

# Green Infrastructure Strategy for North Devon and Torrington District Councils



**2013 - 2031**

Part 1 of 3: Green Infrastructure Strategy  
Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment



**David Wilson Partnership Limited**  
Architecture • Landscape Architecture • Building Surveying



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Appendix 1 - Questionnaire Surveys

Appendix 2 - Community consultation spreadsheet (Excel)

Appendix 3 - Sports Consultation - Summary Profile

## **Acknowledgments**

Many individuals, groups and organisations have provided information, views and support in preparing this study. Input from these stakeholders is fundamental to the report, and provides the basis for the evidence in supporting the standards, options and recommendations in relation to open space, sport and recreation facilities. The study has been carried out by David Wilson Partnership in conjunction with JPC Strategic Planning & Leisure and Leisure and the Environment.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Part One Overview - Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment

Part One of the *Green Infrastructure Strategy for North Devon & Torridge* examines identified local need for green infrastructure including various types of open space, sports and recreation provision. It has drawn upon a range of survey and analytical techniques including a review of consultation findings from recent health, leisure and open space strategies. The report details the community consultation and research process that has been undertaken as part of the study as well as the main findings. The extent of the research reflects the breadth and diversity of the study and a consequent need to engage with as wide a cross section of the community and stakeholders as possible<sup>1</sup>.

Questionnaire surveys were undertaken as below:

- A general household survey
- A survey of town and parish Councils
- Local groups and organisations' survey
- Survey of sports national governing bodies; league secretaries and local clubs.

In addition to the above an extensive programme of stakeholder interviews and workshop/focus groups was undertaken.

The result of this consultation and other analyses will help amongst other things to inform the content of the recommended local standards. Crucially it has also helped the study to understand local people's appreciation of open space, sport and recreation facilities, and the wider green infrastructure and the values attached by the community to the various forms of open spaces and facilities. This appreciation will have clear implications for the way in which green infrastructure, open spaces and sports facilities are treated and designated in the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan.

***At the end of each section there is a short summary of the key findings.***

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this report provides consultation evidence in the form of the observations and views/opinions sourced from many different organisations, individuals and studies. On occasion the views and observations expressed by individuals and groups may not be consistent with each other, nor are such individual contributions necessarily accurate or wholly up to date.

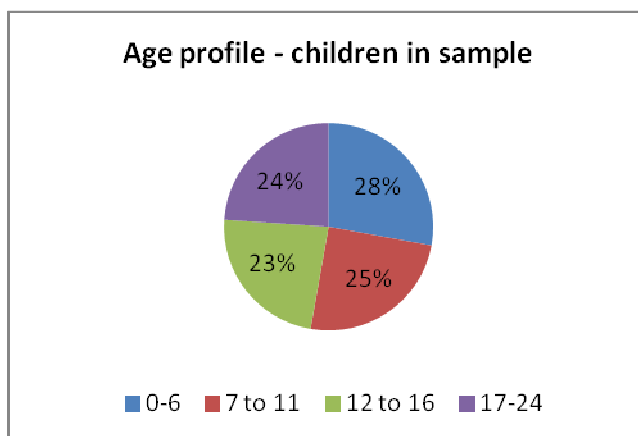
## 2. GENERAL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

### 2.1 Household Survey

A questionnaire was sent out to a random selection of households across North Devon and Torridge Districts (hereafter referred to as the study area). A total of 3,500 surveys were distributed (2000 in North Devon and 1500 in Torridge). 626 completed surveys were received (18%)<sup>2</sup>. This is a strong response rate for surveys of this kind and our experience is that rates can be as low as 10% and rarely exceed 20%.

The total number of people represented through the household survey was 1572 and the average household size of the households was 2.5 - slightly higher than the national average and that of the study area as whole.

Just over 30% of households had children (representing household views on behalf of just over 300 children and young people) with ages well spread across the age range:



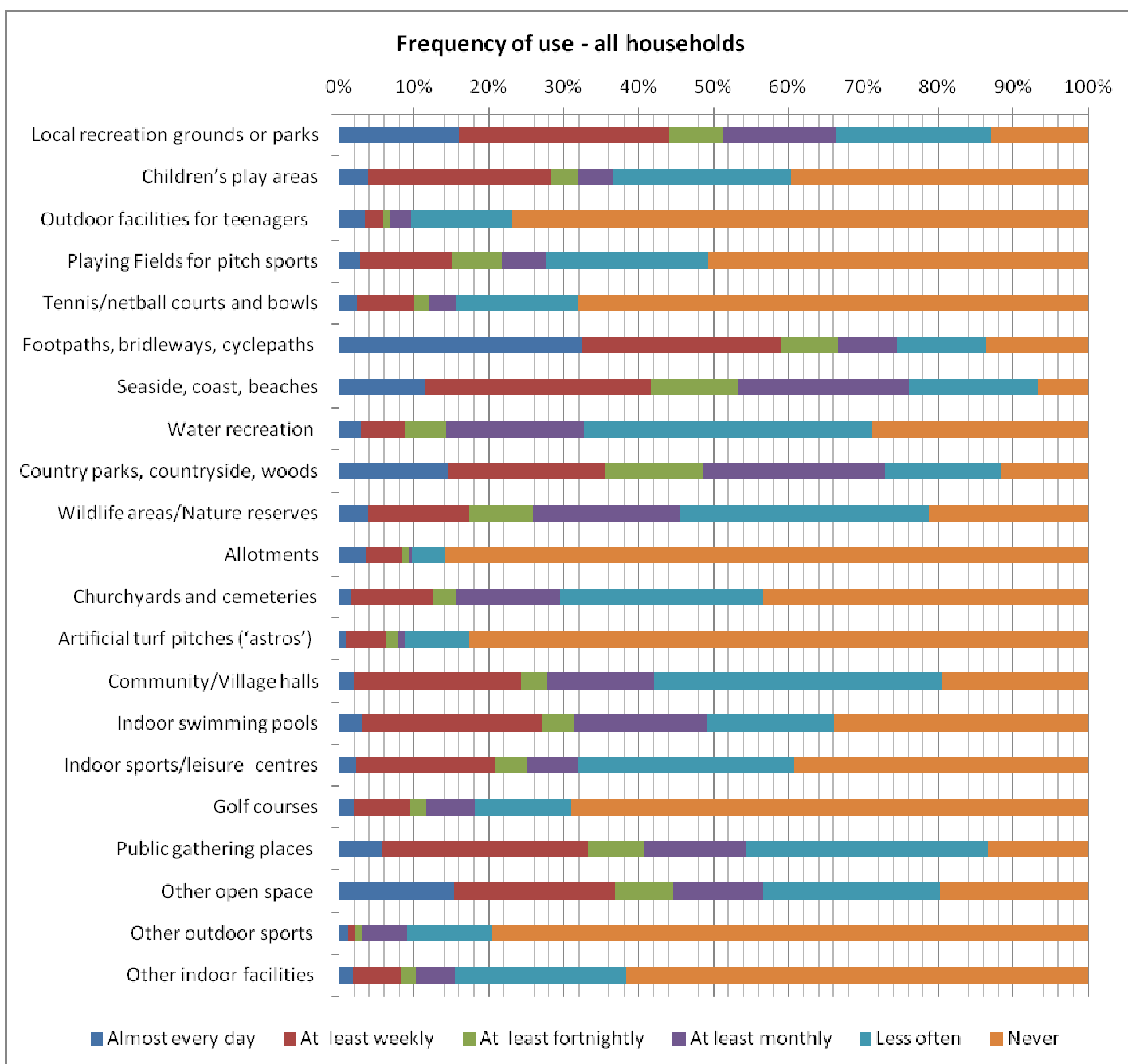
The full questionnaire is included in Appendix 1 and the following provides some of the key findings.

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<sup>2</sup> Broadly speaking this provides statistically significant findings at a 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of  $\pm 3.9\%$

### Frequency of use - All residents

Respondents were asked to state how often they visited or used each of the following types of open space, sport and recreation facilities within study area, and the results are shown on the chart below:



### Open Space and Outdoor Facilities

As can be seen, it is the areas' seaside coast and beaches that are most commonly used by most households on a regular monthly basis (76%). Footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths; and country parks/countryside and woodlands are also accessed at least monthly by over 70% of households.

Footpaths, bridleways etc. are also by far the most frequently used facility with over 30% of households reporting using them almost every day.

Other spaces used on an almost daily basis by at least 15% of households are local parks/recreation grounds, country parks/countryside and woodlands and “other open spaces” e.g. grassed areas for dog-walking, informal games, picnics etc. It is the informal recreation opportunities that figure most frequently in respondents’ replies.

Play areas, playing fields and areas for water recreation/sports are also fairly frequently used but with fewer households (at least 27%) using them on a regular basis (at least monthly). This is not surprising given the more specific purposes of these facilities.

### ***Indoor Swimming Pools, Sports and Recreation Facilities<sup>3</sup>***

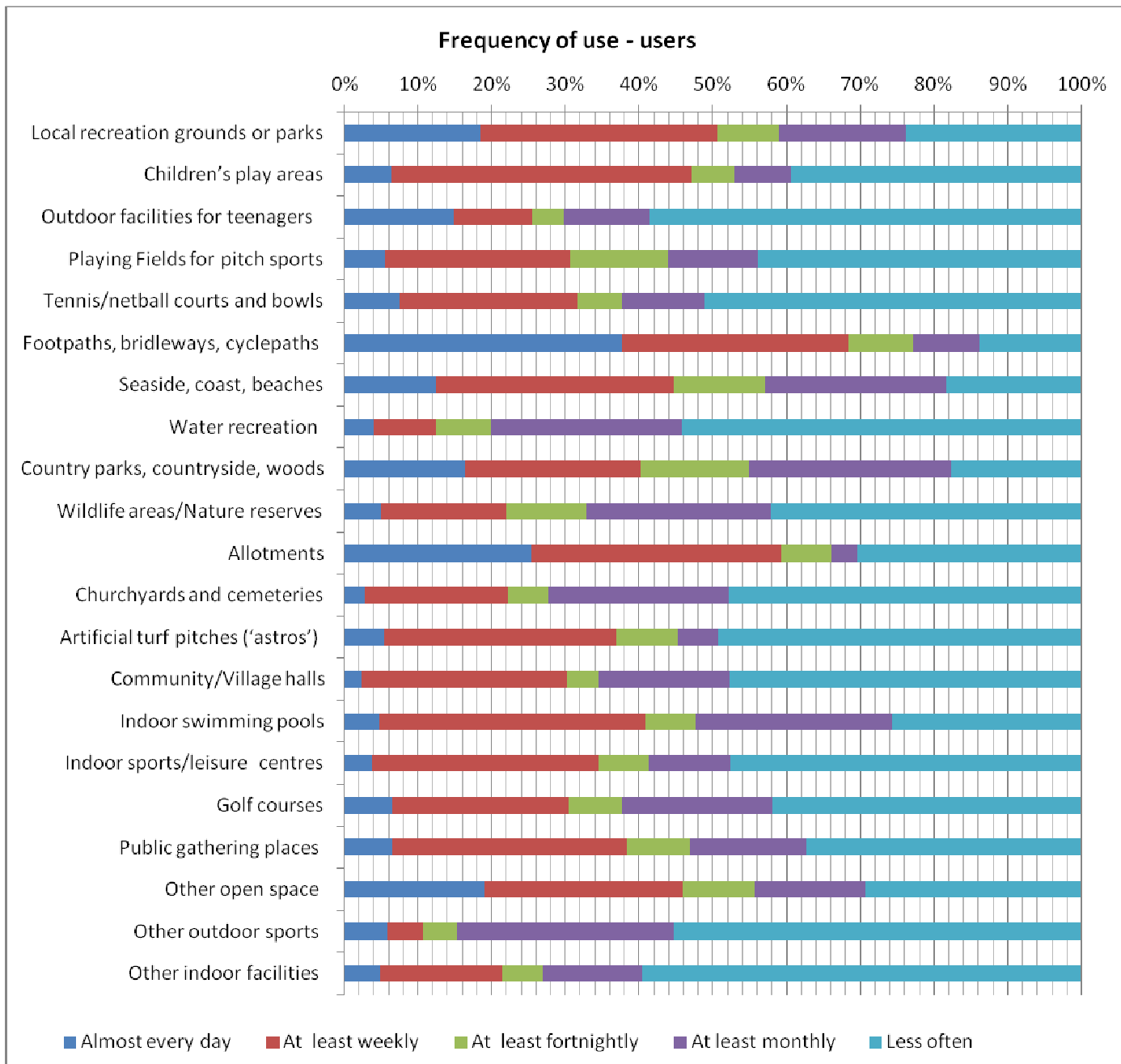
Indoor swimming pools are used regularly by significant numbers (49% of households report using them at least monthly) as are the areas’ village/community halls (42%). Over 30% of household also visit sports/leisure centres at least monthly.

In very broad terms it can be seen that although informal open space use is very much more common and frequent than the use of formal sport or leisure facilities, the use of indoor swimming pools is significantly high.

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<sup>3</sup> The table simplifies the Categories to enable clear presentation. e.g. Other indoor facilities is short hand for specialist sports facilities such as indoor bowls and tennis centres. This is clear in the survey itself (see appendix 1).

**Frequency, regularity and times of use - Users**

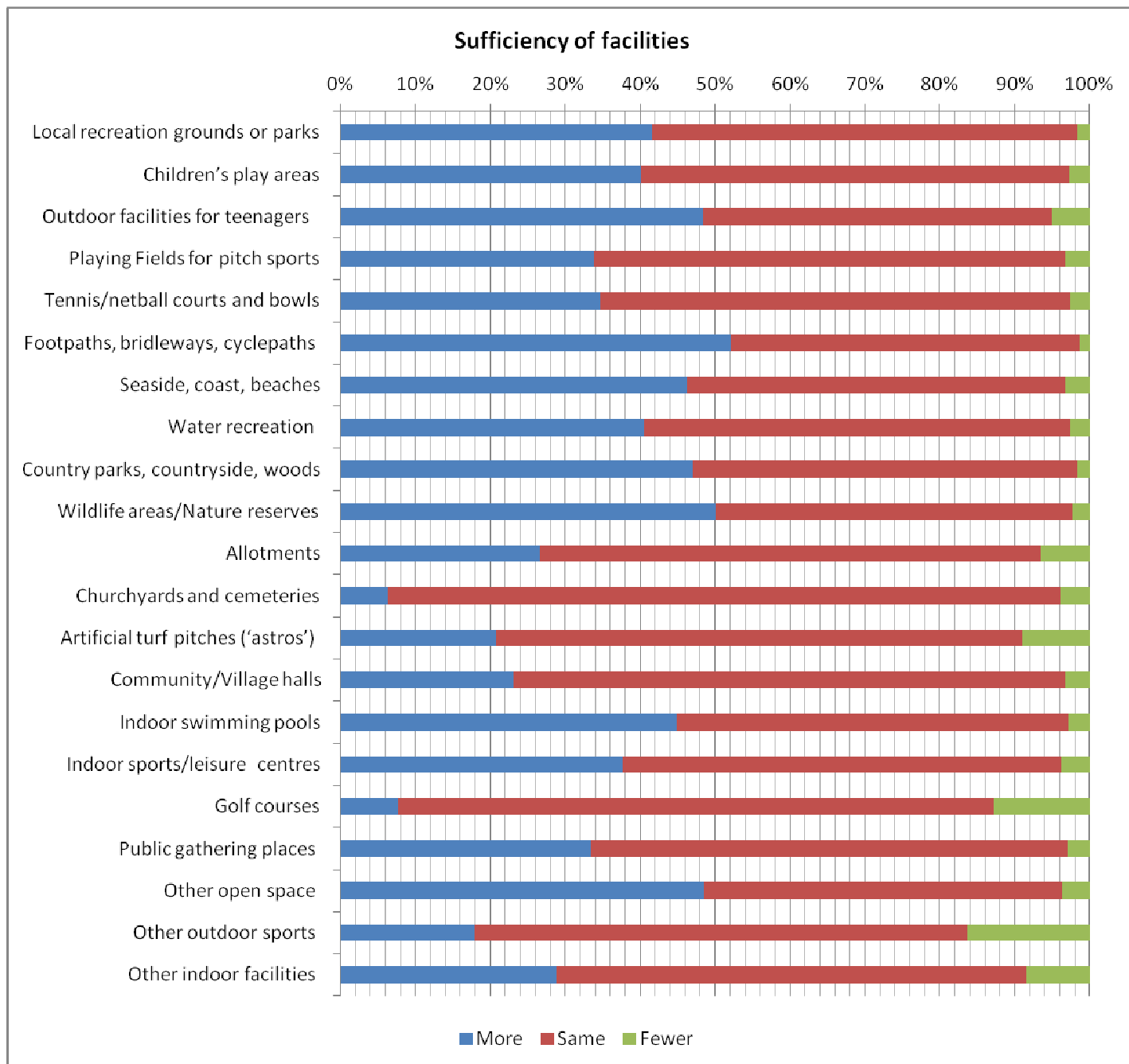


It is interesting to look at the frequency with which users of facilities visit them as this is not immediately obvious from looking at the overall figures. This shows, for example, that 59% of allotment users visit at least weekly (of which over 25% visit almost every day). Over 30% of users of grass playing fields, astro-turf pitches, tennis courts, and golf courses use them at least weekly (of which over 5% use them almost every day).

In terms of indoor facilities the most frequently visited by users (at least weekly) are the swimming pools (41% - of which 5% visit almost every day); and sports/leisure centres (34% - of which 4% visit nearly every day).

### Quantity of open space, sport and recreation facilities

Residents were asked if they needed more, the same or fewer of different types of open space and recreational facilities. Findings are illustrated in the chart below and will influence the “quantity” component of local standards.



Other than for footpaths, bridleways and footpaths a majority of households reported that there were currently enough of all of the various kinds of open space and recreational facilities. However significant numbers did indicate a need for additional open space and facilities as noted below:

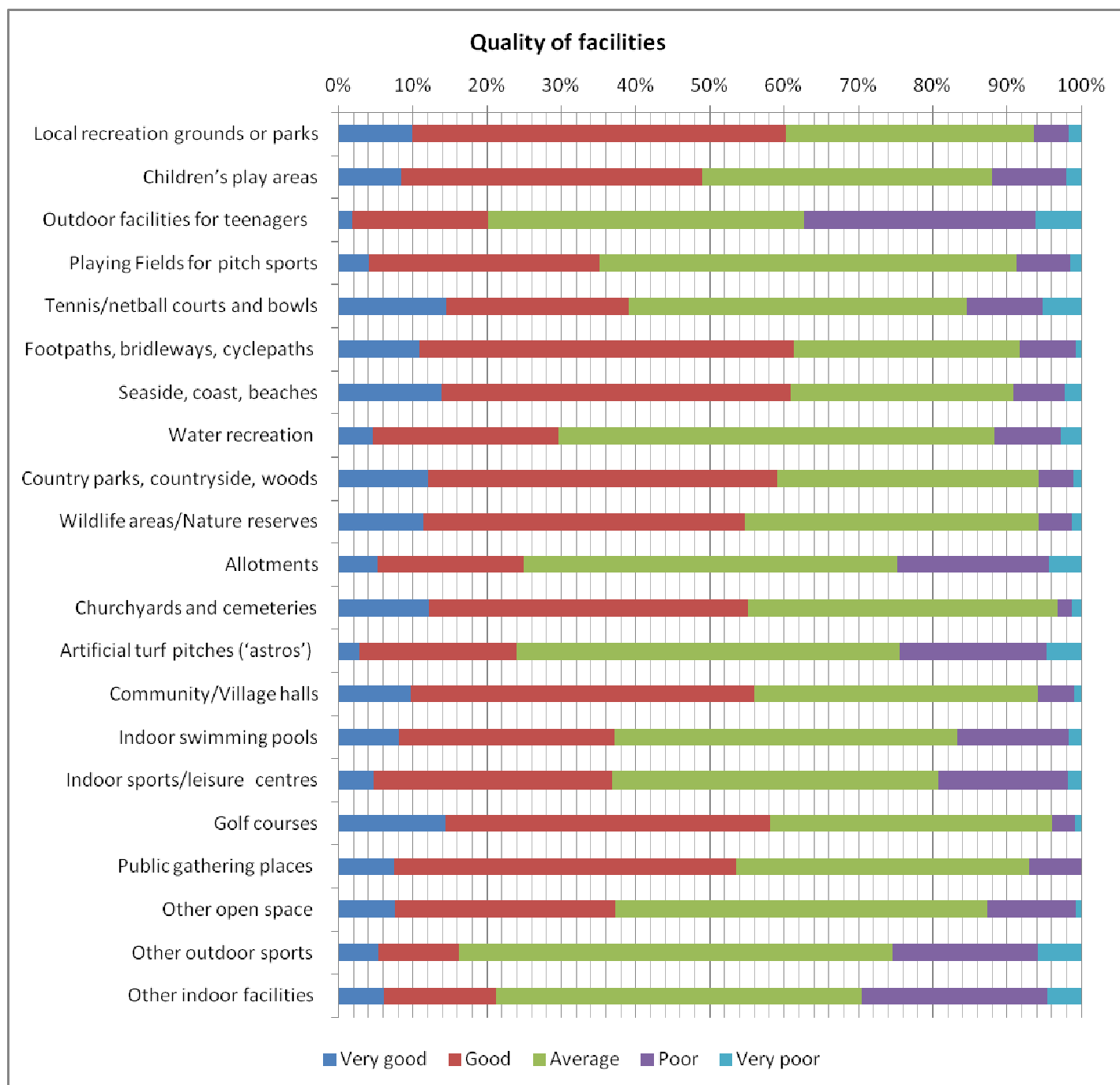
A majority (52%) of residents think there is a need for more footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths etc. and 50% thought that there should be more wildlife areas/nature reserves. In addition just over 48% highlighted a need for more outdoor facilities for teenagers.

Following this, the other aspects where there was considered to be a significant shortfall were: parks and play areas; access to the sea, coast and beaches; and indoor swimming pools (40% or over indicating a need for more of such facilities).

More than 12% of respondents thought there were more than enough golf courses and areas for specialist outdoor sports to meet local need.

**Quality of open space, sport and recreation facilities**

Respondents were asked how they rated various types of facilities in the study area in terms of quality. The responses of those expressing an opinion on specific categories of facility are illustrated below:



All facilities are rated average or better by a majority of households.

Nearly 40% households highlighted outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor and over 25% said the same in relation to specialist sports facilities.

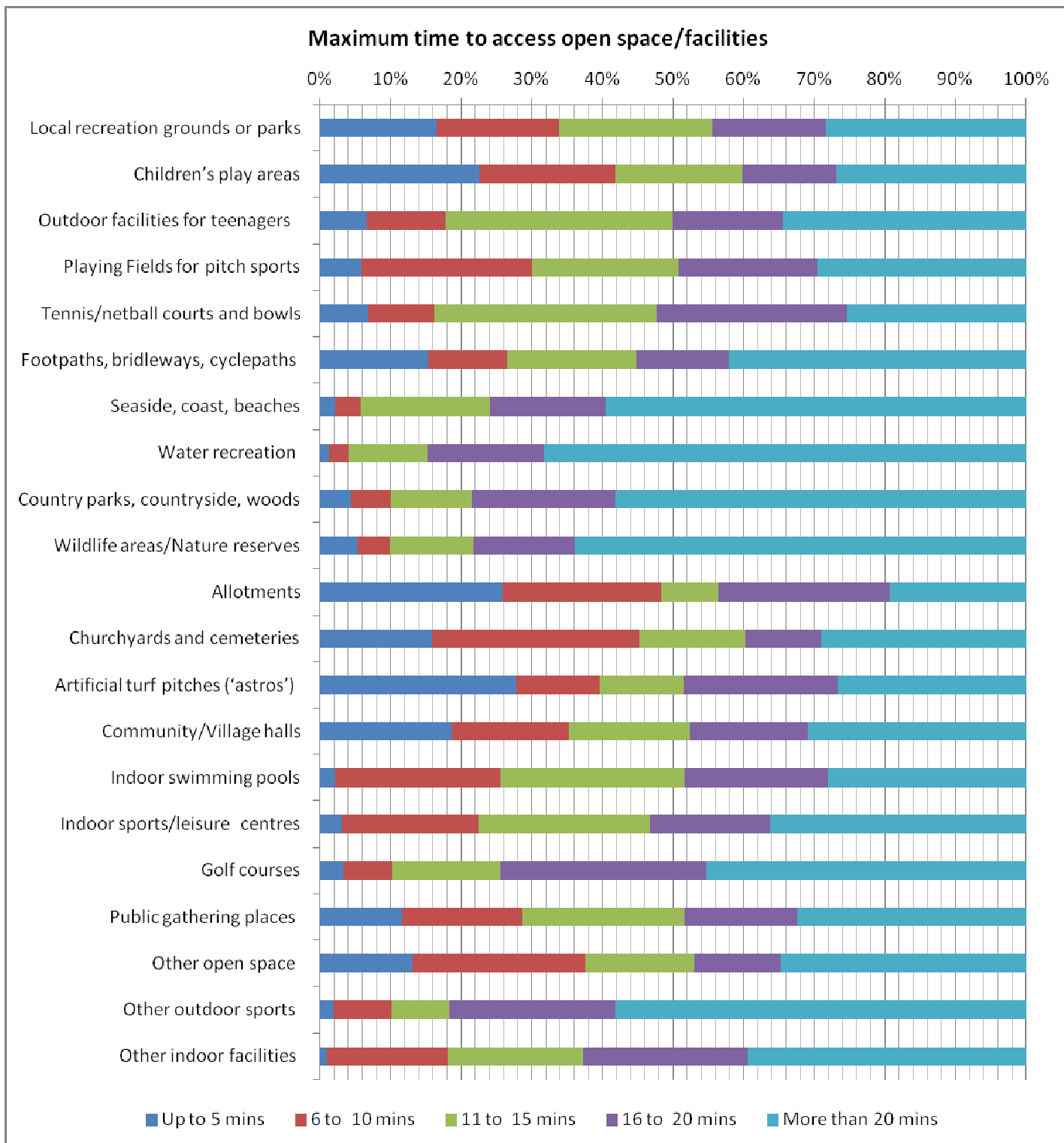
Around 25% thought that the quality of allotments and astro-turf pitches in the study area was poor or very poor. Other facilities rated as poor or very poor by significant numbers of households (15% or over) were tennis courts, indoor swimming pools and sports/leisure centres.

Facilities where the quality is rated good or very good by around 60% of households include parks/recreation grounds; footpaths etc; country parks/countryside/woodlands; sea, coast and beaches; and golf courses (and at least 10% rated them as very good).

The detailed findings regarding quality will be useful in relation to the determination of the “quality” aspect of local standards.

**Access Issues (Geographical)**

An important component of this study is to develop and recommend a series of local standards of provision for different types of open space, sport and recreation opportunity. The following provides a means to gauge people’s willingness to travel to use different types of opportunity (which might be by car, foot, bike, public transport etc). These results will feed into the determination of the “access” element of local standards.



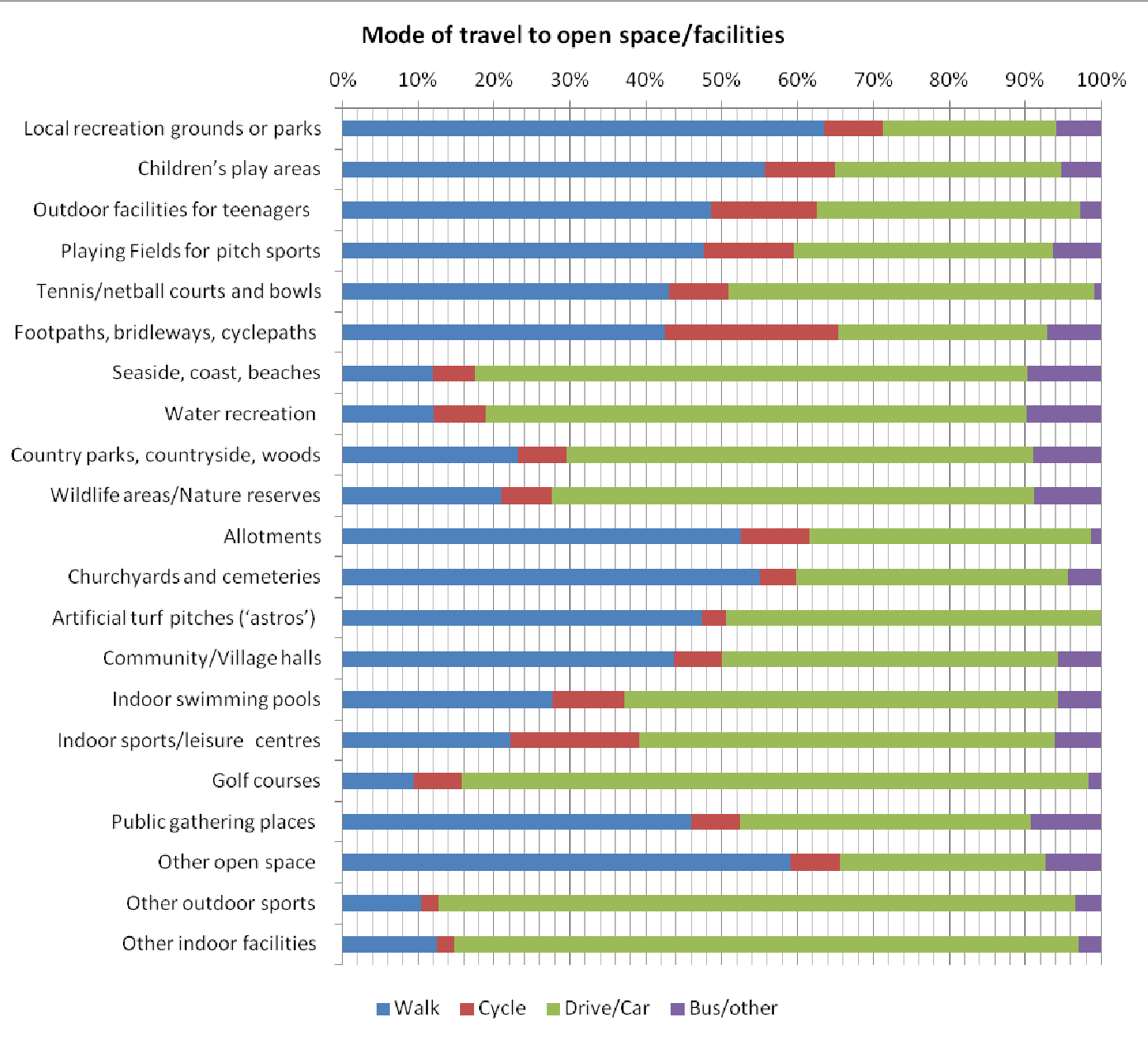
It can be seen that where households make use of the opportunities identified, the majority of users are prepared to travel more than 20 minutes to use some facilities such as the seaside, coast and beaches; areas for water recreation; wildlife areas and country parks; and specialist outdoor sports facilities.

In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, allotments, play areas, astro-turf pitches and churchyards/ cemeteries. For example:

- 48% of users would expect allotments to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 26% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 42% of users would expect play areas to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 23% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 39% of users would expect astro-turf pitches to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 26% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- 35% of users would expect village/community halls to be within a 10 minute travel time, of which 19% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.

It is therefore clear that there is great variance in respondents' apparent willingness to spend time travelling to different types of opportunity. In drawing up the "access" element of specific local standards for different kinds of open space/facility it is clearly very important to take careful note of all of these findings. The general pattern observed in the study area is very much in line with findings nationally with the exception of astro-turf pitches which in many other areas, anticipated access times are longer.

An accompanying question asked what mode of transport respondents were likely to use to get to such opportunities (where they would use them).



Residents are more likely than not to drive to many facilities including specialist sports facilities; sports/leisure centres and swimming pools; countryside sites, wildlife areas/nature reserves; and the seaside and water recreation.

However, walking and cycling are the norm for facilities such as parks, play areas, outdoor teenage facilities, playing fields foot/cyclepaths, and allotments. For a small but significant minority access by bus is important, particularly for the seaside/coast and water recreation; and countryside sites, wildlife areas and nature reserves.

It is not of course surprising that in broad terms walking is the predominant mode of travel to facilities such as local parks, children's play areas, recreation grounds, and other informal recreation areas. In contrast, motorised transport is more common for larger and more specialised facilities such as leisure centres, golf courses, areas for outdoor pursuits, and nature reserves which are often some distance removed from many potential users. It is however of great importance when it comes to drawing up the access element of local standards in terms of whether access thresholds should be provided in terms of walking, cycling or drive times.

