



# What does the new decade offer Children's Play?

**A welcome outlook for the play sector is to stimulate continued government interest, attention and hopefully funding.**

PLAY ENGLAND has brought public consultation to the fore and raised the natural play profile to be part of local authority play planning. The play industry has come of age as dedicated exhibition, PlayFair, enters its third year this June.

We have seen moves from a primarily risk-averse approach to one that

**we've moved from a primarily risk-averse approach to one that encourages challenge**

encourages challenge, assessing risks and the thrill and reward it gives children. A normal part of mainstream play planning, design and delivery now includes accessibility, meeting wider community needs and making use of existing natural elements.

**Turn-key**

For many local authorities, play area development will continue to depend on

third-party turn-key provision of consultation, design, installation and maintenance. Short term, local authorities, play manufacturers and Play England are all focused on delivering the Playbuilder and Pathfinder projects to 2010 and 2011 deadlines.

More broadly, with Playbuilder and Pathfinder allocations going to Children's Services, others are now becoming involved in play provision beyond its traditional home within the Parks departments. The

growing involvement of other departments and stakeholders, as they see how play also meets their agendas, is a positive development. Play England's Play Shaper training for police, planners, transport, health officers builds on this.

Sustainability for environmental and financial reasons is likely to be centre stage although electronic play's need for electric power is an interesting counter trend.

Having evolved into a diverse and

multi-disciplinary sector, a long term objective for play will be for the many different interests – playworkers, manufacturers, adventure play and natural play – to come together and develop a greater understanding of the opportunities for growth. ■



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