



# Playable Spaces

Environment & Climate Change Scrutiny – January 2026

# Playable Spaces Programme Review

1. Background
  - Strategy
  - Delivery
  - Kirklees Play Areas
  - Benchmarking
2. Achievements
3. Challenges
4. Next steps





# Background: Strategy

- Original strategy granted Cabinet approval 2019

Need:	Vision:	Aims:	Benefits:
Developed after years without core investment – many play areas becoming outdated or with damaged equipment and/or surfacing	A district where all are able and encouraged to access a range of opportunities to play outdoors.	To improve the overall quality of play throughout Kirklees. To provide a more financially sustainable network allowing for more effective management and maintenance.	Physical and mental health and wellbeing. Intergenerational interaction and community cohesion. Contact with nature and social development.

- **Version 1 – March 2019**

- Convert local play areas to open greenspace/natural play with investment focused on infrastructure in Community & Destination play areas.



- **Version 2 – October 2019**

- All sites can have traditional equipment should the local community request it through site-by-site engagement.



# Background: Delivery 5 years in



- **Programme launched in 2020**
  - £3.9m PS capital invested to date
  - £5.6m contractually committed or allocated
- **Now 5 years into the programme**
  - Current expectation that all sites, regardless of size can have traditional equipment.
    - Departure from the original strategy
    - Expectations and interest, both internally and externally, remains high
    - Resources are restrictive - trying to achieve more with less