The main implications for deriving access standards are that walk times would be most appropriate for:

- Parks and gardens
- Natural areas
- Amenity areas
- Play areas for children
- Teenage facilities
- Allotments
- Civic spaces
- Grass pitches
- Tennis courts
- Green corridors

Drive times would be most appropriate for:

- Golf courses
- Specialist sports facilities
- Swimming pools and leisure centres
- Seaside, coast, beaches; and water recreation
- Country parks, woodlands, nature reserves etc.

It is less clear for synthetic turf pitches and tennis/bowls which is the more appropriate transport mode upon which to base access thresholds.

### ***Importance of Footpath/cycle access***

Residents were asked if they would cycle or walk further or more often if the quality of their journey by foot or bike to a nearby open space or facility was improved.

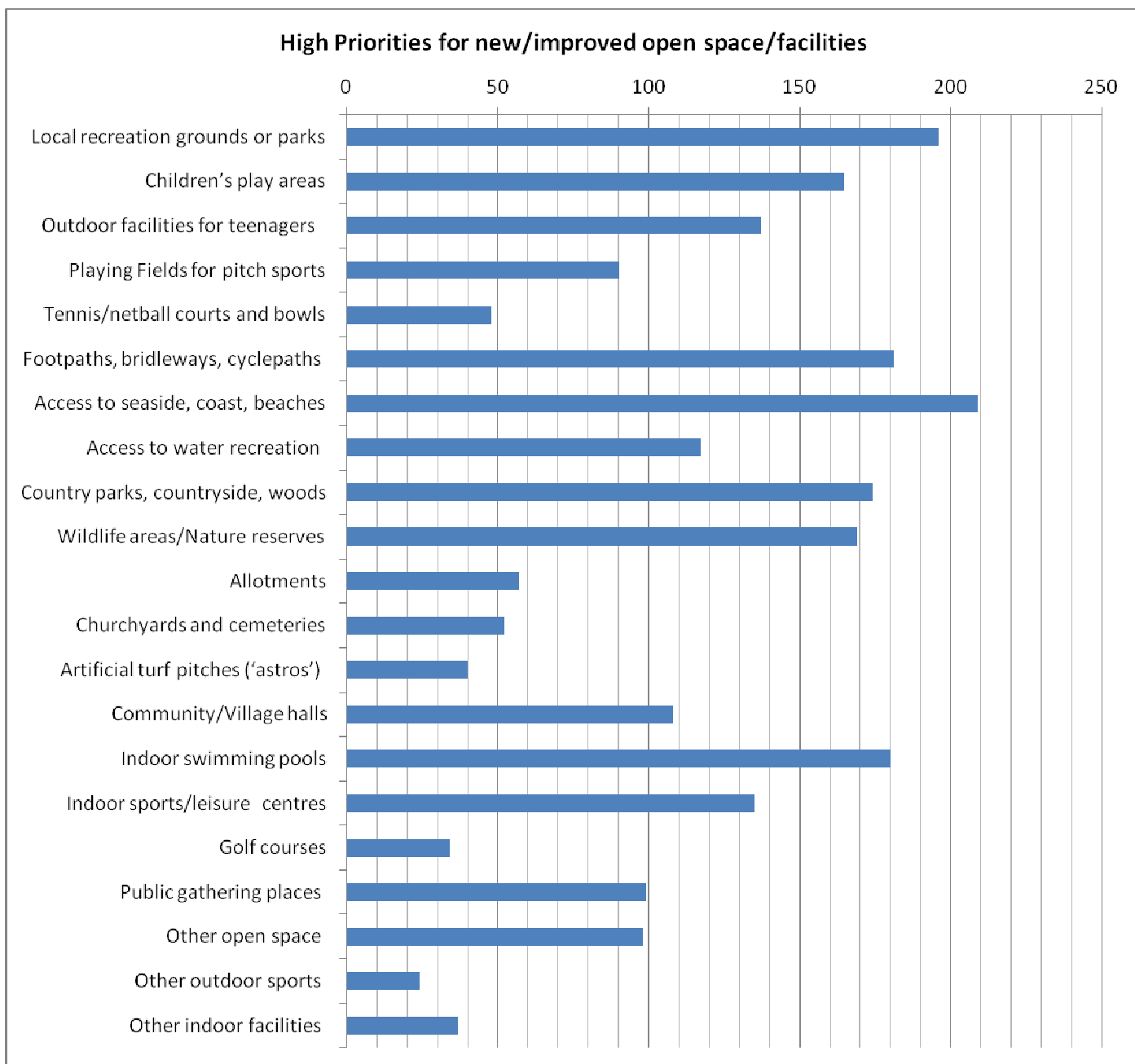
- 73% of residents confirmed that they would be prepared to walk/cycle further if the quality of the route was improved
- 73% also said that if the quality of the route was improved they would make the journey more often.

This is a significant finding in terms of illustrating the potential benefit of ensuring good foot and cycle path access to facilities.

The detailed findings from this section will be used when drawing up the access elements of relevant standards for different kinds of open space elsewhere in the study.

**Key Issues and priorities for improvement**

Residents were also asked what their priorities for improvement in provision were. Findings are illustrated on the table below. Households were asked to rate the need for new or improved facilities by indicating priorities at three levels - high, medium or low

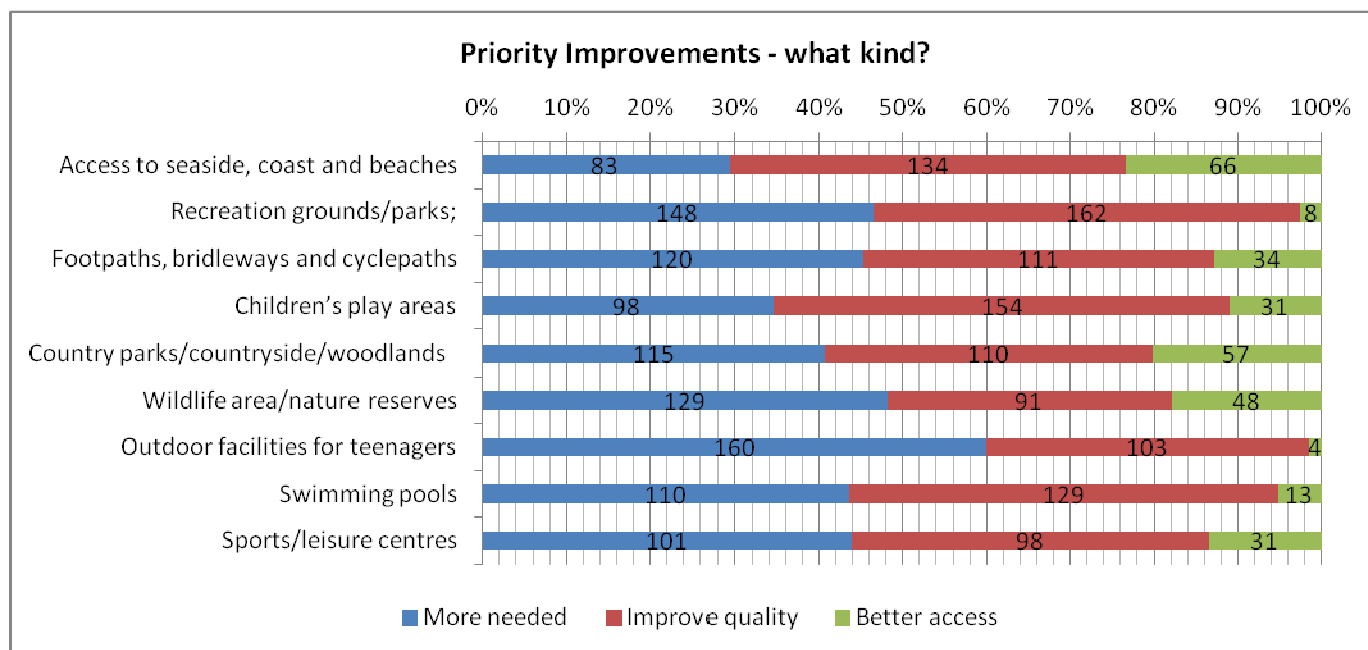


The category highlighted by the largest number of households for potential improvement/new provision was for improved access to seaside, coast and beaches, followed by local recreation grounds/parks; and better footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths.

Other notable priorities for improvement highlighted by significant numbers were children's play areas, country parks/countryside/woodlands and wildlife area/nature reserves; and outdoor facilities for teenagers.

In relation to indoor facilities the priority highlighted by the largest number of households for new or improved provision was swimming pools (by a significant margin) followed by sports and leisure centres.

Associated questions asked households to indicate whether the kind of priority need was primarily for more facilities, improved quality of existing, or improved access. In relation to the priorities noted above these findings are shown in the chart below:



From this it can be seen that:

- For some categories the most common kind of priority suggested is for more open space and facilities e.g. outdoor facilities for teenagers; wildlife areas/nature reserves; footpaths/ bridleways/cyclepaths; and country parks/woodlands.
- For others quality improvements to existing levels of provision is the more common kind of improvement suggested e.g. recreation grounds/parks; children's play areas; swimming pools; and access to the seaside, coast and beaches.
- Improved access is particularly significant for some categories e.g. access to the seaside; country parks, woodland etc; and wildlife areas/nature reserves.
- Often the choice between additional facilities or quality improvements to current facilities is fairly evenly split e.g. sports and leisure centres; and country parks, woodlands etc.

## 2.2 Place Survey 2008

Government’s 2008 Place Survey was undertaken in all of England’s local authority areas and provided information on people’s perceptions of their locality and the local services they receive. This included investigating resident’s broad levels of satisfaction with local sports and leisure facilities and parks and open spaces. The results for North Devon and Torridge are shown in the table below:

	% very or fairly happy with	
	Sports/Leisure Facilities	Parks/ Open Spaces
North Devon	46%	70%
Torridge	41%	66%
Devon	48%	70%
South West	47%	70%
England	46%	69%

This suggests that about 46% of residents in North Devon are very or fairly happy with the sports and leisure centres and 41% in Torridge; both are less than Devon as a whole (Torridge considerably so). Compared to the South West and England North Devon is similar but fewer residents in Torridge reported being happy with facilities.

With regard to parks and open spaces about 70% in North Devon are very or fairly happy with provision, again levels of satisfaction are less in Torridge (66%). Satisfaction levels in North Devon are similar to both the South West and England, but less so in Torridge.

In general terms satisfaction with parks and open spaces is considerably higher than with sports and leisure facilities (a trend seen widely across the country).

## 2.3 Survey of local community and youth organisations (Non- sports)

Surveys were sent to local community and youth organisations followed up with reminders. Eight organisations responded as below:

- Cairn Conservation Carers
- Coastwise North Devon
- Ilfracombe in Bloom
- North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- North Devon UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve
- Ramblers - North Devon Group
- North Devon Homes (Forches & The Hangout Youth Clubs)
- Torridge District Scouts

### General Findings

#### Quantity

All the groups said they either had management responsibilities or made direct use of local areas of open space in various ways. Most said that they thought there were *not* enough of certain kinds of open space and facilities in relation to their own interests.

Comments from those who thought that there were not enough open spaces or recreation facilities are noted below:

- Not enough flat areas for sports such as cricket and football
- Excellent range of beaches and habitats, most regrettably in private ownership - so in this sense not enough for public access.
- There is a general lack of indoor leisure facilities. There are probably enough open spaces and outdoor leisure facilities but some are not known to the general public.
- There is a need to look at national policy on green space access and proximity and map this for North Devon to see whether what is available meets the standard. Coupled to this in meeting our Biodiversity 2012 obligations we should be looking at significant habitats and looking at where an additional provision would facilitate landscape scale conservation initiatives.
- Biodiversity corridors are not being managed properly or are at risk. Connectivity for biodiversity is not properly accounted for.
- Not enough outdoor youth facilities, play areas, or sports facilities for children and young people. There is a need for more free (or very cheap) sports places for young people. We probably do have enough indoor youth facilities.
- We need more places for young people to meet outdoors; shelters and seats; and areas of grass to sit on or kick a ball about.
- Not enough sports facilities. Many facilities are not accessible to youth groups and/or individuals at a reasonable cost (eg Bideford College facilities). Facilities at schools/colleges should be more affordable and accessible out of school hours
- We need more playschemes, out-of-school clubs; and more scouts, cubs, guides etc. Guiding and scouting requires volunteers to run these activities. We have over 100 young people on the waiting list in Bideford, but a lack of adult volunteers means we are not able to offer scouting to more young people

### **Quality and Access**

The three most common factors understood to be important in relation to local open spaces and leisure facilities were:

- they are easy to get to for all members of the community;
- they should provide an environment for wildlife and biodiversity; and
- they need to have good signposting and reliable information about what's available.

Other factors commonly highlighted as being important were:

- feeling safe and secure; and
- there are good links - by footpaths and cycleways - to them and between them.

There were also a number of specific factors highlighted as being of importance including:

- opportunities for people to take exercise;
- sustainability;
- sites should be managed with a bias towards environment in mind: energy use, management methods etc;
- surface water flooding management and control; and
- adequate consideration for walkers when shared-use routes are devised. Walkers are the most vulnerable user versus cyclists and those on horseback.

A series of open questions were also included to elicit comments across the whole range of open spaces and facilities. These detailed responses will be found in the appropriate sections later in the report.

## 2.4 Stakeholder Views

### Health - Devon County Council/NHS

We spoke to Tracey Polak the assistant Director/Consultant of Public Health for Devon County Council.

Tracey highlighted the importance of participation in and access to sport, recreation and open space provision in relation to both mental and physical health. A key aspect of her work is to promote healthy lifestyles that research has shown contributes to longer life, a higher quality of life and personal wellbeing. She pointed out that regular physical exercise can reduce the risk of developing major illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer by up to 50% and lower the risk of early death by up to 30%; and she noted that research also shows that physical activity can boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing your risk of stress, depression, dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

In this respect she recognised the importance of developing and maintaining an adequate green and blue infrastructure in North Devon and Torridge and ensuring that all elements of the infrastructure are as accessible as possible for local people. The development of the Green Infrastructure Strategy should therefore make a significant and valuable contribution to the health agenda.

Some issues raised by Tracey were:

- The particular importance of targeting areas of health inequality and deprivation in relation to planning e.g. parts of Ilfracombe, Bideford and Barnstaple have high levels of deprivation and health inequality. Tracey highlighted the importance of making use of available health inequality statistics in relation to sport and recreational planning.
- It is important to think about the different age ranges which can particularly benefit from regular access and participation in physical activity - such as children and young people (reducing childhood obesity is a key target); and older people.
- The need for promotion and education in relation to encouraging more people to make use of the accessible green and blue<sup>4</sup> infrastructure e.g. Ilfracombe residents already have good access to coastal paths but the level of use by local people is low.
- Improving access routes to opportunities for physical activity e.g. developing a linked up network of footpaths, cyclepaths, bridleways etc. so that people can easily get to the various kinds of facilities and open spaces.
- Do not assume that because much of North Devon and Torridge is rural that it is necessarily easy for local residents in the villages and small settlements to gain access to the countryside and informal open space.
- The area has many natural assets in terms of natural open space, the beaches, countryside and such like but barriers to access need to be reduced e.g. accessible and well promoted footpath links, and through subsidising access to coast path/beach parking areas for local people.
- Formal sport and recreation is important but it needs to be affordable and accessible for those with an interest.

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<sup>4</sup> Blue infrastructure refers to an areas' water based resources

- Only a small proportion of the public are active and interested in sport and it is important to develop a strong infrastructure providing free informal recreational opportunities that are accessible to everyone, such as parks, play areas, and open spaces where people can walk and relax; and a good footpaths network.
- When new residential development is planned it is very important to ensure that good access routes by foot/cycle into town and village centres, shopping areas, sports facilities and such like are secured where possible. Also that in large developments sufficient recreational opportunities are provided on site within the newly developed area.
- The overall design of residential areas should be such that it is easy for residents to walk and cycle within the developments and to get to sport and recreational facilities, shops etc. outside of the development. Permeability within and beyond the developed area is an important consideration in encouraging walking and cycling.
- When planning for developments in locations out of the towns and in more rural areas thought should be given to access to nearby towns by foot, cycle and via public transport.
- Planning and design of recreational open space, sports facilities, play areas and such like should take into account security and safety aspects so that people feel safe in both using them and getting to them e.g. sufficient lighting, having natural surveillance planned in from the outset e.g. play areas and youth facilities located within sight of housing etc.
- Provision and promotion of the area in relation to access to its natural environment - beaches, countryside and woodland is important to retain young people who might otherwise move away. This also applies to developing and maintaining an adequate provision of formal sports and leisure facilities.
- Encourage creative business thinking into commercial sport and recreational operators whereby local people are provided subsidy to facilities at off-peak times when visitor and tourism numbers are low. This could even apply to beach car park operators so that local people could become frequent users rather than baulking at paying £5-£7 per visit

## 2.5 General Community - Key Findings

### Use of open space and sports/leisure facilities

- It is the areas' seaside coast and beaches that are most commonly used by most households on a regular monthly basis (76%).Footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths; and country parks/countryside and woodlands are also accessed at least monthly by over 70% of households.
- Footpaths, bridleways etc. are also by far the most frequently used facility with over 30% of households reporting using them almost every day. Other spaces used on an almost daily basis by at least 15% of households are local parks/recreation grounds, country parks/countryside and woodlands and "other open spaces" e.g. grassed areas for dog-walking, informal games, picnics etc.
- Play areas, playing fields and areas for water recreation/sports are also fairly frequently used but with fewer households (at least 27%) using them on a regular basis (at least monthly). This is not surprising given the more specific purposes of these facilities.
- Indoor swimming pools are used regularly by significant numbers (49% of households report using them at least monthly) as are the areas' village/community halls (42%). Over 30% of household visit sports and leisure centres at least monthly.

## Quantity

- Other than for footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths a majority of households reported that there were currently enough of all of the various typologies of green infrastructure and leisure facilities.
- A majority (52%) of residents think there is a need for more footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths; and 50% thought that there should be more wildlife areas/nature reserves
- Nearly half of the households (48%) highlighted a need for more outdoor facilities for teenagers.
- Following this, the other aspects where there was a significant view of there being a shortfall were parks and play areas; access to the sea, coast and beaches; and indoor swimming pools (40% or over indicating a need for more of such facilities).
- More than 12% of respondents thought there were more than enough golf courses and areas for specialist outdoor sports to meet local need.

## Quality

- Nearly 40% households highlighted outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor and over 25% said the same in relation to specialist sports facilities.
- Around 25% thought that the quality of allotments in the study area was poor or very poor Other facilities rated as poor or very poor by significant numbers of households (15% or over) were the indoor swimming pools and sports/leisure centres.
- Facilities where the quality is rated good or very good by around 60% of households include parks and recreation grounds; footpaths etc; country parks, countryside and woodlands; the sea, coast and beaches; and golf courses (and at least 10% rated them as very good).

## Access

- The majority of users are prepared to travel more than 20 minutes to use some facilities such the seaside, coast and beaches; areas for water recreation; wildlife areas and country parks; and specialist outdoor sports facilities e.g. ice rinks, indoor tennis and bowls centres.
- In contrast, for significant numbers of residents, facilities need to be much more locally accessible before they will be used (for example, allotments, play areas, astro-turf pitches and churchyards/ cemeteries).
- There is great variance in respondents' apparent willingness to spend time travelling to different types of opportunity. In drawing up the "access" element of specific local standards for different kinds of open space/facility it is clearly very important to take careful note of all of these findings.
- The general pattern observed in the study area is very much in line with findings nationally with the exception of astro-turf pitches which in many other areas, acceptable access times are slightly longer.
- Residents are more likely than not to drive to many facilities including specialist sports facilities; sports/leisure centres and swimming pools; countryside sites, wildlife areas/nature reserves; and the seaside and water recreation.
- Walking and cycling are the norm for facilities such as parks, play areas, outdoor teenage facilities, playing fields foot/cyclepaths, and allotments.
- For a small but significant minority access by bus is important, particularly for the seaside/coast and water recreation; and countryside sites, wildlife areas and nature reserves.

## Priorities and other issues

- The most common typology highlighted as a high priority for potential improvement or new provision was for improved access to seaside, coast and beaches, followed by local recreation grounds and parks; and better footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths.
- Other notable priorities for improvement highlighted by significant numbers were children's play areas, country parks, countryside, woodlands and wildlife area/nature reserves; and outdoor facilities for teenagers.
- In relation to indoor facilities the priority highlighted by the largest number of households for new/improved provision was swimming pools (by a significant margin) followed by sports and leisure centres.
- For some categories the most common kind of priority need suggested is for *more* open space or facilities e.g. outdoor facilities for teenagers; wildlife areas and nature reserves; footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths; and country parks and woodlands.
- For others *quality improvements* to existing levels of provision is the more common kind of improvement suggested e.g. recreation grounds and parks; children's play areas; swimming pools; and access to the seaside, coast and beaches.
- *Improved access* is particularly significant for some categories e.g. access to the seaside; country parks, woodland etc; and wildlife areas and nature reserves.
- In other cases the choice between additional facilities or quality improvements to current facilities is fairly evenly split e.g. sports and leisure centres; and country parks, woodlands etc
- The issues and concerns of the rural areas of the study area are often quite different from those of the main towns and service centres. This will need to be addressed when considering the development of local standards.
- Provision of and access to open space, sport and recreation opportunities is regarded by the Devon Director of Public Health as an extremely important factor in terms of maintaining health and wellbeing for local residents.
- Some sectors of the community face particular barriers to access such as disabled people; children and young people; households in the more isolated rural areas and those in the more deprived urban wards of the study area.

### 3. STRATEGY REVIEW - OPEN SPACE, LEISURE AND HEALTH

Both North Devon and Torridge Councils have produced key strategy documents relating to open space, sport and recreation in recent years that involved widespread consultation of direct relevance to this report. The most important documents in relation to green infrastructure are

- The North Devon Health and Leisure Strategy (2008); and Update (2013)
- Torridge Open Space, Sport and Recreation Strategy (21012); and Cultural Strategy (2010)

This section provides an overview of key findings and more detailed consultation findings will be found in the appropriate sections of the report further on.

Other directly relevant strategy documents are:

- The draft Devon GI Strategy
- Playing Pitch Studies for North Devon and Torridge completed in 2010 by Devon County Council

These studies are considered in the relevant sections below (Sports and Leisure; and Parks, Green Spaces, Countryside and Green corridors).

#### 3.1 The North Devon Leisure and Health Strategy (2008-18)

This strategy was originally produced in 2008 but recently reviewed and updated (2013) involving widespread consultation with key agencies and community groups. It is accurate and comprehensive and contains a number of consultation findings relevant to this study.

Consultation findings from 2008 suggested the importance of ensuring that the strategy delivers service improvements that specifically target key groups, for example:

- Children and young people
- Communities in priority neighbourhoods
- Communities with service access difficulties in the District

#### *Community Action Plans (findings from 2008)*

Community Action Plans are profiles of each community (their town or parish.) They set out a vision of how the community sees itself in the future, and identifies actions, which can be taken to reach that goal. The plans are intended to reflect the views of all sections of the community through a high level of consultation.

A number of sports and leisure issues were identified in the community action plans that had been developed across North Devon. Some recurring themes of relevance to Green Infrastructure provision were:

- Improving sports and recreational facilities (including parish/village halls, sports pitches and public open spaces) and investigating the feasibility of creating new facilities.
- Improving accessibility to facilities and recreational opportunities.
- Developing and improving walking/cycling and outdoor recreational opportunities (including improved pathways/cycle ways and promotional programmes and activities.)

### **Affordable access to sport and leisure activities**

The consultation report in the 2008 document noted that:

- One of the most often cited reasons for lack of participation in certain activities and at certain sports facilities is the cost of taking part. Cost can be a significant barrier to regular participation.

### **Consultation Findings - Pitch sports, Tennis, Countryside and Parks (2008 report)**

The findings relevant to these elements of green infrastructure can be found in the appropriate sections below.

### **The 2008 Action Plan**

Actions proposed based on the consultation findings and wider research and analysis included:

- Review current facility provision in Ilfracombe. Plan replacement or refurbishment of existing facilities and develop in accordance with Sport England's "hubsite" model.
- Review current condition of facility provision in Barnstaple. Plan replacement, refurbishment or relocation of current facilities provided at North Devon Leisure Centre. Seek to develop Barnstaple's facilities accordance with Sport England's "hubsite" model.
- Review current facility provision in hubsite of South Molton and plan renewal, refurbishment or relocation of facilities, according to local need.
- Investigate school take over of Braunton Athletics track, and funding for marketing specialist/sports coach. Support development of club and facility.
- Invest in village halls and smaller venues through schemes such as 5 x 30.
- Support the development of a new skate park facility in Ilfracombe.

### **The North Devon Leisure and Health Strategy (2013 update)**

Progress made since 2008 of direct relevance to the Green Infrastructure assessment included:

- Delivery of the £1m North Devon Leisure Centre refurbishment project, including £22k drawn down from the Amateur Swimming Association.
- Negotiation of long term lease, funding support and project support for the build of the £1m Falcons Gymnastics Academy facility.
- £547k of developer S106 funding allocated to eight community projects, leading to an additional £334k external match funding coming into North Devon. Projects include opening of British Museum of Surfing, building of Skate Parks in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe, new sports pitches at Barnstaple Rugby Club and new sports facilities in Braunton, North Molton, South Molton and Woolacombe.

In relation to widening access notable achievements also included:

- 42 registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs in North Devon benefit from a total of £28,360 worth of discretionary rate relief between 2008-2012.
- Family nutrition and exercise education; and concessionary exercise programmes for people with mental health problems.
- Healthy Town Project, surf lessons for young people from areas of deprivation: all supported and funded by NDC to help target groups associated with sedentary lifestyles.

- £70,000 of DCMS funding secured by NDC to support free swimming for 20,000 North Devon residents over the age of 60.
- 42 free Leisure Centre memberships allocated to support National Athletes from North Devon.
- £82,000 of Sport England funding secured by NDC to support 2,000 young people to try an 8-week programme of new sports as part of Sport Unlimited.
- £200,000 of Big Lottery Funding secured by NDC to deliver children's play projects for 37,000 young people across North Devon.
- 3,500 young people accessing low costs summer activities as part of the Supersport Holiday Programme, with funding drawn down from DCC to support 1,000 young people from low income families.
- £57,000 of funding has been provided by Sport England, through the County Sports Partnership to deliver activities in rural communities in Northern Devon as part of the Active Villages Project.
- £22,000 drawn down from NHS Devon to coordinate Walking, Cycling and Running Groups in North Devon through two-year Active Travel Project.

## **2012 Consultation**

In 2012, Active Devon held a North Devon CSPAN consultation event. This event allowed North Devon Council to collect information in order to update the priorities of this Leisure and Health Strategy update.

Some key themes from both events were:

- Facility development
- Affordable access to facilities, including for those from low income households
- More support for clubs (financial, training and general advice)
- Links to school sport and physical activity
- Continued communication between partners and the District Council.

## **Action Plan Update (2013)**

Some of the headline proposed projects of relevance linked to the revised 2013 Action Plan include:

- Review current sports facility provision in Barnstaple and consider the options for the relocation or refurbishment of facilities as part of Seven Brethren Bank Project Phase II.
- Refurbish the current facility provision at Ilfracombe Swimming Pool, including the addition of a gym and boom.
- Develop a sports hub site at South Molton and support the South Molton Swimming Pool Trust Improvement Project.
- Achieve Local Nature Reserve Status for two NDC owned sites.
- The council to formally adopt and implement management plans for its conservation sites as appropriate.
- In line with new government recommendations, investigate the opportunity to transfer assets when facilities can be delivered at lower cost by parish/town councils or community organisations and support the 'communities right to bid'.
- Manage community use of Leisure Facilities at Park Community School and produce an exit strategy for this facility in time for the end of the existing contract.

- Deliver priority community projects to be sourced through consultation with district councillors and town/parish councils, for example: Croyde Surf Club, Ilfracombe artificial grass pitch and refurbishment of Braunton Recreation Ground changing rooms.
- Support the extension of the Tarka Trail to Ilfracombe.
- Review existing discretionary sports rate relief scheme for clubs.
- Continue to provide S106 calculations and application advice for open space and draw down the funding to allocate to appropriate projects.

### **3.2 Torridge - Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy (2012)**

#### ***Community consultation***

The study was produced by KKP and involved a review of and supplement to a number of surveys undertaken by the District Council including a residents survey, a children and young people's survey and a town and parish council survey. KKP also conducted a number of stakeholder interviews based upon a list of consultees provided by the District Council.

The strategy also took into account relevant findings and guidance from the prior Cultural Strategy (2010).

The findings of the community consultation were presented under key issues within individual typology sections, covering:

- Attitudes towards open spaces in terms of quality of provision.
- Opinions about open spaces in terms of the amount of provision.
- Time taken /distance travelled to open spaces.
- Attitudes towards open spaces in terms of how accessible provision is.
- Future provision and what it should look like.

The main findings of the consultation in relation to the various aspects of green infrastructure are included within the appropriate sections of the main report.

#### ***General summary***

- According to the residents' survey, the most popular typologies for residents to visit in Torridge are parks, woodlands, commons and sea fronts. Less popular typologies, unsurprisingly (due to the user profile of these facilities), include skateparks, teenage shelters and allotments. Excluding the typologies that have a niche attraction given their typical user profile. The typology of amenity space is the next least visited open space.
- The most popular typology visited by school children survey respondents is amenity space. This is not surprising, considering that the most common reason for visiting provision is to play games /sport, followed by socialising and walking /jogging. Beaches, footpaths and play areas are the next most visited provision.
- Accessibility of open space is considered acceptable, with the majority of respondents from all surveys stating this.
- Nearly two thirds of all open spaces in Torridge score highly for quality in the audit - amenity spaces, play areas, parks, cemeteries and civic spaces are generally considered to be of high quality. However, natural space and allotments both have more low quality scores than high.
- Almost half of parish councils state that improving the quality would result in increased usage.

- In comparison, survey results highlight that residents view natural spaces, sea fronts and cemeteries to be of good quality. Churches and woodlands score particularly high for quality in the parish council survey.
- Play areas, woodlands and natural spaces are all viewed as being very beneficial to residents, whilst cemeteries /churchyards are specifically highlighted in the parish council survey as being very beneficial.

### Action Plan (2011-16) Proposals

Specific proposals from the study are summarised in the table below:

Category	Proposed Action
Allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce allotment waiting lists in Bideford and Northam.</li> <li>• Increase level of provision of allotments in Holsworthy.</li> <li>• Increase level of provision of allotments in Bradworthy Parish.</li> </ul>
Parks/formal gardens	Continue to provide high quality provision.
Natural space & accessible countryside	Increase the amount of land designated as statutory LNRs.
Amenity space	Improve quality of low quality sites.
Play areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase provision in areas that highlight a need for increased provision</li> <li>• Incorporate facilities for young adults/ teenagers in new provision.</li> </ul>
Cemeteries/ churchyards	Increase burial space in Bideford and Northam.
Civic space	Maintain current levels of provision
Indoor facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop two additional 25m swimming pool lanes.</li> <li>• Develop a centre for racket sport in Bideford/Northam.</li> <li>• Develop two additional indoor bowls rinks.</li> <li>• Improve quality of facilities presently rated 'poor condition'.</li> <li>• Improve access to indoor sport and recreation facilities.</li> </ul>
Outdoor facilities	Develop one (potentially full size) AGP in Holsworthy Develop eight MUGAs. Increase supply of playing pitch training facilities. Reduce overplay of football pitches Convert specific senior football pitches to junior and mini football pitches. Increase supply of mini rugby pitches

## 4. TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Within the study area there are 118 town and parish councils (of which 14 have an annual parish meeting). Surveys were sent to all town and parish councils together with up to two reminders to chase responses as needed. 58 town and parishes responded (56% excluding those only meeting once a year at a parish meeting).

Due to the timeframe available for the study, town and parish councils had a fairly limited time to respond (initially 5 weeks including August - a month when many local councils do not meet; this was subsequently extended by a further month following a change in the overall project plan) and the level of returns is understandable.

In the light of the timeframe there was a focus on securing feedback from the 9 town and parish councils representing the main and strategic centres as defined in the Local Plan. In this respect we received responses, or received feedback via telephone discussion, from the following 8 town and parish councils that is:

- Barnstaple
- Bideford
- Fremington
- Great Torrington
- Holsworthy
- Ilfracombe
- Northam
- South Molton

In addition to the 9 main centres (Braunton is normally included as a main centre, but did not respond) there are a further 18 parish councils with a population of over 1000. In respect of these 27 larger town and parish councils we received 18 responses (67%). Where the parishes did not respond parish plans (where available) were reviewed to identify issues relating to open spaces, sport, recreation and the wider green infrastructure.

In this manner we have been able to provide a comprehensive and robust assessment in relation to the needs expressed by local town and parish councils.

The survey covered issues relating to the quantity, quality and accessibility of various types of open space, sport and recreation facilities. There was also an opportunity for the councils to highlight any priorities they might have for new or improved provision.

