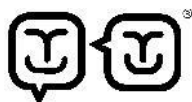


SPORTS PITCH STRATEGY FOR EDINBURGH

2025-2035

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Introduction

This Sports Pitch Strategy is set within the context of Edinburgh's Physical Activity and Sport Strategy 2024-2034 and aligns with the City of Edinburgh Council's [Business Plan priorities](#). The development of the Strategy was based on a programme of engagement and comprehensive information gathering including a significant amount of research, such as pitch and pavilion condition surveys and consultation with sports clubs and groups, as well as in-person interviews. It has been informed by research and analysis of the city's sports pitch and ancillary facilities provision and use, and provides a framework for the development, management and improvement of sports pitches over the next 10 years.

The aim of the Strategy is to deliver an integrated strategic approach to future investment and change in the city's pitches which better meet the needs of Edinburgh's communities and clubs through the delivery of a range of identified actions and recommendations.

The Strategy is intended to be a dynamic and living document recognising that it must be responsive to the evolving financial and operational landscape in which it will be delivered, and the importance of being able to adapt to changing circumstances and take advantage of any emerging opportunities.

The City of Edinburgh Council's (Council) Services and Funding Agreement with Edinburgh Leisure (EL) included a commitment to

progress a pitch strategy for the city. EL commissioned 'EKOS Integratis' consultants to undertake initial development work for the Strategy. The resulting feasibility study and supporting online data tool covered all sports pitches managed by the Council and EL, including school pitches. A working group consisting of Council and EL officers was established to consider the information and produce this Sports Pitch Strategy.



Overview

Sports pitches are vital community assets that contribute to the public's health and wellbeing as well as towards social cohesion. Pitches serve as grounds for organised sports activities and events as well as informal, recreational, and social activities. The benefits of sports pitches extend beyond participants to families, spectators, and communities. Edinburgh benefits from a rich and varied sports pitch landscape which are used for a wide variety of sports and physical activity pursuits.

As the City of Edinburgh continues to grow, both in population and in the diversity of its residents, we face the dual challenge of meeting increased demand for services, including sports facilities, whilst also maintaining standards of quality and service delivery within a challenging economic climate.

The Strategy provides a thorough approach to address current challenges and establishes the foundations for a future where sports pitches:

- meet current and future demand;
- are accessible to all;
- are maintained to a consistent quality standard;
- and are financially sustainable.

In summary, the strategy is a nuanced approach to complex challenges, grounded in financial prudence, aligned with broader developmental

objectives, committed to ongoing maintenance, and focused on maximising community benefit.

The development of the Sports Pitch Strategy has followed the **sportscotland** methodology for sports pitch strategies (See Appendix 1).

The Vision

A sustainable and accessible sports pitch network for the people of Edinburgh, while optimising resources and supporting future growth.

Strategic Priorities

- 1. Accessibility & Inclusivity**
- 2. Quality**
- 3. Health & Wellbeing**
- 4. Sustainability**
- 5. Programming**
- 6. Future Growth**

Strategic Context and Key Drivers

This Strategy has been developed and considered within the context of a range of other strategy, policy and wider plans at national, regional and local level (See Appendix 2). There are key messages highlighted across these plans and strategies that have influenced the development of the new Sports Pitch Strategy including:

- the drive to improve the quality of life, health and wellbeing for the citizens of Edinburgh;
- the positive contribution that physical activity and sport can bring to people and places;
- and the potential for partners to work in an integrated way to improve opportunities and take action to encourage more people to have an active life.

The key drivers for the development of the new Strategy include:

Active and Healthy Lives for All

The Council's Physical Activity and Sport Strategy 2024-2034 sets out the vision for the city: **"An Edinburgh where everyone enjoys the benefits of an active life"**. The Strategy aspires to be a catalyst for community wellbeing with particular focus on encouraging physical activity in under-represented groups. The Sports Pitch Strategy aligns with the wider Physical Activity and Sports Strategy and is referenced within it as a key strategic action.

There is a well-established evidence base that shows that people derive a wide range of benefits from having an active life, including better

physical and mental health, reducing the risk of many long-term conditions, maintaining a healthy weight, skills development, supporting social inclusion, and living longer and healthier lives. Participation in sport and physical activity from a young age encourages lifelong participation, and with a growing ageing population, being active throughout adulthood is vitally important. The provision of quality, safe, well-located and inclusive facilities, including pitches and ancillary provision are key to supporting and sustaining participation.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Reducing inequalities continues to be a strategic focus at a local and national level. It is recognised that inequality in participation in physical activity and sport is a long-standing issue which impacts on some population groups more than others. For example, women and girls, older people, people who live in deprived areas, those from ethnic minorities and disabled people (evidence- [Scottish Household Survey 2022](#)).

Under-represented groups face barriers (real or perceived) which hinder their ability to participate in physical activity and sport. These barriers can include, cost, transport, clothing and equipment, and perceptions that some sports may be competitive or elitist (evidence- in sportscotland's [Equality and Sport Research](#) report). Equality of opportunity and of access to physical activity and sport and associated facilities are key considerations for the development of this Strategy.

Quality and Location of Facilities

The provision of high-quality sporting facilities including pitch facilities, are identified as being a key enabler of increasing participation in physical activity and sport. The number, type and quality of sports facilities is an important consideration but so is their location. Sports facilities, such as pitches, need to be accessible to residents e.g. located centrally within communities and accessible from bus stops, pedestrian and cycle routes to promote sustainable and active travel.

The [City Plan 2030](#) (2021) identifies the importance of outdoor sports facilities in helping to create a sense of community and reducing the need for travel. While the Plan reports that there are a suitable number of pitches within the city in relation to need, it notes that the quality of facilities could be improved. Further, it suggests that additional pitches

may be required to be developed in response to housing development plans within Edinburgh and as part of a place-based approach.

Challenging Financial Climate

It is recognised that pressures on public funding accompanied by rising costs of living, energy costs, escalating inflation and increased service demand combined with the effects of the pandemic have combined to present an unprecedented challenging financial climate for the provision of service. A key driver for this Strategy is financial efficiency, ensuring that existing assets are used to their maximum capacity and any new investment is carefully targeted where it will have the maximum benefit and impact.



