



HOW KSI GOT THE MONEY TO BUILD A 1000m² OPEN ACCESS CONCRETE SKATEPARK

Very happy to help you if we can. It has been a long process for us!

Background

We began in 2003 after many years of the issue popping up in the local paper. The first petition was handed to the Council in 1987 so it was clear that they had no will to provide the skatepark.

We were lucky in a way, although it still took years of hard work, that Government policy changed making it compulsory for local authorities to get young people up and active - a skatepark helps them to meet their obligation to do this. From a council's point of view the cost of running a skatepark is no more than running a play area for younger children, unless there are lights. There is no insurance for skaters - a council's existing public liability insurance covers it the same as a rugby pitch (more people are seriously injured playing rugby, I do not have exact figures for this but you might be able to track some down)

KSI did not take the view that we were reforming young people and preventing anti social behaviour. We pointed out the benefits of skating to health and worked from there.

I don't know exactly how much property costs are in your area but our skatepark (the concrete park only not including VAT and peripherals) is costing us £243,000. This is about the price of ONE family house in our area. And your group already has 550 in it! In terms of a council's budget this is tiny! Find out how much it costs them each year to run their swimming pool! Just remember, even if you find you are trying to raise £0.5 million, this is not a lot of money in the 'value for money' scheme of things - as long as you can prise money away from the Olympics.

So, what did we actually do?

1. Got Charitable Status

Get a constitution and apply for charitable status, simply to get access to more funders. This has governance implications but it helps to demonstrate to potential funders that the group is well run and serious.

2. Got the support of local politicians

Take every opportunity to canvas support from your councillors and your local MP. Get them to sign a petition - this exposes the doubters. Once they have signed up get in touch with the senior council officer whose department runs leisure activities and ask for a meeting. In our case this was the Community Directorate Director. (Always talk to the top if you can, lower down cannot give you any answers). If you have the politicians behind you, the senior officers of the council will speak to you.

3. We got a site

We had no money and could not be taken seriously by funders so the approach we took was to make the council an offer they couldn't refuse. We asked if we could make a presentation at the relevant committee meeting where leisure facilities are discussed.

One of our members, 15 yrs old then, gave a presentation on the benefits of having a skatepark. We then told them that if they gave us a site, KSI would raise the money. And they gave us a site - not a brilliant piece of ground with poor access and that is why we have taken so long to get the skatepark built but at least we had now the credibility with funders which the site gave us. The Council (i.e. the politicians) also committed to giving us support from the officers (i.e. the council workers) and we have benefitted from their help and support over the years.

Key point: we presented the benefits of the skatepark focussing on the council's objectives i.e. how we could help them to achieve THEIR objectives. Antisocial behaviour is not a huge problem in our area but unfit kids is.

From this point forward we presented the project as 'working in partnership with East Dunbartonshire Council to raise the funds to build a skatepark in East Dunbartonshire'. This way if we failed then they failed. And we did as much as possible to keep it high profile at community events and in the local paper.

4. We got planning permission

We met with the planners and found out how they viewed the skatepark and what we had to do as part of the planning application to be successful. We had the support of the planners, although they did not make it easy. We applied for funding from Awards for All for the planning application which a landscape architect did on our behalf. We got conditional planning permission in October 2006. We were ready to go for funding.

5. Wrote the business plan

This is all about proof! The business plan will be successful if it is carefully reasoned and backed up by facts and evidence of need. We worked with local schools and gave out questionnaires - 80%+ of kids have either a skateboard, inline skates or a bmx bike - and all said they were using them in the street. Once this has been pointed out something really has to be done!

Read government policy for young people so you can identify the places where a skatepark meets their objectives - Health and Anti social behaviour being the most obvious but you may also be encouraging people to use public transport, cycle instead of CO2, improve community safety, provide opportunities for young people to volunteer, - these are all boxes local councils need to tick. Unfortunately this takes time and work on your group's part.

You will get away with making some claims which are not backed up by proof but only if you have enough claims which are backed up by proof. You will find all the proof you need in government policy - e.g. the amount of exercise young people need for health etc.

Your business plan will help you to stand out from the crowd - there is a lot of competition out there for the funding which is available. Remember, although it is ever easy to get the funding, the funders do have money which they are trying to give away (that is the box they need to tick) so if you make it easy for them to identify your group as well run with a realistic grasp on their project you will be in a very good position.