### 4.1 General Overview

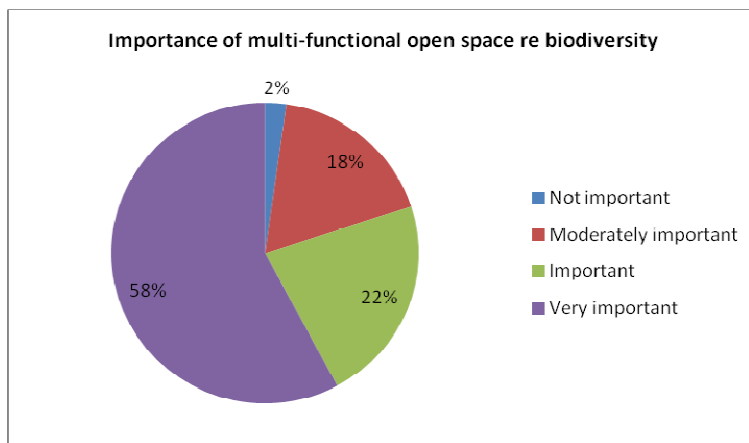
Some broad findings from the survey were that:

- Over 73% of the town and parish councils were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities
- 78% reported that there was a need for additional or improved open space, play and recreation facilities within their town or parish
- Of the parishes expressing an opinion 40% thought that there was scope for greater community use of local school sports facilities
- The sector of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were young people/teenagers.

Green spaces can fulfil more than one function at the same time. They can provide opportunities for healthy sport, play and recreation while simultaneously supporting natural and ecological processes such as habitat creation/preservation, and flood protection. Local councils

were therefore also asked "How important do you think it is to provide open space in your town/parish that is "multi-functional" in relation to its use and value?"

Responses are illustrated in the chart below from which it can be seen that 80% of the local councils say that having multi-functional open space to support biodiversity etc. is either important or very important (of which 58% think it is very important). Only 2% thought this consideration was "not important".



In relation to quality and access the aspects that that were most commonly highlighted as being of importance were:

- Equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained. They should be clean and free from litter and graffiti
- They should be safe and secure for those using them
- They should be easy to get to for all members of the community; and be easy to get around by all members of the community.

The general findings from the town and parish council surveys in terms of quantity and quality are summarised on the table below. Detailed findings for each individual parish in relation to each aspect of quantity and quality can be found in an associated Excel spreadsheet.

North Devon Town/Parish Councils	Not enough football pitches	Not enough cricket pitches	Not enough rugby pitches	Poor quality playing pitches and/or access problems	Not enough tennis/ netball courts and/or mugas	Not enough bowling greens or short mat bowls	Poor quality of or access to bowls, tennis courts or mugas	Poor quality changing facilities and/or access to	Not enough children's play areas	Poor quality of children's play areas and/or access to	Not enough areas for teenagers	Poor quality of areas for teenagers and/or access issues	Not enough allotments	Poor quality of allotments and/or access issues	Not enough informal open space	Shortage of recreational footpaths/bridleways/cycleways	Shortage of wildlife areas
Barnstaple Town Council											X					X	
Berrynarbor		X	X	X	X	X			X		X		X				
Bishops Nympton											X						
Brayford	X	X		X	X				X			X			X		
Burrington											X	X					
Chulmleigh			X	X	X							X					
Combe Martin					X						X						
East Anstey																	
East Down					X											X	
East & West Buckland	X	X	X		X	X			X		X		X		X		
Fremington	X	X	X	X	X			X					X				
Georgeham								X									
Horwood, Lovacott & Newton Tracey									X								
Ilfracombe Town Council	X	X		X				X					X		X		
Instow									X								
Kentisbury & Trentishoe									X		X		X				
Knowstone																	
Loxhore																	
Rackenford & Creacombe											X						
Romansleigh																	
South Molton	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X
Tawstock																	
West Down	X	X	X		X	X		X	X		X				X		

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Town/Parish Councils	Not enough football pitches	Not enough cricket pitches	Not enough rugby pitches	Poor quality playing pitches and/or access problems	Not enough tennis/ netball courts and/or mugs	Not enough bowling greens or short mat bowls	Poor quality of or access to bowls, tennis courts or mugs	Poor quality changing facilities and/or access to	Not enough children's play areas	Poor quality of children's play areas and/or access to	Not enough areas for teenagers	Poor quality of areas for teenagers and/or access issues	Not enough allotments	Poor quality of allotments and/or access issues	Not enough informal open space	Shortage of recreational footpaths/bridleways/cycleways	Shortage of wildlife areas
Witheridge				X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X		X
<b>North Devon TOTALS</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Torridge Town and Parish Councils</b>																	
Ashwater	X									X	X						
Beaford	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Bideford Town Council										X		X					
Bradworthy	X	X		X	X						X	X	X				
Buckland Brewer				X			X	X							X		
Clawton									X						X		
Clovelly																	
Dolton													X		X		
Great Torrington Town Council		X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Halwill	X	X		X				X		X	X						
Hartland				X													
Holsworthy Hamlets																	
Holsworthy Town Council	X		X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X		X	
Littleham & Landcross						X			X	X			X			X	
Little Torrington										X	X						
Merton						X					X	X	X			X	
Milton Damerel				X					X		X				X	X	
Northam Town Council									X	X	X				X	X	X
Parkham				X			X				X				X	X	X

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Torridge Town/Parish Councils	Not enough football pitches	Not enough cricket pitches	Not enough rugby pitches	Poor quality playing pitches and/or access problems	Not enough tennis/ netball courts and/or mugas	Not enough bowling greens or short mat bowls	Poor quality of or access to bowls, tennis courts or mugas	Poor quality changing facilities and/or access to	Not enough children's play areas	Poor quality of children's play areas and/or access to	Not enough areas for teenagers	Poor quality of areas for teenagers and/or access issues	Not enough allotments	Poor quality of allotments and/or access issues	Not enough informal open space	Shortage of recreational footpaths/bridleways/cycleways	Shortage of wildlife areas
Peters Marland																	
Pyworthy																	
Roborough										X						X	
Shebbear		X		X	X	X		X			X	X	X		X	X	X
Sheepwash													X				
St Giles in the Wood	X				X	X		X									
St Giles on the Heath				X													
Tetcott & Luffincott									X								
Thornbury																	
West & East Putford																	
Winkleigh		X	X								X	X			X	X	X
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>

All Study area Town and Parish Councils	Not enough football pitches	Not enough cricket pitches	Not enough rugby pitches	Poor quality playing pitches and/or access problems	Not enough tennis/ netball courts and/or mugas	Not enough bowling greens or short mat bowls	Poor quality of or access to bowls, tennis courts or mugas	Poor quality changing facilities and/or access to	Not enough children's play areas	Poor quality of children's play areas and/or access to	Not enough areas for teenagers	Poor quality of areas for teenagers and/or access issues	Not enough allotments	Poor quality of allotments and/or access issues	Not enough informal open space	Shortage of recreational footpaths/bridleways/cycleways	Shortage of wildlife areas
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>

The above table covers issues of quantity and quality for a range of facilities. In relation to the total study area, it shows that the areas of most common concern are:

- not enough areas for teenagers e.g. skateparks, shelters;
- not enough multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and tennis/netball courts;
- not enough allotments;
- not enough informal open spaces; and
- poor quality playing pitches and/or access problems.

Factors that are *not* of such widespread concern for many parishes include the quality of existing allotments, a shortage of wildlife areas, and the quality or access to existing bowling greens or short matt bowls facilities.

## 4.2 Town/Parish specific issues

### Town and Parish Council Issues and Aspirations

The detailed town and parish responses relating to quantity and quality of the various elements summarised in the table in 4.1 can be found in the associated Excel spreadsheet.

### Unmet needs and aspirations for improvement

As part of the survey we also asked the open questions "are you aware of any particular groups within your community whose needs are not currently met" and "what new or improved recreational opportunities do you think would benefit your town/parish?" Individual town/parish responses are shown in the table below.

#### North Devon

Town or Parish Council	Groups in parish whose needs not being met	Desired new or improved recreational opportunities
<b>Barnstaple Town Council</b>	Local croquet club cannot find accommodation sufficiently big enough to allow them to play tournament matches.	More cycleways, youth shelters.
<b>Berrynarbor</b>	Primary School. Insufficient room / space.	Primary School sports facilities, Bowling Green
<b>Bishops Nympton</b>	Teenagers - there is nowhere in the village suitable/appropriate for teenagers to meet, engage in sports activities or socialize.	Facilities for teenagers
<b>Bradworthy</b>	Teenagers	Sports Ground Tennis Courts
<b>Brayford</b>	Older children	Playing field area.
<b>Chulmleigh</b>	Chulmleigh is rich in Clubs and Associations covering nearly every recreational, sporting and leisure time interest, I cannot envisage any current under resourced activity.	Most are adequately covered, though funding for existing to expand would always be welcome.
<b>Combe Martin</b>	Teenagers - skate park and lack of organised sport	MUGA area
<b>East Anstey</b>		Improved play equipment on the playing field would be benefit to children in the parish. This is a small parish with no sports facilities. Young people need help to be able to access sports facilities in South Molton or Dulverton.
<b>East Down</b>	We have no facilities for the younger people in	Anything would be much appreciated

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	the parish We have no facilities for disabled/less mobile people in the community We have no public transport	
<b>Fremington</b>		A multi use games area
<b>Georgeham</b>	There is no BMX track in the Parish.	BMX track
<b>Ilfracombe Town Council</b>	All those who need all weather training facilities. Youth football groups due to lack of pitches.	More football pitches
<b>Instowe</b>	Young children	Children's play area
<b>Kentisbury &amp; Trentishoe</b>	Yes, the young people of the community do not have anywhere to play. This is why the Parish Council is progressing the Play Area in the Parish Field, to also act as a 'meeting point' at the Pavilion (Phase 3). The Steering Group has involved the children in all aspects of the planning for the Play Area, also village groups such as the Primary School, Village Hall and Pre-School, together with interested parishioners who attended the first meeting, the Police, County and District Councilors and the residents of neighbouring Arlington and East Down Parishes who also do not have play facilities.	The creation of the Play Area chosen by the children and other members of the community and fully supported by the Parish Council. Phase 2 and 3 of the project (aerial wire and pavilion) would transform the Parish Field into a well used recreational facility in a safe environment, well away from traffic.
<b>Knowstone</b>		The Parish Council is currently negotiating with DCC reference the purchase or acquisition of a field (currently part of a DCC owned farm called East Hill) for use as a sports/gymkhana field
<b>South Molton</b>	Cyclists and BMX/Mountain biking community	BMX track and outside gym equipment. Improved facilities for teenagers. lighting and access improvements to existing tennis court . Aspiration for Sports Hub to provide more tennis courts, more rugby and football pitches, changing rooms and club room. Improved play area. Shortage of informal open space, recreational foot/bridle/cycle routes and natural areas for wildlife also identified.
<b>Rackenford &amp; Creacombe</b>	11-15 year olds	The school needs another classroom, and another large room then the school hall could be used for recreation. The school hall needs to be used as the lunch room so if it is wet there is limited room for play.
<b>West Down</b>	All - but being addressed by Green Field Committee	No facilities at present but Green Field Committee will hopefully address this in the future
<b>Witheridge</b>	Indoor sports hall for primary school, would also double up for community use.	Sports Hall and MUGA

**Torridge**

Town or Parish Council	Groups in parish whose needs not being met	Desired new or improved recreational opportunities
<b>Ashwater</b>	No	Playing field
<b>Beaford</b>	Badminton/Squash	Squash court and cycle path

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<b>Bideford</b>		Victoria Park, needs new drainage internal roads and paths
<b>Bradworthy</b>	Teenagers	Sports ground Tennis courts
<b>Buckland Brewer</b>	No	New community hall will enable more indoor sports to take place; badminton, short mat bowling
<b>Clawton</b>	No	Village Green - open space
<b>Dolton</b>	No	Village green/open space adjoining the village hall
<b>Great Torrington Town Council</b>	Amateur Boxing Club, Girl Guides, Streetz Dance Crew and quite a few others do not have designated space/ accommodation to store equipment and meet regularly.	Dry ski slope Kayaking in the river Larger skate park Not enough areas for teenagers Not enough cycle paths through town
<b>Halwill</b>	Children in general especially older children/ young adults who have no play facilities apart from the football pitch. The cricket club currently has no pitch in the parish.	Facilities for older children such as skate park/shelters. Improved play area for younger children. Tennis courts and bowling greens.
<b>Hartland</b>		Hartland Vision Statement, compiled as part of the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan process calls for improved recreation and sports facilities including the complete refurbishment of the Parish Hall
<b>Holsworthy Hamlets</b>	Skate Park, Football pitch	Parking is a problem especially in Holsworthy Woods
<b>Holsworthy Town Council</b>	Holsworthy Town Council is hoping to refurbish the Cricket Pavilion in the near future and as part of the consultation process, we have been soliciting feedback from potential users in the town, especially those groups who would benefit from changing facilities. We have received an expression of interest from several people who are keen to establish walking, cycling and running groups but currently lack appropriate facilities. We also understand that the Youth Football Club, which uses Stanhope Park for its training sessions, is in dire need of extra pitch facilities, due to its popularity.	Stanhope Park and its Pavilion are in dire need of new play equipment and upgrading works. New play equipment is being financed via Section 106 monies and being project managed by the Town Council, with completion anticipated for Autumn 2013. The refurbishment of the Pavilion is dependent on the Council securing further funding but will hopefully include refurbished changing rooms, toilets and a café. Wider plans for the Park also include the reinstatement of the disused Tennis Courts or new Multi Use Sports Pitch, Youth Dome and Trim Trail. A refurbished pavilion would attract a number of sporting / recreational groups, as mentioned above. The Cycle Path which runs along the old railway track to the east and west of the town needs to be joined up in the middle at Coles Mill. Coles Mill Viaduct is privately owned and despite commitment from Devon County Council historically to commit funding to this section, the project has stalled. There is also scope to extend the cycle path in a westerly direction towards Bude, where it would join up with

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		other cycle routes.
<b>Milton Damreal</b>	Young people – predominately teenagers do not have a place to 'gather' for unstructured activities.	Please see Parish Plan 2008.
<b>Northam</b>	Children - play areas	Safeguard open spaces - e.g. below Knapp House, Westward Ho! Green Youth Shelters needed
<b>Parkham</b>		Skate / BMX Track Tennis Court
<b>Roborough</b>	There have been unsuccessful calls for allotment provision at various times over the past few years	
<b>Shebbear</b>	Outdoor bowling is popular but there are no facilities at all so players must travel to other villages.	There are NO public open spaces in the Parish for ANY recreational pursuits. This situation needs to be resolved
<b>Sheepwash</b>	I do not believe that there are any	I do not believe that there are any. Our population is 250 people and there are good facilities within easy reach.
<b>St Giles in the Wood</b>	Badminton - hall is too low	A new hall for recreational opportunities
<b>St Giles on the Heath</b>		Help with New Play Equipment for the Play Area
<b>Tetcott &amp; Luffincott</b>	Everyone	A play/recreational area for both children and adults would be really good
<b>Thornbury</b>	Elderly. Children [play area]	Community venue for multi use indoor sports, shop, public house, post office, outside play area for children.
<b>West &amp; East Putford</b>	Due to closure of the Methodist Chapel last year and the school this year, there is nowhere in the parish suitable for Parish Council meetings. As a result we have had to make arrangements for meetings to be held in a neighbouring parish.	Personally I feel every parish should have a central meeting place, especially when there are no other facilities and parishioners are as spread out as they are here in West and East Putford.
<b>Winkleigh</b>	The elderly, mobility impaired, families & teenagers (as indicated in a recent parish-wide survey). There is a definite lack of public open spaces available for general use for these groups. The opportunity to create a walk route has failed due to the area being used to generate income for the Sports Centre by renting out to local farmers.	Proper community access to the open space by the Sports Centre designated for public benefit. (presently restricted).  Access by foot from the village to the local woods for dog walkers and others.  Skate board park, gym, swimming pool, climbing wall, cycle paths (as indicated in a recent parish-wide survey)

**Observations regarding indoor sports and leisure facilities**

We provided the opportunity for the local Councils to comment on any issues regarding indoor sports and leisure provision. Responses are shown in the table below:

**North Devon**

<b>Berrynarbor</b>	Not enough
<b>Brayford</b>	Sad because of the lack of any in the village area.
<b>Chulmleigh</b>	The Chulmleigh Sports Centre and Pavillion are both good quality improving amenities, with good access.

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<b>East Anstey</b>	Access to short mat bowls in neighbouring village hall. No other indoor sport locally
<b>Horwood, Lovacott &amp; Newton Tracey</b>	Good disabled access to the parish Field and Village Hall.
<b>South Molton</b>	Good facilities at Swimming Pool and Resource Centre (Badmington Hall). Scope for more community use of school facilities. Lack of changing facilities highlighted. Aspiration for a new sports hub , predominantly to serve outdoor sports facilities but with potential for indoor sports.
<b>Witheridge</b>	Parish Hall due to age and layout is very limited for serious competitive sport.

**Torridge**

<b>Buckland Brewer</b>	Village hall does not fit the purpose - new community hall being built with S106 agreement will include badminton court
<b>Clovelly</b>	With a population of only 400 it is difficult get sufficient support to run any sports.
<b>Great Torrington Town Council</b>	Climbing wall contained there-in is for school use only. The hall is not available for public use during periods of public examinations as it is used by the school for children to sit their exams.
<b>Halwill</b>	Reasonable hall for size of Parish.
<b>Hartland</b>	The nearest full facilities including pools are 13 miles away at Bideford or Bude
<b>Holsworthy Hamlets</b>	Excellent facility
<b>Holsworthy Town Council</b>	Leisure Centre is in need of refurbishment.
<b>Milton Damerel</b>	Quality is fine at Woodford Bridge, but membership is expensive.
<b>Roborough</b>	Facilities in the village are limited / access to wider area is limited by the absence of public transport and many people young and old will be dependent on private transport for travel to a wider range of facilities.
<b>Shebbear</b>	Village Hall not suitable for racquet or ball sports and storage space for equipment, for example short mat bowls, is very limited.
<b>Sheepwash</b>	I am not aware of any unfulfilled expectations. There are good indoor and outdoor facilities in neighbouring towns
<b>Thornbury</b>	Swimming pool good; frequently used mainly by children.
<b>Winkleigh</b>	Village Hall - The heating system is inefficient and inadequate which deters some of the community (especially elderly) from attending the more sedentary activities (i.e. yoga). Also the disabled access requires checking again to see if it meets current standards, as the gradient is too steep for some to push a wheel chair. The ordinary access up from the street is very dark, making the steps difficult to see. Community Centre - This has a long term programme for refurbishment. Again the heating system is inefficient and inadequate which deters some of the community from attending the more sedentary activities (i.e. yoga) Sports Hall and Leisure Facility - The range of potential activities are limited by the design (low ceiling and permanently divided hall).

**Parish Councils - other comments**

Finally, the survey also provided the opportunity to raise any other issues or to make other points. The table below provides individual parish responses made:

**North Devon**

<b>Berrynarbor</b>	Sports facilities should be free to everyone.
<b>Chulmleigh</b>	Chulmleigh is blessed with a village atmosphere and a wealth of active community, sporting and recreational activities, all activities, area's have a maintenance cost and funding is always welcome to sustain and improve what we have

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<b>Combe Martin</b>	Problems with dog fouling - would appreciate more cover by dog warden Council should look at facilities for small communities with limited public transport access to the larger towns
<b>East Anstey</b>	East Anstey only has a field, known as the Village Green, as an amenity area with a small amount of play equipment. Open space can also be used for community events such as fairs and fetes which are socially important
<b>Georgeham</b>	The concept of providing more facilities is excellent but in these times of budgetary constraints, it is difficult to plan for new projects when funding is so limited.  The Parish has a very good network of Public Footpaths and Bridleways, operated under the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme (P3). Councillor M Harrison is the local co-ordinator who works very hard to ensure they are kept in excellent order. He has overseen a recent project for new signage for the footpaths, agreed by and funded by the Parish Council, but unfortunately nearly half of them have been vandalised making the scheme almost unviable.
<b>Horwood, Lovacott &amp; Newton Tracey</b>	Where is the money coming from for all this when North Devon Council alone is facing a cut of £2 million?
<b>West Down</b>	Gree Field is a new facility in West Down, with no or very little funds to develop it. Funding help and advice will be good to develop this facility to its full potential
<b>Witheridge</b>	Witheridge is ten miles from the nearest modern indoor sports facilities.

**Torridge**

<b>Beaford</b>	Gulf between town and parish facilities is not proportional
<b>Bideford</b>	In need of money to bring play area up to a usable standard <sup>5</sup> . Skate board park in very poor condition and in the wrong place Parks and open spaces should contain works/structures of “art”. This has proven culture changes things and has been very effective in places like Liverpool.
<b>Bradworthy</b>	We also have 88 acres of Common Land – used by the public for dog walking etc.
<b>Buckland Brewer</b>	As part of the Olympic legacy we have installed a basketball hoop and volleyball court in the playing field. We need financial support to provide all the facilities in the new community hall
<b>Clawton</b>	It is proposed to create a new village green/open space with a small/med building with toilet/kitchen facilities with a small development to include affordable housing
<b>Great Torrington Town Council</b>	Because of the relative isolation in rural areas there needs to be more attention paid to the provision of basic recreational services. It is sometimes thought that being in the “country side” means that there are plenty of places of recreation.. This of course is incorrect as all land is owned by “someone” who may not want children or adults playing on it. Public transport is non-existent in many rural areas and those providing it need to recognise this.
<b>Holsworthy Town Council</b>	The Redrow Housing Development adjacent to Stanhope Park has provision via a Section 106 agreement to supply a new football pitch when associated housing occupation reaches 60. The pitch would comply with FA regulations and be a welcome facility for the Football Club. The agreement will also supply a new skate park when associated housing occupation reaches 120. The skate park would be a welcome facility for the youth of the town.
<b>Holsworthy Hamlets</b>	Good provision exists - it needs constant repair, updating and public awareness programmes
<b>Northam Town Council</b>	Cycleway from Appledore to link cycleway at Haywood Rd Safeguard existing wildlife corridors - e.g. off Haywood Rd, bottom of Raleigh Hill
<b>Parkham</b>	General lack of facilities in area.

<sup>5</sup> It is not clear from the return which play area is being referred to or whether this is a general concern about the quality of play areas in Bideford.

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	Concern about the historic use of Northam Burrows as a rubbish tip (exposed by erosion).
<b>Roborough</b>	High quality facilities need to be open and free to all, residents and visitors, and should not be seen as way to raise revenue. It is wrong that beach access at places such as Northam Burrows Country Park is linked to a summer months pricing policy; this is bad for the regions tourist industry and punitive to local residents. Furthermore, it creates a very negative poor image when facilities and road access within the park are such poor quality. Such a situation is hardly in keeping with the ethos promoted by this questionnaire
<b>Thornbury</b>	Thornbury Parish Council support the need for Nth Devon & Torridge to provide a high standard of sport, recreation, play and open space facilities and opportunities for it's communities.

**Parish Plans**

Some of the larger parishes (population of over 1000) that did not respond within the required timeframe have completed parish plans that feature issues of relevance. While many of these plans were completed a number of years ago many of the issues are considered to remain relevant. However, it would be sensible to check with individual parishes to ascertain the current position in relation to issues highlighted. The issues of relevance for the green infrastructure study are noted below:

**North Devon**

Parish	Issues re Green Infrastructure and Leisure
Bratton Fleming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth facilities/youth centre - more consultation required to find out what they want</li> <li>Maintain verges and hedgerows</li> <li>Increase facilities on Millennium Green Suggestion for a shelter</li> <li>Put nesting boxes in community woodland</li> <li>Set up a woodland wildlife watch</li> <li>Plant copse of trees on the recreation field</li> <li>More footpaths and bridleways- particularly through community woodland</li> </ul>
Braunton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify additional leisure facilities that could be feasible</li> <li>Improve Vellator Quay</li> <li>Clean and improve River Caen</li> <li>Litter and dog litter Bins - on streets and in public green spaces</li> <li>Play areas - for all ages and also consideration for children with disabilities</li> <li>Increase use of Recreation Ground - more sports and events as well as seating areas</li> <li>MUGA, skate park/ youth facilities</li> </ul>
Combe Martin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refurbish village hall</li> <li>Provide Youth Zone; MUGA at Hollands park</li> <li>Improve play area; more children's play facilities</li> <li>Provide a cricket pitch and additional football pitch at Lime Kilns</li> <li>Protect landscape- implement habitat management at Adderstable Woods</li> <li>Protect landscape- reduce run-off into water to improve its quality</li> <li>Dog fouling - more dog wardens, bins and an awareness campaign</li> <li>Circular walks</li> <li>Improve access to the beach and footpaths</li> <li>Enhance the parade area</li> </ul>
Landkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community centre - current community buildings are inadequate for parish: Fitness activities - sports facilities, possibly in community hall</li> <li>Sports facilities - possibly in conjunction with community centre/hall</li> <li>Footpath and cycleway - To Newport/Barnstaple</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More footpaths and walkways - mostly to separate pedestrians and cyclists from vehicles</li> <li>• Use of school facilities broadened to the community</li> <li>• Youth facilities - suggested that a youth club could be the solution. Community activities for young people - to decrease Anti-social behaviour</li> </ul>
Mortehoe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve play area</li> <li>• Improve facilities at Meadow Pavilion</li> <li>• Support Woolacombe Surf lifesaving club</li> <li>• Improve cyclepath network</li> <li>• Modernise village halls</li> <li>• Review paths network</li> <li>• Hedge maintenance</li> <li>• Dog mess</li> <li>• Nature trail/tree planting scheme</li> </ul>
South Molton	<p>A "Strategic Action Plan for South Molton" was prepared by "The Community Company" and updated in 2011 following a public consultation process supported by the District Council. The report highlighted a number of issues of relevance as noted below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More leisure, sport, growing and open space are needed.</li> <li>• The Community College and schools facilities (both sport and other recreation) are considered underutilised with access requested out of school term-time</li> <li>• The creation of a sports' hub is warmly welcomed with support for a wide range of physical activity excluding swimming which is catered for by the existing pool. Consideration should be given to including after-sports leisure (bar, food and function room) within a hub.</li> <li>• The Community Woodlands are highly valued and worthy of further funding.</li> <li>• Allotments are valued and generate interest and ideas, including innovative opportunities for co-operation, selling produce and community participation.</li> <li>• Access to the countryside is fairly difficult. Development may bring opportunities to improve footpaths, bridleways and multi-use paths.</li> <li>• There is a shortage of footpaths and those that exist can become overgrown and unusable.</li> <li>• There is a concern that pedestrian and cycling perspectives have not been given due weight in the design of the Central Development Area (CDA).</li> <li>• There is a need to increase the number of multi-use paths for cyclists, horseriders, walkers and disabled, e.g. improve access from North Molton under the link road with lighting and a footbridge over river.</li> <li>• Ensure paths link up and are not cut off by roads.</li> <li>• Access to the River Mole is a high priority.</li> <li>• Within town, pedestrian access along Old Alswear Road to the community college and the football fields is unsafe.</li> </ul>
Swimbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase potential use of Glebe Field - including play area</li> <li>• Community green/open space</li> <li>• Community facilities - Improve use of Jubilee Hall</li> <li>• Cleaner open spaces - More litter bins and harsher penalties for offenders</li> <li>• More footpaths and walkways- Mostly to separate pedestrians and cyclists from vehicles</li> </ul>

**Torridge**

Parish	Issues re Green Infrastructure and Leisure
Woolfardisworthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of the countryside</li> <li>• Village Hall refurbishment</li> <li>• Improving cycle tracks along bridleways</li> </ul>

## North Devon Council Community Development

We also spoke to Hannah Harrington from the Community Development team. The focus of discussions primarily related to non-sports specific aspects of the study relating to parish councils. Information provided on some known issues is highlighted below:

- Parish Plans - Hannah provided a spreadsheet of information from parish plans of relevance to open space and recreation. She also provide information on grants to local organisations awarded recently that related to open space and recreational needs.
- In general the main priorities from parish councils appeared to be for refurbishment and improvements to existing recreational provision rather than for new facilities e.g. sports pitches, pavilions/changing facilities, recreation grounds, play areas and village halls.
- In general the quantity of public open space appeared to be sufficient with the main concerns relating to quality and access.
- Securing adequate funds for the maintenance of open space and recreational provision was a key issue for many parishes and local organisations.
- A common complaint related to problems with dogs e.g. a lack of poop scoops and inadequate management of dogs in relation to open spaces and play areas.
- In recent years demand for allotment plots seemed high in various parts of the District where demand was higher than supply. There were also applications for improvements to allotment sites. This had slacked off slightly in the last year or two.
- There have been quite a number of grant requests relating to children and young people's sporting events and competitions post 2012.
- The AONB also have a grants scheme and a study of this would be useful in identifying trends relating to local need and aspirations in relation to natural and informal open space.

## 4.3 Town and Parish Councils - Key Findings

### *Quantity*

- 78% reported that there was a need for improved open space, play and recreation provision within their Town or Parish
- The sector of the community most commonly identified as being poorly served in relation to their needs were young people/teenagers.
- Many parishes report a shortage of MUGAs and tennis/netball courts
- A significant number of towns and parishes report a lack of football pitches in relation to local demand
- Many parishes report a need for more allotments

### *Quality*

- As regards quality the key factors most commonly identified as important re local open space, sport, and recreation facilities were that equipment and grounds should be of high quality and well maintained; and that they should be clean and free from litter and graffiti.
- Many parishes highlighted the importance of ensuring open space and facilities should be safe and secure for those using them
- Dog fouling of open spaces and play areas is seen as a significant problem.
- Many towns and parishes specifically reported that that playing pitches and associated facilities were often of poor quality.
- Very few parishes reported issues concerning the quality of existing allotments, bowling greens or short matt bowls facilities.

### *Access*

- 40% of parishes thought that there was scope for greater community use of local school sports facilities
- As regards access it was highlighted that it is of great importance that open space and facilities should be easy to get to for all members of the community; and be easy to get around by all members of the community
- The rural nature of much of the study area and related transport difficulties means that as much as possible needs to be provided locally or that opportunities are made available to access city and town facilities and activities more readily.

### *Other issues and observations*

- Over 73% of the councils were directly responsible for the management of various local spaces and facilities
- 80% of the local councils say that having multi-functional open space to support biodiversity etc. is either important or very important (of which 58% think it is very important). Only 2% thought this consideration was "not important".
- The individual parishes are very different in relation to size, demographics, geography, needs and demand/aspirations. It is very important that local standards take this into account.

## 5. SPORTS AND LEISURE

This section contains feedback from Sport England, council officers from both local authorities with responsibility for sport and leisure and the governing bodies of the main pitch sports (football, cricket, rugby union and hockey) and tennis. It incorporates findings from three surveys (community organisations, pitch and non-pitch sports clubs). It also includes information gained from the sports related stakeholder meetings. The section summarises some of the general themes and issues from this research.

### 5.1 Stakeholder Views

#### 5.1.1 Sport England

We contacted Gary Parsons from Sport England who is one of the Planning Managers for the South of England. North Devon and Torridge are both local authorities for which he has responsibility. He reported that Sport England does not have any specific issues to raise at this stage other than a concern about a development at a former private school in Bideford where he noted that a planning application for housing development by Redrow homes had been approved. He noted that Sport England were not convinced that the District Council had conducted a sufficiently robust assessment of the supply of and demand for pitches in the area to conclude that the pitches were surplus to requirements.

More generally Gary noted that the two current playing pitch studies covering North Devon and Torridge commissioned by Devon County Council were nearing the end of their set timeframe and that the Councils should consider undertaking new studies in the future. In this respect he highlighted that new guidance was currently being finalised by Sport England and that any such studies should be completed in line with this guidance. This would avoid potential objections to development proposals that could be made by Sport England relating to any developments that involve the loss of any playing fields and sports facilities.

Gary welcomed the additional opportunity to be consulted on the study at an appropriate time in the future.

#### 5.1.2 Active Devon

Active Devon is the body which is recognised as the County Sports Partnership (CSP) in Devon. In this context it is one of a network of 49 CSPs in England. Their geographic scope is the county of Devon. We spoke to Jill Borrow who is their Sports Strategy Manager.

Jill highlighted that Devon County Council had produced detailed playing pitch studies covering North Devon and Torridge in 2010 and that though these had not been formally adopted by the two District Councils they were robust, well evidenced and completed in accordance with Sport England guidance current at the time (Towards a level Playing Field). She felt that while overall there had not been major changes in supply or demand since that time it would be important to contact the relevant sports governing bodies to secure their views and to check where new pitches and facilities have been developed, along with any loss of pitches. For example, Bideford College had been developed recently with extremely good quality sports facilities and pitches.