Living Well Locally

The Council's [20-Minute Neighbourhood Strategy: Living Well Locally](#) (2021) defines the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods to support people to live well locally. It aims to provide people with access to services and facilities to meet most daily needs within a 20-minute walk or wheel. Providing good local cycle and public transport provision for people to have the choice of accessing a wider range of services and facilities.

Fields in Trust's [Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play Scotland](#) (2020) report recommends that there should be 1.20 hectares of outdoor pitch facilities per 1,000 population. Currently Edinburgh has 2.4 hectares per 1000 of population (CEC [Open Space 2021](#)). Additionally, the guidelines suggest that there should be playing pitches within a 1,200 metre (walking distance) from residential areas. Currently 50% of the Edinburgh population are within a 10-minute walk of a sports pitch.

Increasing Participation at All Levels

Participation in physical activity and sport is important at all levels, ages and abilities, from grassroots activity to competitive sport. There is recognition that while not all individuals want to participate in competitive sport, it is important that there are clear pathways to progression for those who do.

The provision of pitches facilitates both formal and informal participation in physical activity and sport. Importantly, they also provide the necessary infrastructure for those who simply want to take part for fun and enjoyment, as well as those who want to further develop their skills and progress within their chosen sport. Increased collaboration and coordination between key players within the sporting ecosystem – public, private, tertiary and third sectors (and beyond) – will therefore be key to getting the most out of Edinburgh's sporting system.



The following sections provide an overview of the supply and demand findings for pitch provision across the city which were informed by a robust data gathering exercise and were supplemented with feedback from the engagement process with clubs and sports organisations. The findings have helped to shape the strategic priorities and recommended actions included in this Strategy. The analysis seeks to understand the current levels of demand but also aims to understand factors which affect future demand.

The sports which were in scope for consideration included football, rugby, hockey, and cricket. Additional background information and evidence on the supply and demand findings are included in Appendices 3 (Supply Findings Summary) and 4 (Demand Findings Summary).



Pitch Supply – Key Findings

The current supply of pitches in Edinburgh presents a mixed picture that captures both the strengths and challenges facing sports pitch provision in the city. Key findings include:

Pitch diversity and availability

- Edinburgh boasts a robust array of sports pitches, provided by a diverse range of partners and organisations, most of which are accessible to the community.
- While grass remains the dominant pitch surface, the city has seen a growing prevalence of 3G artificial pitches, contributing to a varied pitch landscape.

Sports representation and hub sites

- Football is particularly well-served across the city, reflecting its popularity and high participation rates. Rugby, hockey, and cricket also have a good supply of pitches.
- Several sports pitch "hub sites" (i.e. pitch venues with multiple pitches, surfaces and changing accommodation) offer multiple pitch types and sizes. Many of these sites have the potential to expand their capacity by converting existing grass surfaces to synthetic pitches.

Accessibility and geographical coverage

- In a Living Well Locally context, the city fares well in accessibility to all pitch types by car and bicycle. However, there is room for improvement in encouraging other modes of active and sustainable transport like walking and public transport.
- Interestingly the most economically disadvantaged areas generally have comparable or even better access to sports pitches than the rest of the city.



Quality of facilities

- Whilst the overall quality of pitches is generally satisfactory, feedback from clubs and information gathered through condition surveys suggest that the quality of some grass pitches, pavilions and ancillary facilities require improvement. Although many pitches and pavilion facilities are rated as “Good” or “Standard,” over half fall into the “Needs Improvement” or “Poor” categories.

Operational aspects

- While sports pitch opening hours are extensive, there is scope to extend the operating hours of school estate pitches to ensure that facilities are accessible to the community at the times they are most needed. Future planning must ensure school estate pitches as far as possible serve the wider community alongside the school community.
- Current pitch booking procedures could benefit from focus and better strategic alignment.

Cost and pricing

- Cost and pricing models are an important factor to clubs and organisations accessing pitch facilities.
- Pricing should not only reflect maintenance costs but also align with broader strategic objectives for promoting sports and physical activity. A review of current pricing models across the Council and Edinburgh Leisure should improve consistency and sustainability of access for the long term.



Maintenance arrangements

- Pitch maintenance is not only about the upkeep of grounds. It is closely linked to the preservation of pitches for extended longevity, ensuring the maximisation of their usage, generating consistent income and above all, meeting the anticipated standards of customers. Future budgeting for the ongoing maintenance of pitch and ancillary facilities is essential to support longer-term sustainability.
- A tiered approach to grass pitch maintenance could be explored which may result in benefit for those pitches that are used the most.
- Opportunities to consolidate maintenance contracts could also be investigated.

Energy efficiencies

- Although both schools and sports pitch operations are largely efficient, the consistent 40% rise in energy costs experienced site-wide taken alongside the Council's ambition to respond to the climate emergency and become a net zero city by 2030 suggest additional energy- saving actions should be explored.

Optimisation of existing assets and planned future investments

- Alongside plans for new pitches in the city, the emphasis for Edinburgh Leisure and the Council should also be on optimising existing, underused pitches especially in the school estate.
- Community-driven projects often resonate with local needs, making them valuable additions to the city's sporting infrastructure. Engagement feedback from sports clubs indicated their desire for short-term growth and their interest in contributing to community, social, and health activities whilst some expressed appetite for key holder arrangements, lease or community asset transfer.
- Planning for sports pitches cannot occur in isolation. Instead, it must be integrated with broader urban development plans, including housing projects, school estate developments, and the city's 'Living Well Locally' initiative - all of which have a role to play in shaping the sports pitch landscape.

In summary, Edinburgh has a rich and varied sports pitch landscape, with some areas for improvement identified that range from quality and accessibility to cost and strategic alignment. Future efforts should focus on optimising existing resources, harmonising operational procedures and ensuring that the pricing and quality meet the expectations and needs of all communities.

Pitch Demand – Key Findings

The demand analysis for sports pitches in Edinburgh indicates that while many pitches are well-utilised, there is still significant untapped potential for more efficient use of existing facilities. Key findings include:

Utilisation and maintenance

- Levels of utilisation suggest there is ample room to make better use of existing pitches, especially during peak demand times.
- Many grass pitches are either well-used or overplayed, requiring enhanced maintenance to maintain their quality.

