



The Secret Garden
Outdoor Nursery,
Fife

News release

For immediate use

Years of hard work gives community playtime

Three years of planning and fundraising has not always felt like child's play, but the results delivered to one Fife village have been warmly welcomed by the community. Residents of Letham turned out to mark the official opening of the village's recently-completed play park makeover (Wednesday, 3 October 2011).

New play equipment has been installed, as well as a unique eco-friendly shelter built, with help from local children. The project was made possible with grants from LEADER in Fife, Fife Environment Trust, the Lottery and Fife Council, while materials and tools were donated by local businesses. Children from the community raised money by washing cars.

The project was spearheaded by Cathy Bache, founder of The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery – Scotland's first and only fully-outdoor nursery. The park plays an important role for nursery and is used as a meeting point before children and staff head off to nearby woods for the day.

Dave Hamilton, policeman and chair of the Community Council, said; "It's been a great effort by everyone involved to transform what was a tired and underused park into a fun and exciting place for adults as well as kids."

Attending the opening, Roz Mullin, assistant lead practitioner for the Secret Garden said: "The new shelter and play equipment are fantastic and will be well used by the children who come to The Secret Garden. Although we spend the majority of the day in Letham woods, the park is an important base for our daily activities.

"As an outdoor nursery, we rely on the village and its surrounding areas enormously – we are very grateful to the local residents of Letham who have been, and continue to be, supportive of The Secret Garden."

Local community interest company, North Howe Transition Toun, helped build the new shelter. Tom Morton, chair of NHTT, who last week won Best Green Community initiative at the Scottish Green Awards, said: "In these tough times, this project shows how any community can come together to make their area a better place to live."

The eco shelter was designed by local architects and built by a local firm, Little and Davie Construction, specialists of traditional building techniques. The clay walls were built by the 360 hands of volunteers, mainly little ones those from the nursery and primary school.

“Building with the children has been great fun, as well as educational and has created a building rooted in its community.” said master builder Becky Little.

Letham resident Louise Barron, who was instrumental in getting the project off the ground, added: “Although not always easy or straightforward, the past three years have shown what can be achieved by community involvement and enthusiasm. The project is a great example of people working together to share their skills and expertise for the benefit of local residents.

“We owe a big thanks to all the organisations which helped fund this project – without which we would not have been able to offer children and young people a valuable space for outdoor play.”

Ends

Notes to editors

PHOTO CAPTION:

Letham Park opening will be held on Wednesday, 5 October 2011 at 3.30pm

Awards and recognition for The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery:

- Awarded the Nancy Ovens Trust Award for Outstanding Contribution to Play 2008
- Play Scotland’s Outstanding Achievement to Play 2008 in recognition of *Best Practice in Action*
- Numerous invitations to speak about the Secret Garden’s pioneering work at conferences and workshops on outdoor education, children’s play and nursery provision by charities, NGOs, and government organisations/departments at local and national levels.
- Co-ordinated funding, design and project management of new community playground and eco-shelter in Letham Park, including a £12,000 EU Leader grant towards the shelter
- Erection of an 18-foot yurt to provide shelter and warmth in the woods by parent and staff volunteers, funded by the Big Lottery’s Community Wildlife Fund and available to local community groups and individuals.
- Facilitating the making of award-winning documentary *Into the Middle of Nowhere* by Anne Ewert about children playing at the Secret Garden

For further details contact:

Sarah Burnside

The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery

Email: enquiries@secretgardenoutdoor-nursesey.co.uk

Tel: 01333 720228

Local Residents:

Louise Barron Tel: 07917711886

John Vaughan Tel: 01337 810359

Architect & NHTT Chair:

Tom Morton 01334 659801

www.nhtt.org.uk