

SKATEPARK: WEST MOORS - A HISTORY



Before outlining the history of the Skateparks here in West Moors, a little background to this activity might be helpful.

Skateboarding has a long history. The generally accepted idea is that wave surfers on the Californian coast in the '50s and early '60s needed a land-based activity when the surf wasn't up and running.

Early boards were makeshift affairs made from materials to hand - often based on roller skate wheel sets screwed onto a flat board or shallow box.



It wasn't too long though before bespoke manufacturers, often 'boarders' themselves, brought more professional rigs to the market.

The moves of 'boarders were based on the actions of surfers when riding the ocean waves.

Skateboarding competitions can be traced back to the 'sixties' when the surfing community - already a highly competitive lot - arranged for land-based events - some were actually broadcast in the US.

However, it needed the development of synthetic materials to construct the wheel-sets, allowing better control for more intricate moves, before the sport took off outside of the US.

In the UK, boards were imported from California initially, but without purpose-built skateparks, the pavements, car parks and city streets had to suffice.

And so it was in West Moors: youngsters wanting to use their boards had to find a suitable open area where the various moves, jumps etc., could be practised - without getting in the way of anyone else! This inevitably brought car parks, side streets and similar into play.

Around the turn of the 21st century, with the closure of the garage/filling station that used to stand where Spar and Holly Court are now, the old garage forecourt area there was used as a makeshift facility. But the area would be redeveloped soon, following a fire that destroyed the parade of shops.



The youngsters keen to pursue their fun lobbied for a purpose-built skatepark for West Moors. Many communities had followed this path and with help from the local Youth Club, particularly facilitated by Mo Shearing and Andy Skeats, the ball started to roll towards getting funding agreed. The Club members themselves raised considerable sums through a variety of activities and canvassed for donations from local firms.

Funding included (among others) £17,000 from the government's Living Spaces project; £12,000 from East Dorset District Council; £6,000 for West Moors Parish Council; £3,000 from the Police Partnership and £3,500 from the West Moors Recreation Association.

[*These plaques, acknowledging sponsorship and activists, were located on the ground to one side of the skatepark, nearest the access to/from the Castleman Trailway.]*



With enough money in place (or pledged), a site was chosen that wasn't being used for any other purpose: the plan was for a park (and a BMX track alongside) on the edge of Fryer Field – owned by the (then) Parish Council.

Steel was chosen for ramps/jumps etc., to work within cost limits. The facility opened in 2003. There was no restriction on access or opening time: the skatepark boasted several different obstacles, including pyramid and ramps (bank/wedge), flat rail, fun box, half and quarter pipes (and others).



[Some images of the original skatepark taken in 2018 & 2019.]



Once up and running it was felt that an additional 'mini ramp' was needed for newcomers to the sport and in 2007, fundraising began to provide this - there was in fact a little money left-over from the original build - grants helped and come 2008, the additional ramp was ordered from Maverick Skateparks, a Poole company specialising in skatepark construction. The total cost for this phase was £17k.



[*Mini-ramp image taken in 2017*]

From the start, this first Skatepark was very popular. Inevitably with the passage of time repairs were needed, and also some landscaping of the surrounds. By 2017, the repairs in particular were becoming too regular and the Parish (later Town) Council agreed that a complete replacement was needed.

By 2019, significant repairs to the steel ramps were required, which added urgency to the search for a long-term solution. The local council received grants from Dorset Community Action and the National Lottery to support consultation costs as to the way ahead.

2019 was a busy year, with schools sent questionnaires to seek feedback from youngsters as to what they would like to see in a rebuilt park; this was followed-up at Westival 2019 in July, when further soundings were initiated from the wider community. In September, an 'open' event, well attended, was arranged at the Skatepark to further publicise efforts to drive the project along.





Above: Kev Mills, Dead Fast Jae, Lee Cooper, Louis Pulford, Steve Castle, Richard James (Steel)
The above gentlemen helped in the opening of West Moors skate park and are still regular users.



[Images of the open event 27th September, 2019]

The November (2019) meeting of the Full Council set out the plan for a complete rebuild of the Park. This included (inter-alia) ... a commitment by the Council to provide £50 000 towards the project and action to hasten the tender/contract publishing process & to pursue applications for additional funding from other sources: the re-development value was set at £200 000.

With a funding video produced in November, the finalisation of the tender specification in December, the Contract terms published in January 2020 and major grant funding applied for from Veoila, all was set

... then of course, came March 2020, and the dreaded Coronavirus hit! Of necessity, the project planning slowed, but never stopped - a great credit to all involved – including those in the Town Council office who were having to work remotely. In that same month, the build award was offered to **Canvas Spaces Ltd** and they were given the task of producing the basic design and subsequent construction.