Management and alternative uses

- The management of grass pitches is currently delivered across the Council and Edinburgh Leisure. A review could be undertaken which would consider how this arrangement works and an exploration of potential ways to improve efficiency and equitable access.
- Some underutilised grass pitches could be re-purposed for lease, community asset transfer (CAT), open spaces, community allotments, or other commercial uses.

Artificial pitches

- While 3G pitches are generally well-utilised, data suggests that there may be scope for better use, including meeting latent demand through club growth.

- Use data suggest that some 2G pitches are currently underutilised. Their potential use for hockey and football training could relieve some pressure from grass and 3G pitches.

Specialised pitches

- The water-based astroturf pitch at Meggetland currently operates at full capacity. However, future investment in hockey pitches need to consider the governing bodies strategy on the optimal surface alongside the impact on other sports.
- Demand for cricket pitches is variable but generally growing. Better utilisation of existing, underused facilities could accommodate this growth.

Sports pitch hub sites

- The city's existing sport's pitch hub sites (e.g. Meggetland) experience disproportionately high demand, possibly due to better quality pitches and facilities. Expanding capacity at hub sites and improving quality could be further explored as well as creating new hub sites where they are needed.
- Whilst exploring the potential to expand and develop a pitch hub approach, it is also important to support local provision across the city, recognising the importance of accessible facilities and diversity in increasing participation in physical activity and sport.

Geographical and demographical trends

- Wards within the city with more 2G and 3G pitches tend to have lower utilisation rates, suggesting that demand does not grow proportionally with supply.
- Future demand for pitches is expected to rise, particularly in certain Wards due to both organic population growth and new housing developments.

Club and community demands

- Clubs expressed a growing need for pitches, either due to existing demand or future growth aspirations.
- As clubs diversify or expand provision to target under-represented groups (for example women, older people), the need for appropriate ancillary facilities (such as changing rooms, toilets) will also grow.

Strategic planning

- Investments in new 3G pitches and the replacement of some 2G pitches are underway and align with demand priorities.

- The Pitch Strategy will require alignment to existing city and national strategies and plans and there will be a need to strengthen links with other relevant partners such as universities, private schools and National Governing Bodies to ensure a holistic and integrated approach to the future development of sports pitches in the city.

In summary, the demand analysis underscores the importance of strategic planning to meet the growing and diverse needs for sports pitches in Edinburgh. The demand for grass pitches is expected to persist. Diversifying the pitch types by including synthetic pitches could meet the year-round demand more effectively and ease the pressure on over-utilised grass pitches. This would not only spread wear and tear but would also accommodate a variety of sports and activities, enhancing year-round participation.

Use data and engagement feedback suggest that existing facilities have untapped potential that could be more efficiently utilised. Any future investments should focus on optimising the current infrastructure alongside the creation of new pitches, involving a coordinated approach among the key stakeholders involved.

Vision and Strategic Priorities

Vision

A sustainable and accessible sports pitch network for the people of Edinburgh, while optimising resources and supporting future growth.

Strategic priorities

The overarching strategic priorities have been informed by a review of all the information and data gathered during the strategy development process alongside the key findings from the supply and demand analysis. They reflect overarching and common areas to be addressed, which apply across playing pitch facilities and may not be specific to just one sport. Many of the priorities require the cooperation and collaboration of a range of key stakeholders to be tackled successfully.

In shaping the future of sports pitch provision in Edinburgh, both the Council and EL face a complex, interconnected set of priorities that necessitate thoughtful, strategic planning. At the heart of this is the commitment to achieving the best value for investment, particularly given financial pressures. This means directing funding towards projects that fulfil the most pressing needs and offer the greatest positive impact and maximum return for local communities and the city.

1. Accessibility & Inclusivity: Making sure that sports pitches are available and easily accessible to a diverse range of people including underrepresented groups.

2. Quality: Providing a balanced offering of well-maintained and safe sports pitches that meet the needs of users and promote positive experiences.

3. Health & Wellbeing: Advocating the important role that sports pitches play in promoting good physical and mental wellbeing.

4. Sustainability: Ensuring the sustainability of sport pitch facilities in the face of financial challenges.

5. Programming: Ensuring the most efficient and effective use of existing spaces and resources.

6. Future Growth: Supporting the improvement of sports pitch facilities in line with population growth, changing demands, and evolving user needs.

Objectives

The objectives of the Sports Pitch Strategy are to:

1. Optimise the sports pitch portfolio: ensure efficient use of resources while maintaining a high level of accessibility and quality to allow Edinburgh people to 'live well locally'.

2. Improve the quality and maintenance of sports pitches: enhance the condition of existing sports pitches and implement cost-effective maintenance practices that ensure longevity and usability.

3. Increase the availability and accessibility of pitches: accommodate year-round use and cater for the needs of a diverse range of sports and user groups through exploring opportunities to improve the booking procedures and pricing framework.

4. Foster partnerships and collaboration with key stakeholders: work closely with others to successfully deliver a supported sports pitch strategy and explore new models of operation and ownership.

5. Support inclusivity and diversity in sport pitch usage: encourage participation through the provision of safe and welcoming spaces for all participants, including those who would not traditionally access pitch spaces.

6. Develop data-driven decision-making processes: gather and analyse relevant data on sports pitch usage, demand, and quality to support informed decisions on resource allocation for the future development of sports pitches and ancillary facilities.

7. Consider expanding and building on a 'pitch hub' approach across the city: explore the benefits of strategically located pitch hubs that offer a range of facilities and sports to meet the needs of communities and investigate opportunities to expand capacity and improve the quality of existing hub sites.

8. Support future growth and development: monitor population growth, housing and school estate developments, and evolving user needs to proactively plan for and accommodate future demand for sports pitches.

High-Level Actions

Strategic objective 1: Optimise the sports pitch portfolio.

