



Falkland Imagineers: Putting children at the heart of Falkland Estate

"Falkland Estate is full of so much welcoming and funny people. It should get an award for the most imaginative place."



 **Children's
Parliament**
giving ideas a voice



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Introduction

Falkland Centre of Stewardship and its stakeholders are currently working on the development of Falkland Estate to ensure its sustainability and to enhance community involvement.

Falkland Estate is a place that Children's Parliament values and loves working in and therefore we were delighted to be asked to support children's participation in the development process.

To inform this process, Children's Parliament worked with children aged between 3 and 12 on the Falkland Imagineers project to capture children's views and ideas on what they and their families value about Falkland Estate and how people of all ages could best enjoy playing and learning on the Estate now and in the future.



Project Outline

From February to May 2022, Children's Parliament worked directly and indirectly with over 200 children from Falkland Primary School and nursery, Freuchie Primary School and Nursery and Falkland House School on the Falkland Imagineers project.

This work is located in a longer-term conversation around the future direction of Falkland Estate. As with all our work, we used creative, participatory and play-based methods to encourage children to consider what they love about Falkland Estate. We also asked them to think about ideas that would keep what they and others value, and imagine new ideas which could offer fun and interesting experiences for people of all ages.

From the 200 or so children who took part in the process, 17 became our Chief Imagineers. This group met together at the Centre for Stewardship to reflect on all the ideas gathered during the project and use these to create a honeycomb mural that features children's ideas and vision of the future Estate. The Chief Imagineers presented their work and revealed the honeycomb mural at a celebration event at the end of the project to their families, friends and other community members and local stakeholders.

The honeycomb mural is now in place at Falkland Estate, accessible to the public and linked through a QR code to Children's Parliament's website that features an annotated version of the honeycomb alongside information about the project and the children's ideas. The website can be found here: www.childrensparliament.org.uk/falkland-imagineers/

Furthermore, Children's Parliament also produced a portable banner of the honeycomb that will support future discussions around the development of Falkland Estate in schools and community settings.

At the end of the project, the children were invited to reflect upon their experiences and learning. A selection of the children's poems can be found on our website.

Our Chief Imagineers were aged between 9 – 11 and all quotes are attributable to them unless otherwise stated.



To achieve these outputs, the Falkland Imagineer project was structured into the following key elements:

Exploratory Workshops

To ensure as wide a reach as possible, school children participated in a creative, activity-based workshop designed by Children's Parliament and delivered by school staff. The workshop supported nursery and school staff to gather children's views on what they, their friends, families and neighbours valued about Falkland Estate along with new ideas. As a result, over 200 new ideas were generated – 60 of which were integrated into the honeycomb mural by the Chief Imagineers. The remaining 140+ ideas can be found at childrensparliament.org.uk/falkland-Imagineers and will also soon be accessible through falklandestate.co.uk.



Working in more depth with two P6 classes from Falkland and Freuchie Primary School, the children spent an exploratory day with Falkland Estate Ranger Sam. They listened to stories from Ninian, Chair of Falkland Estate Trust which owns the Estate, and Ninian's sister Elly Stuart. At the end of the day, the children were given a mission. The mission was to interview family and friends to find out their stories about how they use Falkland Estate, what they enjoy and would not want to lose and share any ideas they had to contribute to the ideas bank. This allowed the children access to the views of people in their communities of all ages.

Chief Imagineers Sessions

At the midpoint of the programme, 17 children from the three schools became our Chief Imagineers. Five Chief Imagineer sessions provided an opportunity for a smaller team of children to work with peers and, through the lens of children's human rights, to explore children's ideas and vision for the development of the Estate.





The Imagineers' first job was to consider all ideas gathered from the schools and decide which 60 best reflected the range of ideas and illustrations to be shown on the large wooden honeycomb which was to be sited on the Estate as a visual representation of the children's ideas. It was a challenging task as the children acknowledged the work and thinking that had gone into the illustrations. They took their role seriously and through a sifting process, chose their 60 images which they then transferred onto wooden honeycomb tiles using a process of chalking, tracing and painting to make the images as true to the originals as possible.

