

Mark Hazlehurst

Event Support Ambassador (volunteer), parkrun UK

5th April 2024

To the Members of Dronfield Town Council

I am the parkrun Event Support Ambassador for North Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire. My role is to work with local teams in the establishment and eventual operation of local events. Over the last 11 years I have established or helped establish a number of 5k and junior parkruns in the area, including within a custodial estate.

I am writing to express my support for the Dronfield Running Club's request for Dronfield Town Council to allow Singelfingen Park to be used for a new junior parkrun event.

I also explain some background about parkrun, what would be expected of the local team and what you can expect as a local authority from the event.

Background

Already operating weekly in over 1,000 UK locations, parkrun and junior parkrun are a series of **free**, weekly, timed runs, jogs or walks. The ethos of parkrun is that it is also about friendships, families and bringing people together to help each other achieve sustainable and healthy lifestyle changes. To quote from parkrun UK - "parkrun is such a simple concept: turn up every Saturday and run 5km, or if you're a junior then 2km every Sunday. It doesn't matter how fast you go. It doesn't matter what you're wearing. What matters is taking part. Participants of all abilities are welcome, and the focus is on increasing participation in recreational running, jogging or walking."

Junior parkrun is a series of over 450 2km runs, throughout the UK, for children aged between 4 and 14. They are held in areas of open space at the same time every Sunday. They are open to all, free, and are safe and easy to take part in.

I note the vision statement outlined in the NE Derbyshire Local Plan 2014-2034, which stated in the on page 31

"North East Derbyshire will be a place ... where (people) .. will (be) happy and healthy"

There is significant overlap with parkrun's Mission Statement:

"To transform health & happiness by empowering people to come together, to be active, social & outdoors"

Junior parkrun requirements

Any parkrun event needs three key components. These are

- a. A team of committed local volunteers
- b. The initial funding to pay for the start up fee. This is a one-off and no further funds will be required
- c. A suitable safe and sustainable course

I am confident that the team assembled by Oli Constable and his colleagues at Dronfield Running Club are committed and able to run a sustainable event in Singelfingen Park. The Club has already stated their willingness to provide the start up funding.

A safe and sustainable course

What remains is a park to hold the event.

I am familiar with Singelfingen Park, having visited it several times over a period of years. I have long been convinced that it would be capable of hosting a safe event and meet all of the strict guidelines required by parkrun HQ

I have walked a potential course with Oli and made a few suggestions to remove potential hazards and make it easier to set-up and marshal. Should the go-ahead be given, I would re-visit to finalise and measure the proposed course.

During my visit, I carried out an initial risk assessment and feel confident that any potential hazards to participants and other park users are minimal or can be easily mitigated.

Another consideration is that the course be available all year round, although it is expected that many locations occasionally host other events or are impacted by weather conditions. Wherever possible, courses likely to be impacted by regular poor weather (rain, ice, etc) are usually discouraged. I do not believe this will be the case at Singelfingen Park

This risk assessment also took into account the likely number of weekly participants. Obviously estimating numbers in advance can be rather problematical, but experience from similar events in surrounding similar areas gives some guidance

Looking at local established, non inner city, events shows the following

- Staveley (averaging) 10-30
- Worksop College 15-30
- Sutton-in Ashfield 10-40
- Dukeries 15-20
- Hucknall 20-30

In Sheffield City, the two most popular events are Graves and Hillsborough

- Graves 60-120
- Hillsborough 50-100

I believe that these are exceptional with Olympic Legacy Park and Norfolk Park being more typical of what could be expected at Singelfingen Park

- Olympic Legacy 10-40
- Norfolk Park circa 20

Personally I would be surprised and delighted if Singelfingen attracted about 40 children each week – this number would easily be accommodated within the Park. What must be considered is that with such a big age range, the speed and abilities varies greatly so runners are quickly spread out and so the bigger issue is overtaking. The paths in the park are sufficiently wide to accommodate this safely.

In the unlikely event that 100 children did turn up, I am confident that the park would cope comfortably and safely.

This assessment of numbers also covers potential car parking needs. At the likely number of participants there is ample car parking without inconvenience to local residents and even the most optimistic levels do not raise any concerns. Given it's location in a residential area, participants would be encouraged to walk to the Park

A final risk assessment will be completed and filed with parkrun HQ before the event should be started. This is publicly available on the parkrun website and must be reviewed annually. Events cannot continue without this review being completed

As far as is known (and several visits have been made at the appropriate time) there would be no conflicts with other events on Sunday mornings between about 8.30 and 10.00. More

typically the event will last between 8.45 and 9.30. From several visits to the Park at this time on a Sunday suggests that the Park is very lightly used at this time.

I would also add that 30-40 children do not make much noise – they are too busy running – and I would expect that most local residents will not know that the event is taking place.

What you can expect

To be clear, you, as a local authority, can expect Singelfingen parkrun would:

- Be risk assessed by an experienced volunteer at least annually
- Be required to be marshalled at least every 100m, with line of sight around the course
- Be covered by parkrun's liability insurance
- Be managed by Event Directors who are DBS checked and hold a current NSPCC Child Protection in Sport certificate
- Be supervised each week by a Run Director who is DBS checked
- In the unlikely event of any potential incident have it recorded and followed up by parkrun HQ
- Have the backing and if necessary support of the parkrun Safeguarding team
- Have a defibrillator present during the course of each weekly event
- Have the support of myself as the local Event Support Ambassador

These safeguards and processes have been established and refined over the 20 years since parkrun started and over the 14 years since the first junior parkrun.

What you get

In summary, the junior parkrun model has been proven to attract children and young people to participate in regular physical activity. Many local authorities, in neighbouring Chesterfield, other Derbyshire councils, and beyond have recognised, funded and embraced junior parkruns as adding value to their constituents and positively contributing to their goals.

The Council's input into a junior event at Singelfingen Park would be limited but the results would be measurable and long lasting. Again I note the North East Derbyshire Council Plan 2023-2027 aims "*Maximise opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to participate in physical activity*" (P8).

This is an opportunity to provide a new and lasting resource to the children of the Town

From the potential participant point of view, there are few barriers to participation and unlike many other activities, it is free to take part!

What is required from Dronfield Town Council is permission to use Singelfingen Park each Sunday between 8.30am and 10.00am.

I commend this project to you I hope that you are minded to grant such permission. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter

Yours in sport

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