

Shhh-wing sets and seesaws as Mid and East Antrim promotes quiet play!

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council has announced the expansion of its successful 'Quiet Hour' play park scheme.

This initiative, which began as a pilot programme in People's Park, Ballymena, aims to create a more inclusive environment for autistic children and others who may feel overwhelmed by excessive noise.

The 'Quiet Hour' will now be observed every Wednesday and Sunday from 2pm to 3pm in the following locations: People's Park, Ballymena; Carnfunnock Country Park, Larne; Town Park, Larne; and Marine Gardens, Carrickfergus.

During these designated times, park users are kindly requested to respect the quiet period and Council will play their part by ensuring that staff refrain from using noisy equipment. This will support a more inclusive space for all visitors.

Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Alderman Beth Adger MBE said: "At Council, we are committed to creating a more inclusive environment that welcomes autistic individuals and their families. This scheme, developed by our Autism Champion within Council's Parks and Open Spaces team, is a significant step towards achieving this goal and aligns with our vision of making Mid and East Antrim a strong, vibrant, safe and inclusive community where people work together to improve the quality of life for all.

"While children will naturally play in their own way, in any given area, and their play experiences can be enriched through the creation of appropriate and stimulating environments - quiet, contemplative play is just as important as boisterous and physical play - so facilitating the 'Quiet Hour' scheme provides an opportunity for all children to enjoy our parks in a way that suits their individual needs.

"The expansion of the 'Quiet Hour' scheme is part of the Borough's community plan, 'Putting People First', and the broader Autism Friendly Borough initiative, demonstrating Council - and our community planning partners - ongoing commitment to creating spaces that cater to the diverse needs of our residents and visitors.

"As Council continues to prioritise accessibility and inclusivity, the 'Quiet Hour' scheme serves as a model for how small changes can make a significant difference in creating welcoming spaces for all members of the community."

During the designated quiet times, park users are encouraged to be mindful of noise levels and speak softly, avoid using loud electronic devices and respect the peaceful atmosphere of the park.

Council recognises that creating an inclusive environment benefits not only autistic individuals but also those with sensory sensitivities, anxiety or anyone seeking a calmer outdoor experience.

Feedback on the 'Quiet Hour' scheme is welcome and encouraged. Residents and park users can share their thoughts by speaking with on-site staff members or by emailing parks@midandeastantrim.gov.uk.