



Leisure Options Appraisal For The BMX Tracks Site at Huncote

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In 2014 Blaby District Council (BDC) supported Huncote Hornets with a Sport England Capital Fund Application to build a BMX Track to the rear of Huncote Leisure Centre (adjacent to an existing small but well used casual use BMX track).
- 1.1.2 The application was successful and the track was funded by Sport England with contributions from BDC, Huncote Parish Council and Huncote Hornets. The funding required open community use at all times with the exception of club sessions for a period of 7 Years (this has now expired).
- 1.1.3 It was known that the track was built on a former landfill site and the construction was tailored to this.
- 1.1.4 BDC entered into a lease with Huncote Hornets from 14 August 2014 for use of the track on the Council's land. The lease contained a red line area for the site including the small casual use track as well as the main competition track. The lease expired on the 30 June 2021.
- 1.1.5 In April 2023, a new lease was issued to Huncote Hornets. This was never concluded and as such there is no current lease in existence and no rent having been paid during that time although it was only a "peppercorn rent if demanded."
- 1.1.6 Huncote Hornets as host club developed the club to a National level hosting events including Regional and National Championships attracting significant numbers to site and delivering financial benefit to the club and economic benefit to the surrounding area.
- 1.1.7 In 2019 the Council became aware of unauthorised development on site that might compromise the landfill site and put users at risk namely the installation of floodlights, erection of fencing and the use of a generator on site. These incidents and the absence of necessary documentation and assurance of site safety for major events, have led to BDC officer concerns about the capacity and capability of the club to fully understand the risks of operating on a landfill site.
- 1.1.8 The Council did not receive a request for approval for these installations and subsequent checks by the Council's retained landfill consultant highlighted areas requiring rectification (as a direct consequence of the unauthorised installations and use).
- 1.1.9 The Council undertook these rectification works in default in 2020/21 and agreed a payment plan with the Huncote Hornets for a share of the costs.
- 1.1.10 In 2020 routine land fill gas inspections identified high levels of methane near the leisure centre building and as such the Council closed the leisure centre and the site with immediate effect.
- 1.1.11 The Council has invested over £700,000 to date in active gas management and the readings on the rear of the site are now within acceptable levels with the rear field and public footpaths opening from 16th August 2023. However, there are still some boreholes in between the BMX track and the leisure centre that are not yet down to safe levels defined as 5% Lowest Explosive Level. As such further work is required to bring these down (scheduled for late October/early November) and in the meantime the track will remain closed.
- 1.1.12 With the BMX track area continuing to be closed it allows the Council an opportunity to undertake an options appraisal as to the BMX tracks future.

- 1.1.13 In September 2023, the Council commissioned the Active Communities Consultancy (ACC) to undertake an independent options appraisal of potential leisure use and management options of the site.
- 1.1.14 An arial shot of the BMX site and Huncote Leisure Centre is shown on Figure 1.

Figure 1: Ariel Shot of the Huncote BMX Tracks Site



1.2 Project Brief and Scope

1.2.1 The scope of the options appraisal covers the following:

1. To summarise the range of benefits of having an operational BMX track located at Huncote Leisure Centre.
2. To highlight the risks of having an operational BMX track located at Huncote Leisure Centre due to the on-going management of the landfill site i.e. are there any further risks and if so how would they be mitigated.
3. On the basis of points 1 & 2, to recommend whether each of the BMX Tracks should re-open or not (assuming safe gas levels can be established).
4. If not, what options are available for the Council to do with the two tracks.
5. If the recommendation is to re-open, what are the available options with regards to management and usage arrangements based on the original funding (grant award), the ownership of the track and the responsibility of the land owner for on-going site and user safety.
6. What would be the financial liability/risks to the Council in the future if we need to close it down again due to gas levels rising and how would we mitigate against those risks.

2 Methodology

2.1.1 The project has been carried out through stages:

- Project inception and site familiarisation
- Consultation
- Assessment of the social value yielded by the site
- Development and appraisal of alternative options for the site
- Development and appraisal of alternative management options for the BMX tracks if retained
- Risk register for the site
- Reporting.

2.1.2 Our detailed methodology is set out in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Methodology

Stage 1: Project Inception and Site Familiarisation	Key Outputs
Project inception meeting to establish: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information requirements• Project scope• Project plan.	Meeting notes Project plan.
Site visit to understand the BMX tracks, their condition and scope for other uses for the land.	Meeting notes Long list of site options.

