

# Briefing Paper for Scrutiny, 15 February 2018

## Artificial Sports Pitches

### 1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **The purpose of the paper is to provide an update report for the Scrutiny Committee reviewing the use of 2G and 3G artificial pitch provision in the Scottish Borders. Also an update on the delivery of Selkirk & Hawick facilities and the maintenance works undertaken in 2017/18.**
- 1.2 In February 2017 a paper was presented to the Committee detailing usage, costs, benefits and any issues relating to artificial pitches already installed in the Scottish Borders.

### 2.0 Background

- 2.1 Live Borders operate six artificial pitches across the region, four second generation (2G) pitches and two third generation (3G) pitches.
- 2.2 2G pitches are predominantly sand dressed or sand filled pitches certified by the Federation of International Hockey (FIH) for use for competitive hockey fixtures. 3G pitches consist of a longer pile length with rubber infill and are certified by FIFA and World Rugby allowing competitive rugby and football matches to be played.
- 2.3 Usage across the pitches consists of a mix of sports spanning a variety of ages and abilities from grass roots to performance.
- 2.4 As noted in the previous report, artificial pitches provide many benefits including enabling clubs and groups to secure access to good quality affordable training facilities, providing the opportunity to play all year round under floodlights and providing consistent quality playing surfaces enabling play to be dynamic, fast and fun. All of which lead to increased participation.
- 2.5 The pitches also bring the added benefit of relieving pressure on existing grass pitches, in turn helping to improve quality and reduce maintenance costs for the local authority.
- 2.6 Please note the majority of this report only covers the artificial pitches currently operated by Live Borders. Other existing 2G pitches, mainly located on the school estate, are not managed by Live Borders but information regarding recent maintenance is included later in the report.

### 3.0 Usage (Live Borders Managed Facilities)

- 3.1 Following on from usage statistics provided in the previous report, Table 1 below compares the total number of visits per pitch for 2016/17 against prior year.

**Table 1: Total usage comparison per pitch**

Locality	Surface Type	2015/16	2016/17
Galashiels	3G	43,799	48,538
Tweedbank	2G	24,790	26,644
Peebles*	2G	16,313	17,104
Selkirk*	2G	4,200	2,344
Hawick**	2G & 3G	12,320	9,121
<b>Total Usage</b>		<b>101,422</b>	<b>103,751</b>

**NB:** \*School usage is not included in the totals. Peebles & Selkirk 2G pitches are located on the school estate and not operated by Live Borders during school hours.

\*\* The Hawick 3G was only open for part of the 2016/17 reporting period (December 2016) and as such only 4 months of usage is reported.

- 3.2 The figures highlight an increase in usage from prior year, the most notable being a 10% increase in usage at the Galashiels 3G.
- 3.3 Usage statistics for the Hawick pitches are positive returning just over 9000 visits for the first 4 months of operation with many of the local clubs now regularly using the facilities.
- 3.4 The facilities are used by a broad spectrum of groups including clubs, schools, development programmes and recreational bookings. With the right programming and support the pitches enable significant increases in participation ensuing far more individuals and communities benefit from the associated social and health benefits of physical activity.

### 4.0 Costs

- 4.1 Construction of the pitches is funded by SBC and Sportscotland with Live Borders assuming operating responsibility for each of the pitches with commensurate management fee for doing so. Construction costs for Selkirk and Hawick are as follows:

Selkirk 2G - £736k  
Hawick 3G - £1.3M

- 4.2 Table 2 below focusses on the ongoing operating costs of the Galashiels 3G pitch, which does not receive any management fee support from SBC.

**Table 2: Financial overview for the Galashiels 3G pitch**

Financial Year	2015/16	2016/17	Variance
Income	£70k	£78k	£8k
Expenditure	£79k	£81k	(£2k)
Net	(£9k)	(£2k)	£7k

**NB:** The expenditure totals for Galashiels include operation of a small 5-a-side pitch located on the site plus club rooms and bar facilities.

- 4.3 Table 2 demonstrates the impact that increased usage and well managed costs has had on the net position of the facility.
- 4.4 The operating costs of a 3G pitch are far more significant than that of a 2G pitch mainly due to the maintenance and testing schedules that are required. Both of our 3G pitches are certified to FIFA and World Rugby test standards ensuring the pitches meet the specification requirements for both football and rugby at all times.
- 4.5 In addition, all the pitches undergo a regular weekly and planned period maintenance regime in order to maintain high performance standards while maximise the life of the pitch.

## 5.0 User Feedback

- 5.1 The previous report highlighted the impressive growth that Gala Fairydean, who use the Galashiels 3G as their home ground, have seen since 2012 with over 300 players of all ages and abilities now playing on a weekly basis.
- 5.2 The same positive feedback is now also being received in Hawick.

**Sara Robson, Hawick Youth Coach** states that the "3G pitch is great for the kids as they can experience playing on a high quality surface which has beneficial effects on the kids skills and development. When you are on the 3G you know it is 100% safe for the kids and don't have to worry about there being dogs dirt or sticks lying around. Since the 3G opened in Hawick my numbers have definitely increased and the kids think it is great and get excited when they know they are going to be training on the surface. Overall the surface is fantastic and it has been a real asset to the town.

**Gerry McGuinness, Hawick Youth Rugby Coach** also goes onto say "The Volunteer Park 3G has helped Hawick Youth Rugby by providing a safe surface to play on and first class lighting for games and training. Our players, and the teams we play against are very complimentary about the 3G surface being a consistent pitch, no slopes, no divots, no muddy bits, just the same surface which ever part of the pitch you are on. It also helps parents, as rugby kit does not need washing after training"

## **6.0 Other points to note**

- 6.1 The number of reported accidents at the 3G Arena in Galashiels remain extremely low with less than 1 reported accident per 10,000 visits for the 2016/17 reporting period.

## **7.0 Non Live Borders Managed Facilities**

- 7.1 In 2016/17 Scottish Borders Council commissioned Sportslabs to undertake a safety inspection of all the synthetic pitches and MUGA's own by the authority. List below:

- Clovenfords Primary School
- Galashiels Academy
- Hawick High School 2G
- Jedburgh High School
- Kelso High School (Former)
- Kingsland Primary School
- Lauder Primary School
- Newcastletown Poly Sport
- St Ronans Primary School
- Tweedbank Play Park
- Tweedbank Sports Ground 2G
- West Linton Primary School.

- 7.2 A programme of safety maintenance repairs were undertaken at all of the pitches over the course of 2017/18, from fencing repairs to carpet rejuvenations and new carpets at Jedburgh and St Ronans. Some line marking works remain to be complete in the remainder of 2017/18.

- 7.3 A future year's maintenance and replacement fund has been established in the Council's Capital and Revenue planning process.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

- 8.1 The increase in usage figures against prior year further strengthen the argument that improved playing surfaces not only help the sustainability of local clubs but also provides greater opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in sport and physical activity.
- 8.2 12 months on it is evident that usage has continued to increase while the costs associated with the operation have been driven down. With a continual focus on participation and the efficient and effective operation of the facilities, the artificial pitches can continue to be affordable, accessible and financially sustainable community facilities for many years to come.
- 8.3 The Capital and Revenue provision will ensure that the surfaces will be maintained to the appropriate safe standard in future years.