Sharing Children's Ideas with the Community

The Children's Parliament team was supported by class teachers, staff of Falkland Centre for Stewardship and local adults. A number of local adults stepped forward to join 'The Elders' group – adults from the community who supported the children in their presentation to the wider community and who will champion the children's vision and their involvement in the ongoing community conversations.



The children had spent time with the Elders thinking about which of the ideas might be able to become 'Quick Wins' – these were things that Falkland Centre for Stewardship could implement quickly, to demonstrate their thanks to the children for all their hard work alongside the Centre's commitment to taking the children's ideas seriously.

At the end of the project, the children presented their honeycomb to their families, teachers and community members. The children and Elders together also presented the 'Quick Wins' to the Centre of Stewardship in a specially created beehive.



Project Timeline

March

4x

Children's Parliament-led exploratory class workshops at Falkland Estate for Falkland Primary School

1x

Mission to engage people of different ages and the wider community within the process

1x

Children's Parliament-designed exploratory workshops for all children at Falkland and Freuchie Primary School and Nursery and Falkland House School, delivered and supported by school staff to gather a wide range of ideas.

5x

Children's Parliament-led sessions with a core group of children from each school, called 'Chief Imagineers' at Falkland Estate to decide on the most representative ideas and to work on the honeycomb mural.

1x

Session with community Elders who supported the children in their work and will champion the children's ideas in future discussions around the development of the Estate.

April

1x

Final presentation and celebration event was held on 27th April 2022 where the Chief Imagineers presented the honeycomb to their friends, families and the wider community supported by the elders.



Emerging Ideas

In our exploratory workshops we asked the children what they and their families enjoy and value about Falkland Estate now. Using our "Tree of Life" activity and the feedback that children gathered from their friends and parents after interviewing people of all ages in their community it became clear that most of the children, if not all, have experience of visiting Falkland Estate. The language that they used to describe their experiences reflects a deep love and appreciation for the place based on their family memories and from being in and around natural spaces.

Most describe the feeling of being out and about in nature making them feel "happy" and "safe". When talking about play and having fun they described how for them this had been about walking, cycling, playing tig, walking their dogs with their families or their friends. Fond memories of the café, the people - the hot chocolate was a firm favourite – childhood memories.



"I feel like the Estate is very peaceful and that you can go to feel like that."

"I feel quiet, happy, calm and I just really enjoy being in the Estate"

"When I am in the Estate I feel peaceful because I can only hear the sound of nature."

"I feel very grateful that I have this amazing Estate near to me."

"I like Falkland Estate because it is a great place and great for kids and adults to have fun in, I like to climb trees."

"I value the nature and wildlife".

"In the estate, I like to make dens. I read and play with my friends and family."

"I come here for outdoor learning and for walks with my mum."

"When I am in the Estate, I value the nature and calmness."

There was a strong consensus among the children that they would like to see Falkland Estate maintained and protected for future generations.

"I think it is peaceful and I value how well we have kept the Estate and I think we should keep it this way!"

Some children also spoke about the impact that climate change is having and raised the importance of planting more trees on the Estate.



Children and their families also thought about what might improve people's experiences of spending time at Falkland.

"I feel happy and it is peaceful though it could be improved."

Some children, especially from Frenchie Primary School, mentioned their dependency on adults to be able to get to the Estate and the lack of public or supported transport. Another barrier highlighted by the children was that paths weren't accessible enough for people in wheelchairs, due to their size or missing ramps.

"Some people may not be able to access the paths and outdoors as well as others."

Also, muddy, blocked or overgrown paths are seen by the children as an obstacle to access the Estate.

"Some parts are overgrown, or rough and muddy paths are blocking the way."

Children were also aware that many more people have been accessing Falkland Estate due to the pandemic and people weren't able to travel far so were making more use of local facilities. As a consequence of increased numbers, the children talked about the increase in cars causing issues due to limited parking available.

