



**ILMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL**

**21st December 2020**

**PRESS RELEASE – WHARF LANE RECREATION GROUND UPGRADE**

The eagerly awaited Phase 1 of the upgrade to the Wharf Lane Recreation Ground in Ilminster has now been completed and opened on Monday 21st December 2020 with the ribbon cutting on the centrepiece play facility, a 20 metre-long sand barge.

This is the culmination of a project that was started in 2014 by the late Sophie Storey who was, at the time, an Ilminster Town Councillor. Cllr. Storey led an initial public consultation involving local schoolchildren and the Ilminster Rec Users' Group who visited other play areas in Somerset to investigate potential equipment upgrades. Following some years competing for the necessary funds, the project was given new impetus by Cllr. Michelle Gunn in 2019 when she successfully persuaded Ilminster Town Council to approve unanimously for the recreation ground upgrade.

Planning moved quickly and, with invaluable advice and assistance from Rob Parr, the Locality Officer of South Somerset District Council (SSDC), designs were prepared, and work started in October 2020. SSDC have contributed to the purchase costs and maintenance of the play area. Despite inevitable delays due to the Coronavirus pandemic the play barge was opened by Cllr. Gunn and will be named "Sophie Louise" in memory of Cllr. Storey. Phase 2, the upgrade to the other play equipment, will begin at the end of March 2021.