
NETHERDALE 3G SURFACE REPLACEMENT

**Report by Director, Strategic Commissioning and Partnerships and
Director, Infrastructure and Environment**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1 March 2022

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to approve the replacement of the 3G sports surfaces at Netherdale (Galashiels).**
- 1.2 The two artificial 3G sports pitches at Netherdale (Galashiels) were installed in 2011/12. Installed was the main pitch (116x72m) suitable for football & rugby use and the five-a-side pitch (36x18m).
- 1.3 In general terms, the life-span of 3G pitches is 10 years, with this being dependent on usage and the care and maintenance regime. Both of the Netherdale surfaces have been well used by club and community and well maintained by Live Borders, but both surfaces are near end of life and require replacement.
- 1.4 At the time of the original construction, a £200k sinking fund (for surface replacement) was established for Netherdale (£100k contribution from the Hayward Trust plus a £100k contribution from Live Borders). The Netherdale management agreement states that *'if the cost of renewal were to be greater than £200,000 then SBC shall be responsible for these additional costs'*.
- 1.5 The estimated replacement cost for both pitches at Netherdale is £350-£425k therefore on top of the £200k sinking fund additional capital of £150-£225k is required – either from SBC or via external funding. A £200k funding application has been submitted to the Scottish Football Association (SFA) to access funding for the *'replacement and enhancement of existing 3G football surfaces'*. A decision on SFA funding is expected by the end-March 2022. Netherdale appears to be ideally placed to meet the SFA funding criteria which includes facilities that can demonstrate:
 - grassroots football servicing the local community and focused primarily on football development;
 - increased participation;
 - SIMD criteria focusing on investment into Deciles 1-6 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD);
 - multi-sport development (e.g.) football and rugby;
 - improved access to sport facilities for women and girls.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Executive Committee:-

- (a) Agrees that the 3G synthetic sports surfaces at Netherdale be replaced with new 3G surfaces.**
- (b) Agrees to the funding arrangements as detailed at section 5.1**
- (c) Agrees that if the £200k SFA funding application fails and/or SFA funding is less than required, that SBC will fund the balance – as per the terms of the Netherdale management agreement.**
- (d) Agrees that work is prioritised to deliver the pitch replacement project to completion in calendar year 2022 and as far as possible that the pitch replacement project coordinates its work with the project delivering the £1.45m SBC investment into the Netherdale stand overhaul/upgrade.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In general terms, the life-span of 3G pitches is approximately 10 years, however, this is very much dependent on usage and the care and maintenance regime. The Netherdale surfaces have been well used by club and community, well maintained and well managed by Live Borders, but both surfaces are near end of life and a decision is required on replacement.
- 3.2 The two artificial 3G sports pitches at Netherdale (Galashiels) were installed in 2011/12; a main pitch (116x72m) and a five-a-side pitch (36x18m).
- 3.3 The estimated cost to replace both surfaces at Netherdale with new 3G surfaces is £350-£425k.
- 3.4 The 10-year tri-partite management agreement for Netherdale (signed in 2011 between SBC, Live Borders and Gala Fairydean Rovers) includes provision for a £200k sinking fund for carpet replacement (£100k from Hayward Trust + £100k from Live Borders), with SBC (under the terms of the management agreement) responsible for funding any costs over and above this.
- 3.5 An options appraisal/business case for surface replacement at Netherdale was undertaken. The business case and options are shown in sections 4 and 5 below.

