

PITCHES CONDITION SURVEY & STRATEGY

Part 2: Strategy

6 November 2018



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**Derry City
& Strabane
District
Council**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** Derry City & Strabane District Council has commissioned a ‘*Condition Survey of Council Pitches and Recommendations for a Council Pitches Strategy*’. The methodology for the commission is ‘Towards a Level Playing Field; Playing Pitch Model’ developed by Sport England and the Central Council for Physical Recreation. The model requires focused research on supply, demand and quality to assess *adequacy of provision* for competition requirements.
- 1.2** The research was carried out from January 2018 to April 2018, looking at association football, gaelic games, hockey, rugby and cricket.⁽¹⁾ The Council requires two main outputs, namely:-
- ❖ An audit of all playing pitches in the control of Derry City & Strabane District Council, including an inventory of other pitches, and;
 - ❖ A Playing Pitches Strategy that allows the Council to make informed planning decisions regarding pitch provision and assists with the targeting of financial investment and the planning of the delivery of sports development programmes.

The approach involved desk research, survey work, site inspections and liaison with key stakeholders. Supply of and demand for pitches was assessed for the Council area as a whole and where appropriate, for four defined geographical areas; (i) Derry City; (ii) Derry Rural; (iii) Strabane Town; (iv) Strabane Rural. This document is the Playing Pitches Strategy.

⁽¹⁾ Cricket was added to the list at the Project Initiation Meeting.

2. Context

2.1 The research informs a complete picture of the number of clubs, teams and participants.

Table 2.1: Clubs and Teams by Sport

Sport	No of Clubs	Male		Female		Total	
		Teams	%	Teams	%	Teams	%
Association Football	60	316	54	25	16	341	46
Gaelic Games	20	173	30	108	67	281	38
Cricket	14	71	12	10	6	81	11
Hockey	3	0	0	13	8	13	2
Rugby	2	20	4	4	3	24	3
Totals		580	100%	160	100%	740	100%

Table 2.2: Participants by Sport

Sport	Male		Female		Totals	
	Junior	Adult	Junior	Adult	Totals No	%
Association Football	3,638	1,661	351	63	5,713	45
Gaelic Games	1,991	864	1,376	550	4,781	38
Cricket	432	563	166	193	1,354	11
Hockey	61	18	120	70	269	2
Rugby	320	180	49	20	569	4
Totals	6,442	3,286	2,062	896	12,686	100%

2.2 Regarding *supply* a complete inventory of all pitches in all ownerships for the five sports was developed. The summary shows there are 143 pitches suited to competition at some level across the five sports:-

Table 2.3: Summary of Full and Youth Match Pitches

Ownership	GRASS					ARTIFICIAL TURF PITCHES			TOTALS
	Assoc Football	Gaelic Games	Cricket	Hockey	Rugby	Assoc Football	Gaelic Games	Hockey (Astro)	
Council	42	3	0	n/a	1	5	1	1	53
Club/Community	9	21	18	n/a	5	0	0	0	53
Education Sector	14	3	6	n/a	7	5	0	2	37
Totals	65	27	24	n/a	13	10	1	3	143

3. Adequacy of Provision

3.1 Adequacy of provision for community use is assessed for each sport against three scenarios in accordance with the Sport England model:-

Reference	Description
Scenario 1	All pitches (in all ownerships)
Scenario 2	Pitches with secured community use and pitches used by the community, but not with secured use (excludes pitches not available to community use).
Scenario 3	Council pitches only

3.2 Adequacy of provision across the Council area for each sport is summarised as follows, where a '+' result indicates supply of pitches exceeds current demand and a '-' result indicates a shortfall in supply of pitches for current demand. Scenario 1 and Scenario 3 are assessed in the sports-specific sections in this report; Scenario 1 is deemed to be unrealistic as it includes pitches in the education sector that are generally not available for community use. Similarly Scenario 3, assessed in the sports-specific sections is deemed to be unrealistic as it considers only Council-owned pitches. For these reasons Scenario 2 is summarised here as the most realistic Scenario. It is summarised for the whole Council area and, where appropriate, for each of four sub-areas:-

Table 3.1: Adequacy of Provision – Scenario 2

Sport/Category	Whole Council area	By Area			
		Derry City	Derry Rural	Strabane Town	Strabane Rural
<u>Association Football</u>					
Youth pitches (U12-U16)	+28	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Adult pitches (U17, U18, older)	+3	+2	+1	+3	-3
<u>Gaelic Games</u>					
Go Games, Youth and Adult pitches for matches and training	-8	-3	evens	-0.5	-4
<u>Cricket</u>					
Youth, Junior and Adult pitches	+1	evens	evens	evens	+1

for matches and training					
Hockey					
Mini Hockey	+1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Youth Hockey	+1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Adult Hockey	evens	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Rugby					
Mini Rugby	+2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Youth Rugby	evens	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Adult Rugby	-2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