"The road is often too busy, there are a lot of cars - too many cars."

Children said that the increased traffic makes them feel less safe. They also raised worries that visitors might care less about the environment they were visiting and that this could be the reason for the increase in littering.

"I don't like people littering and disrespecting the nature and forest."



Children would like to see more litter bins installed across the Estate, which they see also beneficial to make sure dog owners bin their dog poo more often.



“Pick up dog poo!!! Do it!”

A strong theme throughout our work with the Falkland Imagineers was the desire to create opportunities for more fun and exciting opportunities for children and adults to enjoy Falkland Estate together. The children were keen that these opportunities supported the development of new skills, for example through (outdoor) learning experiences.

“I think we should add more safe spaces to the estate and more play equipment!”

“I think we should add more family adventures in the Estate.”

“I think we should make more rope swings.”

Collecting over 200 drawings plus descriptions from the children from the schools involved in the project, children came up with the most amazing ideas. We received many drawings for:

- Fantastic tree houses and zip lines for people of all ages to enjoy
- Setting up a tree house hotel or Airbnb
- Climbing walls
- Trampolines on the ground and in the trees
- Parkour and outdoor gym ideas
- Picnic areas
- Nature trails
- More bike and horse-riding opportunities on the Estate
- A giant slide down Falkland Hill
- A community garden and
- A tree top market
- A light festival in the woods
- Different workshop offerings
- Summer schools or camps
- A book swap
- A forest library with swings to relax and read a book
- A hot chocolate / pancake hut up in the forest

Our Chief Imagineers selected the 60 ideas very carefully, focusing on which images, illustrations and ideas best reflected the views of the 200 contributions.

"The thing I found the most difficult was trying to narrow down 200 amazing ideas down to 60/50."



Quick Wins

Children's Parliament often explains our work as 'raising horizons not expectations'. The children were aware that not all of their ideas will be realised. However, with the support of the Elders, the children revised the honeycomb mural ideas and together they came up with a list of approximately 20 'Quick Wins' that Falkland Estate and the Centre for Stewardship might want to consider taking forward.

- Tree carving in the estate and workshops.
- Night walks with light show - with a small charge to finance further projects.
- "Feelings" walkway on bridge.
- Julia Donaldson trail - starting with a sculpture of the Gruffalo.
- Zip lines/ Zip Wire from top of Falkland Hill down into the estate. Invite a company who already runs ziplines to meet with us to explore what is possible and where and how a zip line could be built.
- Musical instruments & guitar strings between trees.
- Community Garden.
- Obstacle Course.
- Picnic area with BBQ.
- Tree houses - to play and stay in.
- Willow walkway and willow spider's web.
- Waterfall with a bridge.
- Beehives.
- Secret Grotto – a place accessible for wheelchairs to relax and watch birds.
- More wheelchair-accessible paths.
- Bike shop (for hire).
- Horse/pony trekking.
- More dog waste bins - bins in general.
- Improve the parking.
- More community events.
- Tree sculptures / More colourful statues.
- Book swing with book swap shelf.



Impact

Reflecting on the feedback that we gathered from children, their parents, carers, our partner schools, Elders and the Centre of Stewardship, the Falkland Imagineers project has had a strong impact on everybody involved.

Over the course of the project more than 200 children from nursery age up to P7 were able to learn about children's human rights and shared their views on what they consider important and value about Falkland Estate and contributed with their ideas to a future innovative and exciting plan. The project also enabled the inclusion of other voices within the community with people of all ages able to share their thoughts and ideas.

The project initiated an intergenerational dialogue between older community members and children about the future of Falkland Estate and put children's vision at the heart of the process.

The outputs produced by the children and Children's Parliament, the honeycomb mural with the linked QR code to our exploratory and interactive website, the portable project banner etc., provide transparency about the process and make the children's ideas accessible to the public. This can support further engagement of the wider community.

The project fostered the willingness for future cooperation between the three schools involved and opened new communication channels between the schools and the Centre for Stewardship. The opportunity and support is there to keep children involved in future projects and discussions and to take some of the quick win ideas further.



