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**Risk control**  
**Skateparks**  
A Guide for Local Authorities



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# Skateparks

## A Guide for Local Authorities

### Introduction

This guidance is prepared to provide a broad overview for the many considerations that a Local Authority needs to address whilst looking at the feasibility of developing local Skateparks.

It is further suggested that at the earliest convenience consideration should be given to compliance with 'BS EN 14974:2019 - Skateparks - safety requirements and test methods'<sup>1</sup>.

This document applies to skateparks for public use intended for the use of skateboards, other roller sports equipment and BMX bikes.

It specifies safety requirements and requirements for testing and marking, information supplied by the manufacturer, information for users, as well as for inspection and maintenance to protect users and third parties (e.g. spectators) from hazards, as far as possible, when using a skatepark as intended, or as can be reasonably expected.

This standard does not apply to bike facilities modelled from ground, gravel or rock.

Skateboarding has been a recreational activity within the UK for decades yet in some areas remains confined to almost derelict or unused areas. This is seen by some as leading to conflict with certain communities yet others who have embraced the culture providing dedicated areas suggest that it has many positive influences including reducing crime, in particular young persons involvement in criminality<sup>2</sup>, increasing creativity in developing minds<sup>3</sup> and lowering childhood obesity levels<sup>4</sup>.

With skateboarding now being included as part of the upcoming 2020 Olympic Games there is an even greater onus on local authorities to explore the need to develop facilities locally as the sport is set to potentially increase in popularity.

As the Independent recognises in its piece on skateboarding, 'Skateboarding defies the neoliberal logic of the city by making it a playground for all'<sup>5</sup> Skateboarding has transcended to new levels and is now 'no longer just for punkish, subcultural rebels – it's everywhere, for everyone'.

For any local authority planning on either developing or receiving planning approvals for a development it is essential that there are two principle and equally important areas to focus on:

- Usability and
- Functionality

Examples of usability would include such aspects as:

- Speed management within the Park
- Degree of difficulty
- Views and flow levels for users to see each other to ensure maximum safety

Examples of Functionality would include:

- The parks capacity
- Attached seating and social areas
- Safety considerations including appropriate drainage
- Visual appeal
- Appropriate landscaping creating an area where people want to be

For a park to become a success it requires both of these aspects to be integrated into any design recognising that this is a simple recreational area that should attract people to it so it must be both visually and functionally attractive.

The design must cater for high demand levels. A park that only allows one skater to use it at a time will not be successful so designers need to create various 'zones' to allow for different types of skateboarding.

### Skatepark Design

The skatepark should be designed with multiple users in mind. Therefore creating different areas within the park where multiple users can explore their creativity is important. Thinking of the park as a multi-occupancy facility with the various parts of the park having different functions allows for more users than just an 'open plan' facility.

<sup>1</sup> BS EN 14974:2019 - Skateparks - safety requirements and test methods <https://www.en-standard.eu/bs-en-14974-2019-skateparks-safety-requirements-and-test-methods/>

<sup>2</sup> Tony Hawk Foundation 2009 Law Enforcement study <https://tonyhawkfoundation.org/content/pdf/2009-THF-police-survey.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2018/4/2/childs-play-billion-dollar-foundation-sets-its-sights-on-playgrounds-and-skate-parks>

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.sph.uwa.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/2559530/WHY-CONSIDER-SKATING-AND-SKATE-PARKS-AS-A-PUBLIC-HEALTH-ISSUE.pdf](http://www.sph.uwa.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2559530/WHY-CONSIDER-SKATING-AND-SKATE-PARKS-AS-A-PUBLIC-HEALTH-ISSUE.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> 'Skateboarding defies the neoliberal logic of the city by making it a playground for all' 21/2/2019 Independent News by Iain Borden. Professor of Architecture, UCL. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/design/skateboarding-london-city-playground-university-college-a8790016.html>

Creating these individual 'rooms' within the park in much the same way as designing a house or office layout would require thought as to what activity was to be delivered in it allows for these individual areas to be used independently of one another.

An example of this would be an authority provides a 6000sqft area for a park that is designed into two large areas of 3000sqft each. This would allow only two users at a time when this size could possibly accommodate 40-50 users at any one time. Whereas if the park were designed into different activity areas such as 10 rooms it allows for many more persons to be active at any one time. It further creates more interest for the spectators and those waiting to take part.