Stage 2: Consultation	Key Outputs
BDC Environmental Services and Environmental Health	Understanding of the health and safety issues with the site and restrictions to its use.
BDC Leisure & Tourism	Consideration regarding the social value of the BMX tracks Exploration on the fit between the BMX tracks and the Council's strategic approach to sport and physical activity Alternative uses for the site as an active place.
BDC Property and Assets	Ongoing maintenance and safety costs for the site Alternative uses for the site.
Greenfield Technical Services	Understanding of the safety issues that affect the continued use of the BMX track or alternatives uses for the site.
Huncote Parish Council	To understand the extent to which the HPC values the BMX tracks To capture any views and ideas about alternative uses for the site.
Everyone Active/SLM (Face to face meeting whilst undertaking site visit)	To understand any issues caused by the BMX tracks for the leisure centre operation Alternative uses for the site Explore the option for Everyone Active to manage the BMX tracks as a community facility Explore if this could be financially sustainable.
British Cycling	Explore the need for the BMX tracks Explore whether there is any funding or other support for BMX from British Cycling.
Huncote Hornets	Understand the social value gained from the track (e.g. overall usage, usage amongst young people etc..) Understand the club's capacity to manage the site

Stage 2: Consultation	Key Outputs
	Explore alternative management options for the site.
Sport England	To find out if they have undertaken any social value assessments of BMX tracks To understand the current policy position regarding BMX What alternative uses for the site would be acceptable to Sport England? Identifying any funding opportunities.

Stage 3. Assessment of Social Value for the BMX track	Key Outputs
ACC will undertake an assessment of social value for the BMX tracks pulling from any usage data gathered and consultation.	Social value assessment included in the final report.

Stage 4: Development and appraisal of alternative options for the site.	Key Outputs
ACC will develop a list of long options for the site for the Council to consider and shortlist.	Short list of alternative options for the site.
Proposed evaluation criteria for the Council to consider. This was finalised at meeting with the Council project stakeholders.	Agreed evaluation criteria for alternative site options.
Assessment of the shortlisted options against the agreed evaluation criteria.	Assessment of alternatives for the site.

Stage 5: Development and appraisal of alternative management options for the BMX tracks.	Key Outputs
ACC will develop a list of management options for the BMX tracks for the Council to consider.	Short list of alternative management options for the BMX tracks.
Proposed evaluation criteria for the Council to consider. This will be finalised at meeting with the Council project stakeholders.	Agreed evaluation criteria for alternative management options for the BMX tracks.
Assessment of the shortlisted management against the agreed evaluation criteria.	Long list of site options.

Stage 6. Risk register for the site	Key Outputs
ACC will pull together a risk register for the site including alternative management arrangements.	Risk register including risks and mitigations via Microsoft Excel.

Stage 7. Reporting	Key Outputs
Draft report based on the project methodology for review. Following the Council's comments we will produce the final report.	Risk register including risks and mitigations via Microsoft Excel.

- 2.1.3 The club is focused on community use as much as competitive BMX including running sessions for children with physical and mental disabilities.
- 2.1.4 Huncote Parish Council view the BMX track as a major asset to the area including economic benefits to local businesses when there are major events at the track.
- 2.1.5 British Cycling view the facility a significant asset for the sport in the Midlands.
- 2.1.6 Nationally, BMX attracts a different cohort of young people to more traditional sports and provides an alternative vehicle to address inactivity.

3 Options Appraisal Summary and Conclusions

3.1 Site Options Appraisal

- 3.1.1 Combining the finance and risk appraisal with the non-financial and social value assessment provides the ranking of options shown in Table 7.1. This is based on Red (negative or high risk), Amber (neutral or medium risk) and Green (positive or low risk).

REDACTED INDIVIDUAL OPTIONS BROKEN DOWN

Table 7.1: Consolidated Ranking of Site Options

Site Option Ranking	Financial and Risk Appraisal	Non-Financial and social value Appraisal	Overall Appraisal
1) Retain BMX as a community facility for day time use only			
	Offers the most optimal balance between finance, managing risk and social value return		
2) Turn land into woodland			
	Ranked 2 as lower potential social return than BMX track.		

Site Option Ranking	Financial and Risk Appraisal	Non-Financial and social value Appraisal	Overall Appraisal
3) Retain land as open space			
	Overall appraisal “amber” as comparatively low risk with potentially low social return.		
4) Fence off site and wait for gas levels to stabilise			
	Ranked 4 due to low healthy and safety risks.		
5) Continue with BMX facility provided through Huncote Hornets via light lease			
	Overall assessment of “red” due to high financial and other risks. Lack of confidence in Huncote Hornets adhering to lease conditions.		
6) Alternative use for other sports			
	Overall assessment of “red” due to high financial and other risks. Ranked lower than retaining BMX tracks due to there not being established users and clubs.		

3.1.2 Table 7.1 indicates that generally the higher level of financial and other risks the higher level of potential non-financial and social value benefits.

3.1.3 The options to retain the BMX track as a community facility or **return the site to woodland** offer the **most potentially favourable** solutions for the site.

3.1.4 Continuing with the **BMX track under the current lease with Huncote Hornets** or using the site for **other organised sport offer potentially the least favourable solution** because of the comparatively high financial and other risks including health and safety.

3.2 Management Options Appraisal – If the Council decides to retain BMX

Combining the finance and risk appraisal with the non-financial and social value assessment provides the ranking of management options shown in Table 7.2. This is based on Red (negative or high risk), Amber (neutral or medium risk) and Green (positive or low risk).

