

Unveiling for play park in the Valley Gardens

By Rick Burin

HARROGATE children have had their first chance to try out the new-look Valley Gardens play area, following its six-figure overhaul.

More than £180,000 has been spent transforming the popular site. New equipment includes a 30-metre zip air ride, a treehouse and ropewalk.

Though the official opening comes on Wednesday with a special fun day, youngsters have already been taking advantage of the improved playground, which informally re-opened this week.

Harrogate parent Melanie Birkinshaw took her two chil-

dren, aged six and seven, to the playground on Wednesday.

"It was fantastic," she said.

"They have put in the most amazing wooden structures - a castle, an aeroplane - and the children went on absolutely everything.

"We stayed for an hour and a half, and they didn't want to leave, even though it was raining quite heavily."

There were around 50 children enjoying the play area at the same time and Melanie said other parents were just as pleased with the new-look site.

"It was getting very tired before. There's a lot more to do now, everything has been freshened up," she said.

"It's brilliant."

Childminder Jo Nolan, from Starbeck, said many parents were eager to see the new playground.

"It's a lovely place - I used to take my children up there when they were younger, and I still do with the ones I look after.

"I remember being a little girl and walking around the Valley Gardens with my grandparents.

"It's a Harrogate thing, and it should be available for the young as well older people."

Anne Smith, chairman of the Friends of Valley Gardens, said: "We like it - it's very good, very nice," she said. "I think the kids will be pleased and there will be more for

teenagers to do, which is something we welcome."

Coun Richard Cooper, cabinet member for cultural services, said the council hoped hundreds of children and their parents, grandparents and carers would attend Wednesday's fun da from 10am.

"We also hope they will get years of enjoyment from this new play area," he added.

Plans to upgrade the play area were passed by Harrogate Council's cabinet in January, after a consultation with more than 300 local residents showed that 85 per cent wanted to redesign and improve the site.

Money for the scheme came from building developers as part of a commitment to pro-

vide community facilities when they built new homes in the area.

The Mayor of Harrogate, Coun Pat Jones, will formally re-open the site on Wednesday. Play day attractions include activities aimed at teenagers, like a mobile skate park, along with events for younger children.

Wendy Hunwick-Brown from playcentre Winkies, which is visiting the fun day, said: "I've heard really good things about the play area from parents. From all the time I spent there with my children, I know the play area needed refurbishment."

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