

Toilet Facilities and Café / Kiosk

The Cathal O'Meara landscape Architects Harbour Field Design Statements states that "Results from the Public Consultation event and questionnaires enabled the design team to include the communities top rated facilities.

Q3 of that questionnaire was : What facilities would you like to see in the Park?

Answer No 1. Was Café / Kiosk, Answer No. 2 was Toilets.

The current design proposal depicts neither café / kiosk or toilet facilities. We are disappointed to note the absence of these two vitally important elements from the design plan. We feel that it is not advisable to wait for a further part 8 consultation and to hope that Waterways Ireland will make planning application for the provision of these facilities at a later (unknown) date.

The proposal for the development of the Harbour Field is forward looking and ambitious, has the potential to greatly improve the usage of the amenity and will encourage more people to visit. The addition of a skate park, a state of the art playground, a sensory play area, bowls, table tennis, etc the opening up of the canal boardwalk are all highly commendable actions. It is however in our opinion of vital importance in this instance to provide those who wish to avail of the amenities with adequate toilet facilities. There is little to be gained by investing such a large amount of funding on a project of this nature without making provision for the most basic of our human needs. An area which consists of sporting and play areas for toddlers, youth, senior citizens and disabled persons of all ages absolutely must provide not only basic toilet facilities but make provision also for accessible toilets and indeed a changing places facility. Parents and carers of young children and those with additional needs are being overlooked in this instance. If it is not possible at this point to include a permanent structure, a stand alone unit providing a full range of facilities should be considered at this juncture.

We have attached full details regarding Changing Places and the major advantages the installation of such a facility provides.

The presence of a café would be seen as a very positive aspect for the Harbour Field. The area is and will continue to be used by large numbers of children who are supervised and accompanied by parents/guardians and carers. Currently there is no provision for a place in which they can meet, have a cup of tea/coffee or a snack, and most importantly meet other adults. Quite often the role of taking care of those with special needs can be socially isolating and very stressful. The opportunity to meet with other parents and carers in this type of environment would greatly enhance the mental health of those parents, guardians and carers. The proximity of the Harbour Field to the Maynooth Community Care unit would also make the presence of a café valued. It could be used as an area where residents of the care centre could be taken out for a treat by family when they pay a visit. It has also been suggested that a café/kiosk of this nature could act as a hub where information could be accessed by parents, carers and guardians where leaflets, application forms and details regarding any and all assistance available could be shared and made known.

This café/ kiosk, information hub could be developed as a co-op. Not for profit but any income received could be used towards the upkeep of the Harbour Field Park and perhaps contribute to the cost of the provision of a park warden who would be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the area.

