

Schools, Children and Youth

The parish population of the community is approximately 250 with many smaller hamlets and villages located nearby and includes over 100 children/youths. Within Peak Forest there is a primary school whose numbers have risen from 20 to 42 within the last six years. In September 2001 a playgroup was formed which is currently growing steadily in size. There is a recreation ground in the village but no other facilities for children or teenagers exist. In 1997/8 the existing old swings were removed from the recreation ground due to health and safety regulations.

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£40,000 for play ground

Peak Forest youngsters are benefiting this summer from a new playground which has been installed in the village.

The community facility, costing more than £40,000, was financed by a partnership of the Peak District National Park Authority, the Countryside Agency, Derbyshire County Council and local fundraising.

Hugh Barton, Secretary of the Peak Forest Village Management Committee, said: "It's a great new facility for local families, and visitors will be able to enjoy it too."

Ian Fullilove, the National Park Authority's Village Officer, said: "By working together, the village management committee, residents, local authorities and national agencies have provided a wonderful playground for youngsters growing up in this rural area."



Pictured with the new equipment: members of the committee Hugh Barton, Peter Hopley, Sue Coles and Harry Trent. BA03626A.

A project identified from the Discovering Villages Plan to install a new playground was being developed by the Village Management Committee and the Village Agent whilst work was being undertaken on the Village Plan. The new playground was officially opened in July 2003.

Toddler Group

Efforts are needed to rekindle interest in the parent and toddler group which is currently not functioning. Equipment for running this group exists. It may be possible to co-ordinate or rotate as a joint effort with surrounding smaller villages.

Playgroup

Peak Forest Playgroup was established in September 2001. The numbers are growing steadily and it is attracting children from surrounding locations. The capacity has recently been increased from 8 to 22 children and the number of sessions held per week from three to four (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday), with attendance rising from 24 to 44 sessions per week. The committee has finalised the prospectus and policies and now hopes to attract more children to support its long-term viability. Currently there are no outdoor play facilities although there is a proposal to provide this.

Articles are published regularly in the Village Newsletter to raise awareness of the Playgroup and advertising posters have been distributed to surrounding health centres to attract more children. The Playgroup recognises that further efforts are needed to ensure its long term viability and sources of funding are needed to provide extra facilities, for example, a secure outdoor play area.

Primary School

Peak Forest Primary (Church of England) Voluntary Aided School (4 ½ to 11yrs) is situated on the A623 Buxton/Chesterfield route. It is a fine example of an old Victorian school. There is a temporary building which is used as a canteen but is due for renewal in the near future. Recently the outdoor toilet block was abandoned and a toilet extension was built on to the school. The old toilet block has been converted for storage.



The number of pupils has doubled in the last six years and the school now experiences a very small floorspace to pupil ratio. Storage space is an issue together with the restricted outdoor area. An additional extension is now needed as is a garden/nature area to meet curriculum goals and to develop children's awareness of the environment.

In early spring 2003 a soft play safety surfacing was laid in the majority of the available play area but a provision for securing pedal bikes is needed. Sports and recreational facilities are inadequate – the indoor facility is the local village hall (Reading Room) a short walk and across the A623. The outdoor area is the village recreation ground which doesn't have any sports facilities, for example marked pitches or goal posts, and is subject to flooding annually.

Suggestions for a pavilion, football/cricket pitch, running track and a netball court on the recreation ground have been made. These could then be made available to the school and the community, and possible development of inter-school and/or inter-village sporting activities, for example the local Fell Race, school sports days, sports training (afterschool clubs, weekend clubs and school holiday activities). However, careful consideration would need to be given about these provisions, as the cost may be large compared to the benefits it might deliver.

Youth Club

It is recognised that young people within the community should be catered for in as many ways as possible.

The following suggestions have been made:

- To conduct a youth survey to establish the needs. e.g. clubs, activities, school holiday clubs etc.
- To provide transport to a nearby village town to enable access to their youth groups/clubs
- To provide a focal point for a youth scheme with the majority of activities occurring off-site, for example to access other activities such as climbing walls, outdoor pursuit centres, walks, trips, etc. Derbyshire County Council provide youth workers who could meet once a month with the children to organise such events.
- To bring in outside activities, for example a mobile skateboard ramp

The capacity to deliver any youth club provision needs to be carefully considered to avoid disappointing people if no help or facilities are forthcoming.

Other suggestions were to create a method to identify the need for providing village outings, such as a trip to Cadbury World or to organise a scheme where parents are trained to take children on short walks in the countryside during the summer months. Some of the ideas could be developed with assistance from existing community groups, for example the Amethyst Project.