Context	Goal	Actions
While evidence suggests that Edinburgh has sufficient sports pitches to meet current demand, there is a need to streamline access. Data analysis indicates that there is an opportunity to adopt a more community-focused, streamlined, equitable and efficient system for sports pitch utilisation.	Enhance Edinburgh's sports pitch access framework to prioritise community engagement, infrastructure optimisation, and environmentally sustainable practices, thereby aligning with the city's objectives of minimising carbon emissions, promoting active travel, and achieving a Living Well Locally approach.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infrastructure Maximisation - Explore the potential to extend the operational hours for Secondary School pitches as a cost-effective means of expanding capacity. Review times currently allocated to schools on Saturday mornings and after school between 4pm and 6pm to ensure usage is being maximised. Explore integration of unused Primary School pitches. 2. Local Sports Engagement – Explore developing systems and processes to geographically match teams with local pitches, reducing travel and environmental impact. Explore the extension of “Anchor Club Status” to encourage local teams to use nearby venues where practical. 3. Booking Process - Incorporate user preference settings for local venues in the booking system. Investigate the establishment of a local priority window in the initial period of the booking process. Ensure the engagement of key stakeholders as part of the review process. 4. Resource Mapping - Identify available resources and funding mechanisms to support initiatives. 5. Active Travel Promotion- Encourage the use of sustainable and active travel opportunities to improve access to pitch facilities in line with city strategies e.g. City Mobility Plan. 6. 9-aside Pitches - Consider the potential for converting any underutilised 7-aside or full-sized grass pitches to a 9-aside

		<p>pitch. This approach could help to alleviate existing pressure on 3G pitch bookings.</p> <p>7. Effective Use of 2G Pitches – Promote the use of 2G pitches to clubs and customers organising training and matches for young children, (e.g. Soccer 4's and 5's). This could help to optimise pitch life and increase capacity at grass and 3G pitches.</p>
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<p>The ever-changing urban landscape and evolving community needs make it crucial for both the Council and EL to collaboratively formulate a cohesive strategy. This strategy should consider the micro-level needs of community sports clubs and the macro-level citywide development goals.</p>	<p>Develop a strategic blueprint for leasing pavilions and extended lets for pitches. This will require us to strike a balance between meeting the needs and interests of local sports clubs and communities and broader projects and strategic objectives.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic Assessment – Explore opportunities to perform a situational analysis for each potential lease or community asset transfer. 2. Council Review of Existing Pavilion Leases and Pitch Extended Lets - Review current pavilion leases and pitch extended let arrangements between the Council and clubs to promote consistency. 3. Periodic Review – Undertake periodic reviews to assess the impact of completed leases on communities' well-being and wider strategic objectives.
<p>A well-integrated sports infrastructure is not solely about the quality of the pitches but extends to complementary amenities such as changing rooms, accessibility, social spaces, and communal areas. Guided by engagement with active users, it is imperative to focus investment on enhancing these supporting facilities.</p>	<p>Dependent on funding opportunities, enhance the quality and accessibility of ancillary facilities that complement the pitch estate through strategic investment.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data-Driven Investment Prioritisation – Ensure investment upgrades align with insights derived from the pitch data model and reflect current levels of facility utilisation. 2. Pavilions – Review pavilion estate and consider different options refurbishing, leasing or repurposing. 3. Energy Saving Benefits- Consider the potential for future investment in improving energy efficiency measures across the pavilion estate.

Strategic objective 2: Improve the quality and maintenance of sports pitches

Context	Goal	Actions
<p>Current grass pitches lack uniformity in quality, affecting user satisfaction and overall utilisation. Implementing a strategic approach to any investment could better ensure that pitches meet quality standards.</p> <p>Similarly, there is a need to consider the maintenance roles for the management of artificial pitches by EL and the Council with a view to improving efficiency.</p>	<p>Focus on upgrading the overall quality of grass and artificial pitches through cost efficient and sustainable maintenance strategies, ensuring improved quality across all playing venues.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consolidation of 3G Pitch Maintenance Contracts- Explore any opportunities to consolidate maintenance contracts between the Council and Edinburgh Leisure to maximise resources. 2. Cost -Benefit Analysis - Conduct an evaluation of maintenance costs for grass pitches in comparison to synthetic 3G/2G surfaces to provide a data -driven basis for any changes to pricing structure. 3. Strengthening the Overall Quality of Grass Pitches – Explore the introduction of a 3-tiered maintenance programme for grass pitches. 4. Evaluate and review the current portfolio of grass pitches – Explore usage and quality of pitches to identify those that are strategically located and well used. There may be potential to identify some that could benefit from repurposing for alternative community or commercial purposes. 5. Artificial Pitch Replacement Programme – Explore funding opportunities to support a pitch replacement programme.

Strategic objective 3: Increase the availability and accessibility of pitches

Context	Goal	Actions
To support year-round use and meet the needs of diverse sports and user groups by harmonising operational procedures, including the booking process and pricing framework.	<p>To streamline and harmonise the sports pitch booking systems to improve customer service and simplify pitch access.</p> <p>To align and standardise the pitch pricing framework to bring a more consistent environment for the sports community, and to foster growth and development.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. System Unification – Explore the integration of Council and EL booking operations into a singular digital interface, offering a comprehensive reservation hub that is customer friendly. This would require an upfront investment but is likely to yield opportunities to streamline operational booking resources. 2. User-Centric Platform - Establish a self-service digital portal allowing users to examine availability, confirm bookings, and oversee their reservations. 3. Enhanced Agility - Implement features allowing seamless integration of new clubs into the existing booking landscape. 4. Cancellation Overhaul - Review the existing cancellation process and explore incorporating real-time assessments, especially during weekends. 5. Equitable Booking Policy- Explore the potential to adopt a new approach to booking pitches which provides equitable access to facilities. 6. Standardised Pricing Model – Explore the creation of a standardised pricing framework that is consistent and equitable. 7. Realignment of Prices - Consider realigning the charges of 2G and 3G pitches to incentivise greater utilisation for younger age groups for training and matches (2G) and enable teams to migrate from grass to 3G pitches during spring / summer months. 8. Adaptive Pricing Model - Consider the potential and implications of introducing an adaptive pricing model for sports pitches to optimise revenue, improve pitch utilisation, and ensure fair access to sports facilities by implementing a pricing model that adjusts in real-time based on demand, time, and other relevant factors.

