



Ormeau Park BMX Track – Risk Assessment 30/11/13

Background

Ormeau Park is owned and run by Belfast City Council and is one of the largest and busiest parks in the city and contains a variety of horticulture, woodland, wildlife and sporting facilities. One of the sporting facilities is the BMX Track. The track was built in the 1980's and was a major venue for the Northern Ireland and Irish BMX Race scene. By the early 1990's BMX as a sport and recreational type of cycling declined. As people lost interest in BMX, so then the manufacturer ceased making BMX type bikes. This resulted in the track at Ormeau Park being used less often and by 2000, barely used at all.

Around 2004, a major resurgence of BMX was born. Manufacturers realized that BMX type bikes were the most appropriate bicycles for young children. This resulted in the actual sport of BMX racing being re-born, and in fact is now an Olympic sport, is a discipline within the UCI cycling calendar, and has created a high demand for BMX tracks.

Modern BMX tracks are designed to give young children and inexperienced riders a safe and enjoyable environment to do leisure-type cycling & activity. At the same time, if designed correctly, a BMX track should also give more experienced and older riders a challenge and exhilarating cycle.

Ormeau Park BMX Track has served the local community well. The time has come, though, to consider bringing it into the 21st century, where a facility can be both a recreational, fun and safe track for all, and at the same time be a track, which offers excitement and enjoyment for older riders. The track at Ormeau Park has been risk assessed by BMX Ireland, the body who oversees the development, promotion and sport of BMX throughout the island of Ireland. BMX Ireland takes its direction and mandate from Cycling Ireland, the governing body for cycling on the island of Ireland.

This risk assessment presents the findings on the current state and ride ability of Ormeau Park BMX Track. The opinions are those of BMX Ireland, and are purely 'observations and recommendations'. Our findings conclude that the track should be dramatically adapted to resolve identified risk hazards, and bring the facility up to modern BMX track standards.

Landing slopes on jumps are too narrow. If a rider becomes 'unstable' in the air, then the 'narrow' width of the landing area does not allow for ample room to correct the landing.

All jumps along the first straight are too close together to enable proper 'flowing' ride ability for older children and more experienced riders. The first jump is too close to the bottom of the start hill.

First Berm / Corner

Due to the almost 'flat' angle of the berm, riders have been observed 'skidding out' and actually over shooting the berm and proceeding onto the grassy area beyond. This is a hazard to other users of the grassy area e.g., people walking dogs, people picnicking in summer etc. The berms should be angled sufficiently to ensure the rider remains on the track. This is particularly important when younger and novice riders are using the facility.

An 'improvised access' channel has been created from the tarmac path running parallel onto the track. This path enters on the first berm. **This is a major collision hazard. If the berms were angled sufficiently this problem would be eliminated.**

Second Straight

The second straight is actually one long 'curve'. This is not conducive to modern BMX track design, as it presents an 'orientation' problem for inexperienced riders. For experienced riders who may wish to 'jump' the obstacles on the second straight, they must land perfectly to avoid fall risk. All 'straights' on a BMX track should be in a strict direction, with no deviation.

First and second jump on this straight have stones protruding. If a rider falls, more serious injuries may result, as it was noticed an actual 'red brick' is protruding here. **This should be rectified immediately.**

Jumps 1 & 2 have 'water channels' on up-slopes. These are fall risks as a wheel can enter these channels. Along the entire straight grass encroachment is a major issue.

Second Berm / Corner

As per first berm, the angle of is far too shallow. As this is berm is immediately after a 'jump' it is imperative that it acts as both a berm' and a 'catchment corner' to ensure the rider stays on the track, and direct him or her onto the next straight. As per first berm, the shallow angle can cause a rider to over shoot and potentially come into contact with other park users.

Bushes

No BMX track facility should have foliage, trees, or bushes in the 'middle' section of the track. The density of bushes in the centre of track is a major hazard. On the day of the Risk Assessment, many riders were riding in the 'wrong direction' around the track, and it was observed that due to the density of bushes, riders were upon each other with barely enough time to avoid collision. This was especially evident where many riders were joining the 'last straight' immediately after exiting the first berm.

Bushes and foliage in centre of track are a Child Safety & Protection issue as parents are unable to observe their child at all times, especially if the child stops on a section of the track, where the parent is unable to see them due to the bushes.

If an event were ever held on the track, the bushes would obscure officials and first aid personnel observing the riders

END

Risk Assessment conducted by Kevin McShane on Saturday 30th November 2013



Kevin J McShane
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