Jill also noted the importance of recent strategy documents produced by the two District authorities, for example the *North Devon Leisure and Health Strategy* and various strategies at

Torridge such as their *Cultural Strategy* and an *Open Space Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy*. She also referred to the *Bideford Sports Facility Needs/Opportunities Strategic Overview* produced in 2007 by Devon County Council with the support of Sport England. She recommended that it would be important to take note of the developing *Green Infrastructure Strategy* currently being produced by Devon County Council.

Jill noted that since 2010 many schools have changed their formal status e.g. to become academies. Secondary schools in particular tended to have a good range of sports facilities with community use but this was very varied and few had formal long-term dual-use arrangements. However in practice community use was well established and she was unaware of any particular schools who were planning to stop community use. Decisions on the extent of community use was increasingly a matter for individual schools to decide.

Active Devon would be happy to provide feedback on the Green Infrastructure Strategy at an appropriate time later in the process.

### **5.1.2 North Devon District Council - Sport and Leisure**

We met with the Contracts Delivery Manager (Parks, Leisure, Culture) along with his colleagues Lucy Tomlinson (Project and Procurement Officer) and Richard Slaney (Leisure and Recreation Officer). The team highlighted the importance of the *Leisure and Health Strategy* and recent update which covered all the main facility issues across the district from a District Council perspective.

The officers also provided useful information about both outdoor sports facilities and the key built facilities as noted below:

#### **A) BUILT FACILITIES**

##### **Main public facilities**

##### ***North Devon Leisure Centre, Barnstaple***

- 68 Station Gym
- Creche
- Group Exercise Studio
- Swimming and teaching pools
- 7 Court Sports Hall
- Spa Area
- 3 x Squash Courts
- Dojo - Martial Arts room
- Indoor Bowls Green
- Bumpers Soft Play Area
- Wetside Changing
- Café - Bar and meeting / Function Room
- Dryside Changing facilities

The pool has the equivalent of approximately 50m pool space (horseshoe design).

***Ilfracombe Swimming pool 33 m:*** Pool, and sauna. No cafe or gym.

***South Molton Pool 20m:*** Run by a local trust with grant aid from the District Council.

##### ***Tarka Tennis Centre, Barnstaple***

Built in 2003 with North Devon Council, Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and Sport England funding. It has 6 indoor courts and 4 outdoor hard courts. It is a pay and play facility. It is also home to Falcons gym club who have a newly built indoor facility and are very strong and popular club.

### **Park School, Barnstaple (Dual-use)**

The facilities include an indoor sports hall, a full size astroturf, and changing facilities to cater for on site demand and demand from people using Rock Park Sports Pitches. The current management contract runs until 2017 and the District Council would prefer to devolve full responsibility for community use to the school.

### **Secondary School Sports Halls**

There are six halls with varied levels of community use (by club bookings - not pay and play).

### **Some Key Issues**

- Contract for *North Devon Leisure Centre* ends in 2020 (Parkwood Leisure). It is likely that any new contract would be more expensive, particularly in the light of anticipated refurbishment and maintenance issues/costs. Due to age and design of the leisure centre (1970's building) there is a threat that the facility may need to close post 2020.
- A current option being considered in the long term is to relocate elements of the leisure centre to the Tarka Tennis Centre site; in particular the pool (note: a 25m pool would not meet current let alone increased demand anticipated from projected population increase).
- Much of the use of the sports hall is for football. Another long-term option would therefore be to build a 3G pitch at the Tarka Tennis Centre site and consolidate community use of school halls for badminton etc.
- Future provision for *indoor bowls* and *squash* would remain an issue of concern if Leisure Centre closed.
- Two strong and high capacity swimming clubs (Ilfracombe and Barnstaple) plus casual usage at South Molton
- Three large surf lifesaving clubs (Saunton, Croyde and Woolacombe)
- Military, canoe clubs, sub aqua clubs use pools along with schools
- Demand is high throughout the year, the winter predominantly by the above clubs and by tourists and swim clubs in the summer. Casual swimming is also in particularly high demand due to the popularity of surfing in the area. Surfers generally swim as a method of training when they are not surfing.
- North Devon Leisure Centre serves Torridge and Mid Devon residents.
- Aging population and increase in development (population increase) putting extra strain on the facilities which are already at capacity.
- Ilfracombe Pool - contract also up in 2020 and new contract likely to increase costs of running.
- Park School - Sports hall and ATP - with contract ending in 2017 it is important to maintain the level of community use after this date.
- Many schools are involved in change of status. It is important to maintain community use through any such changes.

### **North Devon Leisure and Health Strategy - built facilities: Consultation findings (2008)**

Extensive consultation was carried out for the original strategy and findings of relevance are noted below. As the consultation was undertaken over 5 years ago, however, the findings need to be viewed in this light as there have been various changes since that time.

### **Swimming Pools - ASA views (2008)**

- The ASA expressed some concern over two key swimming pools in the district, North Devon Leisure Centre and Ilfracombe Pool, which are coming to the end of their useful life and will need to be replaced in the near future. ASA recommendations at the time were for one 25m, six lane pool with timing equipment per district and one 25m, eight lane pool with timing equipment per county
- In the case of North Devon, the ASA recommended that new facilities should include a 25m eight lane short-course competition swimming pool, a learner pool and a diving pool (these new facilities should replace North Devon Leisure Centre).
- The diving pool should be re-provided to help boost the profile of this discipline and help Barnstaple act as a feeder area to Plymouth
- The new pool should include water depths suitable for water polo (1.8-2m deep) which was thriving in Barnstaple at that time.
- If Ilfracombe Pool is to be replaced this should be a 25m six lane swimming pool with learner pool
- The ASA suggested that local clubs would benefit from an improved programme of use at all swimming pools which provide adequate affordable access at times which are suitable for young swimmers who may be training twice daily.
- Sports clubs - a key need identified by Barnstaple Swimming Club at the time was to retain the specifications of the existing pool (at North Devon Leisure Centre) at any proposed replacement facility
- The depth of the new pool for sub-aqua activity and other swimming training was highlighted as a key priority
- The potential need for a new swimming pool in Braunton was also noted in the 2008 consultation findings, though the source for this suggestion is not clear.

### **Sports Halls (2008 consultation findings)**

- Badminton: there is no official badminton development centre within the District and there is potential for one to be provided in the District.
- Basketball: providing more dedicated indoor basketball facilities was a priority for the sport's NGB at the time to allow it to develop and raise awareness through events<sup>6</sup>.
- Park School is the main hub site for netball activities. At the time, netball facilities in Bideford and South Molton were noted as unsuitable due to poor location and other issues with accessibility.
- A need was expressed for facilities with equipment for indoor cricket training.
- Some facilities (North Devon Leisure Centre, Park School and Pilton School) were noted as being too expensive to hire and hard to book because of a lack of availability.
- More affordable indoor sports in Ilfracombe were identified as a key priority.
- It was noted that Barnstaple acted as the "hub" site for sports hall provision for the District and, because of the transport links and population density compared to other areas in the District, should continue to do so. North Devon Leisure Centre provides a seven-court sports hall that is a very valuable facility and given the levels of deficiency identified by the modelling undertaken at the time, should be re-provided when this facility is replaced in the future.

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<sup>6</sup> North Devon Leisure Officers note that currently (2013) there is only one casual club they are aware of in the District,

### **Indoor Bowls (2008 findings)**

- North Devon Leisure Centre provides the only public access bowls hall in the District and was therefore noted as a very important facility. Discussions over the future of the facility noted a decision by the bowls club at the time to explore the potential of an alternative site.
- At a consultation event held in 2008, the potential loss of indoor bowls facilities serving the District was cited as an important issue.

### **B) SPORTS PITCHES**

North Devon Council manages two pitches at Tarka Tennis Centre (Barnstaple) and the Football pitch at Brimlands (Ilfracombe). These pitches are all used by local teams during the Football season.

Rock Park and Brimlands are currently available for cricket fixtures during the summer (both have artificial wickets).

In general terms there appears to have been no significant change in either supply or demand since the 2010 playing fields study. If anything demand may have increased slightly.

Officers suggested that there is a need to check if pitches have been lost at Petroc College (there were 2 f/s adult pitches - but these may have been lost through developments on site). They had not been maintained properly for a number of years.

There is some potential for new pitches associated with future development and S106 e.g.

- Fremington - 1 f/s football pitch (not imminent)
- Larkbear (Persimmons) - recent application

#### **Artificial pitches - key facilities (located on school sites)**

- Braunton - - half-size pitch - at capacity. Has a swipecard system and portaloo within cage providing easy community access
- Pilton - at capacity - no toilets
- Park School, Barnstaple - changing rooms and toilets - at capacity
- South Molton - some capacity still
- Chulmleigh - half size - near sports hall with gym - full dual use via community association. Probably lowest use due to rurality and poor public transport?
- West Buckland - independent school with various sports facilities as well as ATP - unsure of community use.

#### **Some Issues/Information**

- In general there is a lack of pitches and many existing pitches are of poor quality, particularly for football.
- Ilfracombe has high health inequality statistics and is relatively high deprivation. Also, in general, it has fewer facilities to meet demand.
- Currently no AGP in Ilfracombe but funding just secured for provision at Ilfracombe Academy. This will have community use - should be open in November 2013. The

academy suffers from a lack of space and could do with improved sports facilities generally e.g. sports hall.

- North Molton has good facilities and strong football and cricket clubs. It has 4 x football pitches (one floodlit); a small sports hall and club house - changing facilities also. It probably pulls in players and teams from nearby South Molton

More detailed information in relation to individual pitch and court sports can be found in the relevant sports sections below, along with consultation findings from the Leisure and Health Strategy.

### **Braunton Athletics Track**

It was also noted that this is a very well used facility and is of significant importance to the facility infrastructure of the District. It provides an eight-lane all weather running track with a rubberized artificial running surface.

The facility caters for many activities: high jump, pole vault, long jump, triple jump, shot put, discus/hammer throw, javelin throw and it has 2 practice pits. The facility also has covered seating and a clubhouse with a kitchen, office and a meeting room. The clubhouse provides changing rooms with showers.

### **5.1.3 Torridge District Council - Sport and Leisure**

We met with James Jarroudi who is the Health and Recreation Officer for Torridge District Council and has overall responsibility for a wide brief including health and wellbeing, sports, active recreation, parks and play. James highlighted the importance of their Cultural Strategy, The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facility Strategy and the Play Strategy. The current study should take these documents into account.

The main focus of our discussions was around sports provision in the District.

### **Built Facilities**

- There are pools at Torrington, Holsworthy Leisure Centre and Northam (Torridge Pool) of which the latter two have a gym on site with Torrington's based off site at the community college. They are all 4 lane 25m managed by 1610. The Torrington and Holsworthy pools have been refurbished recently and Torridge Pool is currently subject to elements of refurbishment focused on a new studio for exercise classes and its gym.
- Sports Halls - Torrington has a public sports hall on a school site (ATP also). Holsworthy Leisure Centre has a sports hall.
- In addition many schools have sports halls with variable degrees of community use e.g. Bideford and Shebbear (public school) Colleges.
- There is widespread provision of village halls across the District (variable quality). Many are good and well used for various sports.
- Broadly speaking it seems that other than for squash the supply of "built" facilities is sufficient to meet demand; and quality and access are reasonable. The main access issue is travel to the major facilities from the rural areas (public transport is poor from many areas)
- Squash: there are no public squash facilities in Torridge. There may be courts at private hotel near Holsworthy? Some demand has been expressed for squash locally and the new

tennis centre planned for Bideford may be a suitable location. The Council have an inflatable mobile squash court that can be erected and dismantled quickly and are planning a programme of squash taster sessions.

## **2010 Playing Fields Study - General Update**

Broadly speaking James advised that there had been little significant change in the supply of and demand for playing pitches in Torridge district since the studies were completed in 2010. The most significant development had been the provision of new community use facilities at Bideford College. This includes an indoor sports hall with retractable seating that can also be a venue for theatre etc; an artificial turf pitch; grass pitches and outdoor tennis and netball courts. Some concern has been raised by local clubs about the costs for hire of community use facilities.

The overall position is broadly the same as it was in 2010 i.e. that there appear to be insufficient provision of pitches to meet demand, particularly for football (senior and junior). There is a general need for more and better quality pitches. Due to a lack of local pitches some teams are travelling to North Devon, which is less convenient for them, prohibitive for some, and puts extra pressure on those pitches.

### **Priorities for new improved provision**

In terms of demand exceeding supply the most pressing need in Torridge is probably for additional good quality and accessible grass pitches, mainly for football use. The local authority would welcome taking on management responsibility for such to ensure a decent level of maintenance and equitable use.

## **Torridge Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy (2012)**

Some key findings from the strategy are noted below:

### **Indoor facilities**

Key needs identified through the assessment of sport and recreation facilities at the time were to:

- Develop/replace ageing sport and recreation facilities.
- Improve access to/increase community use of secondary school provision.
- Increase capacity of District Council sport and recreation facilities operating at (or near) capacity, particularly in areas where demand is likely to increase.
- Improve the quality of existing facilities.

It was noted that the condition of existing facilities could be improved by:

- Improving transport and access to the facilities".
- Improving physical access to the facilities' for disabled people
- Upgrading areas around and/or within buildings.
- Improving access to other facilities that are/could be used for indoor sport and recreation.
- Ensuring good access to court time (particularly in activity halls) for generic sports development and /or club-based or led development activity.
- Optimising developer contributions

## Outdoor sports facilities

The assessment considered supply and demand issues for playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities in the District of Torridge. It was based on quantitative and qualitative information from the Devon Playing Fields Strategy 2010, plus bespoke research (e.g., desk research, consultation, site visits).

The strategy identified local need and highlighted the predominant issues for playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities in the District as:

- Pitches located in open spaces are used for a variety of purposes, some of which are not entirely consistent with the needs of grass pitch sport.
- The quality of provision is variable and grass pitches can be used more than they are able to sustain.
- Short term leases and rental arrangements limit clubs' ability to improve facilities.
- As a result of the current recession, club membership is reported to have changed. This could impact on club sustainability and capacity for effective management and maintenance.
- There is a perception that the number of pitches in Torridge has not changed significantly (if at all) in more than a decade.
- The majority of playing pitch sites in Torridge are single pitch sites.
- There are no large multi-pitch sites in Torridge<sup>7</sup>.
- The majority of sites included in the assessment of youth facilities have one piece of youth equipment.

## 5.2 Pitch Sports and Tennis

### 5.2.1 Football

#### A) The National Governing Body - Devon County Football Association

The following information was received from the Devon County Football Association via the County Development Manager Lee Rider.

#### *General*

- Every facility is important to retain for football in North Devon and Torridge to meet the current demand, there is little room for growth in the two local authority areas.
- The main sites are the multi pitch sites such as: Tews lane (Barnstaple Youth) - Lobb Sports Field (Braunton Youth) - Barnstaple and Pilton Cricket club (SAS) - Sandymere (Bideford Blues and Appledore Youth) - Upcott Field (Holsworthy) - Donnacroft (Torridgeside Youth)
- All sites with 3G Football Turf Pitches (FTPs) are key sites: South Molton - Braunton - Bideford Blues - Torrington and the one soon to be installed at Ilfracombe. Bideford College would be a really useful addition particularly for weekend use, but it is currently priced out of the market for local clubs.

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<sup>7</sup> This is no longer accurate given the recent development of facilities at Bideford College

## ***Trends and Demand***

Lee provided the most recent annual Football Participation Report documents for North Devon and Torridge which he suggested would be useful to feed into the study at an appropriate point. He noted that the Devon FA had not yet analysed the data for the current season as the leagues only just started in September - the new football participation report will be available by February 2014.

Some key points Lee highlighted are noted below:

- Major trends are reduction in Adult Sunday 11v11 football, slight drop in Adult Saturday 11v11 football.
- Devon FA have strong small sided football team numbers and new data is due to become available in November 2013.
- Over recent years the Devon FA have seen a growth in youth football but the FA nationally have recently implemented a Youth Football review and have brought in smaller size pitches and goals. Lee offered to help the Councils to determine the pitch make up in their respective areas and to determine what the main priorities are.
- A quick analysis shows that both youth and adult formats of the game have seen a slight drop from last season.
- Girls football has reduced over recent years - all football was played at central venues once a month and once some key volunteers left clubs, the girls provision stopped. Work is underway to build this back up. Disability football is growing; this again is played at Central venues usually out of area at Cullompton due to the location of other clubs in the county. The rural nature of North Devon makes this area of football hard to provide for due to the demands placed on carers.

## ***Issues***

- In general terms Bideford and Ilfracombe are 2 areas of major concern in relation to a shortage of pitches to meet demand.
- More specific issues are probably best derived from the club responses due to the number of clubs and sites across the 2 local authority areas.

## ***Potential Improvements***

- Recommended FA full size 3G FTP: Bideford College is the only full size 3G FTP but this does not meet the minimum FA dimensions for adult football. The best location for this kind of facility would be in the Barnstaple area.
- Additional grass pitch provision especially in the Bideford and Ilfracombe areas.
- An increase in and improvements to multi pitch facilities in areas where provision levels are high and growing such as Bideford (desperate need), Barnstaple, Torrington and Braunton.
- A particularly interesting opportunity will be at Ilfracombe; grass pitch improvements (Killacleave) will be needed to accommodate the planned growth in provision once the new ½ 3G is built at the school

### **Good Practice**

Braunton (grass pitch and training provision for club, ½ size 3G on school site); Tews Lane (Grass pitch and changing provision for club run by Parish Council); and Bideford (1/2 size 3G managed by club) are three examples of really good practice.

### **Additional Comments**

As football is such a popular sport, I am not aware of all the issues that clubs may highlight through the questionnaire. Individual clubs themselves may well suggest other areas for improvement and development.

### **B) League Secretaries**

Individual responses were received from Dai Carpenter the secretary for the Devon Ability Counts League and Peter Evans for the West Country Cleaning North Devon Youth League.

#### **Devon Ability Counts League**

##### **General**

- County-wide competition with 15 clubs fielding 35 football teams - a mixture of 7v7 and 5v5 formats.
- Barnstaple FC are the only current participating club, with 3 men's and 2 youth disability football teams.
- Currently the league uses only South Molton Community College. Previously fixtures have taken place at Bideford Blues/Sandymere, and in future a fixture could potentially take place at Tews Lane.

##### **Trends and Demand**

Demand is increasing - over the next 3 years it is planned to create additional clubs in Bideford, Torrington, and potentially Chulmleigh.

##### **Issues**

No specific issues to raise - accessibility at several venues is good, We are County-wide league with only minimal current use of facilities in North Devon.

#### **West Country Cleaning North Devon Youth League**

##### **General**

- The League runs league football under 11 - 16 inclusive, plus under 18 plus under 8,9,10 on a non competitive basis. It has around 115 teams participating (more if you count the reserve team friendly matches that also take place).
- Sandymere, Northam, Tews Lane in Barnstaple, Lobb Field in Braunton are the most used because they have the greatest capacity but there are many more in the area.

##### **Trends and Demand**

- Football continues to be popular, and the league is growing, but there are not enough senior pitches in the area.
- Demand is increasing. It has been stable in the last 3 years but bigger this year due to another League - Kingsley Youth - folding.

### ***Issues***

- Our ethnic diversity is narrow but that reflects the local population.
- Most pitches are considerably overused due to an acute shortage of accessible local pitches.
- Most clubs seem to accommodate training although there could be more Astros available and indoor facilities.

### ***Potential Improvements***

- The area would benefit from a larger astro which could then accommodate senior games for matches.
- Ilfracombe area needs an astro.
- Schools like Bideford College could make their facilities more accessible/affordable
- More senior pitches across North Devon at affordable prices and are accessible. (Bideford College have pitches but charges are high and it is not easy to book them. For adult games their changing rooms need a separate referee room otherwise the local adult league will not allow teams to play there).

### ***Good Practice***

- Braunton and Bideford Blues (both have won Devon Club of Year awards recently) have the biggest memberships and are well run.
- SAS do well sometimes under difficult circumstances e.g. 'loss of pitch 2 years ago.
- Ilfracombe and South Molton are expanding, as are Bideford AFC Youth (who won the Devon Club of Year award this year).
- Any village team that keeps going in the present climate is noteworthy - Woolfardiswothy, Chulmleigh, North Molton. Fremington won the area's fair play award.

### ***Additional Comments***

- 'Health and Safety' regulations and insurance can be a barrier to access to football. The amount of time on form filling and expense involved to get insurance for a group of mates who want to hire a facility for a kickabout can put some off (as well as increasing paperwork for club and all involved).
- Surveys like this have been undertaken for several years now, but I see little change. In fact, the amount of playing field space has diminished rather than increased and this trend continues.

## **C) North Devon and Torridge District Council - Sports and Leisure**

### ***North Devon Council***

Richard Slaney noted the overall position in a number of towns and villages as noted below:

## **Ilfracombe**

- 3x f/s pitches plus one junior. No changing rooms. Also a pitch at Killacleave with poor changing.
- Shortage of grass pitches and poor drainage on many - meaning many cancellations.
- New AGP will help when it is opened in November.
- Ilfracombe Town FC - strong club.
- Aspirations are to improve pitch quality and for new pitches e.g. supported by S106 in relation to development plans for Southern extension.

## **South Molton**

- 1 pitch and the local club wish to relocate and develop additional pitch/es. No junior team. Recently refurbished home changing but away changing still poor.

## **Braunton**

- Good central location and decent facilities - probably pulls in players from wide catchment including Barnstaple and Ilfracombe.
- Has 3G pitch - at capacity.
- Very strong club - runs 18 teams in total. Manages its own pitches - parish council owned. 3 pitches (2 adult, one junior) plus a village centre pitch (poor changing).
- More pitches needed but best strategy would be to develop pitches in Ilfracombe and Barnstaple and support club development in the towns (avoid travel etc.).

## **Barnstaple**

- Barnstaple Town FC - 1 men's team - high standard - own ground leased from the District Council.
- Barnstaple FC - community club 0 2 x mens; 1 x womens; 6/7 juniors. 2 pitches. Play at Roundswell, Fremington - parish council site leased from the District Council.
- NDC have three pitches at Rock Park and two pitches at Tarka Tennis Centre.
- Insufficient pitches and pitches are poorly drained. No drainage at all at Rock Park pitches.
- Plan to develop full size 3G pitch at the Tarka centre (supported by DFA).

## **Bratton Fleming**

- Football and Cricket pitches - good club house and changing; sports hall also. Facilities recent and in good condition.

## **North Devon Leisure and Health Strategy (2008)**

The 2008 Study refers to an Open Spaces Study, produced for the District Council in 2001. At that time recommendations for new provision were made for the District including:

- the development of a mini soccer centre;
- the need for an ongoing review of the provision of pitches for junior football;
- at least one additional adult grass football pitch to serve teams in Barnstaple (although a new, full-size, synthetic turf pitch replacing two grass pitches on the Seven Brethren Bank would increase the capacity for football in Barnstaple);

- two additional football pitches in Braunton and Swimbridge;
- upgrading adult and junior pitches at Marlborough Park;
- the provision of playing pitches as necessary to keep pace with development in Roundswell; and
- one football pitch to meet North Devon League Premier Division requirements (fenced off and dug-outs).

Consultation with the County Development Officer at the Devon Football Association in 2008 suggested that improvements to the quality of pitches are important in addition to improving the quantity. Key development priorities at the time were highlighted as follows:

- improvements to the quality of pitches and changing accommodation at Ilfracombe College;
- additional pitches at Combe Martin Football Club to serve its eight teams.

### **Torridge District Council**

James Jarroudi noted that football is the main pitch sport locally and there are a number of key club, including:

- Bideford FC - play on King George 5th playing field which is maintained by the District Council. They also have a number of junior teams. The first team is semi-professional and the use of the pitch is restricted to ensure a decent quality is maintained.
- Torrington FC - field a number of teams including juniors.
- Bideford Blues and Appledore FC - field a range of junior teams and have a good set up as regards sports development, links with schools etc.

### **Quantity**

Overall demand exceeds supply for both adult and junior pitches and provision across the parishes is very varied. James noted that in his view a number of opportunities had been missed over recent years to develop new grass pitches including a proposed development by Redrow homes at Moreton Park, where a MUGA had been proposed which would duplicate provision at the nearby College. Sport England also referred to this case.

### **Access**

One of the key access issues (particularly for young people) due to the rural nature of Torridge is transport. The main clubs catering for children and young people are in the towns and to access coaching etc. young people out of town need to travel by car. Public transport is rarely available.

### **Demand**

Demand is probably about the same as it was when the 2010 Playing Pitch Study was completed (adult and junior).

### **D) Club responses**

Direct responses were received from 23 local football clubs. Some general points from their responses are provided below:

- 18 of the clubs reported that they had enough pitches to accommodate pitches, but 5 said they did not. However 15 of the clubs said there were not enough pitches available for training with only 8 saying there were enough.

- 13 clubs were happy about the quality of their main pitch rating it as good or excellent and an additional 7 rated theirs as average. 3 clubs reported the pitch as poor.
- 3 clubs were not happy about the quality of changing facilities and one club reported that there were no changing/showering facilities at all on site (Marlboro FC who play at Brimlands playing field).
- 13 clubs reported fielding at least the same number of teams as last season, with 8 reporting an increase. Only 2 confirmed fielding less teams.
- 16 clubs had plans to increase their membership and 11 intended to field more teams in the future. 9 clubs were planning to expand facilities and 11 to refurbish (5 of these hoping to do both).
- The main barriers to club development were a shortage of grass pitches; a shortage of AGPs for matches and training (as well as a lack of indoor facilities for training); the cost of hiring pitches and a lack of external funding for improvements.

The detail of the club responses can be found in the full Excel Consultation Spreadsheet and a summary is also available in an appendix (Sports Clubs consultation profile).

We also gave clubs an open opportunity to provide additional comments as noted below:

Club	Other Comments
Barnstaple Youth FC	Have aspirations for catering facilities / building extension
Bideford Blues & Appledore Junior	Current planning limits use to sports activities. If the ground (clubhouse included) could be hired for other activities it would help provide a revenue stream and would further develop community links. There is a real need in the area for more full sized senior pitches as ours is currently overused with one Saturday adult team using ours and five of our own junior teams that play 11 v 11.
Bideford Ladies FC	We are currently starting up a girls youth side and having a good interest but using ATP at the moment at the college. With the high demand of teams on the main pitch it's hard to use the pitch, whilst trying to maintain the pitch too, as not to ruin it.
Braunton FC	Plan to move up to next grass roots level, have applied to Peninsula league 2014/15
Haxton Rangers FC	We are a new team using existing facilities.
Holsworthy Youth FC	The club is in a predicament - We need additional pitches and facilities plus improvements to existing also
Pilton Academicals FC	Becoming a Chartered Club. There seems to be a lack of course's to help develop clubs in the area; you have to travel to Exeter or even as far as Plymouth, which comes down to self expense. This includes the new first aid course that has to be taken for football
South Molton FC	Our problem at South Molton is we are hopefully moving to another ground with 1st class facilities within 3 years (Govier Park) but at the moment as facilities are minimal at our ground, we are losing players to better facility Clubs
Witheridge FC	We would like to increase youth and lady teams but don't think pitch will take increased use

## E) Summary

- In adult football, major trends are a reduction in Sunday 11v11 football and a slight drop in Saturday 11v11 football.
- Over recent years the study area has seen a growth in children's and youth football and there is a general shortage of junior and mini-soccer pitches.

- The implementation of The FA Youth Development Review will see the mandatory introduction of 9 v 9 football, at U11 and U12 in 2013/14, more pitches and goalposts, of the required sizes, will need to be provided to enable young players to participate.
- In general terms Bideford and Ilfracombe are 2 areas of major concern in relation to a shortage of pitches to meet demand, though many other towns and parishes also indicate an overall shortage.
- Recommended FA full size 3G FTP: Bideford College is the only full size 3G FTP but this does not meet the minimum FA dimensions for adult football. The FA advises that the best location for this kind of facility would be in the Barnstaple area.
- Overall the quality of pitches is very variable with some being very poor e.g. drainage issues; and various sites suffer from poor quality changing facilities. Many parish councils highlight these issues also.
- There is potential to develop girls' and women's participation in football - this has been strong in the study area but is quite low currently due to the loss of key volunteers. Work is underway to build this back up.
- Disability football is well-established and growing. The rural nature of North Devon makes this aspect of football hard to provide for due to the demands placed on carers.
- The main barriers to club development are a shortage of grass pitches; a shortage of AGPs for matches and training (as well as a lack of indoor facilities for training); the cost of hiring pitches and a lack of external funding for improvements.

## **5.2.2 Cricket**

### **A) The National Governing Body - English Cricket Board**

We did not receive a response from the Devon Cricket Board though they were reminded on a number of occasions by both email and telephone.

### **B) North Devon and Torridge District Councils**

#### **North Devon**

Richard Slaney noted the overall position in a number of towns and villages as noted below:

- Good range of strong clubs across the District clubs and other than Ilfracombe probably enough provision to meet demand.
- Ilfracombe: Club play at Killacleave. Need for improved changing facilities. Another wicket (artificial) at Rugby site but at end of its life.
- South Molton: No cricket club but good clubs in nearby villages e.g. North Molton and Filleigh. Potential shortfall of provision in relation to demand.
- Barnstaple: Active self contained cricket club - sufficient to meet demand.
- Bratton Fleming: Cricket pitches - good club house and changing; sports hall also. Facilities recent and in good condition.
- Braunton and Instow are also strong clubs.

#### **North Devon Leisure and Health Strategy (2008)**

The strategy noted that a previous open space study (2001) recommended that new pitches are required in Swimbridge and Combe Martin. The Council was also unable to consult with the

England Cricket Board (ECB) in 2008 to confirm this view and to gain more information about the specific development needs of these areas and elsewhere in the District. However, the ECB had published its facility development priorities at a District level. The vision for the development of District level cricket at the time was:

- to ensure a network of District Development Centres is established to serve the facility requirements of District development squad coaching and competition programmes.
- Facility needs for the development of District level cricket are identified as:
  - regular access to grass match and practice playing surfaces;
  - use of good quality pitch preparation and maintenance equipment;
  - access to an indoor sports hall suitable for indoor cricket training (eg with nets);
  - access to covers, sight screens and a scoreboard; and
  - access to ECB minimum standard changing and social facilities.

Of these facility needs, the ECB at the time was prioritising investment towards the improvement of access to good quality (well-maintained) grass cricket pitches and suitable indoor sports hall facilities.

On the development side, in 2008 the ECB, through its Developing Partnerships Programme, had undergone an intensive two-year planning process to identify 1,453 Focus Clubs nationwide. A Focus Club is one that has been identified for a clear strategic reason, and one that is committed to long-term junior development. Each Focus Club will be expected to do various things by the ECB in return for ECB resources (funding and other guidance). These included the following:

- achieve Clubmark accreditation;
- work with their District Development Group, to ensure integrated community links;
- produce a long-term development plan - to increase capacity and improve quality;
- link with local school and community networks; and
- commit to monitoring and evaluation, demonstrating the impact made locally.

The Clubmark scheme was recommending that all cricket clubs should strive to achieve Clubmark status as one way of working towards the Focus Club status. Clubs had to demonstrate they have achieved targets covering:

- workforce development;
- player development;
- facility development; and
- competitions development.

## **Torridge**

James Jarroudi noted that most of the cricket provision in Torridge is via small clubs who look after their own facilities. The District Council provide one grass wicket and an artificial wicket at Victoria Park, Bideford. This has a pavilion (changing facilities but no social area). The clubs are varied in relation to junior development and school links etc. Bideford, Littleham and Westward Ho! Cricket Club are an example of a club with a wide range of teams, good school links, development programme etc.

### **Quantity**

There appears to be a need for more wickets in Bideford. The cricket pitch at Victoria Park is used to host 4 teams but could not accommodate this level of play. 3 teams have relocated to

sites in North Devon. The ground also overlaps with a rugby pitch which can be an issue given damage caused through rugby use. It is also impacted upon by a Public Right of Way.

### Quality

This is variable across the District but as noted above it is difficult to maintain the quality of the wickets and ground at Victoria park to a level that could accommodate local demand.

### Demand

Demand appears stable and not noticeably different from 2010; other than for Bideford. James is not aware of any demand for additional wickets and grounds other than as noted above.

## C) Club responses

Direct responses were received from four cricket clubs: Bideford Littleham & Westward Ho! Bishops Nympton, Chulmleigh and Mid Devon and North Devon.