Strategic objective 4: Foster partnerships and collaboration with key stakeholders

Context	Goal	Actions
Effective management and development of sports pitches in Edinburgh requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach. This is likely to require a need for cross-sectoral collaboration. A more joined up approach among relevant stakeholders is crucial for the optimised planning, development, and operation of these facilities.	To ensure a holistic and integrated approach to the future development of sports pitches and the successful delivery of the Sports Pitch Strategy.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Synergised Planning for Future Provisions – Align the Pitch Strategy to existing city and national strategies and plans and work with other relevant partners such as universities, private schools and National Governing Bodies to ensure a holistic and integrated approach to the future development of sports pitches in the city and to consider ways to improve provision for our communities. 2. Data Sharing and Analysis – Establish regular relevant data-sharing between stakeholders to allow for an evidence-based approach, ensuring that decisions are backed by intelligence, information and trends. 3. Community Engagement – Ensure meaningful and relevant opportunities for community engagement with local clubs, organisations, and governing bodies, to help inform decision-making processes. 4. New Models of Operation and Ownership- Consider new opportunities for potential future development of pitch sites.

Strategic objective 5: Support inclusivity and diversity in sport pitch usage

Context	Goal	Actions
With the current and expanding population of Edinburgh as a diverse city, it is imperative that all the actions in the Strategy are fully inclusive. To optimise current resources, there will be a reoccurring need to work collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure an ongoing focus remains on diversity and inclusion as well as providing safe and accessible spaces. In turn, this will result in a vibrant, sporting environment for all to enjoy the benefits of physical activity through their chosen sport.	Encourage participation through safe and welcoming spaces for all participants, including those who would not traditionally access pitch spaces.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children and Young People-Centric Scheduling – Explore opportunities to allocate earlier time slots predominantly for children and young people, promoting safety and accessibility. 2. Inclusive Booking – Explore booking priority for underrepresented demographics, particularly women and girls, to advocate diversity within sports. 3. Stakeholder Involvement- Identify any real or perceived barriers to use of sports pitches through engagement with equalities groups and take action to address. 4. New Developments or Improvements to Existing Facilities- Create safe, welcoming and inclusive facilities (pitches and ancillary facilities) to encourage the inactive to become active. 5. Promotion and Communication- Raise the profile of pitch facilities through targeted communication of active and available outdoor spaces within the local community to increase physical activity participation from those who may not traditionally use pitches.

Strategic objective 6: Develop a data-driven decision-making process

Context	Goal	Actions
Existing pitch supply broadly meets current demands, however, continued proactive planning is essential to pre-empt increased usage. Data-driven decision-making processes are key to maintaining a sustainable and superior quality sports facility offer.	Support informed decisions on resource allocation for the future development of sports pitches and ancillary facilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Peak Demand Management - Explore potential strategies to manage peak demand periods, ensuring uninterrupted accessibility.2. Data-driven Decisions- Gather and analyse relevant data on sports pitch usage, demand and quality. Update the Edinburgh pitch data model to ensure supply and demand forecasts are aligned.

Strategic objective 7: Consider expanding and building on a 'pitch hub' approach across the city

Context	Goal	Actions
As Edinburgh's sporting environment matures, so does its requirement for contemporary, high-quality pitch facilities. A data-centric analysis, considering both current usage rates and future growth projections, has highlighted the potential benefits that could be realised from expanding and building on a pitch hub approach for the city.	Develop a strategic approach to the establishment and improvement of pitch hubs across the city.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Site Evaluation -Dependent on funding opportunities, investigate the possibility of upgrading existing grass pitches to 3G. Assess opportunities for optimisation and potential repurposing under-utilised grass pitches that are near hub locations. 2. Capacity Expansion – Consider expanding and building on a pitch hub approach across the city through improving existing pitch hub sites and creating new pitch hubs to increase capacity and availability of useable pitches through the provision of additional synthetic pitches. Consider the accompanying infrastructure to accommodate increased usage. 3. West Edinburgh Plans – Investigate the possibility of a new pitch hub across major developments planned in West Edinburgh, an area anticipated to have significant population growth. 4. Pitch Optimisation - Develop a staged and prioritised plan for pitch optimisation including all sports that takes account of increased capacity of any new pitch investments come on stream.

Strategic objective 8: Support future growth and development

Context	Goal	Actions
As Edinburgh continues to grow as a dynamic urban city, there is a need to proactively plan for and accommodate future demands for sports pitches.	Support future growth and development to meet the evolving needs of sports pitch users.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. City Plan 2040 – Ensure the City Plan 2024 considers the Sports Pitch Strategy. Explore whether developer delivery and / or contributions can be sought for the provision and the maintenance of new and existing sports and recreation facilities. 2. Contribution Rate Analysis – Subject to the above action, conduct a study into a proportionate contribution rate per development, inspired by other successful models such as East Lothian's approach. 3. Sink Fund Establishment – Explore any opportunities to create a 'Sink Fund' within the capital programme for the sole purpose of maintaining and eventually replacing 2G and 3G surfaces, and pavilions. 4. Preparing for Future Demand – Dependent on funding opportunities and need, explore the potential for the establishment of new 3G pitches to meet the demand from future housing developments.

Glossary of Terms

Term	Description	Further information
2G	Shorter and denser sand-based or dressed surfaces with a pile height of usually less than 24mm	Hockey, tennis and recreational football. Hockey, tennis, cricket and recreational football, also referred to as multi-use games areas (MUGAs)
3G	Long pile synthetic grass with a pile height of 40mm to 65mm. Typically filled with a combination of sand and performance infill	Football, rugby, and Gaelic sports
Natural grass	100% plant-based on a soil / sand base	Recommended maximum usage of 6 hours per week. Annual renovation required
Water based astroturf	Artificial turf specifically designed for high-level hockey	The top layer is a dense, synthetic fiber carpet that does not require sand infill. The pitch is regularly watered to reduce friction, allowing for smoother and faster ball movement.
Sports pavilion	A building or structure near sports pitches, providing facilities for participants	Pavilions normally consist of changing rooms, showers, and toilets. Some have storage areas.
Sports Pitch Hub	A venue that has multiple grass and synthetic sports pitches with complementary infrastructure (e.g. changing accommodation) to facilitate training and matches for multiple teams and to allow a variety of sports to be played in one location.	The goal of a sports pitch hub is to provide a centralised location where different sports can be played, promoting community engagement and making it easier to maintain and manage the facilities.