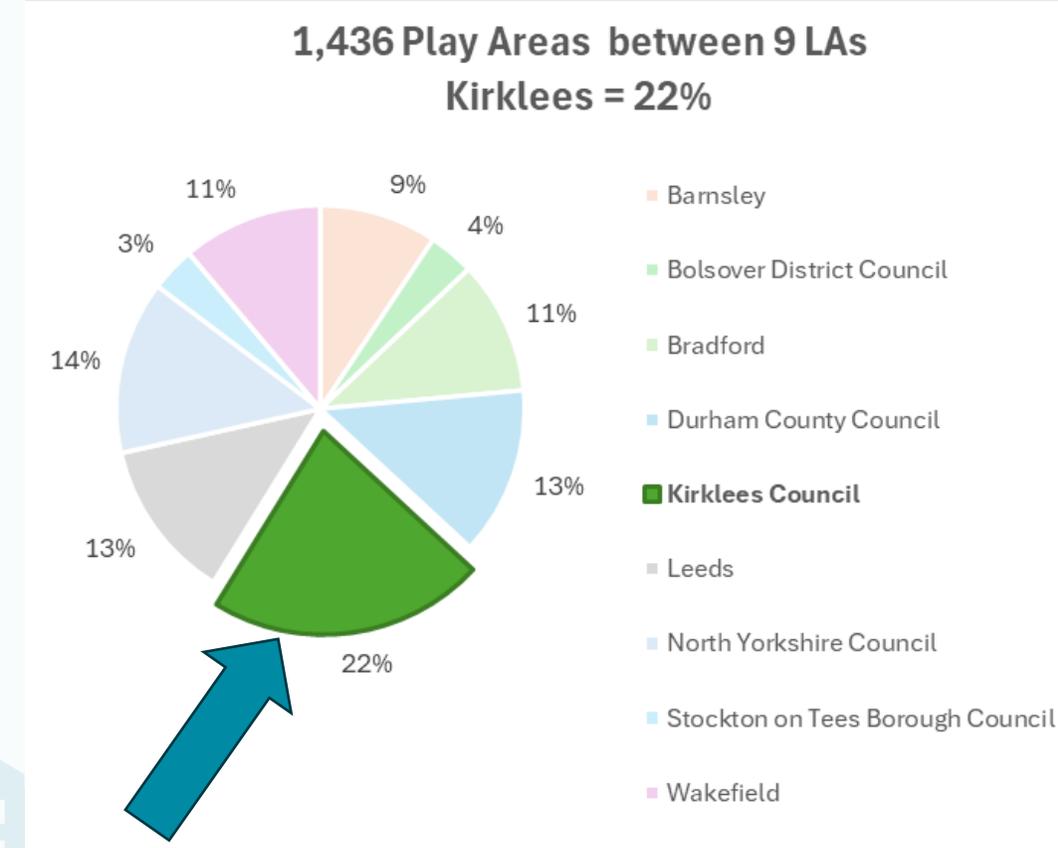
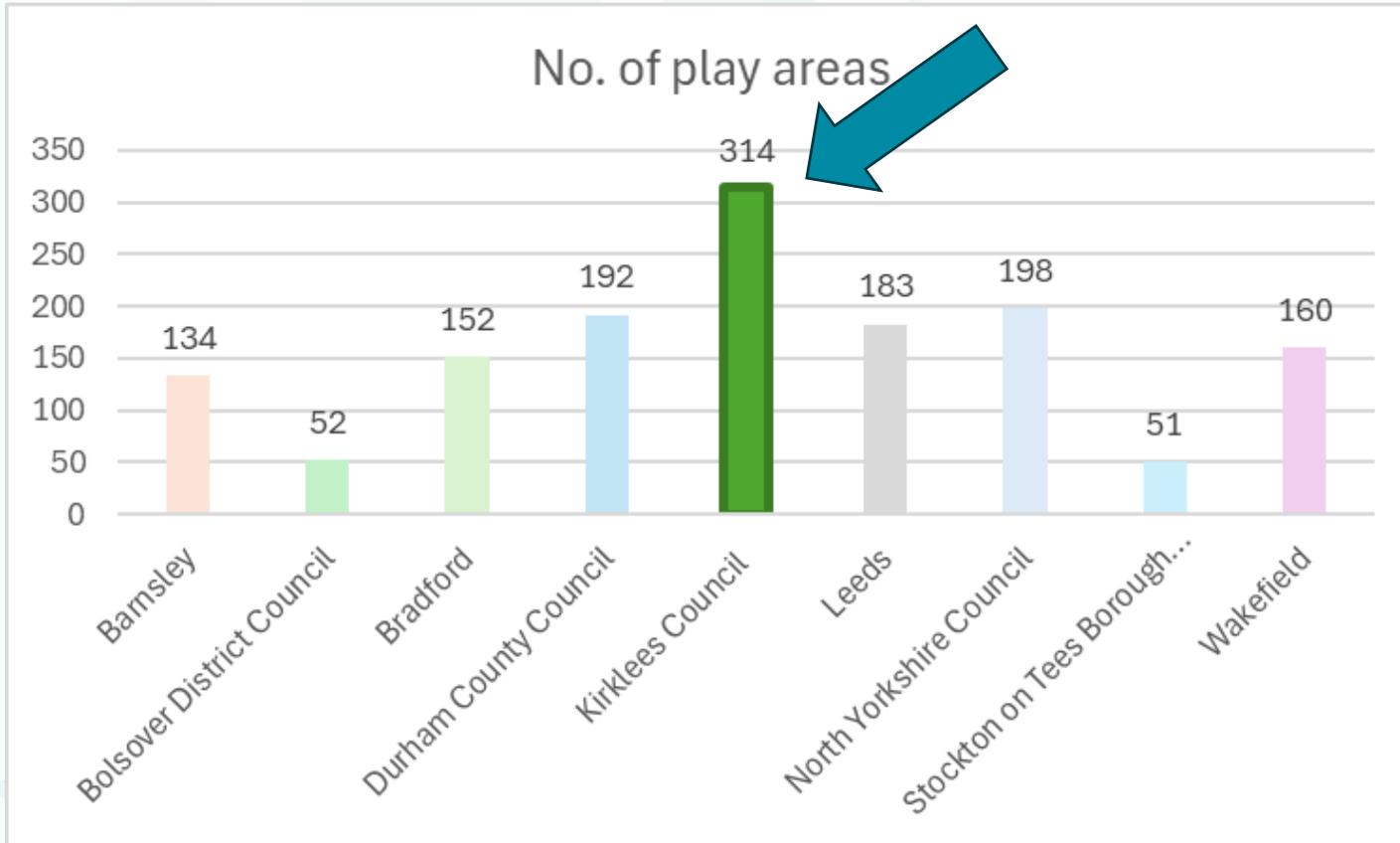
# Background: Kirklees Play Areas