"Pupil Voice will be a focus of our School Improvement Plan next session, using the Children's Parliament resources/website, get the families involved and continue to link with the Estate, Freuchie Primary and Falkland House."

- Headteacher, Falkland Primary School

An early example of impact, that highlights Falkland Centre for Stewardship's commitment to ensuring this process continues, came at the presentation when Helen Lawrenson, Centre Director, told the children she had listened to what they have said and could confirm that she has already ordered new bins, will ensure more poo bins specifically and will ensure new benches are put in. Helen also announced that in response to the children's request for more art and sculpture and creativity, the Centre has commissioned two artists to create a sculpture trail. She, and the artists, invited the children to participate in the forthcoming workshops. The children were thrilled at this practical manifestation of support for their efforts.

The Falkland Imagineer project also had an incredibly positive impact on participating children. Many of the Chief Imagineers and their parents and carers reported an increase in confidence and the forming of new friendships. Beside the development of creative and teamwork skills, children were able to deepen their understanding of children's human rights through experiencing a children's human rights-based approach and took real ownership of the process, the celebration event and the end product - the honeycomb.

Feedback from Chief Imagineers:



"It helped my confidence and I learned how to trace using chalk."

"I learned a lot of teamwork during this experience and how to make a picture out of chalk, wood and pen."

"I loved it all! All the adults always listened and respected our ideas and gave us very delicious dinner."

"I've made new friends. That makes me happy"



"I'm proud of what our group achieved."

"I feel proud of what I achieved. I was really scared to do the presentation – but I did it!"

"I am so proud that we were being able to pull off our brilliant presentation in only the time of a day."

"I am most proud of the honeycomb – it looks amazing."

"I've learned to do new things – like painting – I didn't know I could do that!"

Feedback from parents/ carers:

"The project had a very positive impact on my daughter. It's a great boost to their confidence to be listened to and heard."

"It has helped her confidence immensely and she has made some great new friends."

"There were some wonderful ideas put forward so would be great to see them come to life and for the kids to see through to the end."

"Activities like this should be offered on a regular basis, even if it's a paid-for event! I would like to see the kids' ideas come to life, perhaps they could be involved in group fundraising for some of the larger projects."



"Just like to say a huge thank you to all involved. It has done my daughter the world of good and she has loved every minute. She can't wait to do more and get involved with the sculpture trail."

"We're so proud of him!"

"She's grown so much in confidence - I can't believe it!"

"My son has really enjoyed the project. Seeing the great work you are doing and how much he is enjoying it compels me to share his joy and share the great work the Children's Parliament is doing."

"My son always loved the outdoors, but he has made connection with sustainability and the future."

Feedback from school partners:

"From first meeting to final presentation the teamwork/communication skills shown and developed were outstanding. The CP staff were excellent as role models and facilitators."

"As a teacher I loved it. To see how much the Chief Imagineers grew was a testament to how exceptional the CP staff are."

"The celebration event was excellent, the children shone and the mutual respect shown



by all of the adults involved towards the children and the children to the adults will have left the kids with lifelong memories of these experiences. Brilliant."

"It's wonderful to see our children mixing and being included. We're so proud of them."

"He's so shy and hangs back in school. It's great to see him taking a lead in this project - he's really coming into himself."

Feedback from Elders and community members:

"This is just fantastic - we don't listen to children enough and they have so many great ideas. They just need a chance to get them out."

"I've loved every minute of being involved in this project. The children are incredible and have so much to contribute to this place. Thank you for allowing me to be part of it."

"Children don't usually have a voice. And they should have a voice because they're members of our communities and have an equal right to have a say about where they live and what happens around about them. I'm an Unfeartie and I will use every opportunity to shout about this and encourage others to make sure they create opportunities for children to share their views - we must take them seriously."