- Two clubs reported having enough pitches to meet fixture demands but two (Bideford Littleham & Westward Ho! and North Devon) reported an insufficiency of pitches. All four clubs reported that they had sufficient pitches for training purposes.
- Bideford Littleham & Westward Ho! and North Devon reported that pitch quality was excellent. Bishops Nympton and Chulmleigh said that their pitches were no better than average.
- Bishops Nympton rated their pavilion/changing facilities as below average. Bideford Littleham & Westward Ho! and North Devon reported that their facilities were good and Chulmleigh and Mid Devon reported theirs as "average".
- Three clubs reported that they were fielding the same number of teams as the last season and one club (North Devon) fielded more.
- All the clubs other than Bishops Nympton reported plans to increase members and Chulmleigh intended to field more teams.
- All the clubs had plans to expand (Bideford Littleham & Westward Ho!) and/or refurbish facilities.
- The most common barriers to club development were the cost of insurance, restrictions on development from planning or other legislation, a shortage of volunteers and problems in travelling to compete and train.

The detail of their responses can be found in the full Excel Consultation Spreadsheet and a summary is also available in the appendices (Sports Clubs Consultation Profile).

We also gave the clubs an open opportunity to provide additional comments as noted below:

Club	Comments
Bideford Littleham & Westward Ho!	Major issue of cricket balls leaving the ground and causing damage to property and injury. The club needs to increase the height of the current netting and add additional safety nets on other sides of the ground.
Chulmleigh and Mid Devon	We want to grow but the site places limitations in terms of size and relationship with our neighbours

## E) Summary

- Demand appears to be stable/increasing slightly. Opportunities to play cricket are also increasing due to a good club structure and some useful school links.

- There are a number of strong well established and successful clubs across the study area in both the towns and villages. Most of the cricket provision is supplied via small clubs who look after their own facilities.
- Many of the clubs have thriving junior sections.
- In general, other than at Ilfracombe and Bideford, the supply of cricket grounds/pitches appears to be sufficient to meet demand.
- Quality is an issue at various grounds (in particular pavilions and changing facilities).
- The most common barriers to club development are the cost of insurance, restrictions on development from planning or other legislation, a shortage of volunteers and problems in travelling to compete and train.

### **5.2.3 Rugby Union**

#### **A) The National Governing Body - The Devon Rugby Football Union.**

The following information and feedback was received from the Devon RFU via the Rugby Development Officer, Jason Luff.

#### **General**

Rugby is a historically important sport to the communities of Northern Devon and as such there is a strong rugby presence here. There are 5 rugby clubs in North Devon and Torridge. The three clubs with senior and junior sections are:

- Barnstaple (3 adult teams, 11 junior, 2 girls teams)
- Bideford (3 male and 1 female adult teams, 11 junior)
- South Molton (3 males, 8 junior teams)

These clubs are also RFU Accredited

- Torrington has two adult males teams and 3 junior teams.
- Ilfracombe is a single male club with aspirations to start a junior section.

All the clubs senior sides play in the Devon and South West leagues. The 2nd teams are in the Devon Merit Tables and 3rd/vets teams all play regular friendlies. The juniors play cup competitions and friendlies and also play region and county training and fixtures.

Grass Pitches for training and matches, incorporating training floodlights:

- Barnstaple RFC - Pottington Road
- Bideford RFC - Kind Georges Field
- Ilfracombe RFC
- Torrington RFC
- South Molton RFC

#### **Trends and Demand**

- The RFU has two staff solely dedicated to the rugby clubs, schools and colleges of North Devon. The RFU has seen a massive growth in the number people participating in rugby in the past 12 months. There have been two new girls sections starting: Barnstaple U13 and U15 age groups and Bideford U18 and Ladies.

- The North Devon Barbarians (Male U18) were created to keep more players in the game post 16, the drop off from rugby in North Devon traditionally has been a big one (players who work, farms etc). The result of this was that 50 players were kept in the game and have gone on to join their clubs senior sections.
- The RFU has also been working with the schools to ensure that schools play a suitable number of rugby competitions.
- The last 12 months has also seen an increase in the number of coaches being qualified, this will have an impact on player recruitment and retention as it will ensure the players have the best possible rugby experience.
- 2015 is when the Rugby World Cup is in England with Exeter acting as a host city with approximately 6 games being played there. This is a huge opportunity for the clubs of North Devon as the profile of rugby will be boosted significantly and as a result we hope that the clubs memberships will spike and we will have more people playing the game.
- Demand is increasing vastly, especially with the growth in the female game. Demand is out growing clubs capacity.

## **Issues**

- Due to the size of the clubs and the number of players at each, Barnstaple and Bideford RFC struggle especially. This causes a high usage and the facilities can't cope.
- Barnstaple has 409 players and 3 pitches, 2 training pitches and 1 set of training lights.
- Bideford has 381 players, 2 pitches and match lights.
- South Molton also have pitch issues, however they are in advanced talks to secure extra land to enable their growing membership to train and play.
- Due to the weather and amount of usage a lot of games were being cancelled last season. This led to a loss of players in the game.
- Due to the limited pitch space and floodlighting, a high number of training sessions were cancelled to preserve the ground under floodlights, which doubled up as a playing surface.
- The main issue that is stifling Barnstaple and Bideford RUFs progression is the availability of pitches to train and play. As North Devon's biggest clubs who are continuing grow, this is a real issue
- Bideford RFC has recently undergone a significant changing room and clubhouse facility development.
- Barnstaple RFC has issues with its changing rooms which are prone to leaking which is causing instability to their grandstand. They also have ambitions to update their clubhouse to make it more appealing to guests/sponsors.

## **Potential improvements**

- Bideford RFC have secured a plot of land near to the main club, this would be a great training facility if a pitch could be laid (grass or 3G) and floodlit.
- Barnstaple have a set of training lights on one side of a pitch which would need updating and putting up the other side which would increase the opportunities to train.
- Barnstaple training pitch, improved drainage.
- Bideford RFC, fence put around the training pitch as its prone to dog foul being left on there.

## **Good Practice**

South Molton Community College worked in partnership with the FA and created a 3G pitch which the local club senior and junior section can use.

## **Devon RFU - Club representative - North Devon and Torridge**

We also met with David Butt who is a local clubs representative on the Devon RFU committee and has a good understanding of the overall position in North Devon and Torridge.

David highlighted that in general there was a shortfall of pitch provision across North Devon and Torridge and that in addition pitch quality was an issue at some sites. Rugby Union is very strong in the study area with all the 5 clubs being well organised having active and committed volunteers. All the clubs have junior sections to varying degrees with Barnstaple and Bideford being particularly active (these two clubs also provide for girls and women's rugby).

There are also a number of clubs in adjacent local authority areas and a certain amount of crossover in relation to players i.e. players based in North Devon and Torridge playing for clubs outside the Districts and vice-versa. Clubs in adjacent areas include Bude in Cornwall, Crediton, Tiverton, Okehampton and North Taunton (Somerset).

Demand had risen over the last five years and was still growing. It is likely that the Rugby World Cup in 2015 would further encourage growth. Girls and women's rugby was also growing and the women's world cup next year would also help build the level of participation.

David summarised a number of issues club by club as summarised below:

### ***Barnstaple RUFC***

- Good community club - have recently secured a Club Accreditation Award from the RFU (only 2nd club in Devon to achieve this status). Full range of teams including juniors of all age ranges.
- Ground managed by the club on a long lease from the District Council. It has 3 grass pitches - main pitch and two additional; a good club house with changing rooms and a social area/bar; and two stands for spectators. It also has a floodlit area for training.
- In addition it uses a number of pitches (pitch quality not good) on an adjacent site owned by the County Council. Use of these pitches is not secure though as they are only provided on a 3 year renewable lease because the site has been identified for future use as a potential park and ride facility. This site also provides a junior football pitch.
- The club is very keen to secure long-term secured use of this site and would like the site re-allocated in planning terms as land for sports pitches.
- Even with access to these additional pitches the club is short of pitches to match demand. They probably need 1 more full size pitch plus a junior/training pitch.
- The club would like to have access to an all weather pitch. There is insufficient capacity for them to use the Park School all weather pitch.

### ***Ilfracombe RUFC***

- Strong well managed and solvent club with 2 adult and a junior team. Their ground is leased from the District Council and they have one pitch. The clubhouse is of poor quality.
- The club is growing and need a second pitch, particularly to accommodate growing demand from juniors.
- The club have completed plans for a new club house and junior pitch for which they have the support, in principle, of the District Council.

- The land outlined for the clubhouse is near the existing rugby pitch at Brimlands Playing Fields. The club has also requested that a small piece of open space land, next to the swimming pool, be leased to the club to provide an additional junior pitch.
- The new clubhouse would provide changing rooms, a bar and conference facilities for the public and could provide a sports "hub" for the wider community.
- There is a football pitch adjacent to the current pitch that could be used for rugby but this would lead to a loss of the pitch for football but there also seems to be a shortage of football pitches in the area.
- Options for new level pitches in Ilfracombe are limited due to steep terrain.

### ***South Molton RUFC***

- South Molton is a smaller club than Barnstaple and Bideford but are also well managed and run. They field 2 adult teams and some junior teams, and have good links with the local College where there is a half-size ATP the club use for training.
- They own their main ground - 1 pitch, a club house with changing and social area, and decent car parking. The main pitch is of low quality with poor drainage. The site is also on the small size to accommodate a full size pitch.
- They have a second pitch at Unicorn Park next to the river. This pitch often gets flooded and becomes unplayable. It is also a bit of a walk from the main club house and changing facilities so far from ideal.
- The club would like to sell their ground etc, and re-locate to one site where all their needs can be accommodated. One site is near to the College but there may be other suitable sites. The club understand that there may be in the order of £100k available from S106 funds to support such a project.

### ***Bideford RUFC***

- A major club for the area offering a full range of adult and junior teams - well organised and forward looking. They also provide girls and women's rugby. The club own their main pitch and club house and have recently refurbished their changing facilities.
- Their main pitch is heavily used and as a result cannot adequately accommodate the number of games required. They also use a rented parks pitch nearby mainly for training.
- The club need to secure the long-term use of a second decent quality pitch for sole use plus, ideally, a pitch for training. Good access to an all weather pitch is an option - could be shared use. The club can't afford to book the ATP at Bideford College which otherwise would provide such. They believe that the cost for hire of ATP at the college is also prohibitive for local football clubs.
- The club suggest that there may be space available in Victoria Park for an additional pitch<sup>8</sup>.

### ***Torrington RUFC***

- This is one of the areas smaller and more recent clubs which nevertheless is active and well run. It fields adult and some junior teams.
- It has one main pitch with a club house and access to a second on the opposite side of the road from the main site (poor quality). The club lease their site from the Town Council.
- They also train on occasion at Torrington School.
- The club train and play on their main pitch which therefore suffers with quality issues through overuse. Improving pitch quality would be a priority here.

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<sup>8</sup> The District Council Leisure Officer has indicated that this is not in fact the case.

## **B) North Devon and Torrington District Councils**

### **North Devon**

Richard Slaney noted the overall position in a number of towns and villages as noted below:

#### ***Ilfracombe***

- 1 club (2 men's teams) and developing juniors. Club house but old and in poor condition. 1 pitch
- Aspiration for new clubhouse and plans drawn up (£1m project). District Council own site and lease to RC. Also one football pitch on site - no changing (as noted above in Football section).

#### ***South Molton***

- Strong club with facilities over 3 sites - main pitch, second pitch (poor location) and clubhouse.
- Aspiration to relocate near Community College (this would be supported by the Council - potentially £100k available).
- There is a half size 3G pitch at College also.

#### ***Barnstaple***

- Successful and active club - need more pitches.
- 3 adult and 2 junior pitches (the latter leased from County Council on an annual basis - no security).
- Continuation of County Council pitches dependent upon planning issues - e.g. currently on land allocated for a park and ride scheme.

### **Torrington**

There are two clubs in the District - Bideford and Torrington RUFs. Both are good multi teams clubs.

- Bideford RFC - have one main pitch in their ground which they manage themselves (taken over from the Council). It has been refurbished recently and is in good condition. They have access to a second pitch (off-site) adjacent to their ground.
- Torrington - field a range of teams and manage their own facilities which are Parish Council owned. In the past the club have considered relocation but James is not sure whether this remains an aspiration.

### **Demand**

- Appears to be growing - though currently there appears to be just enough pitches to meet demand, particularly if the quality of pitches were improved.

### **The Leisure and Health Strategy (2008) - Rugby**

The previous open space study recommended that Ilfracombe be identified as a priority area for new provision to serve the teams in this area.

Consultation in 2008 with the County Development Officer (CDO) for the Rugby Football Union (RFU) supported this view. There was a shortage of small sized junior pitches at the Ilfracombe Rugby Club site which was restricting the development of the junior teams.

The CDO stated that the profile of rugby was high across the District, particularly in Barnstaple. Barnstaple Rugby Club is a very successful club but would benefit from additional floodlights to allow more balanced use of their training pitches.

South Molton Rugby Club was noted as a strong developing club in the District with a strategy in place to recruit junior team players. The issue the club had at the time was the quality of its pitches that were not up to RFU standards.

Overall the RFU highlighted the importance of improving the quality of rugby pitches across the District and providing more floodlit, synthetic training areas with programmed time for rugby clubs.

### C) Club Responses

Direct responses were received from 3 of the 5 local clubs: Barnstaple, Bideford and Ilfracombe. Some general points from their responses are provided below:

- Two of the clubs reported that they currently had enough pitches to accommodate pitches, but Bideford said they did not. All the clubs said there were not enough pitches available for training.
- Barnstaple and Bideford were happy about the quality of their main pitch but Ilfracombe noted theirs as being "below average".
- Bideford reported that their club house and changing facilities were good but Ilfracombe noted theirs were poor and Barnstaple as "below average".
- Barnstaple and Ilfracombe reported fielding the same number of teams as last season and Bideford fielded more teams.
- All three clubs had plans to increase both their membership and the number of teams playing. All the clubs were planning to expand facilities. In addition Barnstaple wished to refurbish their facilities and Ilfracombe noted that they were considering relocation.
- The most common barriers to club development were a shortage of pitches (junior in particular) and a shortage of AGPs (primarily for training). Other shared issues were a lack of indoor training facilities, restrictions on development from planning or other legislation and a shortage of external funding.

The detail of the club responses can be found in the full Excel Consultation Spreadsheet and a summary is also available in an appendix (Sports Clubs consultation profile).

We also gave the clubs an open opportunity to provide additional comments as noted below:

Club	Comments
Barnstaple RFC	A large area of our site owned by the Devon County Council accommodating 1 mini, 1 junior and 1 main pitch could be developed further if we were given a longer lease. The present licence is renewed on a 3 yearly basis only and discourages investment and is a barrier to grant applications. Would like to improve playing and spectator facilities.
Ilfracombe RFC	We are hoping to build a new club house and would love to see Brimlands as a sporting hub for our community hosting rugby, football & cricket, which has lacked investment in sporting facilities for many, many years.

## D) Summary

- Rugby is a historically important sport to the communities of North Devon/Torridge and as such there is a strong rugby presence here. There are 5 rugby clubs in the study area.
- The RFU report having seen "a massive growth" in the number people participating in rugby in the past 12 months. There have been two new girls sections starting: Barnstaple U13 and U15 age groups and Bideford U18 and Ladies. Further growth in demand is anticipated and demand is outgrowing clubs capacity.
- The RFU identify Barnstaple and Bideford as being in particular need of additional pitches.
- Many of the individual clubs all have plans to improve the quality of their pitches and associated facilities.
- The most common barriers to club development are a shortage of pitches (junior in particular) and a shortage of AGPs (primarily for training). Other common issues highlighted through the survey were a lack of indoor training facilities, restrictions on development from planning or other legislation and a shortage of external funding.

### 5.2.4 Hockey

#### A) The National Governing Body - Hockey England

The following information and feedback was received from the England Hockey via the local authority Relationship Manager.

##### General

There are currently two EHB affiliated hockey clubs in the North Devon area. There is currently no community hockey club based in the Torridge area. In the main, players from this district travel to Barnstaple, Bude or Okehampton to participate in club hockey.

##### *North Devon Men's Hockey Club*

- EHB affiliation data: 2012/13 35 members (seniors - 26); 2011/12 37 members; 2010/11 48 members.
- Affiliation status is shrinking (-5.5%).
- Teams: 2 senior teams (Men's 1st - Southern Division 1 and Men's 2nd - South East Division 2). There is a limited junior membership with 9 members, but no junior teams.
- Facility usage: 100% usage at The Park Community School, Barnstaple; 1 - 5 hours per week (training & matches). The pitch is in good condition (refurbished 2007).

##### *Taw Valley Ladies Hockey Club*

- EHB affiliation data: 2012/13 - 86 members (seniors - 28); 2011/12 - 91 members; 2010/11 - 79 members.
- Affiliation status is shrinking (-5.5%).
- Teams: 4 senior teams (Ladies 1st - Central Division; Ladies 2nd - Sedgemoor 1. There is a strong junior membership with 56 members: junior teams (U16) 1 male and 1 female.
- Facility usage: 100% usage at The Park Community School, Barnstaple - 6 - 10 hours per week (training and matches). Pitch is in good condition (refurbished 2007).

England Hockey note from the statistics above there appears to be currently adequate AGP provision for hockey within the North Devon and Torridge Districts. However, there is only one hockey suitable playing AGP in the area, which currently meets demand. It is essential that this AGP site at The Park Community School, with good community access, remains hockey compliant as this would enable both clubs to develop and grow participation in the sport, especially with junior and ladies hockey. Both North Devon MHC and Taw Valley LHC have the capacity to grow participation. The clubs work together to develop and run the junior section.

## **B) North Devon and Torridge Councils**

### **North Devon**

- There are two clubs in the District, both based at the Park School, Barnstaple. North Devon Hockey Club has a men's team and junior members. Taw Valley Hockey Club has women's and girls' teams.
- Probably enough to meet demand but with a need to ensure pitch provision is maintained post 2017 when the current dual-use contract at Park School is up for renewal.

### **North Devon Leisure and Health Strategy (2008)**

The District Council was not able to consult with England Hockey directly in 2008 with regard to the needs of hockey in the District. However, England Hockey's Development Strategy at that time set out how the sport should develop and included information on the organisation's key objectives. These included aims to:

- bring more young people into the sport;
- develop a thriving club infrastructure; and
- achieve international success at the highest level.

It planned to bring more young people into the sport by improving links between schools and hockey clubs at a local level and more clearly defining the development pathways for individual players.

It also planned to develop a thriving club structure through developing a tiered club support system, improving the quality and quantity of coaches, officials and volunteers and allocating funding strategically to help improve the quality and quantity of facilities.

### **Torridge**

- There are no hockey clubs in Torridge and no evidenced demand that cannot be met at nearby clubs e.g. those in North Devon.

## **C) Summary**

- The England Hockey view is that currently there is adequate AGP provision for hockey within the North Devon and Torridge districts.
- There are currently two EHB affiliated hockey clubs in the North Devon area. There is currently no community hockey club based in the Torridge area. In the main players from this district travel to Barnstaple, Bude or Okehampton to participate in club hockey.
- Demand appears to be shrinking slightly based upon club statistics of active playing members.

- Both North Devon MHC and Taw Valley LHC have the capacity to grow levels of participation. The clubs work together to develop and run the junior section.
- There is only one hockey suitable playing AGP in the area.
- England Hockey emphasise that it is essential that this AGP site at The Park Community School, with good community access, remains hockey compliant as this can enable both clubs to develop and grow participation in the sport, especially with junior and ladies hockey.

## 5.2.5 Tennis

### A) The National Governing Body - The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)

The following information and feedback was received from the LTA via the Tennis Development Manager (Devon and Cornwall), Georgina Loosemore.

#### General

- Tennis has always been relatively strong in North Devon and Torridge. There has been a decline in the Club set up but dominant Clubs have continued to flourish.
- Tarka was completed in 2002 and is now the hub of North Devon Tennis.
- Main Facilities are: Tarka Tennis, Ilfracombe Tennis Club, Westward Ho! Tennis Club, Braunton Tennis Club and Chulmleigh Tennis Club

#### Trends and Demand

Tarka boosted all year round participation and generally the standard of tennis in the area. Small clubs have been struggling with regard to membership and the ability to maintain courts to a standard. Schools tennis has been improved and becoming a core sport.

#### Issues

- There is the potential to better work with low income families; and
- Some clubs are struggling to resurface poor quality courts.

**Potential improvements:** There are plans for an indoor centre in Bideford, through Westward Ho! Tennis Club.

### B) North Devon and Torridge Councils Sports and Leisure

#### North Devon

Richard Slaney observed that overall Tennis facilities seem to be sufficient to meet demand. He had a number of observations on a more local basis as noted below:

- *Ilfracombe:* Good club at Bicclescombe Park (Council owned). 7 courts (3 floodlit). The Council courts need resurfacing.
- *South Molton:* Tennis club recently folded but there is a court near the new youth centre (available via youth service)
- *Braunton:* Tennis club based at the college
- *Barnstaple:* top rate facilities at Tarka. Potential for more junior development. 2x local clubs at Rock Park courts - only possible to sustain one? Facilities are not in good condition.

- Public, free to use, courts are provided at Rock Park (Barnstaple).

## Torridge

- There are public courts at Westward Ho! (open access - no fee) and a number of private clubs. There is also some tennis played at some of the MUGAs across the District.
- The club at Westward Ho! is a good example of a go-ahead club and have plans to sell their site and relocate to Bideford.
- The courts at Torrington Tennis Club (District Council owned currently) are in need of resurfacing, but no funds available to do so currently. The poor quality of the courts is contributing to a noticeable decline in player numbers and teams.
- No other specific evidence of significant change in supply or demand since 2010.

## C) Club responses

We also received direct responses from three tennis clubs: Barnstaple Tennis Club, Park Lane Tennis Club (Barnstaple) and Rock Park Tennis Club (Barnstaple). Some general observations are noted below:

- Park Lane and Rock Park Tennis Clubs report that their playing membership has increased over the last 3 years but Barnstaple have seen numbers decreasing which they attribute to the development of facilities at the Tarka centre.
- None of the 3 clubs have an active junior section.
- Barnstaple and Rock Park Tennis Clubs rate the quality of their main venue/facility as good but Park Lane rate theirs as poor. Rock Park Tennis Club report that the quality of changing facilities at their site is poor.
- All of the clubs wishes to expand their activities. Barnstaple Tennis Club aim to secure more members. Park Lane, however, note that the club's lack of security of tenure and poor facilities do not allow for expansion "other than in the most minor of ways".
- Factors preventing club development are a shortage of courts on their own site (Park Lane and Rock Park); poor quality changing facilities (Rock Park); and falling membership (Barnstaple).

In addition North Molton Sports and Community Centre reported that they attempted to get 3 tennis courts recently with a grant from Sport England but we were unsuccessful. They note that have a perfect place to put the courts but not the finance to build them.

The clubs were also provided with an open opportunity to provide additional comments as noted below:

Club	Issues/Comments
Barnstaple Tennis Club	Our courts were recently resurfaced (Feb 2013) via a grant from Devon Waste Management We have to set a high subscription, due to a liability to contribute to 'shared' bowling club facilities. This means access is reduced for some who might otherwise join. More generally though, Lawn Tennis facilities in the area are good
Park Lane Tennis Club	Discussions have been ongoing for a number of years with the District Council about options for ensuring the continuing existence of the club with acceptable facilities. No solution has yet been found. The major problems affecting the club are the deteriorating court surfaces and the absence of any security of tenure which give little opportunity for the development of new facilities or the expansion of activities. We need resurfaced or new courts

	<p>Ideally, we need a club house and related facilities</p> <p>We also need a long term lease to give the opportunity of applying for external funding for facility/activity developments.</p> <p>In addition to the ongoing discussions that are taking place with the District Council on the future of the club and the site it presently occupies the club is also working jointly with the Rock Park TC on a number of initiatives to ensure the continuation of a strong tennis presence in Rock Park.</p>
<b>Rock Park Tennis Club</b>	<p>We have an aspiration for lighting and ground improvement works</p> <p>Another priority is improved access to Barnstaple water frontage</p>

Further detail of their response can be found in the full Excel Consultation Spreadsheet and a summary is also available In Appendix X (Sports Clubs Consultation Profile).

#### D) Summary

- Overall there appear to be sufficient tennis facilities in the study area to meet demand.
- The LTA note that tennis has always been relatively strong in North Devon and Torridge.
- There has been a decline in the club set up but dominant clubs have continued to flourish. Small clubs have been struggling with regard to membership and the ability to maintain courts to a standard.
- The Tarka Tennis Centre was completed in 2002 and is now the hub for North Devon Tennis. The other main facilities are Ilfracombe Tennis Club, Westward Ho! Tennis Club, Braunton Tennis Club and Chulmleigh Tennis Club.
- Tarka has boosted all year round participation and generally the standard of tennis in the area.
- Schools tennis has been improved and becoming a core sport.
- There are plans for another indoor centre in Bideford as part of Westward Ho! Tennis Club.
- There is the potential to better work with low income families.

### 5.3 Bowls and other non-pitch sports

Eleven questionnaires were returned from bowls clubs and a number of other non-pitch sports clubs who make use of the study areas' outdoor and indoor sports and leisure facilities:

- Kenwith Company of Archers & Kenwith Junior Archers
- North Devon Triathletes
- Chulmleigh Badminton Club
- Bideford Victoria Park Bowling Club
- Combe Martin Bowling Club
- United Services Bowling Club
- North Devon Wheelers South Fork - Youth Section
- Holsworthy Golf Club
- North Devon Display Gymnastic Club
- Pat Williams Girls' Netball Club
- Venners Bakery Netball Club

The full detail of information received from the individual clubs is available as an Excel Spreadsheet. Some general findings and observations are noted below:

- Membership levels range from over 400 (North Devon Display Gymnastic Club) to smaller one team clubs such as the Pat Williams Girls' Netball Club.
- Six of the clubs who responded have specific youth sections; five have a Clubmark or similar quality accreditation and one is working towards it.

- Five clubs report an increasing membership base with only one club reporting a decline over recent years (Holsworthy Golf Club).
- Five clubs report having strong links with schools. Some say that they do not because of reasons such as a lack of trained coaches and fears over health and safety issues.
- The main barriers preventing further expansion of club activities were: a shortage of good quality indoor facilities; a shortage of suitable training facilities; the cost of hiring/using facilities; and a lack of finance and funding (internal and external).

Clubs were asked to rate various aspects of the main venue they use and the table below provides a general summary of the responses:

	Very good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very poor	Don't know/ N/A
Value for money	6	2	4	1	0	1
Ease of booking/hiring	6	0	0	1	0	6
General quality of facility	4	8	1	1	0	0
Changing and shower facilities	2	0	2	5	2	2
Ease of getting to the facility	7	5	2	0	0	0
Facilities for the disabled	3	1	2	1	5	1
Equipment and storage	3	3	4	1	0	3
Lighting	2	4	2	0	3	2
Car parking	3	3	7	0	1	0
General environment	4	7	3			

The table indicates that the majority of clubs are fairly happy with most aspects of their main venue (as relevant). The most common aspects that are rated as poor or very poor at some venues are facilities for the disabled and changing and showering facilities.

We asked the clubs to identify improvements that they would like to see at their main venue. The aspirations of those that responded to this opportunity are shown below:

Club	Venue	Potential Improvements
Kenwith Company of Archers & Kenwith Junior Archers	The Field, Littleham, Bideford	We'd like to improve the boundary fencing and build our own indoor facility but we do not have the funds and anyway may not get planning permission
Chulmleigh Badminton Club	Chulmleigh Sports Centre	A viewing gallery would be good.
Bideford Victoria Park Bowling Club	Bideford Victoria Park Bowling Club. Park Lane. Bideford. EX39 2QH	Car parking for both our members and visiting teams.
North Devon Wheelers SouthFork - Youth Section	Bideford College car park	Dedicated cycle circuit
Holsworthy Golf Club	Holsworthy Golf Club, Killatree, Holsworthy, Devon EX22 6ST	Improved driving range facility needed. Funding still to be to acquired
North Devon Display Gymnastic Club	Caddsdwn Ind. Park, Bideford, Devon, EX39 3DX	Desperately need larger premises; changing facilities; storage
Pat Williams Girls' Netball Club	Park School	Undercover spectating area would be helpful + better changing facilities

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Venners Bakery Netball Club	Kingsley School, Bideford (Training)	Showers are due to be improved, outdoor courts are currently being resurfaced
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The clubs were also asked what new sports and recreation facilities and/or improvements to existing facilities and resources would they most like to see within the study area. The suggestions put forward are provided below:

Club	Priority needs for study area
Kenwith Company of Archers & Kenwith Junior Archers	An indoor archery range on our own field at Littleham. If not , then an indoor archery range suitable for practise as well as competitions in the Bideford area at an acceptable hire cost. Improve the boundary fencing at our field to make the site more secure
North Devon Triathletes	50m swimming pool - probably in Barnstaple Cycle groups for women
Chulmleigh Badminton Club	Easier access to school sites in North Devon
United Services Bowling Club	Indoor bowls facility in Pottington area
North Devon Wheelers SouthFork - Youth Section	Dedicated 1km race circuit in North Devon. An indoor velodrome in North Devon. Provision of a Minibus
North Devon Display Gymnastic Club	Help/funding to improve existing facilities. Bring local sports onto one large leisure site with ease of access
Pat Williams Girls' Netball Club	A new sports centre in Bideford as there is none at the moment
Venners Bakery Netball Club	Covered courts so the area can have indoor league. Improved main indoor venue that could host high level matches for spectators

Finally, there was also an opportunity for adding additional comments:

Club	Other issues and comments
Kenwith Company of Archers & Kenwith Junior Archers	We aim to gain more members, improve our facilities and build an indoor range to help keep members.  Due to the cost of hiring our indoor winter venue we cannot support ourselves from subscriptions alone and therefore rely very heavily on fund-raising and grants to see us through the year. We do receive - and are very grateful for - support from Bideford Town Council however we still need to raise funds for regular running expenses as well as repairs and renovations so any costs we can save are always welcomed
North Devon Triathletes	We are consolidating activities this year, may consider growth in the future. Hard to find quality triathlon specific swim coaching, also very geographically spread so difficult to get all together at times  As with many Clubs we do find it difficult to have an active membership that will take part/respond as is often the case "it's great when somebody else does it"...am not sure how we overcome this attitude. We have worked hard this year to ensure we have a number of social events & we have surveyed our membership to see what they would like but when we are so geographically spread and a sport where the three component parts can be catered for by specific clubs we do struggle sometimes.
Chulmleigh Badminton Club	We wish to develop more opportunities across North Devon for everyone to play Badminton
North Devon Wheelers SouthFork - Youth Section	We would like to expand our activities by having more appropriate facilities (rather than using a car park).

	<p>Distance travelled (costs) to other race events and training venues is an issue for us.</p> <p>As our youth riders cannot be coached on a public highway it is extremely difficult for us to source suitable training venues because of a lack of facilities.</p>
Holsworthy Golf Club	<p>We intend to have more junior involvement, increase the number of matches with other clubs, and involve other sports in golf.</p> <p>North/South divide in the county presents unique issues</p>
North Devon Display Gymnastic Club	<p>We plan to increase teams; accommodate more people: adapt for disabilities; adapt for trampolines.</p> <p>Willingness by Council planning to free up land or commercial buildings to adapt /change of use</p>
Pat Williams Girls' Netball Club	<p>We need an undercover area where spectators can sit/stand to watch netball on outside Courts at Park School - there is not much space between Courts and spectators can sometimes obstruct umpires etc being too close to the edge of the Courts</p>

### North Devon and Torridge Sports and Leisure (Bowls overview)

The two District Council Sports and Leisure Officers also provided an overview in relation to bowls as noted below:

#### North Devon

- Ilfracombe: Good self-sufficient bowls club with pavilion;
- South Molton: Good bowls club that is also working with local school to encourage youngsters to play;
- Braunton: has a good self-sufficient bowls club; and
- Barnstaple: The bowls Club has an aspiration to improve facilities (town council).

#### Torridge

- In general the bowls clubs are independent and self-supporting;
- Two good clubs in Bideford with outdoor greens and some of the parishes have bowling greens; and
- In addition there are a lot of indoor short mat bowls clubs based at village halls. The Council have provided external grant aid for SM bowls equipment.

#### Summary

- The large indoor bowls facility at North Devon Leisure Centre has a large membership and catchment area. It is the only such facility of its kind in the study area.
- Membership levels in clubs who responded range from over 275 (Southbourne Gymnastics Club) to smaller clubs such as Judo and Softball who have 20- 50 members.
- Most clubs report an increasing membership base over the last three years with only one club reporting a decline.
- A majority of the clubs have or have tried to have links with schools with varying degrees of success and would like to develop those links further. Most see that engagement with schools is fundamental to developing and growing their sport.
- The main barriers preventing further expansion of club activities were: a shortage of good quality indoor facilities; a lack of, or poor quality, changing facilities; a shortage of

playing members and a shortage of volunteers to run/coach teams and/or administer the club

- The majority of clubs are fairly happy with most aspects of their main venue. The most common aspects that are rated as poor or very poor at some venues are facilities for disabled people and car parking.

