

Kids call for action to bring safe Play Zones to Grimsby

By [Grimsby Telegraph](#) | Posted: October 29, 2013



PLAYTIME: Jordan Westerman, 8, from St Mary's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy, hands over a petition with more than 200 signatures to Councillor Steve Beasant. Also pictured are class teacher Bernadette Tarrant, student Morgan O'Neill, teaching assistant Sue Allen, and pupils. Picture: Jon Corken

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THE drone of traffic could be replaced by the sounds of children playing on the streets in one area of Grimsby, if ambitious plans get a green light.

A petition with more than 200 names has been handed to North East Lincolnshire Council, by East Marsh councillor Steve Beasant, on behalf of St Mary's Catholic Primary Voluntary Academy.

The petition calls for the introduction of Play Zones, a model used in Bristol which sees roads closed for a couple of hours a month to allow children to play safely, and for communities to take time out to get together.

Councillor Beasant had visited the academy to talk to Year Three pupils during a project where youngsters looked into things they didn't like in the area they live including heavy traffic, bad language and litter and, after much debate, he put the idea of the Play Zones forward.

The youngsters were keen on the idea and actively pursued names for their petition from within the school.

The petition has now been handed in to the council by Councillor Beasant.

The councillor said the proposed Play Zones could help to bring communities together, while giving youngsters the chance to take up some old pastimes.

"I personally think what is potentially wrong is that a lot of children know they can't play out safely," he said.

"When I was younger there were no cars, and you could play out in the street all day long without the risk of being run-down. This would be a great idea, and would encourage young people and families to play together.

"I would hope that parents and grandparents would make a big deal out of the few hours a month a road is closed and teach their children some of their own old pastimes.

"I praise the youngsters for their research into this project and really hope that the council will support this petition."

Three years ago, Bristol City Council adopted a similar scheme which now sees six streets in the city closed each month.

Organisers have hailed the benefits it has brought, including community cohesion.

Bernadette Tarrant, Year Three class teacher at St Mary's, said the youngsters were hopeful that the council would look favourably on the petition.

"The whole idea has been developed by the children, we know miracles are not going to happen but something good could come out of it," she said.

"Steve has supported the children so much, he is a local person with local knowledge and they appreciate that.

"The idea is that children can play safely, neighbours can get to know each other over a cup of tea and the older ones can teach the younger ones the games that they used to play.

"We know it is not going to happen tomorrow, but we are not going to let the council forget about it."

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