proposed that the Council also assume responsibility for the small, wooded area located between them. This would facilitate the creation of an accessible pathway with play elements linking the two sites. A plan showing the proposed area is attached as Appendix 1.

A Community Asset Transfer would involve the legal transfer of the title deeds and associated legal costs. Alternatively, under a licence agreement, ownership of the land would remain with NCC, while responsibility for the play infrastructure and ongoing management would transfer to the Town Council. Licence agreements would not incur any transfer costs, and all existing Town Council play areas are currently operated under similar arrangements. It is unlikely that the planning use of Ridley Park would ever change as it is not only a strategic historic park but is a Protected Open Space¹ and proposed as a Local Green Space in the emerging Blyth Neighbourhood Plan.

Any licence agreement would be arranged to be effective from when we are ready to commence delivery of the play areas.

¹ Northumberland Local Plan

At present the Ridley Park play areas are inspected weekly by Northumberland County Council, following transfer the weekly inspections would be incorporated into the Town Council play area inspection schedule.

Potential grant funding may support capital costs but also revenue for the trial of a play ranger/play worker scheme which is being investigated and aligns with feedback received during the Forum's parent panel. More details on this will be brought back to a future meeting.

Further discussion will also take place with NCC regarding what other upgrades they may consider in the future for the wider site and facilities based on feedback received.

Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk
13 May 2026

Appendix 1 Proposed area for transfer

