

CHILDREN'S SCRAPSTORE & FROME TOWN COUNCIL

Play strategy update

A tool to support future development, 2025 onwards



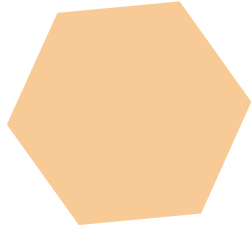
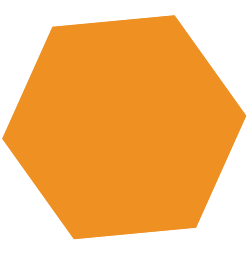
Photo: Chris Bailey



01 — A REMINDER

02 — PROGRESS CHECK

03 — WHAT COULD COME NEXT



A reminder...



Context:

In 2020, Children's Scrapstore responded to Frome Town Council's brief and were contracted to create a Play Strategy for Frome, supporting the vision to develop a playful town for children, young people and adults.

Introduction

Frome aspires to be a brilliant place to grow up and an inspiring place to live and work. The town is progressive and forward thinking, looking for new ways to do things. Frome Town Council has an ambition to broaden people's understanding of play and what it means to play regardless of age, play is for life, not just for children.

Everyone needs the time, space, freedom, and inspiration to play. The ambition of this strategy is to engage the community, voluntary sector, statutory services and businesses to develop a playful town informing and directing local and wider policy.

The Play Strategy is grounded in what play means and the many emotional and physical benefits it affords children, young people, and adults of all ages. All residents and visitors to Frome will have more inclusive opportunities for play, to explore, reclaim and rediscover what play means to them.

It will work to improve choice and access to play to ensure everyone can play as part of their everyday lives.

The Play Strategy identifies the assets and opportunities on offer across the town and provides design principles for future improvement and development. Its principles will be considered across all aspects of infrastructure building and partnership working.

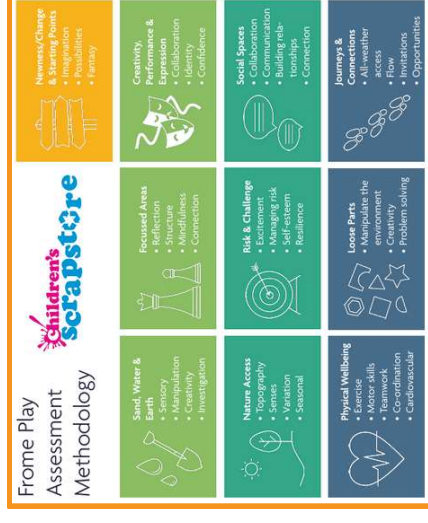
The recommendations within the strategy have been written in collaboration with residents, FTC and other partners, based on a participative approach with a broad demographic of residents, through the Choose Play survey conducted over the summer of 2021 and subsequent focus groups.

Where play is referenced within this document, it means in the broadest sense, to include adults as well as children and young adults.

PLAY STRATEGY FOR FROME 2021-2025

The outdoor space audit indicated:

- *The town has beautiful natural playscapes giving good opportunities to access and experience nature.*
- *There are a variety of parks and green spaces that are valued by residents. (See Choose Play Survey findings).*
- *There is a lack of accessible play equipment across the town to offer excitement and challenge and limited outdoor space that offers creativity, performance and expression.*

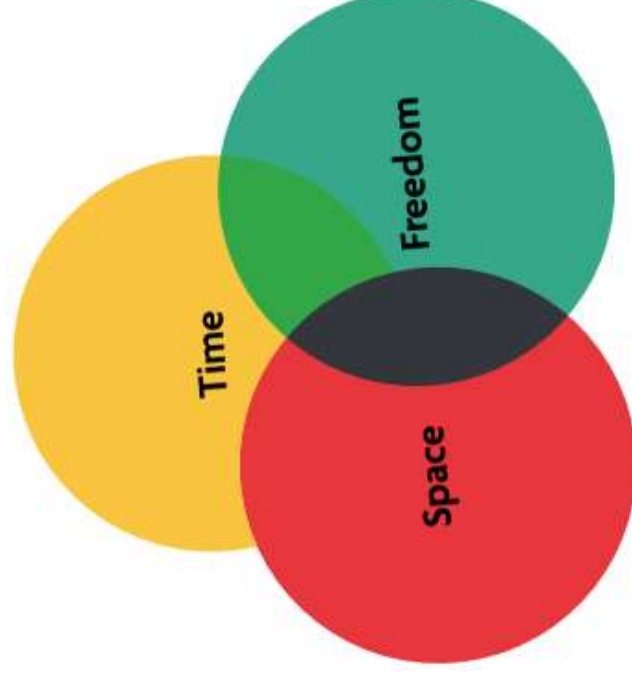


- *There is a need to increase opportunities for risk and challenge for older children as well as increasing social gathering spaces. These need to ensure they are accessible and safe all year round.*

