



## Long Pile Turf (3G) Pitches

July 2010

The aim of this document is to provide clear National Governing Body (England Hockey Board) policy relating to the suitability of long pile turf, third generation or rubber crumb sports surfaces for hockey.

### Background Information

There are approximately 900 sand-filled or sand-dressed and 50 water-based hockey pitches in England. Most have been installed in the past 10-15 years. Many of the sand-filled or sand-dressed pitches are investments representing partnerships i.e. they involve arrangements made between clubs, schools and local authorities. A considerable number of these pitches are used for multisport activity e.g. hockey, football, rugby and tennis etc.

In recent years a 'third generation' of artificial turf pitch has been developed. These are known as 3G or long pile turf pitches (due to the length of the turf). They have been adopted by the football community for amateur competition and, in some instances internationally for professional football. Throughout 2006 and 2007 we received an increasing number of reports of hockey pitches being replaced with new 3G turf and it became clear that we needed to re-visit our policy so as to ensure that our policy going forward is robust enough to sit within the ever changing facility landscape. We estimate that there are 1000 hockey pitches in England of which, it has been reported, more than 100 sand-filled hockey pitches in schools and local authorities have been replaced with 3G turf in the last 20 months alone. The vast majority of these 100 pitches will not meet the FIH (Federation of International Hockey) Testing Standards. The FA and Football Foundation have also informed us that they are investing huge sums of money in developing more of these pitches over the next few years. We therefore estimate that working at the current rate of attrition we will have approximately 50% or more of our hockey facility stock at risk by 2013.

Until 2007, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) and England Hockey Board stated that these surfaces were NOT approved for hockey. FIH have since via their approved testing laboratories certified five (5) long pile turf pitches in England as "FIH approved for hockey". It is anticipated that there will be more long pile turf pitches approved by the FIH. The certification issued by FIH follows on-site testing and pitches that have been certified generally have a turf length ranging from 35-40mm. It is highly unlikely that turf lengths beyond 40mm will meet the FIH performance standards. The turf length of water based, sand dressed and sand filled pitches are typically 12-25mm

England Hockey Board until 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 did not permit long pile turf pitches to be used for any competition at any level but in view of the changing hockey 'facility landscape' the Board of England Hockey commissioned extensive research in November 2008. The research was undertaken over a period of 6 months by a reputable FIH approved testing laboratory and involved laboratory and pitch based performance testing. As a result of the research, England Hockey Board has reviewed its policy.



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From 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 England Hockey Board will permit the use of some long pile turf pitches for some competitive hockey. (For full detail see page 2.)

England Hockey Board recognises that with appropriate maintenance, some (FIH approved) long pile turf as a playing surface is preferable to poorly maintained grass or synthetic turf pitches. England Hockey also acknowledges that with appropriate levels of maintenance, some long pile turf is appropriate for young players being introduced to hockey in schools and in community programmes / activities.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 England Hockey will introduce a system of pitch categorisation which will clearly identify three levels within the current FIH testing parameters. The categories identify the pitches that are suitable for hockey playing and specific levels of competition. The following categories only will apply:

EHB Category 1	Water surface approved within the FIH Global/National Parameters
EHB Category 2	Sand dressed surfaces within the FIH National Parameter
EHB Category 3	Sand based surfaces within the FIH National Parameter
EHB Category 4	40 mm Long pile (3G) surfaces that are categorized by FIH as satisfying their 'National' performance parameter. The certification shall be based on onsite testing

- England Hockey will from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 permit the use of EH Category 1 and 2 surfaces for all levels of competition inclusive of international training and matches.
- England Hockey will from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 permit the use of EH Category 3 surfaces for all levels of competition excepting international training and matches.
- England Hockey will from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2009 permit the use of EH Category 4 surfaces for local and regional league competition (excepting regional premierships – e.g. the division that directly feeds the national league) however it should be noted that the playing surface is characterised by a slower surface speed, poor and sometimes unpredictable levels of consistency and modern hockey skills are much more difficult to execute.

It should be noted that it is strongly recommended that England Hockey League Premier Division fixtures are played on Category 1 or 2 pitches.

Category 4 pitches cannot be used for any England Hockey Knock-Out Competition, International training and matches, the England Hockey League (all Divisions), Regional Premier Division, BUCS premier league matches and all Single System activity from and including JDC level upwards for U18s and SRPC level for over 18s.



#### **Insurance Implications**

Categories 1, 2, 3 and 4 will offer you protection within your current insurance policy. It is highly likely that category 4 pitches that do not pass the FIH Testing parameters will leave the users without insurance protection. Please ensure you contact your insurance company to clarify the position of your individual policy. It is also highly likely that there will be insurance issues if a pile length of over 40mm is used for hockey.

#### **NOTE 1:**

Club School link activity within the Single System can be played on EH Category 4 pitches

#### **NOTE 2:**

The practical elements of England Hockey Leadership, Umpiring can be conducted on EH Category 4 pitches