MUGA

Multi- Use Games Area. A MUGA is an informal play space, usually a tarmac surface with fencing and fixed goals for children and young people to play sport and games. Popular sports played in MUGAs tend to be football and basketball.

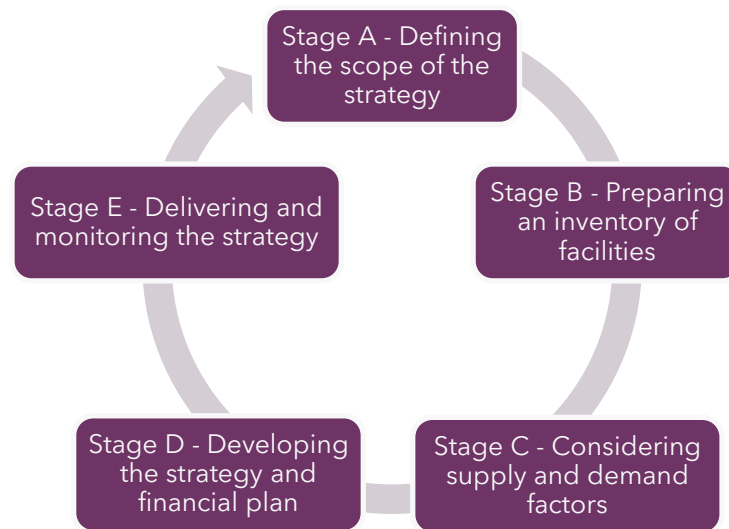
MUGAs are popular in schools, parks and community centres because they maximise the use of available space and encourage participation in a range of sports.



Appendix 1: Strategy Development Methodology

The development of the Sports Pitch Strategy has followed the **sportscotland** methodology for sports pitch strategies for Stages A to D as summarised in **Figure 1-1**. The next steps will be to deliver and monitor the delivery of the Strategy over the next 10 years (Stage E).

Figure 1-1: Sports Pitch Strategy methodology



Stage A: Defining the scope of the strategy

The main purpose of Stage A was to establish the foundational framework to guide the development of the Sports Pitch Strategy. This focused on developing a clear and shared understanding of the rationale

for the development of the Sports Pitch Strategy as well as defining what was in scope. The scope included the relevant Council and EL sports pitch estate, including the Council's school estate, and the sports in scope were cricket, football, hockey, and rugby.

A steering group, comprising representation from the consultant team, Council and EL, was established to oversee the strategy development process, including the scale and scope of the secondary and primary research.

Stage B: Preparing an inventory of facilities

Stage B involved a desk-based exercise to gather, record and sense-check information and data provided by the Council and EL on the supply of, and demand for, pitches. This was then used to provide an up-to-date audit and assessment of the supply of pitches and ancillary provision, as well as on the demand for utilisation of pitches.

To offer a forward-looking perspective, Stage B involved a review of existing information and data to better understand the future demand for pitches in the city. This included a review of existing strategies, plans, and data sets to identify notable changes and trends (for example, population projections, recent and planned housing developments, physical activity and sports participation).

The desk review was supplemented by a process of stakeholder engagement, including:

- In-depth consultations with a wide range of local and national stakeholders with a direct role and/or interest in sports pitches (50+ individuals across 21 organisations).
- With users of sports pitches – an online survey (42 responses received) and some one-to-one interviews were undertaken with clubs.

An additional qualitative assessment was undertaken across a sample of pitches and ancillary provision in the city to feed into the wider assessment of the adequacy and quality of provision.

All information was compiled into a single, coherent data model which informed the remainder of the study. This helped to ensure that the strategy development process was evidence based, data-driven, and rooted in current realities as well as future expectations.

Stage C: Considering supply and demand factors

Stage C involved a detailed assessment of the information and data captured at Stage B – this was then synthesised to provide actionable insight from a supply and demand perspective. It helped to provide further insights into, for example: whether the supply of pitches meets current and future needs; issues, limitations and/or gaps in provision; and on user experience and satisfaction.

Stage D: Developing the strategy and financial plan

Stage D has resulted in the development of a Sports Pitch Strategy which has been informed by all the evidence captured through the secondary and primary research. The strategy has been designed in such a way as to provide the framework for decision-making and development for the next 10 years for Edinburgh and will support

stakeholders to take forward implementation in a systematic, cohesive, and joined-up manner.

Stage E: Delivering and monitoring the strategy

Delivery and monitoring of the strategy will be taken forward by the Council and EL in collaboration with key stakeholders. Processes to engage stakeholders, update the data model and ensure that the supply and demand considerations are kept current will need to be agreed to help ensure that implementation and delivery is agile and responsive to changes in user needs and demand, policy drivers, and other external factors.

Appendix 2: Strategic context

Organisation	Document
UK-Wide	<p>Fields in Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fields in Trust Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play – Scotland
National	<p>Audit Scotland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government in Scotland: Overview 2023 <p>Scottish Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Performance Framework • Covid Recovery Strategy: For a fairer future • National Planning Framework 4 • A More Active Scotland: Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan <p>sportscotland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport for Life • Equality and Sport Research
Local	<p>Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Plan: Our Future Council, Our Future City • Physical Activity and Sport Strategy 2024-2034 • Corporate Property Strategy • 20-Minute Neighbourhood Strategy: Living Well Locally • City Mobility Plan 2021-2030

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Development Plan • Open Space 2021: Edinburgh's Open Space Strategy • Thriving Green Spaces Strategy • End Poverty in Edinburgh Plan 2020-2030 • Edinburgh People Survey <p>Edinburgh Leisure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Organisational Compass • Strategic Framework <p>The Edinburgh Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Plan 2018-2028 <p>Edinburgh Community Safety Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh's Joint Community Safety Strategy 2020-2023
National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGB)	<p>Cricket Scotland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy Refresh <p>Scottish Football Association (SFA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Big Pitch • Scottish FA Grassroots Pitch & Facilities Fund • The Power of Football Strategic Plan 2021-2025 <p>Hockey Scotland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan 2019-2023 <p>Scottish Rugby</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women & Girls Strategy

