



Association of
Play Industries
www.api-play.org

Teenage Provision - Teen Shelters and Skateparks

*The API hears from Chris Dodd at Playground Services
who is well experienced in teenage provision and consultation*

Skateboarding - an Olympic event? Not in 2012, maybe one day. Meanwhile, skateparks continue to develop as this popular sport appealing to a wide age range grows. Park use varies from unpopular to heavy. The more popular locations are likely to share a common denominator: Consultation - with the potential users.

Teenagers exist! But in many places it seems the local population would prefer they did not. Some residents appear to regard the teenage group as a threat to their safety, security and house values. As so often in our society, all are unreasonably 'tarred with the same brush'.

Teenagers need somewhere to meet and 'hang out'. Many studies, of which the one by the Thames Valley Police is the best known, show that shelters are successful in providing somewhere other than the Town Hall steps as a place simply 'to be'.

For the more active teenagers ball courts are popular and spectator areas for ball courts are good, after all the performers need to be seen. Skatepark provision is important too. With such a wide variety of options to ride from various forms of boards, into blades and bikes (even scooters) there are opportunities for many ages and abilities.

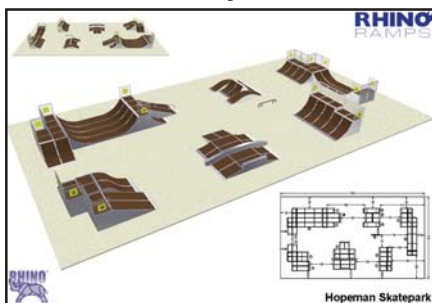
Skating is a sport and an extreme activity. Serious concentration is necessary to practice and achieve the tricks. Much of the on-site teaching is from the other users all helping each other to perfect their technique. Thus it is a social and team building activity too. Skating on the streets tends to be perceived as a nuisance due to the damage to steps, seats and kerbs used for 'grinding' along with the noise and the speed of the riders. Building a skate park does not eliminate use of the street, it is after all a street sport where the challenge is to ride any obstacle anywhere, but it will give a safer place to spend most of the time to perfect the skills and a place to gather as their own.

The selection of ball court, shelter or skatepark locations need to bear in mind not only the teenagers, but everyone else too. Some activities can be noisy. Balls banging on courts or grinding skaters late at night can be intrusive but often the late-night user is beyond their teenage years.

Consultation is the key to success

Working together where local authorities consult with the police and manufacturers and the intended users, good provision can be arranged for the benefit of all. Schemes which fail tend to be those where provision is because 'we must do something' and done without consultation and consideration of all the factors. Just throwing money about does not solve problems or cater for the teenagers. They are a thinking dexterous competent age group well able to express their own mind and if consulted will help achieve the solution acceptable to all. They do not want to be considered a problem!

Skate Park case study 1



Hopeman Skate/BMX Club, Moray, Scotland perfectly illustrates total community involvement in the development of a skate facility. Developed gradually between 2004 and 2007, this extensive park has been designed by the club members and paid for by their continuous and extensive fund raising.

The park has been built in phases with some ramps being relocated in the later phases. Naturally the skatepark is very well used (by some 400+ Club members), as it's exactly what the skaters want!

Skate Park case study 2



A skatepark replicating the features found in a typical environment gives children and teens their own space away from a playground setting. A range of planters, steps, and rails are blended in consultation with all parties to create the perfect park for all.

"A more grown up environment can be created for children and teens that they can take ownership of" comments Douglas Belfield, Record RSS Sales Director.

"Moving the wheeled sports away from the playground can be a good thing, parents with toddlers in the play area aren't bothered by noise or affected by teenage behaviour, whilst the other children don't feel like they are being watched over by adults who could deter them from using the facilities - they have their own space".

Streetwerx has been specially designed to mirror an urban street environment which incorporates planters for trees and shrubs.

Playline Design Rural Shelter



This shelter was installed just over a year ago at Chiseldon Primary School in Wiltshire. They chose it because this Playline Design Rural Shelter incorporated natural timber materials complimented with green HDPE panels for its rear panels and roof. The area is semi rural so such shelters were chosen for their natural appearance, robustness and modern design. With some twenty installed mostly in rural areas, the 'open design' appeals allowing easier policing of these in areas where teens and others may congregate at night.

Meeting Up - That's the point

SMP Playgrounds installed a Meeting Point shelter in Brightwell Recreational Ground, Northampton in early November 2007 as part of a six-thousand pound refurbishment project for the park.