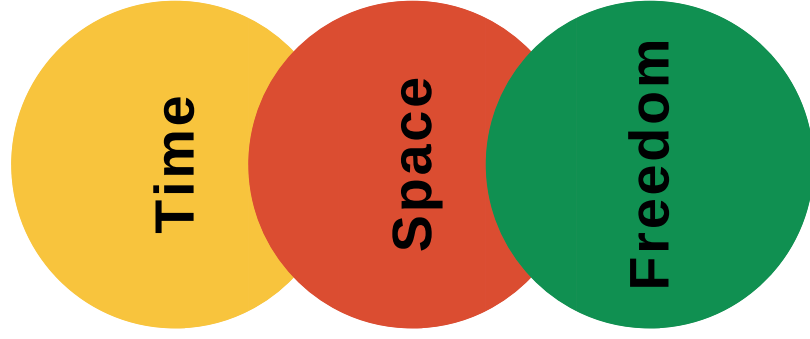
What makes for quality play?

Creating good spaces for play requires consideration and planning. A quality place for play understands the needs of its users and is designed to provoke interaction with the environment.

A well-designed space will be appealing to the senses; provide physical stimulation and/or be conducive to relaxing. People need choice, variety and flexibility. When designing for play, the elements of time, space and freedom are essential.



The ambitions of the strategy:



1. To increase play opportunities & make them visible.
2. To have a dedicated play organisation to support time, space and freedom to play.
3. To enhance existing play spaces.
4. To develop a wider range of spaces for play.
5. To benchmark future developments.
6. To encourage more 'doorstep' play & connection.
7. To increase sense of belonging for teenagers.
8. To ensure equity of play provision.
9. To continue to build participative engagement, with a focus on play.



**PROGRESS
CHECK...**

Ambition 1: To increase play opportunities & make them visible:

Time - to engage; connect; practice or develop new skills and increase confidence

Children & young peoples grants:

- Super Roots
- Purple Elephant
- Young Somerset
- The Pod
- Birth Talks
- Open Story Tellers
- Cultivating Community

Local networks:

- Under 5s
- Youth Forum
- Children and Young People's Working Group
- Young People's Mental Health Forum

Playful pop ups:

- Spray painted games templates
- Lunch Bunch - Adult board games
- The Pod - loose parts play in the park
- Playday!
- Refugee Week



This is not an exhaustive list.

Ambition 2: To have a dedicated play organisation to support time, space and freedom to play:

Time - to engage; connect; practice or develop new skills and increase confidence



Whilst it is still an aspiration to have an dedicated play organisation, there are many organisations that have supported Frome to provide play opportunities, including:

- Super Roots
- Cultivating Community
- Terrestrial
- The Pod
- Speakeasy
- Edventure
- Purple Elephant
- Young Somerset
- Shared Earth Learning
- Caravan Arts

This is not an exhaustive list.

Ambition 3: To enhance existing play spaces:

Space - to access a variety of experiences and opportunities, providing flexibility inside and out, in a diverse range of spaces and venues.

Developments:

- Solar lighting at the Showfield.
- Shelter at the Showfield.
- Toilets at Victoria Park.
- Community garden development.
- Fairy trail & pirate park, Welshmill.
- The play trolley @ the Community Café, Mary Baily. *"Helped to integrate play more fully into the daily life of the park."*
- Play rangers adding sprinkler to the sand pit in Mary Baily.
- Egford Park developments.
- Welshmill play tower development.
- Mowing schedule to create seasonal play opportunities across green spaces.
- Sensory planting in various spaces.



This is not an exhaustive list.