Appendix 3: Pitch supply findings summary

Introduction

The factors considered in the analysis of the supply of sports pitches included:

- **Existing supply** – the availability and distribution of pitches across the city, including how well supply caters to the needs of the sports in scope.
- **Accessibility of pitches** – including the ease with which different demographic groups can access sports pitches.
- **Quality of sports pitches** – a crucial determinant of user experience and safety. Income and expenditure related to the maintenance and operation of the pitches was also considered.
- **Opening hours and booking arrangements** – including consideration of how administrative elements impact usage patterns and user satisfaction.
- **Pricing structure** - for EL and Council lets including consideration of how pricing may influence pitch usage.
- **Maintenance practices** – a critical aspect of preserving pitch quality and longevity. Feedback received from local sports clubs on sports pitches and ancillary provision and their aspirations for future provision was also considered.
- **Future plans for investment in Edinburgh's sports pitches** – planned and potential changes and improvements in sports pitch provision in the city.

Existing Supply

Pitch diversity and availability

The sports pitches available for community use in Edinburgh are owned and managed by a wide range of providers. The focus for the analysis for the Sports Pitch Strategy was on the Council and EL estate, it is important to set this within the context of wider sports pitch provision in the city.

There are 253 pitches in the city. Points to note include:

- The most significant contributor to pitch provision is EL, operating half (50%) of the available pitches, managing a total of 126 pitches.
- The Council oversees the next highest number of pitches, with 39 pitches (15%).
- Pitches located at Council educational establishments form a significant proportion of the overall provision. Secondary schools contribute 37 pitches (15%), booked for community access by EL, while primary schools add a further 22 pitches (9%) although these primary school pitches are not currently accessible to the wider community.
- Wider provision includes:
 - Private schools (10 pitches), including George Watsons, Herriot's, Stewarts Melville's.

- Community sports clubs and universities each contribute 8 pitches, indicating their importance as dual-use facilities where education or community work and sports provision coincide. (e.g. Inch Park Community Sports Club, Peffermill at Edinburgh University)
- Independent clubs (2 pitches) and Ministry of Defence (MOD) (1 pitch).

While the distribution of pitches is heavily skewed towards certain providers, notably EL and the Council, a wide variety of organisations contribute to the city's vibrant sports landscape.

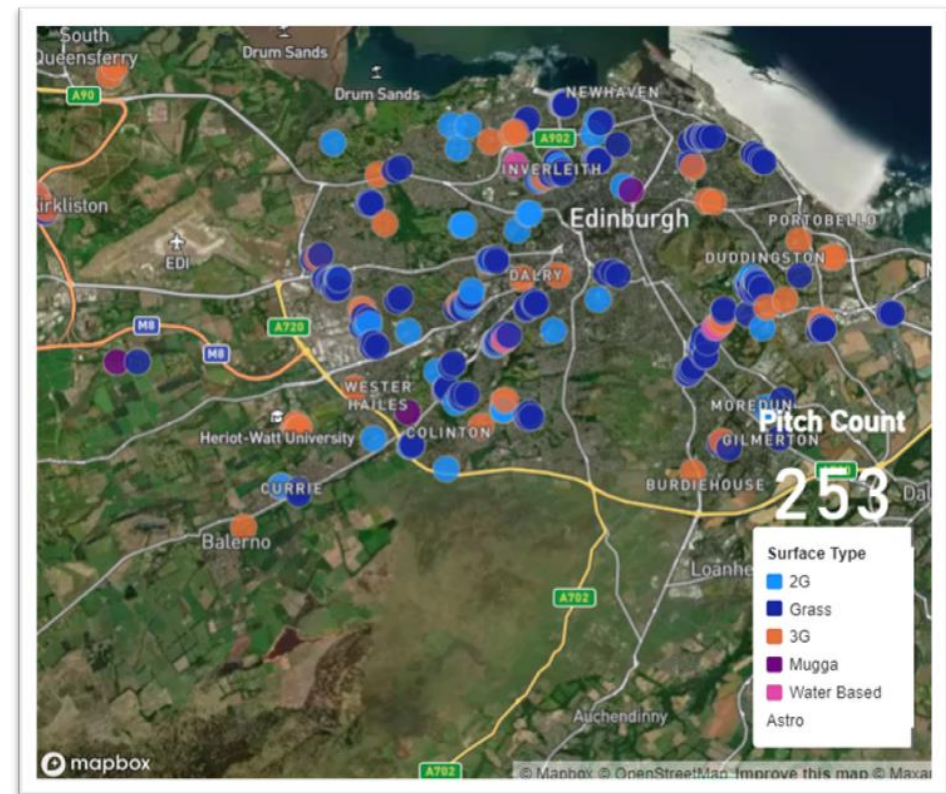
Table 3-1 provides a breakdown of pitches by surface, with grass a dominant feature in the city.

Table 3-1: Pitch surface

Pitch surface	Number	Percentage
Grass	163	64%
3G	42	17%
2G	41	16%
Water based astroturf	4	2%
Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGA)	3	1%

N=253 pitches.

Figure 3-1: Edinburgh community sports pitch provision



Source: Mapbox

Points to note include:

- Most of the pitches operated by EL are grass (106), representing nearly 65% of all grass pitches. This leaves only 57 grass pitches under other types of management. EL also manage eleven 2G pitches, eight 3G pitches, and one water-based astro pitch.
- Almost all the Council managed pitches are grass (38 pitches).

- Council secondary schools have a relatively even distribution across 2G, 3G, and grass pitches. Most primary school pitches are either 2G or grass.
- Private school pitches are mainly 2G, although there is one water-based astro pitch.
- Community sports clubs primarily manage grass pitches, while universities predominantly operate 3G pitches.
- Independent clubs and MOD sites each manage one or two 3G pitches.

In terms of pitch size, most are full sized pitches able to accommodate different sports such as football, rugby, hockey, and cricket. Some pitches are smaller and are only able to accommodate smaller numbers of participants and game formats (for example, 5-a-side, 7-a-side and 9-a-side pitches).

