

NORTHERN DEVON PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY 2017 – 2031

Overview

North Devon Council and Torrington District Council have worked together in partnership with Sport England and the National Governing Bodies for Football, Rugby Union, Cricket, Hockey and Bowls to develop a Playing Pitch Strategy for the area.

The Vision for the Strategy is:

“To fully understand the quantity and quality of our current stock of playing pitches and changing provision to ensure that we: Protect the facilities that are used and valued by our current population; Provide new facilities in the right locations to cater for increased demand and population; and Enhance facilities to ensure that quality meets twenty-first century expectations and attracts new and existing users.”

The Strategy provides a framework for ensuring the development, and sustainability, of larger urban pitch sport sites, which are capable of providing a range of opportunities for all members of the community, whilst also protecting the network of smaller, single pitch sport sites in rural areas which help to sustain the very fabric of village life.

Key messages

- The stock of pitch facilities for football, cricket, rugby and hockey across Northern Devon is not sufficient to meet current and future demand.
- To meet needs for training and matchplay, there are a number of sites requiring improvements to drainage, changing facilities, floodlighting and perimeter fencing. Several cricket pitch sites require site screens and all weather practice facilities.
- Pitches on secondary school sites are a vital part of the stock. Notably, eleven out of thirteen artificial grass pitches (AGPs) in Northern Devon are on secondary or independent school sites. Existing community use needs to be secured, protected and increased wherever possible to meet identified deficiencies.
- A large proportion of the stock in rural areas, are single pitch sites. Whilst there has been a decline in football and cricket activity in some of these smaller settlements, the pitches provide an important role as public open space as well as a site for formal pitch sports. Therefore efforts should be focused to protect these sites and encourage increased use for physical activity.
- It is critical for the ongoing sustainability of new provision that: pitch and ancillary facilities adhere to appropriate NGB and Sport England standards; outdoor and indoor facilities are co-located to encourage cross-participation; facilities are modern and well maintained; and suitable management is in place to maximise usage and manage finances responsibly to ensure sustainability (including ring-fencing funds for maintenance and replacement where required).
- The playing pitch resource needs to be managed flexibly in order to respond to changing patterns of participation. Ideally, any new grass provision will be a minimum of 2 hectares in size (to allow for two pitches), with appropriate run-off being provided to enable pitches to be marked for both adult and junior usage. New winter sports pitches should also be able to accommodate a cricket pitch, where need has been identified.

The big challenges and opportunities

- Providing sufficient facilities to accommodate current demand for the pitch sports i.e. avoiding the overplaying of facilities and accommodating peak time demand, especially for adult football on Saturday afternoons, and for training and Sunday morning junior rugby play at the main clubs.
- Ensuring that current proposals for new provision in association with new housing are brought to fruition to meet the expected increase in demand for both training and matchplay facilities. From 2017-2031 this equates to an increase in the following number of teams (all age groups): 40 football, 18 cricket and 14 rugby teams in North Devon and 35 football, 12 cricket and 8 rugby teams in Torridge. 10 new hockey teams are expected to form across the two authorities.
- Addressing the deficiencies in artificial grass pitch provision, particularly the requirement for a full-size AGP in Barnstaple and an additional AGP in Bideford.
- Ensuring that new and existing 3G Football Turf Pitches (FTPs), notably at Bideford College, are FA/FIFA accredited for matchplay and fully used.
- Agreeing provision for the pitch sports at King George V Playing Fields, Bideford, addressing the requirements of football, cricket and rugby and, depending on the use of Bideford College, agree the size of the additional 3G football turf provision required.
- Sustainably accommodating new forms of the pitch sports, such as small sided football and T20 cricket, and adapting to changing patterns of demand.
- Providing suitable and accessible training facilities for rugby, either on grass or artificial grass pitches.
- Attracting new participants into pitch sports, including people with disabilities and women and girls.
- Actively addressing problems associated with pitches that are located on public open space, such as litter and dog fouling.
- Ensuring that the requirements of younger players (both girls and boys) are fully catered for, by providing: a range of age-appropriate pitch sizes at hub sites for football; suitable non turf wickets for cricket if required; sufficient access for training and matchplay for junior/mini rugby; the development of training and matchplay opportunities for junior hockey players; and appropriate changing facilities.
- Maintain dialogue with RMB Chivenor over the future of pitch sport facilities at the base, including World Rugby AGP, and protect, ideally for future community use.
- Maintain the current level of provision of outdoor bowling greens and support measures to increase participation in bowls.