## 5.4 Community Organisation Survey - Sports and Leisure

This survey (see section one) covered all aspects of open space and recreational facilities and within that provided opportunities to comment on issues specifically related to sports and leisure facilities.

In very general terms it was clear that in terms of quality, where groups expressed a view:

- Most thought that some sports facilities are generally of good quality, such as indoor swimming pools and golf courses.
- Most thought that the quality of playing fields tended to be poor.

Specific comments received from the non-sports organisations relating to sports and leisure facilities are highlighted in the table below:

Group	Category and Comments
<b>Playing Fields, Tennis Courts, Bowling Greens</b>	
Cairn Conservation Carers	There are gaps, such as "flat" areas for sports such as cricket and football. There are tennis courts in Biclescombe park but what is needed is a flat area of sufficient size for at least one football/rugby pitch and possibly a cricket pitch. There is no public bowling green.
Ilfracombe in Bloom	We have several clubs that cover outdoor activities but there is no kick around area for children and youths.
North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	My only concern would be around lighting at night and impacts on our nationally significant bat species.
<b>Sports &amp; Recreation in 'Sensitive Areas'</b>	
Coastwise North Devon	Shorelife is vulnerable to damage from fishermen and increasingly by foragers.
Ilfracombe in Bloom	Ideally it would be good to have a kick around area away from residential areas and the main tourism area of the town but I accept this would be difficult due to the topography of Ilfracombe
North Devon UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve	We have managed the recreation on the estuary through voluntary codes etc, but occasionally it needs more resource than we have to offer. For example to manage moorings, and fast leisure craft.
Ramblers - North Devon Group	Noisy activities should be segregated from those who want to use countryside and parkland areas to 'recharge their batteries'. Perhaps some areas could be set aside, with land owner agreement/payment, to accommodate more noisy recreation. The countryside and wildlife can be damaged by trail bikes and 4 x 4s using our ancient country lanes i.e. unclassified roads and BOATs even when they are within their legal rights to do so.
<b>Indoor Provision</b>	
Cairn Conservation Carers	In general we think there is enough indoor provision for sports and leisure
Coastwise North	Good indoor facilities for swimming, tennis etc especially the wonderful

Devon	Barnstaple Leisure Centre
Ilfracombe in Bloom	<p>Whilst Ilfracombe has an indoor swimming pool it is now somewhat dated and I understand the wrong size to hold national events - it would be good to see this improved</p> <p>There is a lack of other indoor facilities unless you belong to a club. We have the vast bus station site and it would be nice to see part of this used for such facilities. Things such as an indoor bowling rink would bring business to the hotels through the winter as well as being a facility for residents. Could also look at other indoor sports squash - badminton - snooker - the list is endless. As well as a multi purpose area for other ball games.</p>

### Summary

- The majority of groups think that generally speaking the study areas' indoor pools and are of good quality (though this is not the view expressed in the general household survey where a significant number noted the quality to be poor). The quality of golf courses is also thought to be high. In contrast facilities for outdoor sports such as playing fields are deemed to be poor by the majority.
- Tennis courts, bowling greens and village halls are thought to be of at least average quality by the majority of groups. Opinion on other facilities is more varied.

## 5.5 Sports and Leisure - Key Findings

### Football

- In adult football, major trends are a reduction in Sunday 11v11 football and a slight drop in Saturday 11v11 football.
- Over recent years the study area has seen a growth in children's and youth football and there is a general shortage of junior and mini-soccer pitches.
- The implementation of The FA Youth Development Review will see the mandatory introduction of 9 v 9 football, at U11 & U12 in 2013/14, more pitches and goalposts, of the required sizes, will need to be provided to enable young players to participate.
- In general terms Bideford and Ilfracombe are 2 areas of major concern in relation to a shortage of pitches to meet demand, though many other towns and parishes also indicate an overall shortage.
- Recommended FA full size 3G FTP: Bideford College is the only full size 3G FTP but this does not meet the minimum FA dimensions for adult football. The FA advises that the best location for this kind of facility would be in the Barnstaple area.
- Overall the quality of pitches is very variable with some being very poor e.g. drainage issues; and various sites suffer from poor quality changing facilities. Many parish councils highlight these issues also.
- There is potential to develop girls' and women's participation in football - this has been strong in the study area but is quite low currently due to the loss of key volunteers. Work is underway to build this back up.
- Disability football is well-established and growing. The rural nature of North Devon makes this aspect of football hard to provide for due to the demands placed on carers.
- The main barriers to club development are a shortage of grass pitches; a shortage of AGPs for matches and training (as well as a lack of indoor facilities for training); the cost of hiring pitches and a lack of external funding for improvements.

### Cricket

- Demand appears to be stable/increasing slightly. Opportunities to play cricket are

also increasing due to a good club structure and some useful school links.

- There are a number of strong well established and successful clubs across the study area in both the towns and villages. Most of the cricket provision is supplied via small clubs who look after their own facilities.
- Many of the clubs have thriving junior sections.
- In general, other than at Ilfracombe and Bideford, the supply of cricket grounds/pitches appears to be sufficient to meet demand.
- Quality is an issue at various grounds (in particular pavilions and changing facilities).
- The most common barriers to club development are the cost of insurance, restrictions on development from planning or other legislation, a shortage of volunteers and problems in travelling to compete and train.

### Rugby

- Rugby is a historically important sport to the communities of North Devon/Torridge and as such there is a strong rugby presence here. There are 5 rugby clubs in the study area.
- The RFU report having seen "a massive growth" in the number people participating in rugby in the past 12 months. There have been two new girls sections starting: Barnstaple U13 and U15 age groups and Bideford U18 and Ladies. Further growth in demand is anticipated and demand is outgrowing clubs capacity.
- The RFU identify Barnstaple and Bideford as being in particular need of additional pitches.
- Many of the individual clubs all have plans to improve the quality of their pitches and associated facilities.
- The most common barriers to club development are a shortage of pitches (junior in particular) and a shortage of AGPs (primarily for training). Other common issues were a lack of indoor training facilities, restrictions on development from planning or other legislation and a shortage of external funding.

### Hockey

- The England Hockey view is that currently there is adequate AGP provision for hockey within the North Devon and Torridge districts.
- There are currently two EHB affiliated hockey clubs in the North Devon area. There is currently no community hockey club based in the Torridge area. In the main players from this district travel to Barnstaple, Bude or Okehampton to participate in club hockey.
- Demand appears to be shrinking slightly based upon club statistics of active playing members.
- Both North Devon MHC and Taw Valley LHC have the capacity to grow levels of participation. The clubs work together to develop and run the junior section.
- There is only one hockey suitable playing AGP in the area.
- England Hockey emphasise that it is essential that this AGP site at The Park Community School, with good community access, remains hockey compliant as this can enable both clubs to develop and grow participation in the sport, especially with junior and ladies hockey.

### Tennis

- Overall there appear to be sufficient Tennis facilities in the study area to meet demand.
- The LTA note that tennis has always been relatively strong in North Devon and Torridge.

- There has been a decline in the Club set up but dominant Clubs have continued to flourish. Small clubs have been struggling with regard to membership and the ability to maintain courts to a standard.
- The Tarka tennis centre was completed in 2002 and is now the hub for North Devon Tennis. The other main facilities are Ilfracombe Tennis Club, Westward Ho! Tennis Club, Braunton Tennis Club and Chulmleigh Tennis Club
- Tarka has boosted all year round participation and generally the standard of tennis in the area.
- Schools tennis has been improved and becoming a core sport.
- There are plans for another indoor centre in Bideford as part of Westward Ho! TC
- There is the potential for better work with low income families

### **Bowls and other non-pitch sports<sup>9</sup>**

- There is a good indoor bowls facility at North Devon Leisure Centre, Barnstaple and various outdoor greens in town and village locations. There are also a lot of indoor short mat bowls clubs based at village halls.
- In general bowls clubs in the study area are independent and self-supporting.
- There is no evidence of a shortfall of bowls facilities to meet demand but clubs express concern about the potential loss of the indoor green at the Leisure Centre should that need to close.
- Membership levels of non-pitch sports clubs responding to the survey range from over 275 (Southbourne Gymnastics Club) to smaller clubs such as Judo and Softball who have 20- 50 members<sup>10</sup>.
- Most clubs report an increasing membership base over the last three years with only one club reporting a decline.
- A majority of the clubs have or have tried to have links with schools with varying degrees of success and would like to develop those links further. Most see that engagement with schools is fundamental to developing and growing their sport.
- The main barriers preventing further expansion of club activities are: a shortage of good quality indoor facilities; a lack of, or poor quality, changing facilities; a shortage of playing members and a shortage of volunteers to run/coach teams and/or administer the club

### **Other issues and observations**

- Playing pitch studies were completed by Devon County Council in 2010 for both North Devon and Torridge District areas. Both of these studies appear to be robust and well evidenced; and they adhere to all aspects of the Sport England guidance available at the time.
- Our consultation with District Leisure Officers and the sports governing bodies indicate little significant overall change in the position since 2010.
- This study does not include a new formal playing pitch study using the full Sport England methodology and Sport England suggest that such a study may need to be completed in the future, particularly in the light of new guidance which is anticipated to be published soon.
- Indoor swimming pools are used regularly by significant numbers. The household survey indicated that 49% of households visit a pool at least monthly. Other well used indoor facilities are the areas' village/community halls (42%) and over 30% of

<sup>9</sup> This section primarily relates to Bowls but also highlights a number of responses from other non-pitch based sports clubs who utilise the study areas' outdoor and indoor sports and leisure facilities.

<sup>10</sup> Other clubs have even larger memberships, notably Falcons Gym Club who have around 950 members.

household also visit sports/leisure centres at least monthly.

- In the household survey a significant proportion of households (40%) suggested an overall shortfall in swimming pool provision across the study area.
- In relation to indoor facilities the priority for improvement highlighted by the largest number of households for improved provision was also swimming pools (by a significant margin). A supplementary question indicated that the primary concern in this respect was in terms of improvements to existing facilities.
- Squash: there are 3 squash courts at North Devon Leisure Centre but no public squash facilities in Torridge District. Some demand has been expressed for squash and the new tennis centre planned for Bideford may be a suitable location. Torridge Council have a mobile squash court that can be erected and dismantled quickly and are planning a programme of squash taster sessions to help test potential demand.
- There is specific concern over the long-term viability of North Devon Leisure Centre and options to maintain provision for swimming, indoor bowls, sport hall use, and squash need to be identified should this facility face closure.
- Park School - Sports hall and ATP - with the current contract ending in 2017 it is important to maintain the level of community use after this date.

## 6. PARKS, GREEN SPACES, COUNTRYSIDE AND GREEN CORRIDORS

### 6.1 Stakeholder Views

#### 6.1.1 North Devon Council

We spoke and/or had feedback directly from a number of officers at North Devon including Mark Kentell - Contracts Delivery Manager, John Rowe - Assistant Parks and Amenities Manager, Andrew Jones - North Devon Natural Environment Team and Hannah Harrington - Community Development.

#### North Devon District Council Parks Team

The Parks team is responsible for the management and development of various parks, various areas of open space and many of the allotments within North Devon. In overall terms, they are responsible for:

- Formal parks: 10 in number, totalling 8 hectares: Castle Green, Pilton Park, Rock Park and Rotary Gardens in Barnstaple. Bicclescombe Park, Brimlands, Runnymean Gardens and St James Park in Ilfracombe;
- Informal open spaces/amenity areas: 25 hectares, including Capstone Hill, Lantern Hill and Ilfracombe seafront in Ilfracombe;
- Recreation and sporting areas: 13 hectares;
- Woodland areas: 25 hectares;
- Countryside/conservation sites: 49 hectare including Anchor Woods, Whiddon Valley woodland, Yeo Valley Community woodland and Cairn woodland;
- Marlborough Rd Cemetery, Ilfracombe; and
- Allotments at Mill Road in Barnstaple and Jubilee Gardens, North Molton.

#### *Quantity Issues*

- The parks team have identified a shortage of open space facilities in North Devon, especially in Ilfracombe where there is a shortage of casual football provision in Ilfracombe.
- Neighbourhood standard equipped play areas are needed in the north of Barnstaple and east Ilfracombe.
- There are long waiting lists in both Barnstaple and Ilfracombe for allotment plots.

#### *Quality Issues*

- Budget restrictions are making it increasingly difficult to maintain the Council stock to the degree of quality expected by the public. In particular many play areas are old and tired - in need of refurbishment and improvement.
- Rotary Gardens has been improved in recent years with £12k of investment from S106 contributions and there is potential for similar investment elsewhere to maintain and improve quality. The Parks Team would like to maximise future use of any S106 contributions in this way to further improve/replace existing, worn out facilities.
- The Council would be reluctant to take on any additional responsibilities for any new open space provided through development. It is therefore important that long-term management arrangements are finalised with developers as early as possible.
- Bicclescombe Park is a Green Flag Park and sets an aspirational quality target for the future for other spaces.

### **Access Issues**

- Beaches - there are a number of well used beaches within North Devon/Torridge e.g. Woolacombe, Saunton, Croyde, Putsborough, Instow and Westwood Ho! The main barrier to regular local access is the cost of car parking - often around £5-£7. Most of the car parks in North Devon are privately owned.
- A shortage of safe routes has been identified, to connect main population centres to parks, open space and the Tarka Trail, as well as to the wider countryside.

### **Other Issues**

- Rock Park, Barnstaple, is part owned by the District and part by Barnstaple town council. Currently the District Council manage the entire park via a contract with the Town Council which ends in 2015. At this point the District Council will hand back management of the town council half. This process is underway already and is being phased, so that Barnstaple Town Council will have full management responsibilities for it's own land in 2015.
- Yeo Valley Community Woodland is a good example of provision with a strong Friends Group. Fremington Local Nature Reserve provides a successful case study of a partnership project with a parish council. Hillsborough Hill Fort LNR is another valuable site. South Molton Community Woodland has a strong friends group.

### **Priorities**

- The Green Flag award has a set of criteria that aims for continuous improvement to those areas that have attained this award. The parks team also has a very robust risk assessment policy.
- With regards to improving the quality and development of open spaces, there is only sufficient funding to carry out basic repairs and reinstatement works etc.
- To be more proactively involved at the early planning stage to shape future provision. Against drastic budget cuts try to maintain the existing Parks, Facilities and POS using 106 money. If at all possible not to take on any new parks or POS offered by developers (opt for the cash to support existing facilities).

### **Environment Team**

Andrew Jones from the Environment team highlighted a number of important issues as noted below:

#### **General**

- The study should consider the adoption of appropriate local standards for accessible green spaces and woodland based on those suggested by Natural England and the Woodland Trust.
- The importance of the study in terms of identifying opportunities for enhancements to all categories of open space in relation to their biodiversity and ecological value.
- In relation to the audit the County Council have completed a county-wide audit and mapping of the bigger areas of accessible natural green spaces. A key element of this study should be to audit and map such spaces at the more local level. It will then be possible to look for obvious gaps and issues regarding quality and access.
- There is potential for sites to be assessed and developed in relation to their "multi-functionality". In particular many areas of green space are not managed in a manner that would encourage biodiversity and wildlife, but have the potential to do so without

detriment to their primary purpose. The local authority has already started to adopt this approach in areas such as Batts Meadow in Braunton.

### **Quantity**

- There are some evident "gaps" in relation to access to natural spaces, for example, Barnstaple does not have many good sized natural areas of green space. In looking to remedy such shortfalls one approach is, rather than look to provide new areas of such spaces improve links and access to others. For example, the Tarka trail is itself a large linear natural green space so developing improved links and access to the trail would be sensible approach.

### **Quality**

- The quality of many sites (in relation to biodiversity and aesthetics) could be improved, for example, by a planned programme of tree planting and/or areas developed for wildflowers and to encourage native wildlife. Specifically, a standard could be considered including the provision of tree cover on open space.
- The importance of developing a more diverse maintenance regime in relation to areas of green space. Currently most public sites are managed to a very formal and uniform specification that would benefit from a greater variety of management approaches. While the central, formal, public parks may be appropriate for a formal grounds maintenance, many others areas are better suited to a less formal and more natural approach.
- This approach need not leave the area appearing untidy, uncared for or unmanaged. For example, in a closed churchyard the grassed areas near paths can be mowed regularly then blended into less formal natural wild flower areas. These areas can be litter picked regularly with the engagement of the local community.
- The management of areas to enhance biodiversity also needs to be planned carefully. For example it is not sufficient simply to cut grass cutting from 16 cuts p/a to 2. If unwanted invasive species are to be restrained, selective herbicidal treatments will be necessary along and species introduced through seed dispersion etc.

### **Access**

- The importance of identifying and developing "green corridors" linking areas of open space and between town and country. These would include, but not be restricted to footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths and such like.

### **Other observations and issues**

- Areas such as closed churchyards can be a valuable public amenity for quiet reflection and contemplation as well as contributing to biodiversity. Also, making them accessible to the public and encouraging use with well used footpaths leading through them can reduce anti-social behaviour via access being unofficially gained to locked sites that do not benefit from the surveillance and oversight provided by regular and frequent public access.
- To encourage consideration of developing alternative maintenance regimes by parish councils and other local groups it would be useful to provide training and advice services.
- It is also important to ensure good communications and engagement with local communities when adopting new approaches so that the reasons and benefits for changes are understood and any concerns addressed. This needs good publicity and promotion.

## Leisure and Health Strategy Review (2013)

### *Community partnerships*

The Parks, Leisure and Culture Team have helped to form and develop a wide variety of community partnerships to help manage some of the parks and conservation areas in North Devon.

- The Cairn Conservation Carers.
- Friends of Yeo Valley Community Woodland.
- Fremington Local Nature Reserve.
- Hillsborough Advisory Group.
- Friends of South Molton Community Woodland

The Team recognise the importance of adopting and implementing management plans, to guide all that are involved in the partnerships on the long-term objectives for the sites. Adopted management plans also express a long-term commitment to the projects, which is essential when applying for funding. Below is a list of the existing management plans that the District Council aims to adopt:

- Fremington Local Nature Reserve Management Plan;
- Cairn Management Plan;
- Yeo Valley Woodland Management Plan;
- Hillsborough LNR Management Plan;
- Whiddon Valley Community Woodland Management Plan; and
- Designation of the Cairn as an Local Nature Reserve

### *Walking and Cycling*

The Leisure and Health Strategy aims to promote the use of the natural environment in North Devon for walking and cycling activity. It notes that:

- Recreational walking features as first activity in Sport England's Active People Survey, with 20% of the adult population taking part at least once a month. There are a number of groups that operate in North Devon.
- In an attempt to increase participation rates in physical activity, walking is inexpensive, suitable for all age groups, and can make use of the local environment of the moorland and beaches.
- There are examples of 'Walking buses' to take children to school (across the country) in a safe, environmentally friendly way that increase children's activity levels.
- The National Cycle Network has several routes in Devon, which pass through North Devon. The Tarka Trail is one of the key cycle routes in the area; part of both 'The Westcountry Way' and 'Devon Coast to Coast' routes.
- Similar to walking, cycling has many benefits in that it is relatively inexpensive and can make use of the natural environment. As part of Barnstaple regeneration, the development of cycle routes in the town will promote cycling in a safer environment.
- The overall approach of this aspect of the Leisure and Health Strategy also complements objectives from the draft Devon County Green Infrastructure Strategy

## ***Water sports facilities***

The current view of Leisure Services is that this element of the 2008 Strategy now appears bit dated in some respects. They point out that surfing should be identified first and foremost as by far the most popular watersport in North Devon. In 2008 it was simply treated alongside windsurfing whereas it is in fact by far the more dominant and important. Surfing is a significant attraction for tourists as well as the regular local community. There are now many more than eight surf schools in the area.

Equally popular amongst the local population is Surf Lifesaving. This is a separate sport to surfing, but is nonetheless a highly competitive sport. There are almost weekly competitions involving our local clubs, Welsh Clubs and others from Cornwall.

Leisure Services note that windsurfing is not as popular in the area as regular surfing. In fact, with the arrival of kitesurfing, windsurfing participation has significantly reduced. Kite surfing is most popular at Westward Ho!

Bearing the above in mind the position in 2008 was noted as below:

### ***Water sports facilities (2008)***

The focus of the analysis of the needs for watersports facilities in the District in 2008 was focused on water sports disciplines as recognised by the Royal Yachting Association (RYA).

#### ***RYA accredited training centres***

One good indicator of the popularity of watersports in an area is the existence of RYA accredited training centres. These are strategically located in areas where there is a strong demand for watersports activity. There are five RYA approved training centres within 20 miles of Barnstaple, which is a good indicator of the popularity of watersports along the North Devon coastline. The centres are at:

- Bideford and District Sea Cadets Corps;
- Calvert Trust in Exmoor;
- North Devon College;
- North Devon Yacht Club in Instow; and
- Skern Lodge Outdoor Centre, Bideford.

#### ***Dinghy and keelboat sailing***

Dinghy sailing is a sport that is concentrated on the coast. It is a popular and affordable entry activity into other water sports with established training programmes from introduction to advanced skill level. It has a high profile due to it being Great Britain's most successful Olympic sport.

Dinghy sailing requires a range of berthing and mooring options, slipways and associated shore side facilities. It also requires development centres and sailing academies with good quality clubhouses, changing provision, secure boat storage, disabled access and availability of appropriate craft. Most importantly it requires access to high quality water that is both sheltered for the beginners and more challenging for those with more experience.

There is one sailing and yachting club in the District: Watermouth Harbour Yacht Club, located between Combe Martin and Ilfracombe. This club has around 60 members and also offers

opportunities for visitors to moor or hire boats. There is also a thriving Yacht Club in Ilfracombe.

### ***Surfing and Windsurfing***

Surfing and windsurfing are popular and accessible sports because boards are relatively affordable and there are opportunities for “pay and play”. Beginner-level boards are designed to make the sport easier to learn although the experience is still perceived to be enjoyable and exciting.

Surfing is emerging as one of the most popular developing sports in North Devon with a strong network of surfing clubs and schools. In North Devon, there are eight British Surfing Association (BSA) approved schools:

- Two in Croyde Bay (Surfing Croyde Bay and Surfing South West);
- Two in Braunton (Point Breaks and Walking on Waves);
- One in Barnstaple (Atlantic Surf Seekers);
- One in Woolacombe (Nick Thorne Surf Coaching Club); and
- One in Georgeham (St George’s House Club); and
- One in Westward Ho!(North Devon Surf School)

Surfers in North Devon also have easy access to the BSA National Surfing School in Newquay, which acts as an elite centre for aspiring and talented surfers from North Devon to develop their skills.

### ***Rowing, canoeing and kayaking***

These water sports activities are mainly suited to calmer non-tidal waters. It is relatively low cost in terms of equipment and so is an accessible water sport for many people.

The South West is not a traditionally strong rowing area although the Western Regional Rowing Council (WRRRC) has recognised that, due to the high profile nature of the sport at an international level, and the successes that the British team enjoys, there is great potential to increase the popularity of rowing as a sport.

The WRRRC aims to build up the capacity of existing clubs by supporting them in modernising and improving their facilities and equipment. Recent analysis by the WRRRC has identified a number of development issues and concerns which include:

- secure tenure of current club sites at Exmouth and Exeter;
- providing new or improved facilities to extend current activity at Bideford, Plymouth, Salcombe and Wimbleball; and
- establishing a new site at Stithians Lake in Falmouth.

The nearest rowing club for residents in North Devon District is Bideford Amateur Rowing Club (ARA) in Torridge District. The club is very successful and won the 2006 West of England ARA Championships. It is a Project Oarsome club and one of the 50 rowing clubs entrusted with the delivery of this initiative to bring rowing into 100 State Schools. The club has formed a partnership with Bideford College as part of this initiative.

Bideford ARA also has two thriving canoeing and kayaking centres: Bideford Canoe Club and Skern Lodge (an outdoor activity centre which also provides abseiling, assault courses, rope climbing as well as surfing and canoeing).

## **Conclusions**

The popularity of watersports in the District is evident by the abundance of facilities and clubs, particularly for surfing. Bideford provides a hub for canoeing and kayaking whilst Watermouth Harbour provides a key venue for sailing in the District. A good network of RYA training centres supports all these clubs. One development area is sailing which could be developed elsewhere along the coast subject to finding suitable sites.

### **6.1.2 Torridge District Council**

We spoke to two Torridge District Council Officers: John Adams from the Parks and Greenspace section and Baerbel Francis - the Environmental and Sustainability Officer.

#### ***Parks and Greenspace***

##### ***Overview of District Council provision - Parks and Greenspace***

- The Council's manage two formal parks - Victoria Park in Bideford and Rack Park in Great Torrington. Victoria Park is a large park with three play areas for all ages, a café, seasonal putting and paddling pool, toilets and a kiosk. Rack Park is a small park near the centre of Torrington and provides a quiet area for informal recreation.
- The Parks Department are responsible for the management of 40 play areas in the District (including the three in Victoria Park). These are of varied size, quality, and target age range - the majority are most suitable for younger children (under 8s).
- The Council also manage many areas of amenity public space within residential areas, and tend to adopt such spaces in relation to open spaces provided in relation to new residential developments.
- Northam Burrows Country Park lies at the western edge of the Taw Torridge Estuary within the AONB. It is part of a newly designated Biosphere Reserve. The site has about 253 hectares of grassy coastal plain with salt marsh, sand dunes and generally unimproved grasslands. The Burrows provides an access point for the two miles of Westward Ho! Beach and provides opportunities for land and marine leisure activities. There are three car parks, toilets and a visitor centre. This is the only publically owned tourist beach in Torridge or North Devon.
- The Council manage 4 cemeteries across the District and 6 closed cemeteries/churchyards.
- Nearly all of the Council's sites are maintained to a formal specification with frequent grass cutting etc. There is one exception to this general rule - 2/3 of a closed cemetery in North Gate is managed for biodiversity/wildlife with two grass cuts per year to allow for wildflower growth etc.

#### ***Quantity***

- Generally speaking there is good spread of public open space across the District and few obvious gaps in relation to access. This is also so for play spaces. A lack of open space (quantity) is not a general issue.
- Bideford has very good provision in terms of quantity of open space. Torrington and Holsworthy are probably a bit less well provided for, though Holsworthy does have a significant park managed by the town council - Stanhope Park.
- Great Torrington has an extensive area of common land, Great Torrington Commons - that is used for recreation.

### **Quality**

- The most pressing general issue in relation to quality is that of play areas across the District. Parks Officer's view is that in the order of 75% of play areas are in need of refurbishment/improvement. Victoria Park has some good play provision but even here there is room for improvement.
- One aspiration for the future is to focus on improving quality generally at Victoria Park as a "flagship" for the District. To secure Green Flag status would be an important achievement.

### **Access**

- Generally, access to the Council's stock of open space is good and there are no obvious issues to be tackled.

### **Torridge Environmental and Sustainability Service**

- In relation to the derivation of local standards it is important to refer to the Natural England standards which should prove a useful starting point in relation to the study. In general the view was that the brief was well drafted in relation to covering the environmental aspects of the study.
- From the environmental aspect one of the key tasks in relation to the strategy is simply to have an accurate audit of the areas "natural" green space, woodland, waterways etc. This needs to include both what we have and importantly what levels of access local people have to such spaces for the enjoyment and appreciation of the environment.
- In this respect key areas of interest are rights of way, footpaths, cyclepaths, and bridleways. The lack or poor quality of such an infrastructure can be a real barrier to accessing natural green space.
- It is important to assess the supply and demand for allotment space as this appeared to be an issue in a number of areas.

### **Torridge Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy (2012)**

Specific findings from this study relating to individual categories of green infrastructure are provided below:

#### **Allotments**

- The majority of resident respondents reported never visiting allotment provision. This is not surprising as provision of this type has a limited number of 'niche' users (i.e., allotment plot holders).
- Torridge as a whole meets the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners standard. However, the rural (North Peninsula) analysis area is deficient against the standard and has no provision. Great Torrington is outside a 2km walk catchment.
- There is a recognised shortage of provision in across the region as supply does not meet demand. This is supported by the waiting lists for five allotment sites in the area. Parish survey results also demonstrate a lack of adequate supply, with the majority of respondents stating there is insufficient provision.
- Allotments were generally assessed as high value. Survey respondents tended to rate provision as beneficial or very beneficial. This reflects the associated social inclusion and health benefits, their amenity value and the sense of place offered by provision.

#### **Parks and formal gardens**

- Parks were generally visited on a monthly basis in Torridge.

- Consultation did not identify any specific current demand for new parks and gardens provision. It is likely that large sized additional provisions of the country park, town common and accessible countryside affected this perception.
- Although the greatest areas of population are adequately serviced by parks provision in terms of a drive time standard, there are areas of deficiency in Great Torrington and in Bideford /Northam.
- All publicly accessible parks and gardens in Torridge were assessed as high quality in particular Victoria Park in Bideford/Northam.
- Torridge (2009/2010) had no Green Flag sites. However, Victoria Park is identified as having the potential to be successful, due to its high quality and value expressed through the audit. Establishing a 'friends of group' to assist with management and development of the site would assist a Green Flag process.
- The value of parks and gardens is assessed as high, with half of responding parish councils and residents signalling the importance of provision. Parks are recognised in Torridge for their high social inclusion and creating/providing a sense of place.

### ***Natural space and accessible countryside***

- Woodlands were the most visited type of natural space according to the consultation and resident survey respondents indicate they do so, most often, on a monthly basis.
- A significantly higher percentage of resident survey respondents stated they never access nature reserves in Torridge.
- There is wide availability of accessible natural space in Torridge. The majority of areas have sufficient natural space to service the population, with some small pockets of deficiency identified. For example, Holsworthy is deficient against a 2 km walk time but is covered by a 10-minute drive time.
- Survey responses further highlight resident perceptions that the level of provision of natural space provision is, in general, adequate.
- Common problems identified as affecting the PROW network in Torridge were fly tipping and dog fouling. Both are also a recognised common problem affecting routes nationally. TDC has an enforcement service to try and tackle the issue but consultation suggests this currently is ineffective.
- As well as providing important nature conservation and biodiversity value, many natural sites in Torridge were well used for recreational purposes and are a valuable open space resource for local communities.

### ***Amenity green space***

- Amenity spaces provide informal recreation spaces or as open spaces along highways, often acting as a visual amenity.
- The most popular typology visited by school survey respondents is amenity space. However, this contrasts with other survey results (residents and parish councils) which highlighted amenity space as being significantly less popular.
- Although the majority of residents either never access provision those that do, do so infrequently, on either a monthly or yearly basis. Residents are more likely to visit a village green than a grassed area.
- The majority of amenity space in Torridge is located within a 2km walking distance of the areas of greatest population density. There is no identified provision within Rural (Central). However, ensuring appropriate access to other types of provision such as natural space is likely to be an acceptable alternative.

- Consultation identifies some current demand for additional provision in the District. Parish councils tend to suggest an inadequate supply of grassed areas. However, this excludes village greens, which are deemed to be in adequate supply.
- Survey results demonstrated the value placed on amenity spaces by residents and are recognised for their multi-purpose function, offering opportunities to a variety of leisure and recreation activities.

### ***Cemeteries/churchyards***

- Churches were one of the most frequently visited open spaces in Torridge.
- St Mary's Church in High Bickington is a particularly good quality site.
- The vast majority of cemeteries within the audit are rated as good quality. No significant problems or issues were raised with regard to the general quality of provision.
- Cemeteries/churchyards are generally viewed as being of high value in Torridge, reflecting that generally provision has an important role to play in the lives of the local community.

### ***Civic space***

- Civic spaces tend to be well used in comparison to other open spaces. Sea fronts (24.3%) and market squares (17%) are generally visited on a monthly basis by responding residents.
- The densely populated areas in Torridge are generally well served by provision. However, the outskirts of Great Torrington were deemed to be deficient.
- There was no identified demand for additional provision to be provided in the more rural settlements of the District.
- In keeping with the previous responses, most resident respondents rate the quality of sea fronts market squares and civic space as being very good or good. Sea fronts are particularly favourably viewed in terms of their quality.
- Civic spaces help to offer cultural/heritage opportunities and provide a sense of place to the local community. For example, the three Pannier markets in the larger settlements of Bideford, Great Torrington and Holsworthy act as focal points for the community

### **6.1.3 Town and Parish Councils**

Local town and parish councils own and manage significant areas of park and open space in the two Districts, including the main parks in South Molton, Barnstaple and Holsworthy. While the views of parish and town councils are explored in detail in section 4, there are a number of issues relating to quality, quantity and access to parks and open spaces that have been raised. These are outlined below:

- There is a shortage of facilities for young people in parks and open spaces. The need for facilities for 11 - 18 age group was particularly identified. The lack of facilities is exacerbated by perceived poor public transport in rural areas.
- There is a mixed pattern of community use of school facilities, with some primary and secondary schools being open for community use and others not.
- A shortage of allotment provision in some parishes.
- Countryside access is seen as an issue that is in need of improvement, particularly so in Torridge rural parishes.