The business plan must also contain a realistic budget for building the skatepark. (This is why it is a business plan even though you won't generate any income and are not

running a 'business' as such). Even though we wrote the budget in 2006/7 we are building the skatepark to those costs today - that is what the funders funded. This is where the council officers can help - they can recommend suppliers and give you realistic 'ballpark' costs.

Funders will expect the group to have made efforts to raise funds of their own i.e. with raffles etc. It will not be the actual amount of money the skaters can contribute but evidence of what they did that is important.

To make the budget as realistic as possible we went out to tender for the concrete skatepark before submitting our funding applications. This is the biggest cost in the budget so if it is confirmed in some way it gives the funders a degree of assurance that the project is properly funded and you know what you are doing and you are likely to succeed. Going to tender costs money and we got a Community Grant from the Council plus some funding from a local developer to fund this. We also paid for a design prior to going out to tender but we still had a Design and Build tender. The funders will require you to have a building professional (quantity surveyor or similar) to oversee the project - he will also do the tender process. We are lucky to have an experienced QS as part of the team who has donated his time and expertise to the project.

Select the companies which are invited to tender carefully, you will be relying on their expertise to give you a good park which drains properly with good transitions, coping etc!

6. Identified potential funders

You MUST find funders who fund projects like yours. I.e. community projects, sports projects, projects driven by young people or any other category you can fit your project into exactly. Applying to funders who, for example, only fund educational projects is probably just a waste of time and effort - Comic Relief was no use for us because we could not fit their criteria.

Take the time to read the funders' guidelines carefully, then re-read them. If you can't fit - keep looking. Go to your CVS they will help identify possible funders but, in my experience, you will have to look at each one yourself to see if they are possible.

We were lucky. We fitted the Big Lottery Young People's Fund (YPF) exactly and the Waste Recycling Group Ltd (WREN) Community Challenge and got all we asked for from both funds. But, because we were going for the YPF funding our business plan addressed all the points in the sportScotland funding for skateparks as well as the requirements of the YPF because they are both Big Lottery funded. In my experience, if your business plan is acceptable to the Big Lottery it will be good enough for every funder. They make you work for the money!! If you can persuade the local council to give you help with fundraising grab this with both hands but KEEP AN EYE ON THEM they may not be any better at it than you and they are not as well motivated.

7. Completed the Funders' Application Forms

Talk to the funders about your project - they will tell you what they are looking for in the application. Just like in school exams - answer the questions as fully as possible. Don't give them any information they don't ask for and don't give yourself impossible targets. We have committed to '15 - 20 members attending regular KSI meetings' and, now that the skatepark is nearly here, only a few turn up to meetings! Show the application to the funder and get feedback before you formally submit it - they can be very helpful. Your business plan will accompany your application form, not replace it.

8. Kept Local Politicians in the Loop and Kept the Project Visible in the Community

You never know when politicians might be able to help you. We have benefitted from their background support. Give your local paper your good news story at every possible opportunity. KSI has a stall at most of the community events - we have given out proforma letters for the community to send to their councillor giving their support to the project, we have sold Christmas cards showing an artist's impression of the skatepark with a request in each pack asking one to be sent to their local councillor, we have done litterpicks, made a video (with funding and help from our council Youth Issue Team). Don't let the community forget about you and make sure they know about all the good things they guys are doing to get the skatepark. Don't ignore the fact that some people are genuinely afraid of groups of young people so the skaters need to recognise this and be sympathetic. Address this in the local paper if you can. You won't convert everyone but you can make a good noise trying.

9. Build the Skatepark

Another set of challenges but it will soon be over, depending on the promises you made to your funders!

This is just a quick overview. We received lots of help from others and it's our turn to pass it on. It does take lots of work and there seems to be no getting away from that - unless you can persuade your council to do it and take guidance from your group. This is how Edinburgh is being built and how Kelvingrove in Glasgow was built - relatively quick and painless for skaters!!!

Funding a skatepark is like eating an elephant - one bite at a time!

Come and visit Kirkintilloch Skatepark some time to find out if it is all worth it!

Good Luck and let us know how you get on....

KSI xx

Sept 2009



Skatepark under construction!

Project Began
March 2003

Construction
Complete
November 2009