'It's great to see another play space in Frome refreshed and invigorated. Usually we think it's a shame when something is worn out and needs replacing; in the case of play equipment, it's to be celebrated! We hope many more generations of children will enjoy playing at Egford Park.' **Mark Dorrington, Lead Cllr for Parks and Open Spaces (Environment Team)**

Ambition 4: To develop a wider range of spaces for play:

Space - to access a variety of experiences and opportunities, providing flexibility inside and out, in a diverse range of spaces and venues.

Packsaddle - sand pit - residents own toys



Chapmans Close - markings for bikes & scooters



“Designed to work with natural elements and natural materials.”

Welshmill - mud kitchen



“Reclaim and enhance incidental spaces for play”



Welshmill - Pirate ship



Welshmill - Fairy trail



Welshmill - natural play area



Egford Park, Tiny Forest

“Improve playable spaces”

- Paddling access to the river created at Rodden Meadow
- Willow Sculpture at the Showfield



Egford Park, redesign of play space

This is not an exhaustive list.

Ambition 5: To benchmark future developments:

Space - to access a variety of experiences and opportunities, providing flexibility inside and out, in a diverse range of spaces and venues.

Town Council

The success of the play developments that have taken place across the town to date are due to the culture of play that has been fostered by the Communities Team and shared and extended on the ground by the Town Rangers. The Rangers continue to enhance the physical spaces across Frome, always with play and community in mind. Many partners are working to support play across the town too.

This document has been compiled with support from a range of FTC staff, including:

- Nikki Cox - Partnership Lead
- Joanna Morris - Resilience Officer
- Jane Llewellyn - Planning & Development Manager
- Emily Osler - Community Engagement Officer
- Melody Hunter Evans - Children & Young People's Project Officer
- Liz Stone - Community Engagement Officer
- Hannah Stopford - Engagement Lead
- Helen Viner - Wild About Trees Project Officer
- Mark Branson, Toni Duddridge, Jay Hanton, Asia Pryjda, Mark Scopes and Mike Wright - Town Rangers

External Developers

The Play Strategy is always shared with developers to encourage them to work towards the ambitions within it.

"We did have some success with Acorn, who were the developers for the Saxonvale site, who really did embrace the strategy. Unfortunately, Acorn withdrew from the site."

We also had very good discussions with the applicants for Selwood Garden Community, a large development of 1700 houses, opens space and employment, even thought this application is only at the outline stage, they too have really embraced play and active travel.

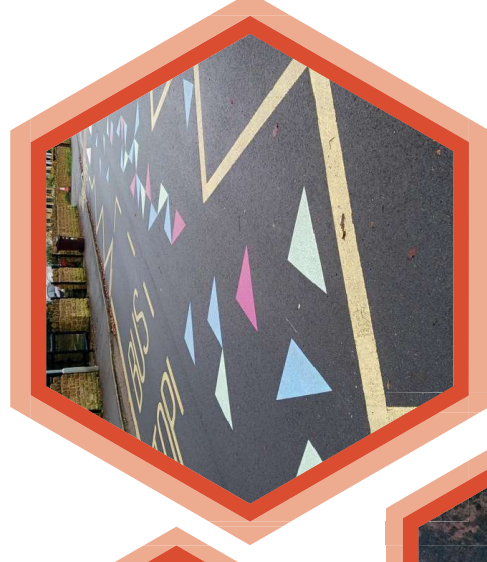
Somerset are currently working on a new local plan for Somerset, this is an opportunity to change policy. We have recently responded to the first of many consultations on the new plan and have sent them a copy of our play strategy." Jane Llewellyn, Planning & Development Manager

This is not an exhaustive list.

Ambition 6: To encourage more ‘doorstep’ play & connection:

Space - to access a variety of experiences and opportunities, providing flexibility inside and out, in a diverse range of spaces and venues.

- Play streets initiative.
- Super Roots pop up play sessions.
- Developing incidental play opportunities, e.g. Packsaddle - sandpit addition; Chapmans Close - markings for bikes & scooters.
- New seating and picnic tables across the town.
- Milk Street Green development of social space.
- Cultivating Community play trolley in the park and on tour.
“The initiatives increased social gatherings and interactions.”
- ‘Veg Patch Sprouts’ at Ecos Court - transformation of a neglected space by volunteers and children and young people
- *“just to chat and chill out.”*



This is not an exhaustive list.

Ambition 7: To increase sense of belonging for teenagers:

Freedom - to choose and permission to play.