### **6.1.4 North Devon Biosphere Reserve**

We spoke to Andy Bell who is the Biosphere Reserve manager. Some Key points from the discussions are noted below:

- The majority of the study area is within the UNESCO North Devon Biosphere Reserve area, the project is managed by the Biosphere Partnership.
- They are concerned to ensure that the ecosystem services provided by sites are not lost through development (or that loss is minimised) and if losses occur compensatory provision needs to be made on or off-site. If off site it is probably better to focus on further building the ecosystem services value of sites that are already fairly strong. That is, further enhance sites where there is good potential for improvement in this respect.
- The Partnership is piloting a Biodiversity Offsetting, whereby ecosystem services lost as a result of development are offset by planned improvements to Biodiversity elsewhere in the Biosphere Reserve. An audit has been undertaken to identify areas of natural green space that are valuable to biodiversity and ecology and have used that to highlight areas that could benefit from enhancement to further develop biodiversity and ecological value. This provides a strategic "pool" of sites where off site contributions could be invested.
- This work has been used in developing an Offsetting Plan that the Biosphere Partnership would like to see adopted formally as policy as an integral part of the new North Devon and Torridge local plan.
- Specific areas that are being considered for strategic, accessible natural greenspace include:
  - The flood plain between Pottington Industrial Estate and Ashford (Barnstaple);
  - A wetland area and visitor centre as part of the Anchorwood Bank development.
  - Greenspace links as part of the Ilfracombe southern extension.

### **6.1.5 Natural England**

Natural England have proposed standards for the provision of natural green space called the Accessible Natural Green Space ANGST standard. Some of their main interests in open space studies are noted below:

#### **Quantity**

Natural England like to see the ANGST standard used as a starting point for natural green space standards but reviewed in the light of local circumstances e.g. to determine what Xh/a per 1000 is appropriate for North Devon / Torridge (or sub areas).

Natural England suggests that the catchment/access element of standards is probably more important than quantity from their point of view. They recommended that studies should think about the specific demographics of the area and how this might affect standards. Could standards reflect this e.g. for play Xh/a per 1000 children rather than general population? They emphasise the importance of being clear about the evidence base upon which standards are being proposed (i.e. what is the justification for varying from the ANGST standard?).

#### **Quality**

Some key aspects of quality for Natural England are:

- "Natural-ness";
- Connectivity;
- Accessibility (physical and psychological);
- Multi-functional e.g. one area of woodland can perform many functions; and
- Interpretation/signage etc. and appropriate "infrastructure" - benches, gates etc.

In looking at local needs and implementation of standards Natural England suggest that it is important to note that the "shape" of the allocation for semi-natural green can just as easily be a long corridor than a "field" type shape.

## Access

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Key points from the Natural England perspective include:

- Geographical access should be in line with the catchment element of standards;
- Practical easy access onto and routes to sites are important;
- Important to have community engagement to encourage use of sites;
- Consider psychological and cultural barriers to use of natural space/countryside e.g. BME/ need for education;
- Ensure disability access wherever possible;
- Importance of publicity and promotion so that people are aware of where sites are and how to get to them;
- Importance of connectivity planning;
- Permissive access from urban fringe are important; and
- Need to make links with the Rights Of Way Improvement Plan.

### 6.1.6 The Woodland Trust

#### Background

The Woodland Trust would like to see more woodland created and improved access to woodland. They note that woods provide a range of social, economic and environmental benefits and woodland has been shown to contribute to 10 of the 20 quality of life indicators for the UK.

Easily accessible woods close to residential areas provide measurable benefits: they encourage people to exercise; help reduce the mental stresses of modern society; improve air quality and reduce respiratory diseases.

Woods make particularly outstanding green spaces for public access because of the experience of nature they provide, their visual prominence alongside buildings which offers balance between the built and natural worlds, their low maintenance costs and their ability to accommodate large numbers of visitors.

Woodland and related activities can also be valuable in promoting social inclusion. Woodland activities, such as tree planting, walking and woodland crafts can provide a forum for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds to come together to learn about and improve their local environment.

The Trust draw attention to the public health white paper (Healthy Lives, Healthy People; Nov 2010), and highlights that there are tremendous opportunities for native woodland to contribute positively towards delivering improved mental and physical health. The note that research shows that woodland can provide benefits for air quality, urban heat island cooling, physical exercise provision and relief from mental illness.

The white paper states that: "*access to green spaces is associated with better mental and physical health across socioeconomic groups.*" and that "*DEFRA will lead a national campaign to increase tree planting throughout England, particularly in areas where tree cover would help to improve residents' quality of life and reduce the negative effects of deprivation, including health inequalities.*"

## Standards

The Woodland Trust would also like to see the adoption of their Woodland Access Standard.

The Trust has researched and developed the woodland access standard (WAST) for local authorities to aim for, encapsulated in their *space for people* publication. They believe that the WAST can be an important policy tool complimenting other access standards used in delivering green infrastructure for health benefits.

The WAST is complementary to Natural England's Angst+ and is endorsed by Natural England. The Woodland Trust woodland access standard recommends:

- *that no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size; and*
- *that there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km (8km round-trip) of people's homes.*

There is an excellent opportunity for creating more accessible woodland to improve health and wellbeing opportunities for sustainable communities and neighbourhoods. The data used can be supplied free of charge by the woodland trust both in map and in numerical/GIS form.

### 6.1.7 Environment Agency

#### **Background**

As the government organisation responsible for managing flood risk, we value open spaces as important areas for intercepting and absorbing rainfall. This can help to reduce the pressure on rivers and streams, and can mitigate for developed areas where hard surfaces prevent absorption of rainfall.

We reiterate the value of green space associated with North Devon's rivers, the Taw Torridge Estuary, and the coast. These areas deliver multi-functional benefits in the management of the risks of flooding and coastal erosion, providing wetland habitats and corridors for wildlife and offering a recreation resource, in many places bringing the countryside and nature into the heart of towns such as Barnstaple and Braunton.

We work with partner organisations, especially the North Devon Biosphere Service (NDBS), to maximise these benefits at sites including Kenwith Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Fremington LNR, Home Farm Marsh (with Gaia Trust), Isley Marsh (RSPB), Bradiford (Devon Birdwatching), Velator Wetlands. Public access on footpaths or permissive paths is also possible on EA flood defence assets, for example East Lyn at Lynmouth, Barnstaple Yeo, Coney Gut, Bradiford, Braunton, Velator.

The flood scheme at Kenwith includes an area of green spaces designed to attenuate flood water during periods of high rainfall, but also has benefits to the local community when not in use. Green spaces also have important benefits for biodiversity, allowing a greater percentage of habitat available to support a wide range of plant and animal species. Good quality functional green spaces can help to increase and maintain water quality (whether this is in local rivers or amenity ponds etc.), and links directly to increased biodiversity.

## ***Open Space Provision***

We would support a Green Infrastructure Strategy which seeks to increase the number of open spaces in the North Devon and Torridge area, as well as improving existing green spaces. Ensuring that green corridors are formed to connect open spaces is beneficial to improving biodiversity, because this allows wildlife to move more easily.

## ***Important Issues (General)***

We consider that the following are important issues in relation to parks, open space and leisure activities:

- They provide an environment for wildlife and biodiversity;
- There are good links - by footpaths and cycleways - to them and between them; and
- To have good signposting and good information about what is available.

The wider environmental benefits of green spaces also need to be highlighted so that communities have a greater understanding of their role in:

- Maintaining high levels of biodiversity;
- Providing corridors to encourage movement of wildlife; and
- Reducing flood risk

Open spaces will also have an important role in adapting to the impacts of climate change. Existing and new open spaces can be adapted to help deal with heavier rainfall events. Open spaces can normally easily be designed as temporary storage or conveyance routes. This will help reduce local flood risk and damage to property.

## ***Parks and Open Spaces***

We consider that careful management such as encouraging native species, removing invasive non native species and monitoring water quality of ponds etc would help to improve the health of local wildlife. Ensuring that parkland and open spaces are well drained would help reduce flood risk by allowing water to absorb more quickly. More interactive information and signage would help people become more involved and increase both public ownership and understanding of the importance of open spaces.

## ***Countryside and Wildlife Areas***

Using footpath links to create green corridors for wildlife would have wider environmental benefits.

For example, Barnstaple's Newport Life and Cycle Project delivered public art and access improvements in the valley park footpath along the Coney Gutt to encourage wider community use. The project included elements of wildlife habitat improvement along the stream corridor and parts of the green corridor adjacent to the Coney Gutt offer increased flood protection to downstream properties.

However, we highlight the importance of the need for long term commitment to maintain these benefits, and advise that parts of the green corridor adjacent to the Coney Gutt remain in poor condition and we recommend that opportunities to improve them are encouraged.

### **Other Observations and Issues**

Consideration should be given to pressures and potential conflicts between recreation and flood risk assets and/or wildlife, for example disturbance on estuaries. It might be worth perhaps cross-referencing the work on this carried out around the Exe Estuary

Some specific examples:

- Velator Nature Reserve - We own land near Braunton referred to as Velator Wetland Nature Reserve which is managed for wildlife but with public access. We work closely with the North Devon Biosphere Service (NDBS) who manage the adjacent Tarka Trail.
- Tarka Trail - We work closely with DCC and NDBS where the Tarka Trail also doubles as coastal flood defence around Taw Torridge Estuary.
- Raleigh Meadow, Barnstaple - The footpath along river through flood defence scheme on Barnstaple Yeo is now formally dedicated by the District Council.
- Kenwith Dam, Bideford - The key function of this area is flood storage but it also provides environmental/ biodiversity /recreational benefits.
- Pilton Park, Barnstaple - The key function of this area is recreation but it is also a formal flood storage area

## **6.2 Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy (North Devon and Torridge)**

A number of strategic objectives underpin and inform the direction of the 2009 Green Infrastructure Strategy:

- Multi-functionality;
- Connectivity of habitats;
- Extended Access and Recreation;
- Landscape Enhancement;
- Biodiversity Enhancement; and
- Landmark Projects.

### **Stakeholder Consultation**

Key stakeholders were engaged to identify opportunities to create more integrated networks of GI, at both sub-regional and settlement scales. Devon Wildlife Trust and relevant town councils provided information to help formulate the GI strategy. Key opportunities were identified for:

- linking habitats together through enhanced wildlife corridors;
- safeguarding and enhancing key network features;
- creating new priority habitats, especially within strategic nature areas;
- providing new formal and informal public spaces, including sports pitches and allotments, within the main towns to meet specific local needs;
- enhancing pedestrian and cycle networks and creating new linkages.

## **6.3 Survey of Local Community Organisations**

Views from the organisations relating to their overall opinion of the quality of facilities across the study area are summarised in the following table:

	VERY GOOD	GOOD	AVERAGE	POOR	VERY POOR
Local recreation grounds or parks		1	3		
Footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths, tow paths, disused railways etc.	1	3	1		
Access to the seaside, coast, beaches	1	4			
Access to water recreation e.g. canals, marinas, lakes, ponds etc				1	1
Country parks, local countryside, woodlands		2	3		
Wildlife areas/Nature reserves	1	2		3	
Allotments		1			
Churchyards and cemeteries		1	1		
Other open space e.g. grassed areas for dog-walking, informal games, picnics etc.					

Most groups think that access to the beach and the standard of footpaths and bridleways is good.

Wildlife and nature areas are regarded as poor, although local countryside, woodlands and country parks are seen as average or good.

Specific comments of relevance to parks, natural green space and rights of way included:

Group	Category and comments
<b>Local recreation grounds or parks</b>	
Cairn Conservation Volunteers	There is only one reasonable sized park in Ilfracombe but with council cut backs the level of maintenance has been severely cut back reducing the quality of the gardens etc. The parks department does provide good special days such as Easter egg hunts but with the reduction in spending these have had to be cut back.
Ilfracombe in Bloom	There are probably enough open spaces & outdoor leisure facilities but some are not known to the general public Whilst Bicclescombe Park is well looked after and has much going on thanks to the volunteers & tennis club, St James Park often looks neglected. Many people don't realise it is there and because parts are overgrown the wonderful views that could be had of the harbour & Hillsborough are not there.
<b>Footpaths, bridleways, cycle-paths, tow paths, disused railways etc.</b>	
Devon County Council Cycling Project	Aspiration to continue Tarka Trail between Willingcott and Braunton, Highampton to Bude and a link from Torrington to the Tarka Trail.
Cairn Conservation Volunteers	Not enough footpaths particularly circular routes. Many footpaths end at roads with no pavement. Perceived problem with landowners blocking paths and obscuring signs. Call for more footpath officers.
Coastwise North Devon	Beaches: Lack of awareness of environmental sensitivity, poor regulation of behaviour & enforcement. Totally unsafe walking/ cycle access to beaches round Saunton/Croyde area. We are often surprised to find that many local youngsters are totally unfamiliar with our beaches as places of nature and healthy enjoyment.

North Devon UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve	Footpaths are well maintained by DCC and with support from parishes. However there need to be more spaces such as community woodlands and other ways for people to enjoy wildlife/ landscapes. Riverside footpaths would be more welcome throughout the area
Ramblers - North Devon Group	<p>Adequate consideration for walkers when shared-use routes are devised. Walkers are the most vulnerable user versus cyclists and those on horseback.</p> <p>Countryside and wildlife areas - Local public transport is poor other than on the popular corridors eg. Ilfracombe, Barnstaple, Westward Ho! /Appledore. Sunday services are especially restricted. Links to the countryside and to the existing rights of way network should be a priority within local development plans and when each planning application is considered.</p> <p>There are a reasonable amount of rights of way in the area. However it should be a priority to link new developments into the existing network. Also, with financial cut backs Devon County Council, as the Highway Authority responsible for ROW, is finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their previous high standards of maintenance. Ramblers would like to see a future where the public has access to river and canal side.</p> <p>Note should be made of the 'Walking for Health' scheme, previously run by the NHS and more recently by Ramblers and Macmillan Cancer. Also, Devon County Council has a 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' which should be consulted as a way forward.</p>
<b>Access to the Countryside, wildlife areas, nature reserves etc</b>	
Coastwise North Devon	<p>Seaside, surely our pre-eminent outdoor resource, well used by excellent surf life saving groups - but not much by local authorities. Poor transport links to some. Footpaths are good but in historically significant areas, more than those of use today. The holidaying public seem to have little knowledge of them. Excellent map series from Croyde Cycle helps.</p> <p>We have a good coastal bus service, it could be better promoted especially to tourists who are amazed by it, especially the 21 service. Our area is often sold as being dog friendly - but this is a 2-edged sword. Too many dogs make for social/environmental problems.</p>
North Devon Coast AONB	This is a significant part of any GI plan and needs to link in with national priorities, not just biodiversity but functioning floodplains, inter connectivity of habitats, building in resilience to climate change etc.
North Devon UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve	Probably more provision for locals and visitors to use their surrounding countryside is needed in rural areas.
<b>Accessible Coast and Countryside</b>	
North Devon Coast AONB	<p>There is a need to look at national policy on greenspace access and proximity and map this for North Devon to see whether what is available meets the standard. Coupled to this in meeting our Biodiversity obligations we should be looking at significant habitats and looking at where an additional provision would facilitate landscape scale conservation initiatives.</p> <p>The nature and extent of greenspace available may not be well known. Are there maps available? Do we know how and when these spaces are currently used? Are they in the right places to be accessed?</p> <p>From a planning perspective how can we look at an ecosystem services approach to greenspaces? What services do they provide? What services COULD they provide? Who is best placed to own and look after these spaces?</p>
North Devon UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve	Biodiversity corridors are not being managed properly or are at risk. Connectivity for biodiversity is not properly accounted for.

## 6.4 Natural Green Spaces Focus Group

The main focus of the session was on natural green space including the seaside, coast and beaches; footpaths bridleways, cyclepaths etc.; country parks, countryside and woodland; and nature reserves/wildlife areas.

Some key points raised are noted below:

- The group noted and endorsed the preliminary findings of the general household survey which highlighted the extent to which local people value all aspects of natural green space and foot and cyclepath networks to and within the countryside.
- The group agreed that in very general terms there appeared to be a shortage of publically accessible country parks, nature reserves, and nature reserves/woodlands etc. E.g. there is only one Country Park plus the Tarka Trail. Consider opportunities for additional country parks within reasonable access of the main towns.
- It is also important to improve access to and the "quality" of established sites e.g. through good management and maintenance systems.
- There is a need to publicise and promote access to such areas of open space as the view was that many local people were unsure about what areas within the extensive rural countryside in North Devon and Torridge were available for public access. There was a feeling that this extremely valuable local asset was not being used to anything like the extent that it could be by local people.
- Make sure that the study makes full use of all relevant data available from Natural England who have undertaken an extensive audit of natural green space areas with associated GIS mapping layers.
- Similarly ensure that the audit and mapping data available from the North Devon Biosphere Service is taken into account for the study.
- The study should consider the adoption of appropriate local standards for accessible green spaces and woodland based on those suggested by Natural England and the Woodland Trust.
- It is important to ensure that the ecosystem services provided by sites are not lost through development (or that loss is minimised) and if losses occur compensatory provision needs to be made on or off-site. If off site it is probably better to focus on further building the ecosystem services value of sites that are already fairly strong. That is, further enhance sites where there is good potential for improvement in this respect.
- Another potential development in relation to the use of open space to maximise ecosystem services is to provide more allotments and community food growing systems e.g. land developed for growing food where responsibility is shared collectively by a local community organisation.
- In discussing the findings of the household survey in which improved access to the coast, seaside, and beaches was clearly a high priority a number of suggestions were made, to improve access and reduce barriers, including:
  - Improve access for disabled people/families/less able wherever possible e.g. appropriately surfaced paths, ramps instead of steps etc.
  - Look at methods to subsidise parking charges for local people
  - Introduce low-cost/free park and ride schemes from appropriate town locations

- For young people (and the wider community) re-consider introducing the "surf-bus" service (would need subsidy). This would fit in with another priority from the survey - more facilities and activities for teenagers. Ordinary public transport makes it difficult to load surf boards etc. It could also provide a service for families with buggies, wheelchair users etc.
- Develop better walking and cycle routes from residential areas within walking and cycling distance from the coast, beaches etc.
- Provide bicycle racks/shelters/lockers at the main beaches and coast access points
- Provide new/improved foot/cycle access routes to less busy parts of the coast, beaches and the coast path.
- Ensure adequate provision of toilet facilities. A number of public toilets on the coast/beaches were highlighted as having been closed over recent years.
- Provide areas/routes on more of the beaches where dog walking is allowed
- The importance of establishing a strategic network of cyclepaths.
- Developing a network of strategic "improved" footpath links between settlements e.g. linking North and South Molton would also be a valuable asset.
- In general it is very important to ease access to the countryside from within the main towns to the surrounding countryside so that people living in residential can easily find routes to the open countryside and connecting rights of way. This might mean new paths and cycleways as well as the use of existing routes along with publicity, promotion and education.
- The importance of adequately maintaining footpaths and rights of way in the light of reducing budgets. If people new to countryside walking are to be encouraged the footpaths need to be clearly signed and maintained - particularly those that are being promoted. It may be necessary to focus on a strategic network of key local routes.
- Investigate how wind farm community contributions can be used to improve natural green space assets.

## 6.5 Parks, Green Spaces and Rights of Way - Key Findings

### *Use*

- It is the areas' seaside coast and beaches that are most commonly used by most households on regular monthly basis. Footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths; and country parks/countryside and woodlands are also accessed at least monthly by over 70% of households.
- Footpaths, bridleways etc. are also by far the most frequently used facility with over 30% of households reporting using them almost every day.
- Other spaces used on an almost daily basis by at least 15% of households are local parks/recreation grounds, country parks/countryside and woodlands and "other open spaces" e.g. grassed areas for dog-walking, informal games, picnics etc. It is therefore the informal recreation opportunities that figure most frequently in respondents' replies.
- 59% of allotment users visit at least weekly (of which over 25% visit almost every day).

### *Quantity*

- Parks officers from both Torridge and North Devon District Councils suggest that overall, in terms of parks and green spaces provision there is no significant shortfall in the quantity of provision but quality is very variable - need for improvement in many areas.
- A majority of residents think there is a need for more footpaths, bridleways, cyclepaths etc.
- Half of residents thought that there should be more wildlife areas/nature reserves.
- Nearly half highlighted a need for more outdoor facilities for teenagers and the focus groups indicated that this should include access to natural green spaces.
- Following this, the other aspects where there was a significant view of there being a shortfall were parks and play areas; access to the sea, coast and beaches.
- A number of town and parish councils highlight a shortfall in allotment space.

### *Quality*

- Parks officers from both authorities stated that their priorities for open space improvements as a result of development would be to improve existing facilities rather than the provision of new ones.
- In the household survey, all facilities are rated average or better by a majority of households. Nearly 40% households highlighted outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
- Facilities where the quality is rated good or very good by around 60% of households include parks/recreation grounds; footpaths etc; country parks/ countryside/ woodlands; sea, coast and beaches.

### *Access*

- There are numerous barriers to access to open countryside, including poor signage of PROWs, public transport network, attitudes of landowners adjacent to rural areas. There is a sense that some rural market towns and villages are landlocked, with little accessible natural greenspace around them.
- Access to the coast was identified as a problem, cost of car parking and lack of reasonable public transport were cited as issues.
- However, there are good bus routes from the main urban centres to the main

beaches at Croyde, Woolacombe, Westward Ho! And Saunton.

- Where households make use of the opportunities identified, the majority of users are prepared to travel more than 20 minutes to use some facilities such the seaside/coast/beaches, areas for water recreation, wildlife areas, country parks. However, residents are unwilling to travel more than 10 minutes to visit allotments or play areas. A significant minority would not travel further than 5 minutes to these facilities.
- Nearly three quarters of households said that they would walk or travel by bike more often to facilities if the quality of foot / cycle paths were improved. The same proportion said that they would use open space facilities more often if access by foot or cycle were improved.

### **Priorities/Other Issues**

- The category highlighted by the largest number of households for potential improvement/new provision was for improved access to seaside, coast and beaches, followed by local recreation grounds/parks; and better footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths.
- Other notable priorities for improvement highlighted by significant numbers were children's play areas, country parks/countryside/woodlands and wildlife area/nature reserves; and outdoor facilities for teenagers.
- The priorities identified for outdoor facilities for teenagers; wildlife areas/nature reserves; footpaths/ bridleways/cyclepaths; country parks/woodlands is for an increase in the **quantity** of these facilities.
- For others **quality** improvements to existing levels of provision is the more common kind of improvement suggested e.g. recreation grounds/parks; children's play areas; and access to the seaside, coast and beaches.
- Improved **access** is particularly significant for some categories e.g. access to the seaside; country parks, woodland etc; and wildlife areas/nature reserves.
- The Rights of Way Improvement Plan highlights many priorities for footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways.
- Natural England stress the need to take into account the ANGSt standard as a starting point for developing a standard for natural and semi-natural green space. Variation from this standard should be justified. The Woodland Trust also have a standard for woodlands endorsed by Natural England.
- There is potential to improve access to the countryside and biodiversity through the Biodiversity Offsetting Project.
- It is important to promote the value of walking and cycling and the use of open spaces and rights of way in relation to their benefits to health, and to encourage community involvement.

## 7. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### Introduction

This section includes findings related to:

- The District Play Strategies;
- Youth Focus groups;
- Household and Community Organisations Survey; and
- The community use of schools and colleges.

### 7.1 Findings from the local Play and Open Space/Leisure Strategies

#### Play Strategies

Though the timeframe of the play strategies are a couple of years one or two years out of date many of their findings are still relevant and important to take on board in the current study. Some of the main findings from the strategy are highlighted in the box below:

#### North Devon Play Strategy (2008-11)

##### Objectives

- Increase the importance of play in North Devon;
- Increase the provision of play opportunities in North Devon;
- Improve the accessibility of play opportunities for children and young people, especially those from low income backgrounds and those in rural isolated locations; and
- Improve the inclusiveness of play provision for children and young people with special needs.

##### Play space overview

North Devon Council owns 22 play spaces across the district: 13 in Barnstaple, 1 in Braunton, 6 in Ilfracombe, 1 in Landkey and 1 in South Molton. 16 of these sites are, at least in part, accessible to children and young people with disabilities. 63 per cent of all play equipment on these parks is accessible to children and young people with disabilities.

In addition there are 36 equipped play areas, together with further informal leisure space, across the district owned by parish and town councils and North Devon Homes.

A study conducted on behalf of Devon Playing Fields Association and 'Devonplay' found that 17 out of the 63 parishes in North Devon had neither a sports field nor a play area with open community access. This represents almost a third of parishes in the district. The research also showed that North Devon had a lower than average number of playing fields and playgrounds than the Devon district average.

##### Consultation

During 2007 the District Council consulted with more than 500 young people through events at North Devon College, with local schools and out on the streets. Some common issues raised

were:

- Many activities are too far away, are too expensive and are too few and far between.
- Many young people wanted safe places to meet their friends without being moved on.
- There was specific interest in developing more skate parks and youth zones<sup>11</sup>.

### Community (Parish) Plans

The various community plans undertaken across the District highlighted some common community wants and needs with regards to play. These include youth activities, pre- and post-school clubs, play for 0 - 5 year olds and multi-use sports facilities. Many rural communities expressed a desire to access village school facilities out-of-hours.

### Proposed Actions relevant to Green Infrastructure Strategy

- Use planning guidance (PPG17<sup>12</sup>) to increase the number and quality of play spaces;
- Use section 106 monies (developer contributions) to create or refurbish open spaces that are responsive to community needs;
- Promote the natural environment as an excellent site for play;
- Improve the standard of current Council owned play equipment;
- Open up access to suitable areas for play; and
- By increasing access to play drive up levels of children's and young people's physical activity.

### Torrington play strategy (2007 - 2012)

#### Objectives

The objectives of the Torrington Play Policy and Strategy reflect a commitment to children's play as fundamental to their development from birth to eighteen years. It recognises the crucial role of adults in ensuring that children and young people have a good quality play experience.

It identifies the following key aims, to:

- Improve access for all to play provision.
- Replace old play areas with new modern facilities.
- Ensure that provision is holistic and led by reality, not theory
- Provide robust play requirements and processes via the planning system.
- Provide viable funding of new play provision via S106 agreements
- Ensure that all age groups are catered for and that provision is local and accessible.
- Consider environmental factors, both "green" and any effects on communities.
- Involve local communities in the design, provision and ownership of schemes.
- Incorporate best practice into TDC's management and design of play provision.

#### Play space overview

The District Council has 43 play areas with more being discussed with developers.

<sup>11</sup> Subsequent actions have responded to this need, for example, there are two more large skateparks in Barnstaple and Ifracombe. Our recent consultation indicate there is still a demand for further improvements.

<sup>12</sup> Now superseded by the National Planning Policy Framework as followed by this study.

Research identifies that some of TDC's older play areas do not meet current standards in terms of location, access and construction. The aim is to renew or replace these as soon as possible. In addition, the Devon Playing Fields Association carried out a survey of outdoor sport and play provision within Devon which highlighted the fact that 21 parishes in Torridge (33% of the total in the district) do not have either sport or play facilities.

The Play Policy and Strategy provides a framework to develop targets and plans, to increase play opportunities and eliminate barriers to the take up of activity by disabled children and those with specific needs. It recognises that separate provision may sometimes be a valuable resource for particularly vulnerable children, use of a range of specialist services should only be at the choice of the child or their advocate and that all mainstream services must be welcoming and accessible to all children and young people.

### **Consultation**

As part of the development of the Torridge Play Strategy, an extensive children's consultation exercise was carried out throughout the whole of the district. During September 2006 every school's pupils were given a questionnaire and 85% were returned. Petitions were also received from young people highlighting the need for more provision in the district.

In addition, consultation was carried out through the Torridge District Sport Programmes in Summer 2006 seeking parents' views on current provision available.

Other consultation and research taken into account was:

- Early Years Excellence Centres
- Rural Holiday Provision in the Torrington Area
- Parish Plans
- Youth Council
- Devon Youth Service

Children were asked a range of questions relating to where they play and findings included:

- Children and young people think there is not enough play and youth facility provision
- 50% of all children regularly accessed designated play areas, but a large proportion of children stated that the play area was too far for them to walk to.
- Nearly half of the children stated that they did not feel safe when playing in a play area (all ages).
- Many young people reported that they watched TV or play computer games simply because no alternative provision was available.

Some of the key messages drawn from the consultation relevant to the Green Infrastructure strategy included:

- There is a general shortage of lack of play and youth facility provision - particularly for teenagers
- There is a need to expand provision in rural areas
- Wheeled sports provision, MUGAs and basketball hoops are popular with teenagers
- Provision for informal play and formal play space needs to be close to the neighbourhoods they serve
- The design and location of play and youth facilities needs to ensure they feel safe.

They should also be inclusive for disabled children and young people.

### Proposed Actions relevant to Green Infrastructure Strategy

- Provide more facilities for teenagers e.g. develop skate parks, shelters, MUGAs etc.
- Design play spaces that feel safe to users in parks throughout the District - and promote inclusion and access for disadvantaged and disabled children
- Provide for both informal and formal play space in new housing developments.
- Provide adequate informal play space in appropriate areas within new housing development
- Develop natural environment settings for play spaces particularly for older children e.g. at Northam Burrows
- Rationalise existing District Council play facilities: identify where new facilities and spaces (or more investment) is required; and establish any areas where play provision is no longer required or little used.
- Develop and rationalise play areas in deprived communities as a priority
- Develop formal Planning Guidance for Torridge to deliver play priorities
- Develop through Planning a "% for Play" policy for future funding of play activity and facilities
- Develop 'commuted sum' structure for developers to enable play areas to be sustainable for at least 10 years
- Expand Rural Play Provision Develop provision in rurally isolated areas where there is a need

### North Devon Leisure and Health Strategy: Skate Parks

Skating is a popular activity amongst people aged under 25. There are currently four designated skate parks located in South Molton, Braunton, Barnstaple (Rock Park) and Ilfracombe. Extensive consultation through the Market and Coastal Town Initiative (MCTI) drove the development at South Molton, as well as highlighting the need for provision of a skate facility in Ilfracombe; whilst 'Barnstaple - Our Town' community action plan had identified strong support for the skate park developments within the sub-regional centre.

The Strategy acknowledges that good skating provision as developed in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe, provides social and leisure opportunities through engagement with this particular group.

### Torridge Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy: Youth Facilities (2012)

#### Key findings from this study were:

- Youth facilities tend to be located in more active and (relatively) large settlements.
- There are communities in Torridge that are further than a five-minute drive from existing youth facilities.
- Nearly three quarters of the youth facilities visited (which are predominantly managed by TDC) are assessed to be of 'average' quality or better.

## 7.2 Stakeholder Views

### Play England

Play England have some broad observations about overall policy direction and advice on local standards as summarised below:

#### **Quantity**

Play England are keen to see a range of play spaces in all urban environments:

- A Door-step spaces close to home;
- B Local play spaces - larger areas within easy walking distance;
- C Neighbourhood spaces for play - larger spaces within walking distance; and
- D Destination/family sites - accessible by bicycle, public transport and with car parking.

They emphasise that play spaces do not just mean formal play areas. While these are included play spaces cover all areas of public open spaces that are "playable" e.g. spaces that are accessible, safe, appropriate for play and where play use is welcomed and encouraged.

They also point out the need for standards for smaller settlements and rural areas where the doorstep, local, neighbourhood, and destination hierarchy is unlikely to be appropriate.

#### **Quality**

Play England would like the Play England Design Guide *Design for Play* to be referenced and added as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Play England have developed a *Quality Assessment Tool* that can be used to judge the quality of individual play spaces. They recommend that local authorities consider adopting this as a means of assessing the quality of play spaces in the local area.

#### **Access**

Access is the key element for Play England as referred to in the Quantity section - a range of doorstep, local, neighbourhood, and destination play spaces with appropriate catchments.

Disability access is also an important issue for Play England and they would like local authorities to adopt the KIDS publication *Inclusion by Design* as a Supplementary Planning Document.

#### **Priorities**

Play England have a guidance document: *Better Places to Play through Planning*. The publication gives detailed guidance on setting local standards for access, quantity and quality of playable space. It also shows how provision for better play opportunities can be promoted in planning policies and processes; giving detail of how local development frameworks and planning control can be utilised in favour of child-friendly communities. They recommended that local authorities adopt this guidance generally in terms of play and spatial planning.