Table 7.2: Consolidated Ranking of Management Options

Management Option Ranking	Financial and Risk Appraisal	Non-Financial and social value Appraisal	Overall Appraisal
1) Hybrid management option: BDC or Everyone Active managing the site through a management committee which includes the Huncote Hornets as a stakeholder.			
	Ranked 1 due to modest financial and other risk and comparatively high potential social value. It would offer an approach to keep the Huncote Hornets engaged with the running of the BMX track.		
2) Operate the BMX site as part of the Everyone Active leisure contract as a community facility.			
	Ranked 2 due to modest financial and other risks and comparatively high potential social value.		
3) BDC Operates the site as a community facility (daytime only) in a similar way to parks			
	Ranked 3 due to lower levels of risk transfer than managing the facility through Everyone Active.		
4) Leasing the whole outdoor Huncote site to a third party (e.g. the Land Trust).			
	Ranked 4 due to lower levels of risk transfer due to the uncertainty of a new leaseholder. There would also be uncertainty around social value and how the leaseholder will use the site. It is also unlikely that a leaseholder would be willing to pay a rent for the site.		
5) Heavy lease with Huncote Hornets			
	Ranked jointly 5 due to health and safety risks associated with Huncote Hornet running the site due to their track record of adhering to lease conditions. This has created a lack of confidence from the Council.		
5) Continue with BMX facility through light lease with Huncote Hornets			
	Ranked jointly 5 due to health and safety risks associated with Huncote Hornet running the site due to their track record of adhering to lease conditions. This has created a lack of confidence from the Council.		

- 3.2.1 The options to retain the BMX track as a community facility and manage this through either **Everyone Active or directly by BDC** offer the **most potentially favourable management solutions for the site. This could be enhanced by creating a joint management committee potentially involving Everyone Active, BDC and Huncote Hornets.**
- 3.2.2 An initial proposal from Everyone Active provides a management solution where SLM act as Management Agent for the BMX Track. They would manage the site operationally, opening and closing the facility and taking bookings. This would require a fee per annum and the Council would pick up maintenance and insurance cost. Any income generated would go back to the Council.
- 3.2.3 Given the complexities of the site managing it through a voluntary organisation or club such as Huncote Hornets via a lease represents a high risk strategy for the Council.

3.3 Conclusions

- 3.3.1 There is no site use or management option for the BMX site at Huncote that involves zero cost to the Council. The site will need to be monitored and managed by the Council to ensure gas levels are safe for the foreseeable future.
- 3.3.2 Similarly the health safety risks associated with site being a former landfill site sit with the Council.
- 3.3.3 The option to retain the BMX facility for community daytime use provides a balance of financial and other risk against a Social Value return.
- 3.3.4 Leasing the site to a voluntary organisation or club for BMX use or any other sporting activity presents BDC with risks as it does not allow sufficient control or assurance that the site is being managed safely.
- 3.3.5 Should the Council wish to retain BMX the optimum management solutions are either including the BMX track as part of the Everyone Active leisure contract or; BDC managing the facility directly in a similar way to parks and open spaces. This could be enhanced by creating a joint management committee potentially involving Everyone Active, BDC and Huncote Hornets.
- 3.3.6 Under this arrangement there could be a phased approach initially opening the facility for daytime use only. If gas levels remain low for a period of time the joint management committee could then consider reintroducing floodlights and other electrical installations to enable the track to be used for major events once more.
- 3.3.7 Everyone Active have proposed an initial solution based on them becoming an agent for the site which would require an agent fee per annum. The Council would need to insure the site and be responsible for maintenance and health and safety. Individual and club users would be charged to use the BMX track with the income going to BDC.
- 3.3.8 Any investment in the site as a BMX facility or other sporting facility runs the risk of the return not being fully realised, in the event that the site has to close again in the future due to unsafe gas levels.
- 3.3.9 Regardless of which option the Council decides to pursue, it is likely that the BMX area will need to be fenced off in order to meet insurance requirements.
- 3.3.10 A risk register for the site is provided in Appendix 2 (separate Excel document).

Appendix 1: List of Consultees

Julia Smith	Chief Executive, Blaby District Council
John Richarson	Executive Director, Blaby District Council
Nigel Grundy	Councillor, Blaby District Council
Anna Farish	Environmental Services Manager, Blaby District Council
Phil Fasham	Environmental Health Manager, Blaby District Council
Phil Turner	Health, Leisure & Tourism Service Manager, Blaby District Council
Chris Portess	Property & Assets Services Manager, Blaby District Council
Stuart Bacon	Parish Clerk, Huncote Parish Council
James Naylor	Area Contracts Manager, Everyone Active
Casey Daniell	Huncote Hornets, BMX Club
Jan Freakley	Huncote Hornets, BMX Club
Kathy O'Neil	Head of Investment, Sport England
Marcus Twomey	Head of Facilities, British Cycling
Steve Johnson	Sport Manager (North), British Cycling

Appendix 2: Site Risk Register

See separate Excel file.



THE ACTIVE COMMUNITIES
CONSULTANCY

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