The project created a real 'buzz' about Falkland Estate and with the children's and Elders' handover of the hive with 'Quick Wins' to the Centre of Stewardship, Children's Parliament hopes that this work has the potential to spark a new, long term intergenerational community engagement and development process.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all children involved in the project across the three schools who shared their views, experiences and ideas for this project. We would like to say an extra special thank you to our 17 fabulous Chief Imagineers for demonstrating such kindness, respect, creativity and empathy and teamwork throughout this project. They worked exceptionally hard! It has been such a joy to learn from you and to imagine a vision of the future. Thank you: Archie & Archie, Brooke, Eilidh, George, Isla, Kayson, Keira, Leo, Lily & Lily, Lylah, Matthew, Owen, Phoebe, Ramsay and Seth.

This project would have not been possible without the support of the children's parents/ carers and our colleagues from:

- Falkland Primary School and Nursery (especially Laura Munro, Sarah Spring and Kate Vance)
- Freuchie Primary School and Nursery (particularly Holly Kirkhope, Alistair Kinneer and Carol Simpson)
- Falkland House School (particularly Kenny Graham, Demi Conroy and Patrick Gannon).

Not to forget our engaged and supportive and 'nothing is a problem' partners at the Centre of Stewardship (our thanks go to Helen, Caroline, Lisa, Adele and Sam) and other committed friends that supported the process. A special thank you goes to Elly Stuart for throwing herself into all aspects of the project, sharing wonderful stories and giving so much of her time and to Ninian Stuart for his support and storytelling and Tara for sharing local knowledge, passion, positivity and general fabulousness. It is a testament to the engagement of the adults that the

children made strong connections with the team too and always asked after any of the adults if they missed a session.

Thank you to Paul Turner, who kindly and unobtrusively captured images of the process and to Mark Duffy who at short notice came along with his drone and shared the footage with excited children and adults. We were delighted to welcome local adults – Elders – and would like to thank them for their interest and commitment; Rod and Gail Crawford, Dave and Maggie McKeen, John Smith, Lars Christiansen, Robbie Nellies, Jimmy and Teresa Kilbane, Dave and Margaret Dryburgh, Tara O’Leary, and David Macdiarmid. Their involvement in the final celebration event was important and demonstrated their commitment to their local children.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to the Centre of Stewardship and Inspiring Scotland for funding this work.

Unfearties

Unfearties are individuals who are courageous in discussing children’s issues, are making a difference in children’s lives, and who are willing to speak up for, and stand alongside, children.

This Children's Parliament initiative has attracted more than 1000 people to join, including doctors, nurses, teachers, parents, carers, civil servants, local authority workers, third sector practitioners, United Nations deputy high commissioners, and even the First Minister of Scotland.

Visit childrensparliament.org.uk/unfearties to find out more and join the brave band of Unfearties



About Children's Parliament

Established in 1996, Children's Parliament is Scotland's centre of excellence for children's human rights, participation and engagement. Through our rights-based, creative practice, we provide younger children from diverse backgrounds across Scotland with opportunities to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings so that they can influence positive change in their lives at home, in school and in the community. Our dream is that children grow up in a world of love, happiness and understanding. Our mission is to inspire great awareness and understanding of the power of children's human rights and to support implementation of the United Nations on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across Scotland.

Our Approach

Children's Parliament adopts a children's human rights-based approach to practice, as set out in the UNCRC. This means we seek to develop open and honest relationships with children, and to create opportunities for them to feel safe, challenged and trusted. This is done by respecting their human dignity and valuing their opinions and ideas.

The aim of our work is to encourage children to explore the salient issues in their lives and consider what they can do to influence their own situation and that of others in relation to these issues.

All children who participate in our programmes become Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs). Unlike other parliamentary bodies, Children's Parliament is not an elected body. Rather it is a participatory one, engaging with children across a range of settings in order to include as many children as possible. Every space we create is a children's parliament. When children come into this space, we want them to bring with them their knowledge of what it is like to be a child, their ideas and their opinions, and to be willing to voice and explore them. By building trusting relationships, we can begin to support the children to see things from different viewpoints and to realise that they have the ability to make a change in the world.