Whatever the size or amount of 'rooms' within the park, it is vital that cosmetically it appeals to the users. This cosmetic appeal is used to stimulate the creativity of the user and generate more interest.

## Skateboarding Disciplines

There are principally two types of boarder. There those that prefer the:

- **Street Terrain:** This relates to the type of environment where many learn the skill and use generally available social features such as rails, kerbs and jumps
- **Transition Terrain:** this relates to those who favour hollows, curves and bowls

Both types of environment needs to be considered and facilitated within every park.

## Construction Considerations

Authorities considering construction or looking to decide a planning application must also consider the construction of such parks with many providers placing emphasis on cost savings that can be made with statements such as:

- 'For a fraction of the cost of...'
- 'Lifetime warranties'
- 'What the Professional boarders prefer'

It is important to think about the users whose skills will quickly grow beyond the capabilities of the park offering. The cost of creating the facility in comparison to ongoing maintenance, particularly where cost challenges the design. Ongoing operating and maintenance of the facility over at least a 10 year period. Above-ground ramps and prefabricated structures, particularly polymer, wood, and steel materials, have a documented history of escalating maintenance concerns. With many of skateparks being closed after a few years due to safety concerns.

Any skatepark is only as strong as its weakest element. Whenever a structure uses a steel transition plate to bridge the surface of the slab with the surface of the ramp, it doesn't matter how strong the ramp is. The transition plate will be the point of failure. No skatepark should ever feature transition plates.

Prefabricated ramps are ideal for temporary, private or residential applications, such as a backyard ramp, but have demonstrated a pattern of failure when used as municipal facilities.

Concrete is unequivocally the only material you should be considering for your public municipal skatepark.

Proper signage is essential with regular inspections to assess vandalism, damage graffiti that could undermine the signage

## Facilities

Any newly developed skatepark needs to ensure that it caters for the needs of those using the space.

Consideration must be given to basic seating, simple hydration as this is a sports centre and toilet facilities. Further there needs to be litter bins and if contained within a grassed park dog toilet bins to ensure it remains clean for the enjoyment of persons attending. Further considerations include the possibility of functional lighting and the use of CCTV.

Whatever the Authority decides it must engage with the target group who will be most likely to use it to ensure that the park is a prized local asset rather than a huge white elephant and money pit.

## Risk Assessment, Monitoring and Review

Fundamentally, skateparks present inherent risks by virtue of the activities that they encourage to be undertaken. The challenge for local authorities and others who provide skatepark facilities is to strike a balance between encouraging users to enjoy the utility of such facilities in order to maximise their value, and not exposing the users to a significant or unreasonable risk of harm.

In order to achieve this, organisations must rely upon the relevant British Standards, and also ensure that a comprehensive risk assessment is completed for each park, which is reviewed at regular frequencies.

## References

- 1 BS EN 14974:2019 - Skateparks - safety requirements and test methods <https://www.en-standard.eu/bs-en-14974-2019-skateparks-safety-requirements-and-test-methods/>
- 2 Tony Hawk Foundation 2009 Law Enforcement study <https://tonyhawkfoundation.org/content/pdf/2009-THF-police-survey.pdf>
- 3 Inside Philanthropy - <https://www.insidephilanthropy.com/home/2018/4/2/childs-play-billion-dollar-foundation-sets-its-sights-on-playgrounds-and-skate-parks>
- 4 Twin Cities Pioneering Press.com (Fridley Elementary study) - [http://www.sph.uwa.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/2559530/WHY-CONSIDER-SKATING-AND-SKATE-PARKS-AS-A-PUBLIC-HEALTH-ISSUE.pdf](http://www.sph.uwa.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2559530/WHY-CONSIDER-SKATING-AND-SKATE-PARKS-AS-A-PUBLIC-HEALTH-ISSUE.pdf)
- 5 'Skateboarding defies the neoliberal logic of the city by making it a playground for all' 21/2/2019 Independent News by Iain Borden. Professor of Architecture, UCL. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/design/skateboarding-london-city-playground-university-college-a8790016.html>

## Further information

For access to further RMP Resources you may find helpful in reducing your organisation's cost of risk, please access the RMP Resources or RMP Articles pages on our website. To join the debate follow us on our LinkedIn page.



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