[*Plan produced by Canvas Spaces, in consultation with users.*]

By June of 2020, an award of £75k was provisionally promised by Veoila (subject to other funds being found) and the design process, influenced by current users - some of whom had been involved in the 2003 project, was further progressed. All this was coordinated by the (now) Town Council.

In October of 2020, delays following the restrictions due to Covid-secure working had placed doubts around the project, but the Full Council agreed to underwrite the possible shortfall in funding to ensure that the Veoila (primary) grant was assured.

By May of 2021, the Fundraising was complete (Veoila, The National Lottery Community Fund, Dorset Council Leisure Development Fund.), with further grant in June from Tesco 'bags for help', and formal build preparations began.



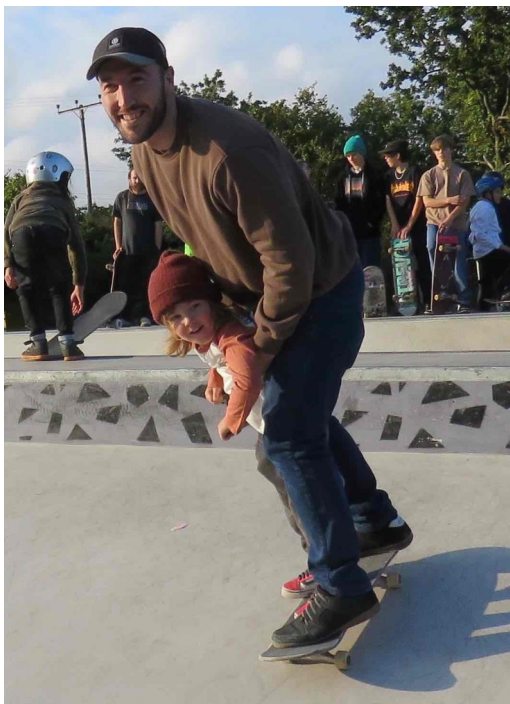
In June, the site was handed over to Canvas Spaces, and the clearance of the old park (see above) and construction of the new (see below) commenced. Work proceeded through the summer and early autumn, and generally the weather was fine enough to allow for few interruptions.



[*Small selection of images of the rebuild: more on the web site*]

Slightly ahead of schedule, the skatepark was handed over to the community Friday 24th September - and immediately it became well used.







FRIDAY 15/10/2021 3:30PM - 6:30PM
WEST MOORS SKATEPARK, WEST MOORS, BH22 0LH
MUSIC | REFRESHMENTS | PRIZES | GIVEAWAYS

WEST MOORS SKATEPARK
OFFICIAL
OPENING DAY








[A few images of users on the 'official' opening day (October 15th, see below): the park had been available since end September.]

(See separate file regarding rebuild on our website)



[*The principal contributors to funding of the Skatepark, and of course the constructors!*]

The following statement was issued by West Moors Town Council and neatly sums up the activity on the 'official' opening day:

" Scores of skaters turned out in West Moors, at the launch party on Friday 15th October, to give our fantastic new Skatepark, the seal of approval. The event was celebrated by nearly 200 people including families, young and older individuals/groups, residents/non-residents (It was amazing to hear how far some had come to try the new skate park), council members, and park users of all ages and abilities. The turnout was proof of how much this community resource is important to a variety of people. It was bound to be a hit, as there was extensive consultation before doing the refurbishment, to ensure that the wish list of many was catered for. Canvas - Skateparks and Public Spaces, who designed (with the help of the local skatepark user group) and built the skate park, entertained all, with music, competitions and West Moors Town Council generously sponsored lots of free pizza, provided by Pizza with Love Keeping the party energised, was Golden Gate Coffee The tricks that some of the young ones were doing, were extremely impressive. The atmosphere was electrifying. Thanks must again go, to all the funders who made West Moors new Skatepark possible; Veolia Environmental Trust <http://www.veoliatrust.org/> for their grant of £75,000, in early 2020, The National Lottery Community Fund with a grant of £75,985 in April 2021, The Leisure Development Fund at Dorset Council with £1,500 and Tesco Bags for Help-Groundwork for a £1,000 grant. Not forgetting the Council's own reserved funds of £50,000. Thanks are also due to Mr Russell Kerr, our local voluntary First Responder, for providing first aid cover, as he has done so for so many council events.

Our thriving skate community has been enjoying the skatepark since 2003 when it was originally built. Now, with the sustainable new concrete replacement, we hope they enjoy it for many years to come. "

Some of the original committee who fundraised for the first (2003) skatepark in West Moors. L-R= Mo Shearing, Michael Patten, Louis Pulford, Chris Blainey, Megan Austin, Andy Skeats. (ex. FB/Dorset View magazine)