Detached youth work

*The Showfield
Victoria Park*

Lighting & shelter

*The Showfield
The Roundhouse*

Co-design opportunities

*Safer spaces for young people
designed by young people:*

Mary Baily

Frome Skatepark Project's Skate Jam

Cllr Mark Dorrington: "Victoria Park is a popular and well-used space and we want to maintain that, while thinking about ways it could be even better. Our engagement officers' recent work with schools showed that, sadly, not everyone feels safe in Victoria Park, so that's one of the things we'd like to explore. Alongside FTC's free activities for younger residents, the Skatepark Project team are keen to showcase the fun and entertainment to be had from skating or wheeling on the ramps. Our Environment team have some ideas to share about additional seating, spaces aimed at encouraging girls and older children to use the space, tree planting and more."

This is not an exhaustive list.

Ambition 8: To ensure equity of play provision:

Freedom - to choose and permission to play.

Whilst there is still the need and desire to increase equitable play opportunities across the town, there have been some developments:

- Raised sand pit at Mary Baily to be reached from waist height.
- Some development of pathways between spaces for improved access.
- Some addition to play spaces of inclusive fixed play equipment.

• *“A piece of work on Equality Diversity & Inclusion is planned, particularly looking at a simple equality impact measurement tool to build in good practice from the start of our projects.”*

Emily Osler, Community Engagement Officer

This is not an exhaustive list.

Ambition 9: To continue to build participative engagement, with a focus on play:

Freedom - to choose and permission to play.

Community engagement

‘Make it happen’ school workshops

Terrestrial **‘Take Over’** events:

