

MUGA – PROGRESS POST MT MEETING 9 AUGUST

After MT met, 9 August, although in principle the idea was supported, concerns were expressed about ongoing costs and the transfer of the facility to community ownership.

An outcome from the meeting was to arrange a fact finding visit to another LA where a similar project had been undertaken, with successful transfer to community ownership. Issues to be considered were the ongoing maintenance and insurance costs and how the facility could be managed in the local community, any obstacles faced and how these had been overcome

Potential questions

1. Ownership – how had communities been involved so that they were keen to have a MUGA and it was an accepted part of the community
2. Management and maintenance – who managed the facility, covered costs to clean, repair and maintain to H & S requirements
3. Had ownership transferred from LA to parish council / community group or had alternative ownership been stated at the outset. For both options, how had this been achieved?
4. Were there any issues raised during the project that had not been considered?
5. How were the key issues faced and how were they overcome

LC suggested that DS, SW (MT), RF, JD (Officers) and PT (Portfolio holder) be involved in the visit.

Prior to arranging a visit, RF and JD undertook further research with several LAs and the potential contractor. It was considered that answers to these questions would determine if the visit went ahead.

Responses

Bradford Metropolitan District Council (CPA score 3* improving well)

Michael Priestley - Technical Manager (01274 432685)

(Spoken to Michael – happy to arrange a site visit)

- Bradford currently have 34 MUGA's and will be rolling out another 5 for 2007/08
- All MUGA's are managed and maintained by the District Council with none in community or Parish Council ownership.
- General maintenance is incorporated into the Parks budget
- They only require minimal maintenance that includes weekly sweeping and the occasional touch up to paintwork.
- No additional work has to be written into the grounds maintenance contract as the District Council street clean programme covers the weekly sweeping.
- They estimate that annual maintenance costs for each MUGA has never been more than £1000.
- Insurance for each site is incorporated into the general parks and open space cover with no additional costs
- They have not experienced any incidents of major vandalism and work closely with Lightmain to address any structure / technical problems that may occur.
- Many of their MUGA's are in very deprived wards but the number of reported vandalism / youth disorder incidents are very low.
- They have worked with Lightmain for 10 years and have been extremely happy with the service they have received

Initial groundwork issues to be considered

- MUGA's are very heavy units and careful consideration has to be given when choosing and preparing the space.
- Bradford District Council did experience some problems with their first few MUGA's i.e. flooded pitches, maintenance of gates and stonework etc.
- The most successful MUGAs have been open access with no gates and rounded corners, this has led to fewer incidents of bullying, reduced maintenance costs and offered a better standard of play for the young people.
- No gates have led to a reduction in noise. The District Council have carried out noise tests / assessments all of which have reported no rise in noise levels due to the provision of a MUGA.
- The issue of flooding can be addressed by the use of an open texture, porous surface.
- They suggest that pitch lines be laid out for no more than 3 different sports. This reduces confusion with painted lines on the tarmac. The 3 most popular sports played on MUGAs in Bradford are football, cricket and basketball all of which work well together.

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (CPA score 3* improving well)

Dave Gill / Jo Birch – Parks and playground Managers 01226 774356

(spoken to Dave - happy to arrange site visit)

- 15 MUGAs in place
- All managed and maintained by the Borough Council
- Some MUGAs are supported by local community partnerships. These partnerships meet every few months and are used to report any incidents of vandalism or problems to the Borough Council. Lead officers from the Council also sit on the community group to take away any actions from the meetings. These groups act as the eyes and ear for the MUGA and do not have any management responsibility for the facility.
- Areas with MUGAs have reported a reduction in ASB and kids hanging around on the street, it offers young people a meeting point that is visible to the rest of the community.
- MUGAs have been welcomed by the police and youth organisations as it gives them access to large groups of young people and enables them to work with them in a constructive way.
- Programmes have been led by the Community Safety teams / CDRP with great success
- Maintenance costs are minimal with the only regular cost being sweeping once a week. MUGAs have been designed to enable the street cleaning machines to have access to them in order to quickly sweep the area. This cost is incorporated into the street cleaning budget and paid through mainstream funding.
- Minimal reports of vandalism but this is due to extra money being spent on the MUGA at the outset. They suggest that money should be invested into good quality / heavy frameworks that are nearly impossible to bend or break.
- Open access MUGAs have been very successful as they reduce the amount of bullying
- The majority of their MUGAs are lit but the lights are on timers and turn off at 9pm. This has been agreed with residents as an appropriate time. In some cases where lighting was kept on until 11pm, young people were congregating on the MUGAs later in the evening and problems occurred with noise and ASB. This has now stopped and residents are happy with the MUGAs being used until 9pm

Issues to consider when installing

- The Borough Council found that consultation prior to installation was essential. They consulted with local residents who would be directly affected by the MUGA. They received mixed responses to the consultation, all positive from the young people but some residents had concerns. Following on from MUGAs now being in place, they

receive minimal complaints from residents and the majority of people have welcomed the additional facility.

- Identifying a suitable location for a MUGA can be difficult. The facility can not be too close to local properties as balls going into gardens and noise could become a problem. However;
- It is useful to have the MUGA overseen by a certain amount of local properties in order to have some informal policing of the facility. This balance is hard to get!

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (CPA score 3* Improving Well)

Andrew Burton – Landscape Design Manager 01709 822118

- 2 MUGAs in stalled early 2007, in existing Victorian parks
- Consultation with “friends groups”, local communities and park users for both
- LA covers maintenance and insurance costs for both sites
- No plans to pass assets to community ownership
- Open access, not lit. Part of bigger parks that are closed at lighting up time
- No evaluation completed on impact on ASB or youth disorder, but overall positive feedback from communities
- Court marked out for football, basketball and cricket and are well used
- Litter bins provided and 1 has seating pods
- Positive comments about Lightmain as a contractor in terms of service and quality of workmanship and materials

Lancaster City Council

Richard Hammond – Leisure Development Manager (01524) 582000

- Different types of MUGA's, some in recreational sites, some in target wards (as South Lakeland's MUGA's will be).
- Wouldn't consider handing over the target ward based MUGA's, as they wouldn't expect the community to manage them and take the liability.
- On average, the authority spends £2,000 on maintenance per MUGA

Spoken to Carlisle City Council (Richard Lewis) and Barrow Borough Council (Chris Athersmith), much the same situation as Lancaster, in terms of managing the liability internally.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (CPA score 4*)

Graham Helm – Manager PAYP scheme 01254 297038

(Happy to arrange a site visit)

- 7/8 brand new purpose built facilities
- Approx the same number of existing play surfaces that have been adapted to MUGAs
- Have had them for approx 3 / 4 years
- All are Council operated and managed, with no plans to pass into community ownership
- All open access, but do have issues over “assumed ownership” by some groups
- Mixture of facilitated use with sports coaches and youth workers and work ongoing with local young people to respect other sports e.g. ladies netball team can use the MUGA as much as football teams
- Main sport is football for unplanned sessions
- Main facilitated sports are football, handball, basketball and cricket
- Considered to be of value and used by PAYP scheme
- About 50% have lighting and the lit MUGAs have not attracted gatherings of young people, although this was a community concern
- Vandalism is not an issue, but litter bins are necessary
- Insurance covered by existing premiums