- 314 play areas across the district
- 252 sites over 15 years old were included in the original programme, which increases as S106 funding is received and allocated
- Quality and condition of play areas varies across the district

**Kirklees manages and maintains significantly more play areas than other local authorities**



# Background: Benchmarking against local authorities in the West Yorkshire Play Forum



# Background: Current Play Maintenance Team

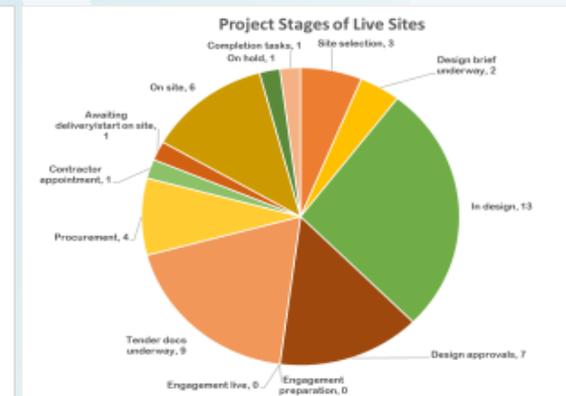
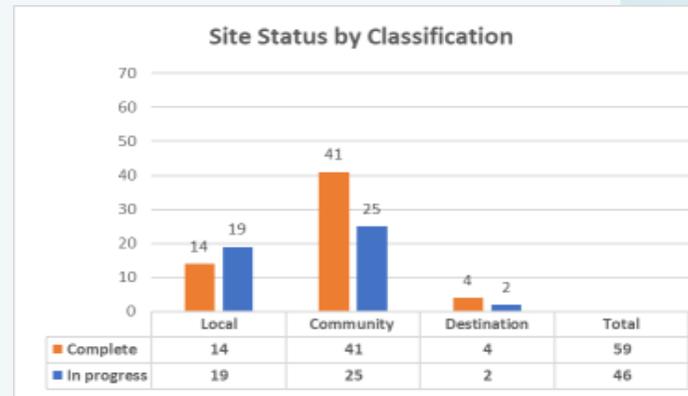
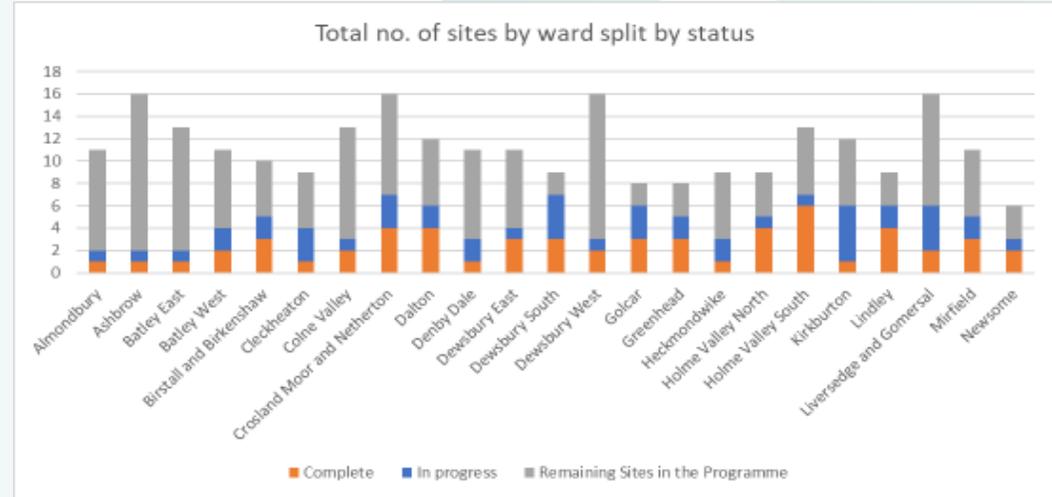
- 4x Play Inspectors covering all KC and H&N\* play areas
  - Tasks include safety inspections, maintenance and repairs that are required.
  - Reduction of 2x Play GM operatives due to service change, who previously supported the grounds maintenance of play areas.
- Inspection frequency depends on classification and footfall:
  - Average inspection frequency
    - Destination: weekly
    - Community: monthly
    - Local play areas: quarterly
- £16,000 from central funds for play area maintenance (e.g. equipment repairs and spares)
  - Supplemented by income generation e.g. Installation of S106 or Playable Spaces sites by small in-house Construction Team (who are also supporting the Inspection Team)

\*Nb. There are 59 play areas located on H&N land. Inspections, play area maintenance, grounds maintenance and repairs of these sites equates to approximately £75k (as quoted in 2024).