3.3 The assessment demonstrates that the provision of pitches for community use, excepting youth pitches for association football barely meets demand and in the case of gaelic games falls well short of demand. A comparison of adequacy of provision between the Derry City & Strabane area and four other Council areas⁽³⁾ for association football presents a useful picture:-

Pitch Audit Year	Council	Adequacy of Provision in Scenario 2	Supply Total number of pitches in Scenario 2	Surplus/Supply (%)
2018	Derry City & Strabane District Council	+3	46	7%
2017	Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council	+20	49	41%
2015	Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council	+10	47	21%
2013	Belfast City Council	+33	124	27%
2012	Newtownabbey Borough Council (legacy)	+21	44	48%

It's clear that, for association football (as an example) there is not the same 'buffer' of pitches as found elsewhere. The buffer is the ratio of the number of unused pitches at peak demand to the number of pitches available for competitive matches at peak demand. Councils often require a pitch surplus for the following operational reasons:-

- ❖ allows for pitches to be taken out of circulation for maintenance and to be rested.
- ❖ allows for unexpected increase in games to be accommodated, for example National cup and league competitions that do not occur on a weekly basis.

⁽³⁾ Otium Leisure Consultancy used the same audit process for the four Council areas presented for comparison.

- ❖ allows for use for by schools and development squads.
- ❖ poorer quality pitches may not be playable in periods of wet weather – a pitch buffer allows matches to be moved to other better quality pitches at short notice.

4. Strategic Recommendations and Projects

- 4.1 This section presents a plan of strategic projects that are either in progress or being recommended. It is noted that the Council has a number of 'live' projects and a number of projects being considered which taken together will add substantially to the existing stock, helping to improve the overall picture for *adequacy of provision* and increase the buffer of pitches.

Strategic Recommendations

The Council is a major provider and operator of facilities for sports training and competition, however a significant number of the 99 sports clubs operate their own facilities. On its own the Council cannot meet all the facility needs of sports clubs in the District, neither can the clubs, therefore the solution is for the Council and clubs (and other providers) to work in partnership. Of course this already happens to good effect on a project by project basis with many examples of how clubs and participation in sport have benefited. Yet the most significant constraint continuing to face clubs and other providers is funding. Whilst many providers of community sports facilities have or are able to raise a percentage of a project's cost through fundraising it is often not enough to enable the project to proceed.

Recommendation

It is recommended that a Capital Investment Programme for sports clubs be established to recognise sports facility providers as delivering community benefit within their current and future membership.

Sports pitches cannot be used to their full potential if changing accommodation is inadequate; this is the case at several Council pitches. The result is that adequacy of provision is further compromised and other pitches (with changing accommodation) are over-used.

Recommendation

Changing accommodation to be installed at all Council pitch sites; existing accommodation to be modernised and upgraded as required to ensure all lie within the 'Good' quality classification.

Derry City & Strabane District Council has a number of clubs that can be regarded as high profile. Clubs such as this effectively represent the Council area through their sporting activities. At times these clubs need to work closely with the Council to address a particular need or to enable their development.

Recommendation

The Council to continue to work closely with high profile clubs in accordance with their need.

The quality of playing pitches will impact both on the capacity (number of games per day/week a pitch can sustain) and the playing experience. Pitch quality can be improved through a dedicated maintenance programme and upgrades where required, especially in relation to drainage.

Recommendation

The Council reviews its pitch maintenance and monitoring procedures benchmarking these with industry gold standards to ensure all its pitches are assessed as being within the 'Good' classification.

It is well documented that sport and physical recreation is a key component to the health and well-being of the population. However, physical activity participation rates are well below recommended levels. Councils are well positioned to further develop and deliver sports development programmes that maximise participation in team sport activity particularly amongst those from under-represented groups thereby increasing the health of residents.

Recommendation

The Council continues to support sports development programmes in partnership with clubs, schools, governing bodies and statutory agencies to maximise participation including underrepresented groups. In addition, further engage with clubs to build capacity in relation to preparing sports development plans and applying for funding for community-based projects.

Schools are encouraged by the Department of Education to consider community use of their premises where possible. This is a challenging idea for schools, whose core purpose is focused on teaching and learning rather than community use of facilities. There are a number of examples of community use of school facilities across the Council; the benefits are clear in that the sports facilities are used to their maximum potential and the school creates important links with the local community simply by sharing their resources.

Recommendation

Support partnerships with the educational sector to expand on community use.

