

The discovery of air raid shelters beneath the area for the children's play park has been an unexpected find and there has been a lot of discussion between the Friends, the Council and the [Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership](#) about the best way forward.

There are two large connecting tunnel shelters beneath the playground area and it would be expensive to preserve both intact in their entirety and to develop them as visitor attractions. We currently have no funding for such a project.

There is also a third shelter in the north west of the park that we have avoided disturbing by re-aligning some pieces of play equipment.

Creating a good quality play area for all ages remains a major priority and will be an incredible asset for Devonport and the surrounding area. Most people have to travel to Central Park to play in a good playground, which does little to encourage children to be physically active.

Councillor Michael Leaves, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Environmental Regulation said: "After discussing all the possibilities with our key partners, we believe that filling a part of the shelters and realigning some of the play equipment is the best solution to those who want to see the both the playground progress and part of the shelters preserved for possible future public access should resources become available.

"This way work on the play area can continue and the most interesting part of these wartime relics is preserved for the future."

We also carefully considered not filling in any part of the shelters, but this option involved felling three 100-year-old trees, building retaining walls and building up the ground at considerable cost.

This would make the play area highly visible and more intrusive within the historic park – an option that would be unpopular for local people who want to preserve the park's trees and would raise concerns from the Garden History Society who look after historic parks.

This would still not allow the public to enter the shelters as these need to be made safe. Work would include rebuilding collapsed entrances, removing trees roots, installing lighting and ventilation. All this would need extra funding.

We have been in touch with the Heritage Lottery Fund to ensure they have no objections to this proposal and they have confirmed their support for our preferred option.

We re-entered the shelters at the request of the Friends of Devonport Park and the City archaeologist to create another video and photo record of the shelters. All but one item of sign and graffiti is in the section we plan to keep.

We will also try to find the entrance shaft for the third shelter while building the play area to check out its condition and structure.

The play area contractors will now be re-starting the construction of the children's play area, with completion scheduled for early June.