**CHAIRMANS REPORT 2018**

2018/19 has been another great year for the Newmarket play park. As with previous years we have seen some changes in the committee, Donald Macleod has now resigned as a committee member, we wish him well for the future. Sharon Reid has come on board and has become a valued committee member; she has been instrumental in our most recent funding applications. Our committee now consists of 10 members of which there are7 directors and 3 committee members.

As always we have had a great response from volunteers and local businesses who support our fund raisers throughout the year which has been a huge benefit to the park. Without this support we would not be able to continue and we are very grateful for their time and contributions.

We started off 2018 with our AGM which was held in the Laxdale hall on the 19th of February and was well attended. The election of office bearers took place and our plans for the year ahead were put in motion.

The 3rd of March 2018 saw our first community maintenance day in the park where volunteers did some general tidying and maintenance to start off the year. A community skip was provided for general waste for the wider community. There was a fantastic turnout and some great work was done to kick off the year. These days have become an important part of our calendar, improving community relations and getting the wider community involved.

As part of our 2018 fundraising we had our first bag packing in the local co-op on the 21st of March. We had a great turn out from volunteers and raised some good funds for the park. Also in March we had word from Roddy Mackay our local councillor of some funding from the council which we could apply for and were put in touch with the local development officer Sharon Reid who helped us in the application for £4700. As part of our continuing development we identified some areas of improvement and to that end the local councillors Roddy MacKay, Neil MacKay along with the Loch a Tuath councillors gave £3100 in ward funds to support us.

April saw a return visit from our friends from the Bethel Christian College. This was their second visit to the park where they helped with some bridge repairs and laying bark in the zip line area. We are very grateful of their help and enjoy their visits. They will be very welcome if they decide to return in 2019. Also April saw the start of our grounds keeping season, again this year the park has been maintained by Nicolas Davis on a fortnightly basis.

On the 19th of May we had our first fun day fundraiser of the year in the park, it was a fantastic fun day, and by chance it happened to fall on the royal wedding day so as an added extra we had a live broadcast showing of the big day which went down well. As always we had our usual bouncy castles, bbq, candy floss, toy stalls, raffle, local baking, ice creams, balloons, and of course the park itself for folk to enjoy. We also had a visit from Peppa and George pig who did a walk round and meet and greet with the children. There was a fantastic turnout by volunteers and supporters alike raising more money towards the play park funds.

June saw the start of some more bridge repairs by Lewis from the committee;this is part of our ongoing maintenance to keep the park safe for its users. We also had word in June from the local cubs/scouts that they had used their new tents for the first time and thanked us for the donation. Also in June we supported Laxdale School on their fun day by supplying and erecting our marquee and doing candyfloss for them on the day which helped in raising money for their school funds.

As part of our links with other organisations, in July we supported the RNLI Stornoway in their open day for the second consecutive year. Lewis and Mary went along and served candy floss from our machine on the day raising £250. It is fantastic to be involved with such a worthy cause and hope to continue this relationship.

For the first time in August some of the committee along with local volunteers Mary, Dolleen and Annette went along to the local carnival day with a stall selling burgers, hot dogs, candyfloss and milkshakes. It was a fantastic day and raised over £1000 for our funds. We are hoping this will become a regular fixture in our calendar as it was so successful.

September saw our second community cleanup day in the park which again was well attended and saw some general maintenance and clearing done. Also September saw this year’s ROSPA inspection being carried out.

As the profile of the park continues to grow we have seen its use increase over the years. With this in mind we decided it was time to have our own website which we set up in October. This will be to inform people of our purpose and goals and keep them up to date and informed of our progress. [www.newmarketplaypark.com](http://www.newmarketplaypark.com)

October saw our annual Halloween/fireworks evening return, this has become one of our regular events and although it does not raise a huge amount in funds it has become very popular in the community and is great fun to host. This year we had pumpkin carving competitions for the children, we also had a family fancy dress competition with a grand prize of family tickets to landmark Adventure Park and vouchers for cal Mac ferries. This proved very popular and we had some great entries which the winner was chosen by a Facebook vote.

Unfortunately in October following our Rospa inspector’s report we had to remove our zip line seat until it could be replaced due to damage done by dogs. We highlighted this issue with the wider community through a piece done by ‘we love Stornoway’ and posting on social media in the hope that people with pets will be more mindful in the park.

In November we repaired the zip line replacing the seat and safety tubing, using funds donated by councillors we replaced the roof on the shelter in toddler play area, and replaced the bridge and sections on the toddler play frame.

In December the repairs were started on the timber trail replacing the monkey bar section and the chain swing top section, which just leaves the tyre swing section to do in the New Year. We also applied to the landfill trust for funding.

As with previous years we have continued to have a great relationship with the local school and hope to continue building on this. Laxdale School has been a great supporter of the play park and has been a great help throughout the year posting our events in their newsletters and promoting the park. This year their pupil council are doing an art project with locally sourced wood slices that we hope to put into the park next year.

Finally, with a new year ahead of us we are hoping to continue to build on the success of previous years. With the funding secured so far and after consultation with the community and public as a whole we hope to install two new items of play equipment along with a large shelter this will further improve the park and also add some inclusive elements. We will also hopefully move further forward with the community path and finally complete it connecting the Tong and Newmarket communities. 2018 has been a fantastic year for us and we are looking forward to what is ahead.