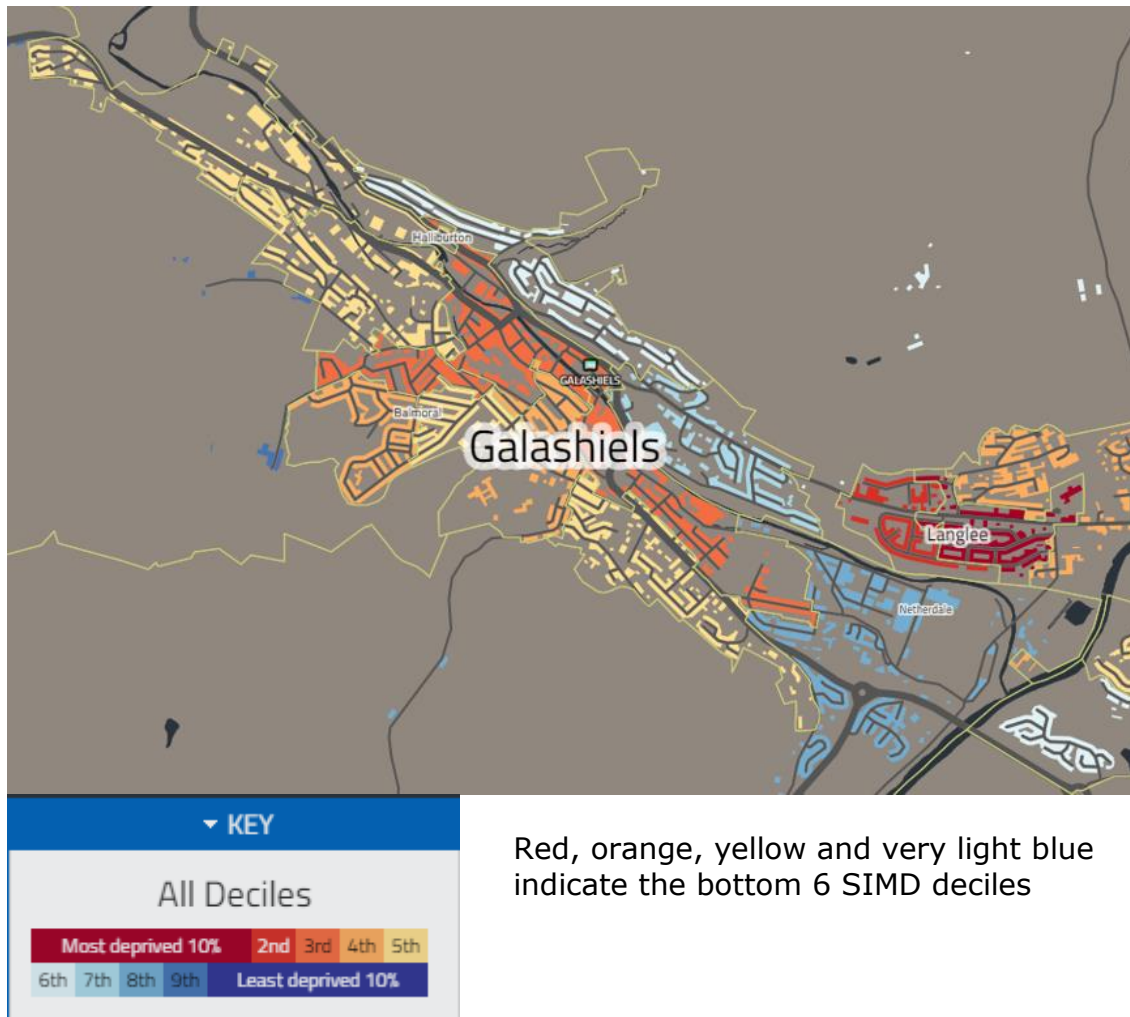
4 HIGH LEVEL BUSINESS CASE

- 4.1 Club and community groups use the Netherdale facility on a regular basis for training and match play. The facility is managed by Live Borders and generates approx. £70k income per annum.

Main Pitch		Fives Pitch	
Club/Community Group	Weekly hrs of use	Club/Community Group	Weekly hrs of use
Gala Fairyden Rovers Youths	16	Recreational 5's	5
Gala Fairydean Rovers (1st team)	5	GFR Walking Football	1
Gala Fairydean Rovers Amateurs	5	Commerical coaching	3
Gala Hotspur FC	1.5	Tweedbank Thistle	2
Stow FC	1.5	Netherdale Thistle	1
Scottish Rugby Union Academy	6	GFR Disability Football	1
Borders Development Squads	3	Borders Development Squads	1
Gala RFC Youths	1		14
Gala Academy	2		
Tweedbank Thistle FC	1.5		
GFR Walking Football	3		
Langlee FC	1.5		
	47		