The Library, Town Hall & Museum

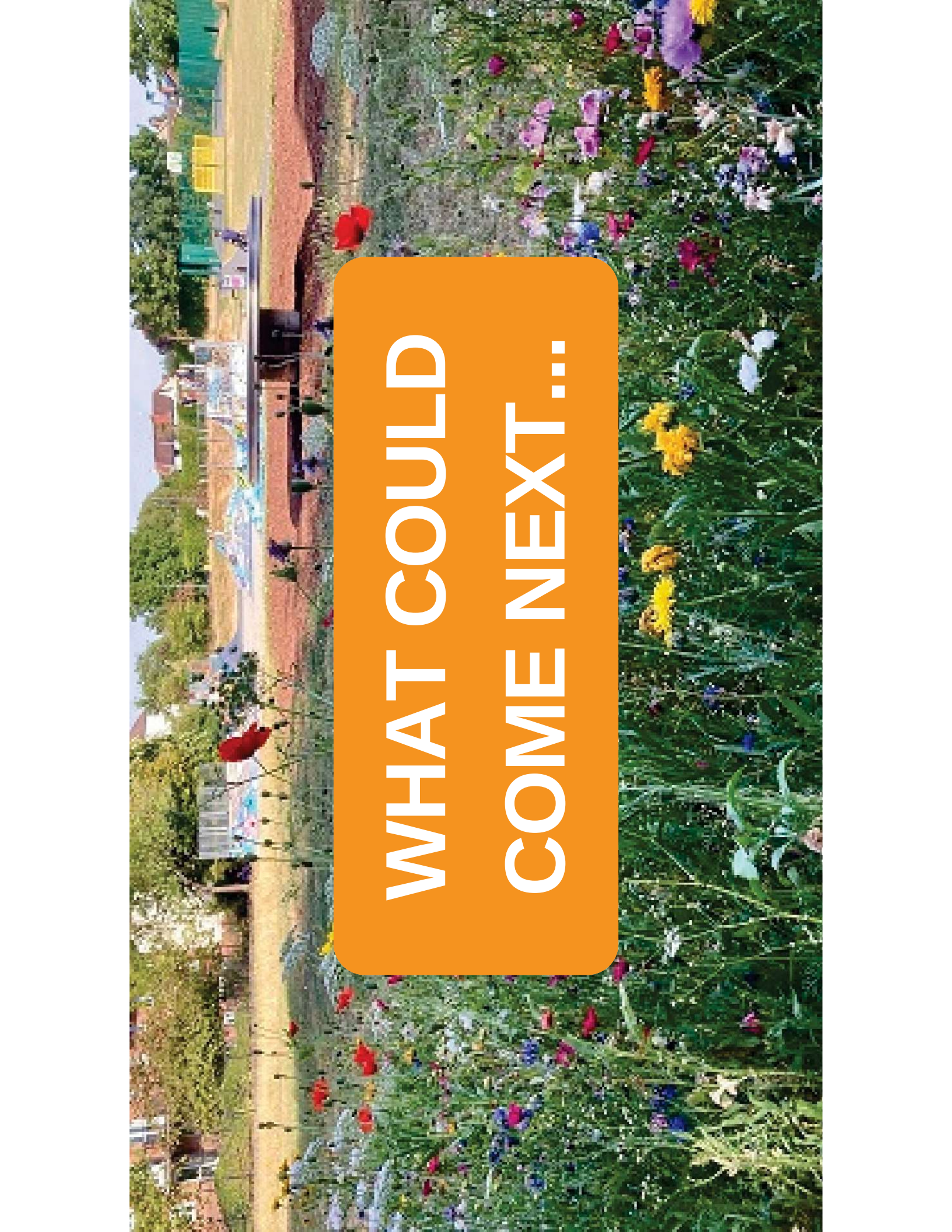
Lunch Bunch

Pop up engagement events across

Frome to create **‘A picture of Frome’**



This is not an exhaustive list.

A vibrant field of wildflowers in the foreground, with a playground and houses in the background.

WHAT COULD
COME NEXT...



Frome Town Council has set out its vision for the year ahead, presenting a plan focused on building economic, social, and environmental resilience to meet the town's needs and create a community that works for everyone.

The following from the plan resonate with the play strategy & this review:

- *Our young people have limited opportunities. (Key finding in the **Picture of Frome** Community Engagement Project 2024.)*
- *A quarter of the town's population is under 18—significantly higher than the Somerset and southwest average of 17%. This youthful demographic brings great energy and potential but also **creates growing demands for youth services, mental health support, and extracurricular activities**. While local organisations have worked hard to bridge service gaps, **more work is needed to ensure young people receive the support they need**.*
- *Open spaces that support community wellbeing through play and physical activity for people of all ages.*
- *Key outcomes - Spaces for everyone to feel safe whilst enjoying green surroundings and play for all.*

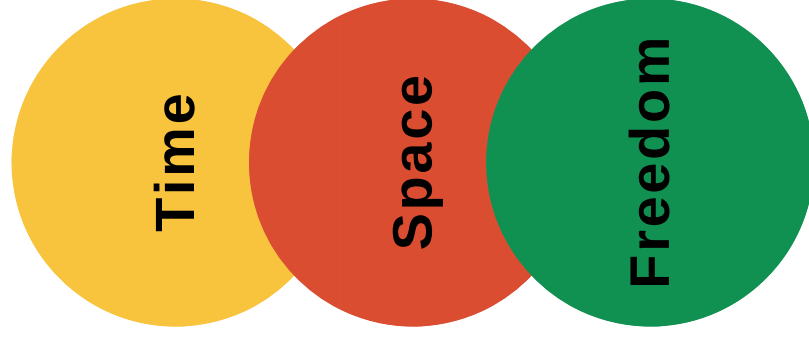
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Upcoming work:

- Continue to develop the play offer at Welshmill & Egford Park.
- Continue to strengthen the play opportunities linked to the café and the play trolley at Victoria Park.
- Devolution will mean an increase in parks and green spaces owned by FTC - this will mean potential for further play development including a Play Trail.
- Devolution will also mean more community asset potential (this could further support a play organisation in the town).
- More Terrestrial work across neighbourhoods to increase 'doorstep' play.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Continued ambitions:



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Further recommendations:

- The Community Team and Town Rangers Team will be key to future play developments as they continue to consider their work and the need of the community through a play lens.
- Supporting all teams of the Town Council to embed a culture of play through their workstreams.
- Work with Play England, in collaboration with Children's Scrapstore to publish a case study on the work of the Town in 'Play Nation'.
- Consider how to open up other community spaces to widen play opportunities for all children, e.g. a school with inclusive/accessible play space, open outside of school hours.
- Consider how to use play as a tool to develop spaces and places that will be taken on as part of the Somerset Devolution process.
- Continue to develop social spaces to allow for young people to gather, face to face in comfortable and playful ways. Designing seating and spaces that include incidental play opportunities for teenagers.
- Continue to use play as an engagement tool at town wide events (e.g. Playday & Refugee Week).

This is not an exhaustive list.