Strategic Projects

Project Site / Description	Status / Comment
ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL	
Donemana Pitch	There is an aspiration to increase the size of the single grass pitch here; it is presently 90m x 52m. Work is on-going to reinstate the changing accommodation and fencing which was damaged in a recently flooding incident.
Mitchell Park Pitches	The two grass pitches are presently undergoing improvement works including drainage work to address flooding issues linked to the outlet pipe to the adjacent River Derg.
Spamount Playing Fields	Whilst there are two grass pitches at Spamount there is only changing accommodation for two teams, therefore both pitches cannot be used simultaneously. It is intended to provide additional changing accommodation.
Meadows Playing Fields	Presently there is no changing accommodation for the single grass pitch at Meadows Playing Fields. A two-changing room unit has been procured and installation will be completed by early 2019.
Daisyfield Playing Fields	A planning application for upgrading the Daisy Field site (two grass pitches) has been submitted and 50% funding committed by the Council. A business case is to be commissioned and an application for the remaining funding to be submitted to Department for

Project Site / Description	Status / Comment
	Communities.
Melvin Arena	It is intended to develop the Melvin Arena site as a multi-sport hub in partnership with the IFA. Plans include turnstile access and a spectator stand. The site has a single grass pitch surrounded by a running track.
Artigarvan Playing Field	Council funding is in place to reinstate this grass pitch (following drainage caused by an effluent spill) and provide changing accommodation. A tender process is underway to appoint a design team.
Caw Playing Field	Work to construct a floodlit training-size 3G facility has been completed and the facility is operational. Funded by SIF Invest & Play Programme.
Clondermott Multi Sport Complex	Funding is secured and a major upgrade project is at detailed design stage including; a full-size grass pitch (1 x gaelic, 2 x soccer), a soccer-size 3G with floodlights, 4 tennis courts, a cricket wicket, changing pavilion.
Templemore Playing Pitches	Design work is on-going in line with the design work for the new Templemore Sports Complex.
Lettershandoney Playing Fields	An application has been made to the Rural Development Programme to complement Council funding. Presently at detailed design stage the project includes changing accommodation and a training-size floodlit 3G pitch.
Ballyfatten	It is intended to develop a synthetic training pitch. A tender process is underway to appoint a design team.
Clooney Park West Playing Fields	Development at Clooney Park will be linked to the Ebrington project. Institute FC has expressed an interest in Clooney Park as an option for a new home ground.
Culmore Playing Field	A Master Plan is presently being developed to include a community centre and pitches for gaelic games and association football.
GAELIC GAMES	
Install ball stop nets on Council pitches used for gaelic games	Ball stop nets have been erected at Leafair Playing Fields on the association football pitch and on the 3G pitch. Similar net systems to be installed at Bishop's Field and new developments.
Ballyarnett Park	A project to develop Ballyarnett Park to accommodate all gaelic

Project Site / Description	Status / Comment
	games clubs in the surrounding area is at concept stage.
Culmore Playing Field	A Master Plan is presently being developed to include a community centre and pitches for gaelic games and association football.
Corrody Road (Dorie Trasna GAC)	Contractor on site to develop a grass floodlit gaelic pitch and a training pitch. Completion due in summer 2019.
Thornhill College	Project to develop a 3G gaelic facility for school and community use is at concept stage.
Develop a multi-sport facility in rural Strabane for training and matches	A project needs to be worked up in terms of a site and the scale/scope of facilities to be developed.
Clondermott and Templemore	Multi-sport facilities at these sites will include provision for gaelic games. Funding secured for Clondermott; design work on-going for Templemore.
CRICKET	
Cricket training facilities	Multi-sport facility developments, present and planned should include training wickets with nets.
Sion Mills Cricket Club	The future use of the club's present cricket ground is uncertain. Options for re-location should be considered.
HOCKEY	
Foyle Arena	When the carpet on the present sand-dressed Astro-Turf hockey pitch is due to be replaced a water-based synthetic surface will be considered.
Strabane Academy	A new sand-dressed Astro-Turf pitch is presently under construction, replacing a former shale pitch. Discussions between the Council and the school should take place to establish community use outside curriculum time.
RUGBY	
Strabane Rugby Club	The club is presently without a home ground/pitch. The need is to facilitate the club in securing a home pitch/es for its 3 adult and 8 junior teams.

Project Site / Description	Status / Comment
City of Derry Rugby Club	The Council should liaise with the club as it seeks to develop facilities for rugby training and matches both synthetic and grass across the city, not least at Ulster University's Northland Road site.
Multi-Sport Facilities	Future multi-sport hub developments to include provision for rugby.

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