Year	Income
2017/18	71,797
2018/19	78,949
2019/20	65,656

- 4.2 Gala Fairydean Rovers are the incumbent club at Netherdale. In addition to their senior football squads, the club has groups for junior football (primary school aged boys and girls of all abilities), youth football (secondary school pupils), disability football and walking football.
- 4.3 Gala Fairydean Rovers play in the Lowland League. This is in Tier 5 of the Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL). Under SPFL regulations for Tier 5 football, the pitch must be certified to a minimum 'FIFA Quality' certification standard to allow for Tier 5 matches to be played.
- 4.4 As the 3G surface has aged, the cost of maintaining and repairing it to the FIFA standard has increased. A specialist contractor (Sports Labs) were commissioned to undertake an assessment of the Netherdale pitches. Their report concludes:
- Sports Labs are of the opinion that the client has done very well to keep the pitch certified beyond 10 years and this is a testament to the clients ongoing maintenance programme, care and attention over the years.
 - Current condition is 'Poor' – Subject to long term wear, having reached the end of its useful life. Extensive repair and replacement required.
 - The pitch, when last tested, was eventually able to achieve FIFA Quality certification – however, this was with extensive work directly prior to the test. It is our belief and judgement that going forward from 2022 this pitch will find it very difficult to achieve further FIFA certification due to additional compaction and surface wear.
- 4.5 In a separate project, SBC is investing £1.45m in the overhaul and refurbishment of the Peter Womersley designed Category-A listed stand at Netherdale. If the 3G surfaces become unusable/unplayable and/or if the surface were to revert to grass then usage of the Netherdale facility will reduce. The refurbished stand will continue to attract architectural visitors but there may be reputational risk to SBC if the wider sporting facility is of less use and value to the local community.
- 4.6 SBC has submitted a funding application to the Scottish Football Association (SFA) for £200k. Applications closed on 31st January 2022, with the pot designed to assist clubs/Local Authorities/Leisure Trusts with the costs of full replacement and enhancement of existing 3G football surfaces. The SFA aim to 'protect current and future football participation levels and to offer football development opportunities in safe, attractive venues'. At least 50 percent of the SFA investment will be made into Deciles 1-6 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The graphic overleaf shows the SIMD deciles in Galashiels with Langlee, which is adjacent to Netherdale, shown in the lowest SIMD decile.



4.7 The plans for the new Gala School Campus includes a 3G pitch and there is also a 3G surface at the Greenyards in Melrose (installed in 2019). There is therefore a future risk of over-provision of full-size 3G surfaces in the Gala/Melrose area. However, Gala Campus has yet to go through planning approval and construction completion may not be until 2025/26. If the 3G surfaces at Netherdale become unusable/unplayable then there is an immediate risk of under-provision in the area.

4.8 Business Case Summary

Over the last decade the synthetic pitches at Netherdale have delivered a valued and valuable community resource, generating income and providing well-used facilities. SBC is investing £1.45m in the overhaul/refurbishment of the Netherdale stand. A £200k sinking fund is in place for pitch replacement and there is an opportunity through the SFA to secure additional funding. Specialist advice is that the surfaces at Netherdale require replacement. New surfaces at Netherdale will enhance the benefits of an overhauled/refurbished stand.

5 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 The options appraisal for Netherdale surface replacement considered:

- Option 1: do nothing
- Option 2: replace with a new 3G surfaces
- Option 3: return the surfaces to grass

5.2 **Option 1: Do Nothing**

At installation it was anticipated that the synthetic surface would need replaced after approximately 10-years and arrangements for a sinking fund were put in place at the time as part of the management agreement. The pitches have been well used and well looked after, but through wear and tear their condition has deteriorated.

- There is a risk that the surface will not be able to attain FIFA certification, which will impact on the club's ability to compete in the SPFL – and could result in a requirement for SBC to identify and invest in a suitable alternative provision for the club.
- As the surfaces continue to deteriorate, this may have a significant impact on income.
- If the synthetic surfaces are not replaced, the £100k Hayward Trust and the £100k Live Borders contributions towards replacement may need to be returned to the respective parties.
- There may be a risk to SBC and Live Borders if the deteriorating condition of the surface was ever cited as a reason for injury.

