

London Borough of Bexley

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Lesnes arson attack – appeal for witnesses

An appeal is being made for witnesses who can help identify the person, or persons, responsible for an arson attack last Friday night - 13 July 2018 – when an arsonist set fire to the children’s climbing wall in Lesnes Abbey Wood playground.

The fire has caused serious damage to the climbing wall and the safety surfacing around it. This area of the playground is now unsafe and has been taken out of use. London Borough of Bexley has asked a specialist playground repair company to assess the damage and provide an estimate for repairs. It is likely that they will run into several thousands of pounds and there will be many weeks during the school summer holidays when children will be unable to use and enjoy this area of the playground.

This is the third time that arsonists have set fire to equipment in the Lesnes Abbey Wood playground. The last time was on 9 June 2015, when local youths caused over £100,000 of damage to the medieval tower unit.

Cllr Peter Craske, Cabinet Member for Places said: “We provide 33 playgrounds in the borough and our budget for repairs and renewals is limited. We have worked hard to use Council Tax payers’ money to provide a great playground for local children and visitors to Lesnes, but the continual use of public funds to repair deliberate criminal damage is in no one’s interest. It disadvantages children across the borough and is not sustainable.”

“Those involved in this mindless anti-social activity should know that we will seek to ensure the full force of the law is brought to bear on those responsible for this crime, the penalty for which could be a substantial fine and a prison sentence.”

Public support and vigilance is essential in order to maintain the borough’s playgrounds for the enjoyment of the local community. If you have any information that could help to identify those responsible please contact parksandopenspaces@bexley.gov.uk, telephone 020 3045 3693 or make a confidential report to Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111.