# Achievements

- **41%** through the programme:
  - 59 sites **complete**
  - 43 sites in **progress**
- Increase of **141% Play Value**  
*(average of completed sites)*
- **£782k additional funding** secured to support sites





# Challenges



## Increased costs

Material costs have increased, and staffing costs have either increased or have been introduced since the original budgets were set. Therefore, funding is being stretched, and the same value for money is not being achieved.



## Expectations

The original budgets accommodated the removal of traditional equipment from local play areas; however, these play areas are being retained and infrastructure invested into without additional funding provided.



## Variety of facilities

Current budgets only allow for a restricted range of equipment and types of play. Some budgets only allow for a refurbishment of existing features. Implementation of natural playable spaces are a challenge due to the reduced workforce unable to maintain them.



## Resources

The programme is being delivered by a smaller team which impacts the programme timeline e.g. PDOs, LAs, GM and management support  
Maintenance revenue budgets to maintain the sites has reduced due to council-wide savings



# Challenges: Increased Costs

Tables showing example cost increases over the last 5 years

Item	2020 Cost	2025 Cost	% increase
Metal Multiplay (ages 6 to 12)	£17,390	£28,290	63
Toddler Multiplay (small)	£7,230	£10,810	50
Toddler Multiplay (medium)	£14,360	£22,340	56
Timber Tangle Climbing Unit	£ 2,910	£4,360	50
2-bay swing unit	£1,870	£2,890	55
1-bay basket swing	£3,210	£4,760	48
Viking Swing	£6,040	£10,310	71
Wheelchair roundabout	£5,310	£7,760	46
Roundabout	£1,440	£2,110	47
Spinning Dish	£2,830	£3,560	26
Seesaw	£2,330	£3,810	64
Kompan Supernova	£3,880	£4,360	12
Trim Trail	£3,530	£5,800	64

Item	2020 Cost	2025 Cost	% increase
Balance Beam	£250	£410	64
Monkey Bars	£1,270	£1,920	51
Imaginative play panels	£1,320	£2,410	83
Sensory Music Pipes	£1,520	£2,270	49
1.2m Embankment Slide	£2,160	£3,700	71
Single 20m zipline	£5,850	£9,070	55
Goal end with Basketball Hoop	£3,710	£8,070	118
Metal Bin	£449	£675	50
Recycled plastic bench	£327	£603	84
Flat swing seat	£41	£85	108
Pod swing seat	£123	£249	102
Bonded rubber mulch surfacing m2 (eco-mulch)	£70m2	£79m2 (average)	13

# Challenges: Site Budgets

- Original March 2019 capital budgets\*:

- Local: £10,000
- Community: £69,000
- Destination: £varies by site

\*Original budget assumed full amount for capital investment

- Revised October 2019 capital budgets\*\*:

- Local: £16,575 (£19,500 incl. fees)
- Community: £50,575 (£59,500 incl. fees)
- Destination: £varies by site (-15% professional fees)

\*\*Accommodating for increased budget for local play areas to provide infrastructure and professional LA fees for all projects

# Challenges: Community Play Area Cost Comparison

Item	2020 Cost	2025 Cost	
Metal Multiplay (ages 6 to 12)	£17,390	£28,290	
2-bay swing unit	£1,870	£2,890	
Roundabout	£1,440	£2,110	
Seesaw	£2,330	£3,810	
Metal Bin	£449	£675	
Recycled plastic bench	£328	£603	
Surfacing e.g. 250m2	£17,500	£19,750	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£41,307</b>	<b>£58,128</b>	<b>41% increase</b>

Excludes contingency, installation, signage, planting etc.



## Next steps

1. Gather feedback and comments from Scrutiny panel to shape the future of the programme.
2. Review the programme considering options to deliver the remaining sites with an asset led approach.
3. Review modifications to the Strategy and return to Cabinet late summer 2026.



# Feedback & Questions