5.3 **Option 2: Replace with new 3G surfaces**

- 3G surfaces (of the type and quality we would seek to use as replacement) can be used intensively for 60+hrs per week. This is in line with current Netherdale usage.
- A new 3G surface will pass FIFA certification and the new surfaces may attract even more usage.

5.4 **Option 3: Return the surfaces to grass**

Reverting the surfaces back to grass is not as straightforward as it may sound. The estimated cost of doing so is £400-£800k; based on a number of factors including those set out below:

- Removal and disposal of the existing 3G surfaces and shock-pads is required.
- Topsoil would need to be added to site. This would require either the removal of some/all of the 3G stone base or the raising of the field of play and perimeter areas.
- Raising the perimeter areas would have implications for the pathways around the pitch, the grass bankings, the dugouts, the pitch-side rail fencing and the steps leading down from the clubhouse
- The five-a-side cage and floodlighting would require removal and disposal.
- The external changing units (x3) would require relocation to the Netherdale 'back-pitches' (i.e.) where they were located prior to the 3G being installed in 2011/12.

In addition, grass pitches cannot withstand intensive use and given that there are a number of grass pitches at Netherdale, it is assumed that Netherdale annual income would reduce to £0. This may need to be reflected in the annual SBC Management Fee paid to Live Borders.

5.5 **Options Summary**

The cost to SBC of returning Netherdale to grass is higher than the cost to SBC of 3G replacement. Particularly if the £100k Hayward Trust and the £100k Live Borders contributions towards replacement are returned to the respective parties.

As already stated, SBC is investing £1.45m in the overhaul and refurbishment of the main Category-A listed stand. If the pitches are left to deteriorate or returned to grass, then Gala Fairydean Rovers may train at the facility and play competitive home matches once a fortnight but the usage of Netherdale as a community asset will reduce significantly.

Replacing the existing surfaces with new 3G surfaces will:

- Ensure the £200k sinking fund can be utilised as originally intended.
- Minimise costs to SBC – particularly if SFA funding is also secured.
- Maximise income to Live Borders.
- Ensure that community use continues at or above current levels
- Ensures that the newly overhauled stand continues to be a valued and well used community asset.

6 **IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 **Financial**

The Netherdale management agreement stated that SBC would be liable for any replacement costs over the £200k sinking fund created from contributions from Live Borders and Hayward Trust. Estimated replacement cost for new 3G surfaces is £350-£425k.

It is therefore proposed a budget of £425k is created for the replacement of Netherdale 3G Pitches funded as follows:

Funding:	£000s
Live Borders Replacement Fund Contribution	100
Hayward Trust Replacement Fund Contribution	100
SBC Pitch Replacement Fund	225

Should the Council be successful in obtaining funding towards Netherdale 3G surface replacement from the Scottish Football Association, the resulting available budget will be returned to the Synthetic Pitch Replacement fund.

The longer-term future provision of sports facilities in the Galashiels/Melrose area will be reviewed as part of the SBC Sports Strategy.

6.2 **Risk and Mitigations**

- The liability to SBC could be reduced via a successful SFA funding application.

- The liability to SBC of returning the pitches to grass could amount to the full cost of the works (if the £200k sinking fund was returned to the respective parties).
- Investing £1.45m in the overhaul/refurbishment but not investing in the 3G surfaces may result in reputational risk to SBC.

6.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

Not required. Replacement of existing facility proposed

6.4 **Sustainable Development Goals**

To be included in tender documentation

6.5 **Climate Change**

To be included in tender documentation

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

It is anticipated there will be no adverse impact on the rural area from the proposals contained in this report.

6.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

6.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

No changes to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation is required as a result of this report.

7 **CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report
- 7.2 The Strategic Leadership Team has been consulted on this proposal. Procurement Officer has been consulted on the procurement of the specialist (Sportslabs) and will be consulted in regard to any future tender.

Approved by

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Background Papers: n/a

Previous Minute Reference: n/a

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