



ALL WALES ARTIFICIAL TURF PITCH VISION AND GUIDANCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Introduction

This is the executive summary of the Collaborative Sports Facilities Group's 'All Wales Artificial Pitch Vision and Guidance'. For details of where to source the full document please refer to the website addresses at the end of this publication.

The sports vision and ambition

The Football Association of Wales, Hockey Wales and Welsh Rugby Union together with Sport Wales - the 'Collaborative Sports Facilities Group' - have established a nationally agreed vision and model for developing clubs and increasing participation through appropriately located and fit for purpose artificial playing surfaces.

The potential impact is significant given the collective scale of the 3 sports – their membership and participation base representing 34% of the all-Wales total.

Each have their own ambitious visions and plans to significantly increase their impact, participation and membership numbers and achievement of these goals will undoubtedly demand a significant increase in access to fit for purpose, high quality and inspiring facilities.

This vision and plan will help deliver that challenge through a 'Collaborative Sports Approach' to the development and use of outdoor artificial turf pitches in Wales.

The collaborative approach is designed to influence the distribution of appropriate Artificial Turf Pitches (ATPs) that best meet the needs of the sports i.e.:

- The most suitable surfaces for different training and competition purposes - the correct carpet and method of construction
- Complementary and not competing facilities
- Appropriately located facilities to support a targeted growth in participation (importantly through the retention of existing, as well as attracting new, participants) and the development of sports hubs/local federations to create stronger clubs.

This unique approach will help achieve the following sporting outcomes:

- Increased participation (retention of, as well as new, members) – through more attractive facilities also appealing to new markets – engaging new or returning participants with business plans particularly focused on encouraging women and girls and young people.
 - Stronger Clubs – community hubs – frequently clubs are small yet the availability of, and access to, quality facilities plays a critical part in enabling them to thrive. 21st Century training and competition facilities are required to support stronger, larger, more business-like and viable clubs with healthy junior and senior sections (for women as well as men) as well as clubs working better together.
 - A more 'fit for sporting-purpose facilities landscape' - resulting from shared Local Authority, School and Club visions and pitch investment plans.
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The strategic case for action

The Collaborative way forward demands a review of future needs, embracing the use of ATPs as well as grass pitches, on education, club and public sites to inform rationalisation and deliver more efficient and effective sports partnership approaches.

The development of more ATPs could also result in the need for fewer grass pitches, which could in turn result in better quality maintenance of those that remain and a reduction in overuse. As a consequence, local outdoor space reviews could be undertaken informing better and alternative uses for 'green' and open spaces.

Responding to the 'New World' of Asset Transfers

The difficult financial position facing the Public Sector is increasingly demanding the consideration of new delivery models - including asset transfer options. Many authorities are reviewing their approach to the management of grass pitches and considering alternative approaches to both increase income and reduce costs. This is a considerable cause of concern for the Sports Governing Bodies and their clubs and particularly for Football - the largest sport with the most to lose from reduced access to grass pitches.

However, before facilities are transferred to new community or social enterprise management models there is a need to review the 'stock': to establish what is essential to support sporting needs; identifying potential for rationalisation and co-locations; to make the case for invest to save models to support more cost effective/economically viable solutions.



Facilities need to be transferred in a way that is both fit for the future and sustainable i.e. as an asset not a liability. At the same time, Governing Bodies of Sport need to work with Local Authorities to develop new partnership approaches, serving the management and maintenance of grass pitches and safeguarding sporting use. The Collaborative Approach will help Local Authorities to ensure that sports clubs are supported to: become more business-like; overcome 'isolationism' and achieve economies of scale; continue to guarantee access to the wider community despite single club management.



Important collaboration principles

Shared Sports and Club Hubs

In the case of Hockey, where membership/club numbers are smaller, work is ongoing to bring together clusters of clubs to establish the business case for facility 'hotspots' and club hubs.

Football and Rugby Governing Bodies also need to undertake further work in the next few years on the models required for shared Rugby/Football training and competition 3G pitches.

Women and Girls Participation

It is expected that the development of more user-friendly, all-weather artificial surfaces, which will provide improved access/more time for women's sport and clubs will be an important 'medium' for increasing female participation.

Developing Hockey Hubs – First Principles

The majority of current full-sized ATPs (78%) are sand-based and whilst multi-purpose, they were designed with Hockey in mind. The on-going development of new technology and growth in development of 3G surfaces suitable for Rugby and Football will result in a gradual loss of "Hockey surfaces".

The Collaborative Approach will include the designation of appropriate strategic Hockey Hubs – in the right locations with robust development plans supporting the business case for Hockey – whilst other existing ATPs will be converted or developed for Football and/or Rugby purposes. Ideally, Hockey Hubs should be in the most accessible locations and adjacent to, or amidst, the largest catchment populations so as to enable the best chance of a growth in numbers.

The Importance of the Education Sector

As a general principle where sports have a low participation base, they should consider developing stronger relations with Universities, as well as Independent Schools, to take advantage of an often better business case for specialist artificial surfaces, serving performance and participation hubs.

And generally there is a need to develop a more inclusive approach to working with all Schools to improve attitudes to community use including shared management models and better access arrangements.



Collaboration supporting the vision

In some instances external intervention and support may be appropriate. With this in mind, the Collaborative Sports review has led to the preparation of a simple 'spatial plan' as a guide to help inform local priorities and external investment. This is designed to encourage developments in areas where:

- sporting priorities are greatest
- intervention might be required to achieve a significant change i.e. a transformation in the local sporting landscape.

The focus of the current approach to intervention is on where there is a need for a collaborative sports approach to achieve the right complementary mix of future ATPs delivering a change in the current landscape.

These 'Intervention Zones' are considered to be first phase 'collaboration priority' areas to develop the Sports 'hot spots' and hubs based upon the analysis of the Local Authority area position statements.





Summary

The primary objective of the Collaborative Sports Facilities Group is to influence the planning and location of ATP developments to ensure the most effective return on investment for all partners.

This Vision and Guidance is intended to assist partners when considering investment in ATPs and will be updated as facilities and plans are developed.

Providing the right facilities in the right places will be a critical factor in achieving the ambitious targeted increases in participation and the development of more sustainable clubs.

Further details

The full document - the All Wales Artificial Turf Pitch Vision and Guidance is available to download at:

www.welshfootballtrust.org.uk

www.wru.co.uk

www.hockeywales.org.uk

www.sportwales.org.uk

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