Northern Devon needs summary

- Current and future demand for football in Northern Devon can only be met through new provision, either grass and/or artificial grass pitches. More football pitches are required in Barnstaple, Roundswell/Sticklepath/Larkbeare, Fremington and Ilfracombe in North Devon and Bideford and Northam in Torridge.
- Two additional cricket pitches are to be required in North Devon and one in Torridge. Developing community use of The Park School cricket pitch in Barnstaple would meet one requirement for North Devon; another pitch is required in Ilfracombe. A replacement pitch is required for Bideford, Littleham & Westward Ho! CC, plus additional pitch in the Bideford Sub Area.
- Barnstaple RFC and Bideford RFC both require floodlighting to existing pitches and additional pitch provision to meet matchplay and training requirements.
- A full-size 3G FTP is required in Barnstaple.
- If Bideford College's 3G FTP is not available for matchplay, a full-size 3G FTP is also required in Bideford.
- Additional access for training and matchplay for hockey is required on appropriate sand based AGPs in the study area, namely The Park School, Barnstaple and Kingsley School, Bideford (which should be fully integrated with the development of hockey in the area).

Priority Sport Specific Actions

	PROTECT	ENHANCE	PROVIDE <i>(Includes improving access to existing provision)</i>
Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All existing football pitch sites, allowing for flexibility of pitch sizes to meet future demand and patterns of play. Secure access to 3G FTP at Bideford College for matchplay (FA/FIFA Accreditation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ground improvements (drainage, perimeter fencing, floodlighting etc) at identified sites Improved changing facilities, suitable for use by women, girls and people with disabilities 	<p><i>North Devon, at least:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 adult pitches 7 youth pitches (11v11 & 9v9) 3 mini pitches (7v7 & 5v5) 1 full size FA/FIFA accredited 3G Football Turf Pitch (FTP) in Barnstaple <p><i>Torrige, at least:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 adult pitches 6 youth pitches (11v11 & 9v9) 3 mini pitches (7v7 & 5v5) 1 full size FA/FIFA accredited 3G FTP in Bideford Half size 3G FTP in Holsworthy
Cricket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing level of cricket provision including non turf wickets on school sites to meet future demand, particularly from junior players and alternative forms of the game such as T20. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved changing facilities and pavilions at identified sites Replacement of Bideford, Littleham & Westward Ho! cricket pitch 	<p><i>North Devon:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to two new cricket pitches: One in Barnstaple at The Park School when demand is reached; Support developments in Ilfracombe at Rugby Club or Southern Extension. <p><i>Torrige:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New cricket pitch in Bideford sub area (ideally two pitch site incorporating replacement facility for Bideford, Littleham & Westward Ho! CC) Non-turf practice facilities at identified sites
Rugby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All existing rugby pitches, including those on school sites, where community use needs to be secured. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floodlighting of Barnstaple RFC 2nd pitch & Bideford RFC 2nd pitch (KGV Playing Fields) Security of tenure of Bridge Field for Barnstaple RFC Changing facilities at Barnstaple RFC to increase capacity 	<p><i>North Devon:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An additional 3 rugby pitches, including 1 in Barnstaple <p><i>Torrige:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An additional 2 rugby pitches, including 1 in Bideford
Hockey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Park School AGP as a sand based AGP suitable for hockey. The existing level of priority access for hockey to The Park School AGP. Community usage of Kingsley School sand AGP for hockey training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Park School sand based AGP will require refurbishment in 3 to 5 years The number of hours that sand based AGPs are available for training and matchplay in order to meet future demand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provision of a 3G FTP in Barnstaple will enable the transfer of 7.5 hours of football usage away from The Park School, thus freeing up the slots anticipated to be required for hockey training and matchplay.