#### **Nature Play Initiative**

Given the feedback from various sources play in natural green space, the coast etc. a new initiative of Play England is of particular interest to North Devon and Torridge. By Nature Play

Play England simply mean children exploring and enjoying the natural environment through their freely-chosen play. As well as simply enjoying playing outdoors and discovering green spaces near their homes, nature play can include planting and growing vegetables, fruit and flowers; cooking outdoors; playing with the elements or making camps and dens with natural materials.

Play England has been awarded £500,000 for the Exploring Nature Play project, which is helping children to explore and become more aware of nature around them and the opportunities for play and enjoyment that it provides. The grant is from Natural England's Access to Nature programme - part of the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces initiative. They have recently published a series of nature play activity 'recipes'. The cards provide activities to explore nature and help children experience the benefits of connecting with the natural environment through play.

### **7.3 Young People Sessions**

Hearing directly from young people is important to provide an indication of their needs and aspirations as well as securing an understanding of the kinds of provision that they currently use and what their preferences are. We therefore met face to face with youth groups in Holsworthy, Barnstaple and Bideford. At the Holsworthy meeting, we discussed the provision in Torrington with youth workers who cover both areas. Some of their key issues and observations raised are summarised below:

#### ***Holsworthy***

##### **Use**

- Stanhope Park has a safe character, overlooked by houses and plenty of adult through traffic.
- The youth service in Holsworthy works with around 200 young people.
- Young people use the bus shelter in town. They do not experience any particular issues with being moved on or made to feel unwelcome.
- Young people like places that are their own.
- They use the leisure centre in Holsworthy, as well as facilities in Bude where the swimming pool needs an upgrade.
- Cricket, rugby, hockey, netball, football are popular. The MUGA at the secondary school is free to use and open outside school time.

##### **Quantity**

- There is nowhere for dog walking. (note, the new play area includes an area that would be open to young people with dogs, as well as a dog free area).
- Nice woodland or fields close to town would be good.
- Somewhere for off road bikes - humps and bumps. Less formal than park, a bit more wild. Land next to hospital is available, in the industrial estate.
- Skate park & play area are the main aspirations for this group in terms of outdoor space.

##### **Quality**

- The scout hut is cold, needs heating.

##### **Access**

- Very little open access to land. Farmers protect their land and access by young people is unwelcome.

- Holsworthy has one of biggest bussed-in school communities in Devon. Quite a few of the young people using youth centre live outside the town. They rely on parents for access to facilities.
- Access to wild open spaces for "leisure" - tree climbing etc. would be valued.
- Young people visit Bude for wildlife areas - for running, picnics etc, as well as for more formal facilities such as the swimming pool.
- Farmers won't let people visit countryside around Holsworthy. People would visit a nature area in the countryside around town.
- Bus service to Bude is good, but the last bus is too early (5pm). Bude has stuff that Holsworthy doesn't - supermarkets, better shops etc.
- A few young people live in the middle of nowhere - transport problems.

## **Torrington**

### **Use**

- DCC operate a detached youth service in Torrington. Youth Service is only organisation for young people in rural areas (outside uniformed organisations with long waiting lists).
- Torrington Common very well used. Young people make their own play equipment. A wild area, well managed by commons conservators and volunteers.
- Lots of young people hang out in each other's houses.
- Torrington needs employment and something done with old dairy. Kids play in the derelict building.
- River Torridge at Taddiport is well used in the summer.

### **Quantity**

- Young people in Torrington generally satisfied with open spaces. It is a self sufficient town.
- Lack of indoor community space - eg: a village hall - campaign to do up town hall to act as village hall, but this has led to it's own problems: The space underneath has been closed in so can't be used as a meeting place. Campaign for youth shelter in park has started.
- No youth centre in Torrington. Would be used, but no great groundswell of support for it.
- Facilities for rugby and football very good in Torrington. Organised activities are very good in Torrington.

### **Quality**

- Facilities for rugby and football very good in Torrington. Organised activities are very good in Torrington.

### **Access**

- Character of Rack Park in Torrington changes when detached youth worker turns up. Young people will not go to park in Torrington because no adult supervision.
- School sports facilities are gated and shut at night.
- Transport is an issue for young people - buses to Bideford and Barnstaple stop at 6pm. Barrier to access to facilities in Barnstaple and Bideford after college.

## **Bideford Youth Centre**

Young people attending the centre are generally Bideford based, but also attend from Appledore, Westward Ho! and Northam.

### **Use**

- Young people like to spectate sport.

- Victoria Park (opposite the centre) is very popular because it has a range of activities and lots of space for informal games. It is not all laid out for football pitches.
- The woods along the Tarka Trail beyond East the Water are used for camping out.

### **Access**

- The beach - young people travel to the beach especially for parties. Northam Burrows and Greensands beach were mentioned. The youth service run surfing courses and canoe trips to encourage young people to make the most of rivers and the sea. However, a lot of younger children never visit the sea. Young people who surf tend to keep their boards in friends garages who live on the coast - access to the beach with a board is difficult without a car. (The young people don't think the surf bus operated in Bideford). Parents do not take children to the beach.
- There are no free to use MUGAs, all are locked up. Cost is a barrier to use.

### **Quantity**

Discussion about play / open space provided on new estates. Often conflict is caused because play areas are too close to houses and are designed for younger children. Wild spaces on the edge of estates are used by young people, for den building and hanging around. Recent consultation in Appledore for new park showed that young people liked wild, not sterile spaces.

### **Quality**

- Youth shelters tend to be unattractive places. They are often in out of the way places, they need to be nearer to town. Bandstands are good, as are funky, organic designs. New modern shelters are not much liked.
- There was not much interest in a discussion about organised sports. However, there were a couple of points raised.
- There is frustration that goal posts in parks / open spaces do not have nets.

### ***Barnstaple Youth Centre, St Georges Road***

This group was comprised of adult and young youth workers as well as the young people attending the centre. The Centre attracts young people from all of Barnstaple, but most of those taking part in the discussion lived in Pilton / Ashleigh area - north and east Barnstaple.

### **Use**

- Rock Park, although it is a long way to go across town.
- Yeo Valley community woodlands. Well used and are more interesting than play areas.
- About half of the group took part in sport, this included climbing and fishing. Young people use the leisure centre, it is not considered to be too far away to use. There was some discussion that indoor facilities could be spread out around town, rather than in one place.

### **Quantity**

- Rock Park skate park. It is well used by skaters from all over Barnstaple and is looked after by its users. Distance was not seen as a barrier to access. Before the skate park was built, skaters used to travel to South Molton and Braunton to skate. Young people did not see another skate park on the west of Barnstaple as a priority.
- The youth centre provides a comfortable, safe place to go and chill out. "The Youth Centre is like another home, like a family" (Kelly).

## Quality

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Equipped play areas tend to be designed for little children. They get vandalised because they get boring very quickly. The same old stuff is put in over and over again - swings, slides, roundabouts. More exciting stuff is needed; the zip wire in Rock Park was mentioned. Young people would like to see more consultation with them when play areas are being designed. Several people were interested in having more outdoor exercise equipment in parks.

## Access

- There is nowhere to go in the evenings when the youth centre is shut. Young people will stay at home or go to each others houses at weekends and evenings. They feel uncomfortable sitting around town in a group, seen as causing trouble. They would use cafes in town if they were open in the evenings.
- Safety: A concern that was raised a number of times. Crossing town at night on your own was seen as a barrier (but not if you were part of a group). Parks and well used routes don't feel safe if they are not well lit. Young people felt happier in a situation where there was some adult supervision or presence - e.g. park attendants, youth workers.
- Access to the beach. In the group interviewed, none had been to the beach more than twice during the summer, and then they went with their parents. Beaches were thought to be a long way to go for 2 - 3 hours. Public transport cost was not an issue, but knowledge of bus times and routes was sketchy and seen as a barrier to access. Adventure Action is a programme that provides surf lessons for young people. The youth service organise trips to the beach every year as a way of showing young people that the beaches are accessible.
- Charging for use of astros (MUGAs) is unpopular and a barrier to use. Young people will break into locked MUGAs to use them.

## Some Priorities

- A comfortable, safe place to meet that is free to use (unlike cafes, cinema).
- Adult supervision / presence is important in well used places, for a feeling of safety.
- Make use of the unused playing fields at the back of the youth centre on St. Georges Road.

## Young People Consultation Exercise

We also undertook a more focused consultation exercise at the youth clubs with a smaller number of young people (10 in total) on some general issues about leisure, play and recreation; ages ranged from 11 to 15 with a fairly equal mix of boys and girls. Some of the key findings from this process were:

- The kinds of outdoor spaces and facilities areas that were most commonly used or visited by the majority of young people were local parks and recreation grounds and playing fields. More than half also reported that they hung/played out "on the street".
- Half of the young people said they used a grass kickabout area and half said they met and hung out in the town/village centre.
- Just less than half reported using formal play areas and youth shelters.
- One young person noted that they lived "in the middle of nowhere" and that there were no such facilities.
- Of those who expressed a view a clear majority agreed that broadly speaking there were enough outdoor youth facilities and spaces to meet locally.
- There was a similar majority view that in general there were enough play areas for younger children (under 13).

- Just over half thought that in general play areas for younger children (under 13) were not of good quality and could do with better maintenance.
- A majority of the young people who expressed a view said that they liked their nearest place to visit/hang out and that it was more important to keep that than provide a new, more exciting area a bit further away. Only one young person thought that their nearest outdoor place to visit/hang out/meet friends was too small and not interesting enough.
- On the other hand a majority of the young people also said that they would be happy to walk a bit further to somewhere bigger, where there is more to do and that is more interesting.
- All the young people who expressed an opinion said that they would like to have a say in how new areas for young people should be built and how existing spaces could be improved.

### **Priorities for new/improved outdoor recreational spaces**

We asked the young people what kind of outdoor facilities they would like to see more of or be improved. The four most commonly highlighted facilities for new/improved provision were:

- Wheeled sports facilities (skateboard, BMX, stunt cycling etc.);
- Somewhere safe to meet, sit and chat with friends e.g. a youth shelter;
- Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs); and
- Play areas with more challenging equipment for teenagers

Another common priority highlighted was simply to have access to bigger areas of public open space.

### **Indoor recreational facilities/services**

- The most commonly visited kind of facility visited were swimming pools and youth clubs (the latter of course to be expected). Other facilities/services used were leisure/sports centres, sports clubs/activities and arts/music/dance groups.
- The quality of swimming pools used was rated as very good or good by a clear majority of users as were youth clubs. Leisure/sports centres, sports clubs/activities and arts/music/dance groups were generally rated as good or OK by the majority of users.
- A small number of the young people expressed a view that their experiences with sports clubs/activities and scouts/guides led them to rate their quality as very poor.
- As regards priorities for new/improved facilities and services the 3 most commonly identified were:
  - Swimming pools;
  - Leisure/sports centres; and
  - Sports clubs/activities.

## **7.4 Household and Community Organisations Surveys**

### **Household survey**

The household survey revealed that all households recognised the importance of provision for children and young people in relation to open space use. For example:

- Significant numbers of households indicated a need for more outdoor facilities for teenagers (48%) with a lower, but still significant, proportion highlighting a need for more play areas (40%).

- Nearly 40% of households highlighted the quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
- Nearly a quarter of households would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes to access a local play area and for youth facilities no more than 10 minutes.
- The normal mode of access to play areas and youth facilities is by foot or bicycle.
- While both youth facilities and play areas feature high in households list of priorities for improvement, it is clear that while the priority need for youth facilities is to provide more of such facilities, the priority for play areas is for improvements to the quality of what currently exists.

## Community Groups Survey

Broadly speaking, the majority view from the community and youth organisations on the quality of facilities for play and youth across the study area was that in general the quality of parks and play areas is regarded as good in contrast to facilities for teenagers which many regard as poor.

Some of the specific comments from the survey directly relevant to play facilities for children and young people are noted below:

Group	Comments
North Devon Homes (Forches & The Hangout Youth Clubs)	Not enough outdoor youth facilities, play areas, or sports facilities for children and young people. There is a need for more free (or very cheap) sports places for young people. We probably do have enough indoor youth facilities.  We need more places for young people to meet outdoors; shelters and seats; and areas of grass to sit on or kick a ball about.
Torridge District Scouts	Not enough sports facilities. Many facilities are not accessible to youth groups and/or individuals at a reasonable cost (eg Bideford College facilities). Facilities at schools/colleges should be more affordable and accessible out of school hours  We need more playschemes, out-of-school clubs; and more scouts, cubs, guides etc. Guiding and scouting requires volunteers to run these activities. We have over 100 young people on the waiting list in Bideford, but a lack of adult volunteers means we are not able to offer scouting to more young people
Coastwise North Devon	We are often surprised to find that many local youngsters are totally unfamiliar with our beaches as places of nature and healthy enjoyment.
Ilfracombe in Bloom	We have several clubs that cover outdoor activities but there is no kick around area for children & youths. Whilst there are several play areas for younger children there is very little for teenagers.
North Devon Coast AONB	Greater innovation is needed in the management and delivery of children's play. For a good example look at the English Riviera Geopark play area and how it was funded

## 7.5 School and Colleges - Community use

### North Devon School Games Co-ordinator

We spoke to Rebecca Gilchrist who is responsible for the Schools Games competitions in North Devon and Torridge. This involves partnerships between primary and secondary schools based around a programme of schools sports competitions hosted by a number of schools. In this respect she has a good overview of sports facilities on School sites.

Rebecca's information and observations on sports facilities on secondary school/college sites and the extent of community use are summarised in the table below:

**North Devon**

School	Pitches	Other Facilities	Community Use	Notes
Ilfracombe Academy	Killacleave Playing Fields: 2 adult pitches, 1 mini soccer. On site: 1 mini soccer pitch.	Sports Hall, Tennis Courts, artificial cricket	Yes - but not formalised into community use agreement	Full size ATP to be opened Nov 2013 (will have full community use)
Braunton College	Tweedies: 2 rugby pitches	Sports Hall, Tennis Courts, Athletics Track, Half-size 3G	Yes - but limited - good system for community use of 3G pitch - see notes	3G pitch has a swipe card system and portaloos within cage providing easy community access - At capacity.
Pilton College (Barnstaple)	2 football pitches and 2 rugby pitches	Sports Hall, Half-size astro	Yes - but limited. No formal agreement	ATP at capacity - no toilets
Park School (Barnstaple)	2 adult pitches and 9-a-side pitch	Full-size astro, Sports Hall, Netball courts, cricket pitch.	Extensive Community use managed by NDDC	Community use contract in place
South Molton College	1 adult pitches and 2 junior pitches	Sports hall, tennis courts, artificial cricket, half-size 3G	Yes - but limited. No formal agreement	ATP still has some capacity for additional community use
Chulmleigh College	2 adult pitches	Sports hall, half-size astro, tennis courts, multi-gym	Yes - managed by community association	ATP has capacity for more community use

*West Buckland School (private)*

- This school has extensive high quality sports facilities including a fitness suite and sports hall; an indoor 25m swimming pool; cricket, rugby and football grass pitches; an all-weather hockey pitch; tennis and squash courts; two shooting ranges; an obstacle course and a nine hole golf course. There is some community use but the location is rural and hence fairly difficult to access.

**Torridge**

School	Pitches	Other Facilities	Community Use	Notes
Bideford College	Floodlit full size ATP; 8 tennis/netball courts; grass pitches	6 court sports hall; fitness suite; gym	Available for hire by clubs and groups	Very expensive - barrier to most clubs using facilities
Holsworthy College	Floodlit MUGA; grass pitches; fitness suite	Sports Hall	Used by young people in particular	Not aware of any widespread use by local clubs
Great Torrington Academy	1/2 size 3G pitch	Sports Hall; Gym; climbing wall	Yes - extensive community use	Full programme of community use

There are two private schools in Torridge with good sports facilities:

- *Shebbear School, Beaworthy* - facilities include sports fields and tennis courts; all weather sports pitch; cricket nets; indoor sports hall; gymnasium and dance studio. There is some community use.
- *Kingsley School, Bideford* - also has a range of facilities - sports hall, grass pitches, tennis courts, and sports hall. The school has plans to develop its sports facilities by selling some of its grounds. New facilities would include a floodlit artificial all-weather pitch/MUGA (hockey type); a rugby pitch and a grass athletics track. There is already a good deal of community use of facilities and this would apply to the proposed new facilities.

### Primary Schools

Some of the primary schools have MUGAS/ half-size ATPs e.g. Great Torrington Primary but these tend not to be easily and regularly available for community use.

### Quantity, Quality and Access issues

- Most of the schools in North Devon/ Torridge have enough facilities to meet their needs though some of the smaller primary schools have limited facilities and many would benefit from improvement.
- Bideford College is fairly recently opened and all its facilities are of a high quality. Access for community use is limited however because of high hire costs.
- The quality of sports facilities at all the state secondary schools is quite good, with no obvious priority needs for improvement/refurbishment. The new ATP at Ilfracombe will mean all the secondary schools have an ATP (some half-size).
- Access for community use is more of a widespread issue with few of the schools having formal or long term agreements or contacts. Much community use is fairly ad hoc and changeable from year to year.

## 7.6 Access to play and youth facilities for disabled children

Access to play and leisure for disabled young people has been highlighted by various stakeholders as a key issue and in relation to improvements for the future the following box provides findings from a valuable research study undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree foundation.

### **Disabled teenagers' experiences of access to inclusive leisure (Joseph Rowntree Foundation - Pippa Murray -2003)**

Leisure is a key area in paving the way towards full community inclusion and participation. It takes on an additional significance for disabled young people when barriers to full participation in education and employment result in them having more time for leisure pursuits whilst simultaneously experiencing greater difficulty in accessing leisure services, activities, and pastimes. This research project consulted with over 100 disabled teenagers to uncover their experience of 'inclusive leisure'. The teenagers said that:

- Disabled young people felt that their experiences at school/college strongly affected

their access to friends and leisure outside school.

- Many young disabled people described their lives being tainted with the experiences of isolation, loneliness and exclusion.
- Whereas professionals viewed inclusive leisure as a means of learning life skills, increasing independence and/or self-esteem, young people focused on friendships and fun.
- Whilst wanting to participate in ordinary, mainstream leisure activities, disabled young people welcomed the opportunity to meet with each other in order to share their mutual experience.
- Lack of appropriate support (such as transport, personal assistance, and support to facilitate and/or interpret communication) was a major barrier to the participation of disabled young people in ordinary leisure activities. This was particularly apparent for disabled young people with complex impairments and high support needs.
- Beyond the specific experience of exclusion due to impairment, the interests and concerns of disabled young people are no different from those of non-disabled teenagers

In addition Play England referred to an excellent publication published by KIDS (which is a national voluntary organisation promoting improved access to play for disabled children and young people) called *Inclusion by Design*. This document supplies very good practical guidance in relation to inclusive design of play and youth facilities.

## 7.7 Children, Young People and Colleges/Schools - Key Findings

### Quantity

- The need for more outdoor facilities for teenagers is one of the most frequently highlighted by households (48% report that there are not enough of such facilities).
- Well over a third (40%) of households also considers that there are not enough play areas.
- The provision of play and youth facilities in the parishes is very varied and many parishes report a shortage of such facilities.

### Quality

- Nearly a half of households rate the quality of play areas overall as good or very good compared to only 20% for outdoor youth facilities.
- Nearly 40% rate the quality of youth facilities as poor or very poor compared to only 12% for play areas.
- A number of parishes highlight the need to improve the quality of local play and youth facilities.
- Broadly speaking, the majority view from the community and youth organisations on the quality of facilities for play and youth across the study area was that in general the quality of parks and play areas is regarded as good in contrast to facilities for teenagers which many regard as poor
- Young people express a wish to have improved access to wilder natural green spaces, the coast, beaches etc. Young people liked wild, not sterile spaces.
- There is a need for play spaces to provide more challenging and “risky” play opportunities, particularly for older children.
- There is need to ensure that the design of play and youth facilities is inclusive as regards use by disabled children and young people.

- Young people say that many activities are too far away, are too expensive and are too few and far between.
- Many young people simply wanted safe places to meet their friends without being moved on.
- There was specific interest in developing more skate parks, youth zones and areas to ride bikes over rough, bump terrain, jumps etc.
- Youth shelters tend to be unattractive places. They are often in out of the way places, they need to be nearer to town. Bandstands are good, as are funky, organic designs. New modern shelters are not much liked.
- Young people value youth centres but they are not open enough.

### **Access**

- The normal mode of access to play areas and youth facilities is by foot or bicycle. Nearly a quarter of households would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes to access a local play area and for youth facilities no more than 10 minutes.
- It is important that younger children have access to some kind of play space within easy walking distance from home and that teenagers have access to spaces to hang out independently with friends.
- It appears that children and young people will walk and cycle further to access more interesting sites and these will therefore have a larger “catchment”. Young people will walk further than younger children to access such sites.
- Disability - need for a mix of greater inclusivity re all play facilities and schemes; and special provision at the request/preference of the children/young people
- The need for improved transport to facilities for children and young people (particularly in the rural areas) and safe walking and cycling routes to play opportunities.
- Cost is a barrier to using some facilities that young people think should be free e.g. MUGAs
- Young people in the rural areas point out that many local farmers do not allow access into the countryside and that they cannot access such open space.

### **Colleges and Schools**

- Local secondary schools and colleges are key providers in relation to publically accessible sports and leisure opportunities.
- There is potential for greater community use of these facilities. The extent of such use is extremely varied between different schools. Much community use is fairly ad hoc and changeable from year to year
- The cost of accessing community use of schools is also very varied and many are prohibitive.
- Most of the schools in North Devon/ Torridge have enough facilities to meet their needs though some of the smaller primary schools have limited facilities and many would benefit from improvement.
- Bideford College is fairly recently opened and all its facilities are of a high quality. Access for community use is limited however because of high hire costs.
- The quality of sports facilities at all the secondary schools is quite good, with no obvious priority needs for improvement/refurbishment. The new ATP at Ilfracombe will mean all the secondary schools have an ATP (some half-size).

### **Other Issues and priorities**

- While both youth facilities and play areas feature high in households list of priorities

for improvement, it is clear that while the priority need for youth facilities is to provide more of such facilities, the priority for play areas is for improvements to the quality of what currently exists.

- Children and teenagers play and hang out regularly “on the street”, near local shops, etc as well as on spaces planned for play and recreation. The study should therefore highlight planning related issues aimed at making the wider residential environment more child-friendly.
- A key barrier to teenagers’ use of “public” open space is that they are often moved on by nearby residents and authorities such as the police. They need more tolerance and places recognised as “theirs”.
- Play England provide excellent guidance on play and spatial planning; play space design; a Quality Assessment Tool for play spaces; and managing risk in play. Some of these could be adopted as guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- There is potential for more community (extended) use of school facilities for play (after school, weekends and during holidays).

## **8 CROSS BOUNDARY ISSUES - NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES**

This section reviews feedback from neighbouring Local Authorities in relation to their Green Infrastructure Strategies. In addition to this the study will also consider cross boundary issues relating to catchments for major sports facilities such as swimming pools and sports halls.

### ***Exmoor National Park***

#### **Boundaries**

The National Park is contained partly within North Devon District, to the north and west of the district.

#### **Green Infrastructure Issues**

Exmoor contains a large reserve of accessible natural greenspace that is relatively easily accessible to residents of North Devon. Much of the area is classed as open access land.

Long distance trails connect North Devon and Exmoor, including the National Cycle Network, Macmillan Way and South West Coast Path.

#### **Relevant Strategies**

The National Park's Partnership Plan (2012 - 2017) sets out the Park Authority's priorities for action over the next 5 years. These cover three programmes: A - A Thriving, Living Landscape; B - Connecting People and Places; C - Towards a Sustainable Future.

Under programme A, the National Park aim to "Maintain the open character of moorland and the range of public benefits that moorland landscapes deliver" (Priority A2).

Programme B covers the following priorities:

- Priority B1 Promote Exmoor National Park as a special destination and develop the Exmoor brand.
- Priority B2 Maintain high quality rights of way, services and facilities to enable people to explore and experience the special qualities of the National Park.
- Priority B3 Inform, inspire and engage people about Exmoor's special qualities.

### ***Mid Devon District Council***

#### **Boundaries**

Mid Devon District abuts both North Devon and Torridge to the East and South.

#### **Green Infrastructure Issues**

There is a shortage of accessible natural greenspace in the rural areas to the west of Mid Devon, as well as to the east and south of North Devon and Torridge. There is scope for shared use of greenspace across borders of the 3 local authorities.

#### **Relevant Strategies**

A Green Infrastructure Strategy is in preparation by Mid Devon. The Strategy recognises that there are shortages of accessible natural greenspace in the west of the district (on the North Devon boundary) and has recognised that these shortages may be met by developments in neighbouring authorities. Policy GI/1 states:

## “Delivery of Green Infrastructure

The Council will work in partnership with neighbouring authorities, local communities and other stakeholders to deliver enhancements to the green infrastructure network, including:

- a Habitat restoration and creation to reduce habitat fragmentation
- b Provision of public open space and allotments
- c Public access to natural green space and woodland
- d Flood attenuation
- e Environmentally sustainable food and fuel production

There are several agencies specialising in aspects of the GI network, including Natural England, the Environment Agency, English Heritage, Devon Wildlife Trust and Devon County Council. The Council must engage with all these partners to achieve genuine and holistic GI enhancement, as well as community and interest groups, allotment associations, parish councils and landowners. The Council may not always be the lead organisation but will play an active role in supporting local communities and bringing projects to fruition, including those which fall outside the Mid Devon boundary but bring a demonstrable benefit to Mid Devon residents.”

The Strategy identifies areas in North Devon District as serving the population of Mid Devon. These areas are:

- Hares Down Open Access Area;
- Witheridge Moor Open Access Area; and
- Strategic Nature Areas: North of Hares Down; Moorland between Huntacott Water and Little Dart rivers, east of Chulmleigh.

## ***West Devon District Council***

### **Boundaries**

West Devon lies to the south of Torridge District, between Mid Devon District and Cornwall.

### **Relevant Strategies**

An Open Spaces Strategy was adopted in 2007; no particular cross border issues are identified with North Devon or Torridge. South West Devon Connecting Communities brings together a number of partners, including West Devon and South Hams, to share a number of services including strategic planning. This organisation has published a number of strategic priority documents, including one on The Environment. While strategic rather than detailed in nature, the document recognises the importance of Green Infrastructure and, in its delivery plan, considers opportunities for local green infrastructure plans.

### **Green Infrastructure Issues**

The northern parts of West Devon are, much like the bordering parts of Torridge, predominantly rural in nature with the accompanying issues of lack of access to facilities and accessible greenspace. Dartmoor National Park, in the south of the district, is a large resource of Open Access Land.

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## ***Cornwall Council***

### **Boundaries**

Cornwall Council follows the western boundary of Torridge District.

### **Relevant Strategies**

Cornwall adopted a Green Infrastructure Strategy in July 2013. The purpose of the Strategy is to guide and shape the planning and delivery of Cornwall's green infrastructure up to 2030.

### **Green Infrastructure Issues**

Consultation with young people at Holsworthy Youth Centre revealed that Bude is more likely to be a destination for formal and informal recreation than either Bideford or Barnstaple. The closest sandy, tourist beaches for those living in rural south and west Torridge are around Bude, as is the most accessible leisure centre.

The South West Coast Path continues from the Devon border through Cornwall and there are aspirations to connect Holsworthy and Bude with a safe cycling route as a continuation of the Tarka Trail.

## ***Devon County Council***

The County is currently revising their Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) turning it into a web based resource rather than a single document. The GIS does not include formal outdoor recreation or Sports themes, but sets a series of principles and priorities that are to be considered by districts preparing their own green infrastructure strategies. These are:

- Generating income and encouraging investment;
- Water resilience and flood risk management;
- Enhancing biodiversity and geo diversity;
- Connecting people and places through landscape and heritage;
- Health, wellbeing and access to nature;
- Securing local food supply; and
- Climate change - adaptation and mitigation.

As part of the work being carried out by DCC, information is being collected that identifies areas where access to natural greenspace is below Natural England standards and has matched that with areas where there is a poor right of way network. This will be available shortly.

### **Conclusions:**

Residents of North Devon and Torridge use facilities and services in neighbouring districts, in particular formal recreation facilities and beaches in and around Bude and accessible natural greenspace on Exmoor.

There is scope for districts to work together to make the most of scarce accessible natural greenspace resources in the south of Torridge and North Devon and the east of North Devon.

## 9. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The survey work, stakeholder consultation, desk-based research and group sessions has highlighted a wide range of issues of value to the wider Green Infrastructure study. There is a strong degree of consistency across the various sources on key areas of local need and aspiration from which we can be confident that the findings are robust and reliable, providing a strong evidence base to be combined with the detailed facilities audit.

### Outdoor Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces

Some overall points of interest relating to green infrastructure and open spaces include:

- The extent to which natural green spaces are valued by local people, including children and young people, as key recreational assets.
- The extent to which open spaces are valued in relation to their contribution to biodiversity, for example, over 80% of the town and parish councils say that having multi-functional open space to support biodiversity etc. is either important or very important (of which 58% think it is very important).
- It is the areas' seaside coast and beaches that are most commonly used by most households on regular monthly basis (76%). Footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths; and country parks/countryside and woodlands are also accessed at least monthly by over 70% of households.
- Other than for footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths a majority of households reported that there were currently enough of all of the various typologies of outdoor green infrastructure.
- A majority of residents think there is a need for more footpaths, bridleways and cyclepaths; and 50% thought that there should be more wildlife areas/nature reserves. Nearly half of the households highlighted a need for more outdoor facilities for teenagers.
- Other aspects where there was a significant view of there being a shortfall were parks and play areas; and good access to the sea, coast and beaches
- Most individuals and groups report that in general the quality of public open spaces across the study area is satisfactory. Outdoor facilities for teenagers are a notable exception in this general view.
- The importance placed by local people on measures to improve safety and security, maintaining spaces to a decent standard and the need for easy access to and within open spaces and facilities.
- Common areas of concern for many parish councils included: not enough multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and areas for teenagers; not enough allotments; and the poor quality of playing pitches.
- As regards sports pitch and courts provision it is important to consider the supply and demand in relation to the needs of the individual sports. Many sources suggest a particular shortage of football and rugby pitches.
- Respondents highlight that the quality of sports pitches and outdoor courts is very variable across the study area.
- There is great variance in respondents' apparent willingness to spend time travelling to different types of opportunity and the preferred mode of transport appropriate for each. In drawing up the "access" element of specific local standards for different kinds of open space/facility it is clearly very important to take careful note of all of these findings.

- The rural nature of much of the area and related transport difficulties means that as much as possible needs to be provided locally or opportunities provided to access facilities and activities more readily.
- Problems faced in accessing facilities and opportunities for people with disabilities and limited mobility.
- There is a need to promote initiatives to enable improved community access to and use of the coastal area in an appropriate way.

Some other important factors that have been highlighted consistently through the consultation exercise include:

- The need for improved provision in terms of both quantity and quality for children and young people, in particular for the older age range.
- The demand for a full sized 3G artificial turf pitch that can be used for both football and rugby.
- The potential for more and better cycling, and footpath links within the study area e.g. additional links to the Tarka Trail.
- The need for improving accessibility in both physical and cost terms.
- The potential for greater community use of school facilities.

## **Built Facilities**

Some overall points of interest relating to built facilities include:

- Indoor swimming pools are used regularly by significant numbers (49% of households report using them at least monthly) as are the areas' village/community halls (42%). Over 30% of household also visit sports/leisure centres at least monthly.
- The most frequently built facilities visited by users (at least weekly) are the swimming pools (41% - of which 5% visit almost every day); and sports/leisure centres (34% - of which 4% visit nearly every day). Demand from clubs for pool space is also very high and in addition to local community use of pools there is significant seasonal tourism demand.
- A significant number of households and organisations highlighted a shortage of swimming pool space across the study area. In relation to indoor facilities the priority highlighted by the largest number of households for new/improved provision was pools.
- There appears to be a demand for various indoor sports training facilities specific to individual sports.
- There is a fairly good distribution of village/community halls across the study area but the quality and adequacy of the facilities to meet local need is very varied.
- Consultation indicates a shortage of indoor facilities for children and youth - there are a limited number of dedicated youth centres and opening times do not meet local demand. Many community/village halls do not provide youth clubs.
- Views on the quality of sports halls and swimming pools is quite varied with nearly 37% deeming them good or very good but over 16% saying quality is poor or very poor.
- Residents are more likely than not to drive to swimming pools, sports/leisure centres and specialist sports facilities.
- More than 50% of residents would not wish to travel more than 15 minutes to use a swimming pool or sports hall. Only 28% would be happy to travel more than 20 minutes to access a swimming pool.
- Colleges and local secondary schools are key providers in relation to publically accessible indoor sports and leisure opportunities.
- There is potential for greater community use of these facilities and some schools and the fees charged by some are prohibitive to many groups.