

Why Skateparks?



The information presented here is intended to give an overview of some of the more frequent arguments for outdoor, free-to-use concrete skateparks. In essence, it will argue that these facilities benefit groups other than skatepark users, and that these spaces could be considered as a viable and highly affordable resource in terms of health and wellbeing, law and order, economical regeneration and the quality use of public space.

As Public Health Resources

Skateparks are places where people build a commitment to a health-giving activity together. Of course, many users don't see it like this – they're skateboarding, BMX riding and inline skating with their friends, not 'getting fit' – though the ideals found in most skateparks are precisely the ones that can help drive forward public fitness and health. The pursuit of sporting and athletic excellence, something demonstrated every day in every quality skatepark, could be nurtured through the provision of many more free-to-use, publically owned skateparks.

"We suggest that skateparks should be conceived as a valuable health-resource for youth because they provide various social, psychosocial and physical health resources that encourage a safe and active lifestyle."

Dumas & Laforest, 2009, 'Skateparks as health-resource', *Leisure Studies*, p.118



Spectacle and Space

BMX riding, skateboarding and roller-blading are exhilarating to perform, and exhilarating to watch. Skateparks should not be seen as obtruding onto other types of public space, and so left to be built at the peripheries of towns and cities. Rather, they could be integrated into the urban landscape and modern city architecture: they could be seen as complimentary elements that enhance public spaces, through allowing the practice and observation of spectacular performance. With the right design, skateparks become places where the wider public come to watch the impressive feats of users.

"Participants and their parents, passers-by and the simply curious represent the different users of the site. The scenery and the resulting atmosphere confer a particular flavour on the place: a place where one can relax, stimulate or be stimulated."

Jean Griffet, 2001, *The Experience of Teenagers at Marseilles' Skate Park*, Cities, p.424



Self-Discipline and Respect

A fundamental benefit to the users of these facilities is the education of important social values. In order to take part it is essential that they learn patience and respect as well as concern for their own and each other's safety. Recognising the efforts and contributions of others as well as the self esteem acquired from becoming more accomplished participants, helps improve social inclusion and goes a long way to ensure healthy communities

It is accepted that active sports have a major benefit to those that take part and for society itself. We are now seeing a huge increase in Skaters, BMX riders and Scooter users. It would appear to be of great value if this growing sport becomes supported by main stream government.

"Although lacking adult-imposed mechanisms for control, these activities and leisure contexts provide forms of control that are internal either to individual participants and/or their group, and thereby help to develop capacities for self-regulation, cooperation, and negotiation with peers."

Graham L. Bradley, *Skateparks as a context for Adolescent Development*, Journal of Adolescent Development, 2010, 292.



Reducing Crime

Skateparks are unusual in being purposefully built, free-to-use, public spaces that cater, often primarily, for adolescents. Giving young people somewhere to go – somewhere that they have designed, worked for and are stewards of, leading to a sense of ownership. There is anecdotal evidence suggesting that skateparks can have a positive and sometimes dramatic effect on crime rates. This is likely due to the reasons outlined concerning self discipline and respect. These places offer young people the chance to relax, to exercise, and to enjoy activities together; they give them somewhere of their own to go to. As their popularity has increased, skateparks have become salient spaces for the well being of not just skatepark users, but youth and society in general.

“A marked drop of 34.9% in levels of youth disorder was recorded in Beat 6, where the skatepark is located, since 2002-2006. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a code of honor among those who attend the skatepark. This encourages youths to behave appropriately for fear of spoiling it for others.”

[Strathclyde Police Report, available online at](#)

“Complaints to the police, re skateboarding, have dropped off the radar. The anti-social behavior section of the ‘State of Herefordshire Report’ makes no mention of complaints re skateboarding.”

[Brian Stephens. Trustee, Wheeled Sports for Hereford](#)



Financial Impacts to the Economy

A major financial implication is that destination parks encourage tourism. It is very common for skaters to travel all over the world to experience different parks. A single well designed and constructed destination park will attract visitors from all over the country. If there were a significant quantity of these parks in the UK it would attract skaters from around the world.

This sport not only encourages the users to buy equipment but it has a whole fashion status which encourages users to buy specific types of shoes, clothes and accessories as well as bikes boards and protective equipment.

“Already the skatepark is bringing other economic benefits to Hereford. It’s increasing the foot-fall in the city as parents come to Hereford to shop because they can drop off their youngsters at the park. Users are coming to Hereford from all over, including London, Brighton, Newport and staying over in local accommodation. It’s putting Hereford on the map as users gravitate to Hereford from all over the UK and beyond.”

[Brian Stephens. Trustee, Wheeled Sports for Hereford](#)



“There is a phenomena; Wheeled Sports tourism. A Family had planned their route to take in Hereford and Cardiff so that they could enjoy the parks as part of their trip. I have many such conversations with families and individual users from all over the country. Then of course there is Anna’s tale that the Travel Lodge in Stoke had to be extended to accommodate extra visitors as a result of their skatepark.”

[Brian Stephens. Trustee, Wheeled Sports for Hereford.](#)

We are always keen to discuss the wider social benefits that skateparks might bring, and have different resources and testimonials from a number of official groups-peers reviewed articles, and our own experiences – which we are happy to share. Please get in touch.