



31 July 2025

Dear Applicant

Our Ref: FOI 854

Your request for information received on 08 July 2025 has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Request

I'm writing to submit a freedom of information request in regard to the change of a public space at the entrance to Millar park, Laurencetown Co.Down. An area I believe was owned and maintained by NIHE.

Recently work has been completed on this area which has removed access of a shared public space with seating area and placed this area inside a compound belonging to Laurencetown community centre.

This area was used freely by all members of our community both young and old to meet, congregate and enjoy at all times of the day. This is no longer the case as it can't be accessed as is surrounded by a perimeter fence.

I would like to access the following information on this matter:-

If, and when this went up for public consultation?

Was local members of the community contacted about this change ?

Names of what local councillors were involved in discussions before this took place?

What were the pros and cons when deciding this area shouldn't be a public space any more?

When and where will a seating area be placed in our community to compensate the loss of this one?

If you need more specific information to fore-fill this request please let me know.

Our response

If, and when this went up for public consultation?

The work was done on the basis of conversations between the group and Grounds Maintenance in order to solve issues around misuse (vandalism, fly tipping). The suggestion to fence the area in to create a community space that could be used to grow fruit and vegetables was brought to and agreed by the LLCTA committee which is made up of 10 committee members who are elected by the local community to represent the area. In this context therefore the group feel the committee was acting in the best interests of the community.

Was local members of the community contacted about this change?

As above.

Names of what local councillors were involved in discussions before this took place?

The committee is made up of 10 members one of whom is a Local Councillor, Kevin Savage.

What were the pros and cons when deciding this area shouldn't be a public space any more?

It is not considered by the group that this space is withdrawn from public use. There is access through the community centre which has extensive opening hours and specific use beyond these hours can be accommodated. The group however is not prepared to have open access through an unlocked gate, as the piece of ground was upgraded to address issues if vandalism and damage to shrubs etc. The group does not believe that there are any disadvantages to the local community with this area being significantly upgraded.

When and where will a seating area be placed in our community to compensate the loss of this one?

The group note that there are benches in the park area and in front of the café area which are both within 50 yards of the fenced in area. In their capacity as the local elected community group LLTCA are happy to have conversations with Grounds Maintenance to establish if they have a role to play in the provision of additional seating.

This concludes our response.