Sports representation and hub sites

Sport specific pitch supply

Football

Table 3-2 shows that there are 185 pitches in the city that can accommodate football related activities including training, match play, and recreational play. The pitches vary in size and surface type. The most prevalent are 11-a-side grass and 3G pitches with a smaller number of 2G pitches. There are also a number of 9's, 7's and 5's pitches that have grass, 2G and 3G surfaces.

Table 3-2: Football pitch supply by surface, size, and available activity

Pitch surface	Pitch size	Number of pitches
2G	11's	7
	5's	7
	7's	7
3G	11's	30
	5's	1
	7's	10
	MUGA (multi use games area)	1
Grass	11's	52
	7's	56
	9's	9
	Training	2
MUGA	5's	2
	7's	1
Total		185

Rugby

Table 3-3 shows that there are 41 pitches that can accommodate rugby related activities including training and match play. The pitches also vary in size and surface type. The most prevalent are full sized grass and 3G pitches. Most rugby takes place on grass pitches.

Table 3-3: Rugby pitch supply by surface, size, and available activity

Pitch surface	Pitch size	Number of pitches
3G	11's	10
	7's	1
Grass	11's	1
	Rugby	28
	Training	1
Total		41

Hockey

Table 3-4 shows that there are 30 pitches that can accommodate hockey related activities including training and match play. Similar to other sports, the pitches vary in size and surface type. The most prevalent are full sized 2G and Water Based Astro Pitches. There are also a number of 7's and 5's pitches that have 2G surfaces that can also accommodate hockey activities.

Table 3-4: Hockey pitch supply by surface, size, and available activity

Pitch surface/ size	Pitch size	Number of pitches
2G	11's	6
	5's	1
	7's	7
	Hockey	10
3G	11's	1
MUGA	7's	1
Water based astro turf	Hockey	4
Total		30

Cricket

Table 3-5 shows that there are 22 pitches that can accommodate cricket related activities including training and match play - the most prevalent provision is grass.

Table 3-5: Cricket pitch supply by surface, size and available activity

Pitch surface/size	Pitch size	Number of pitches
2G	Cricket	10
Grass	Cricket	12
Total		22

Hub Sites Pitch Supply

Some sites across the city operate as pitch hubs. A pitch hub is a venue that has multiple grass and synthetic sports pitches with complementary infrastructure (e.g. changing accommodation) to facilitate training and matches for multiple teams and allow a variety of sports to be played in one location. E.g. Meggetland in the south of the city which operates as a multi-purpose sports complex offering access to a range of sports pitches both astroturf and grass, alongside other facilities. The goal of a sports pitch hub is to provide a centralised location where different sports can be played, promoting community engagement and making it easier to maintain and manage the facilities.









These sites experience disproportionately high demand which may be due to the better quality pitches and facilities. It would be beneficial to investigate opportunities to expand the capacity and improve the quality of existing hub sites.





Although there may be opportunity to expand some pitch hub sites as well as developing new sites (subject to securing the necessary investment), there are a number of factors which could limit their development potential including their location on “Common Good” land, proximity to housing, planning considerations related to fencing and floodlighting in open green space, as well as availability of transport facilities.

Accessibility and geographical coverage

In assessing the supply of sports pitches in Edinburgh, accessibility of facilities for the local population was considered. Accessibility is determined by several factors including travel time, mode of transport, and pitch type, **Table 3-6**.

Table 3-6: Pitch accessibility analysis

Travel time	Travel mode	2G	3G	Grass	MUGA	Water based astroturf
10 minutes		87.9%	95.5%	95.6%	22.9%	28.0%
		91.8%	97.5%	97.7%	28.9%	33.2%
		18.9%	21.6%	34.6%	2.8%	1.7%
		17.1%	19.2%	30.9%	2.5%	1.1%
15 minutes		97.6%	99.4%	98.7%	50.6%	62.1%
		99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	64.6%	72.7%
		49.0%	53.6%	70.7%	8.7%	7.2%
		39.5%	43.3%	60.1%	6.0%	2.9%

20 minutes		99.5%	99.8%	100.0%	74.1%	86.1%
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	92.8%	93.4%
		74.6%	81.0%	90.2%	18.7%	21.6%
		60.8%	65.0%	80.8%	11.7%	7.6%

Source : Accessibility calculated using The Travel Time Platform

Points to note include:

- For all pitch types, accessibility increases significantly as travel time increases.
- At a 10-minute travel time, cycling offers good accessibility. Walking and public transport provide substantially lower accessibility, especially for MUGAs and water-based astro pitches.
- As travel time increases to 15 and 20 minutes, accessibility improves across all modes of transport. Accessibility by cycling comes close to that of driving, particularly for 3G and grass pitches.
- At a 20-minute travel time almost all pitches (99.5% to 100%) are accessible when cycling.
- When travelling by public transport or walking, accessibility remains comparatively lower. At a 20-minute travel time, public transport offers 75% access to 2G pitches and 90% access to grass pitches. The accessibility of MUGAs and water-based astro pitches remains quite low across all travel times and modes of transport.
- There are very strong levels of accessibility for the local population to all pitch types by cycling and driving. However, there is a need to further encourage and support other modes of transport (for example, public transport and walking) to widen community access to such facilities.

Accessibility for more deprived communities

The accessibility data was filtered to consider the population living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) Quintile 1 (the 20% more deprived data zones in Scotland). Points to note include:

- The SIMD Quintile 1 population within the city has a higher or similar level of accessibility to sports pitches than the overall population of the City of Edinburgh. This is particularly significant for 3G pitches when accessed via public transport or walking and is indicative of the proximity of these facilities to areas of higher deprivation.
- Access to MUGAs and water-based astro pitches remains relatively similar across both population groupings.
- Analysis at SIMD level helps to provide valuable insights to support the development of targeted interventions that aim to improve accessibility for specific population groups.

Quality of facilities

Non-technical inspections and assessments

Using an adapted version of the Sport England pitch inspection methodology, non-technical inspections/assessments were conducted by MAC Consulting to evaluate the quality of existing pitch provision and ancillary facilities such as changing rooms, car parking, and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance.

Pitch inspections

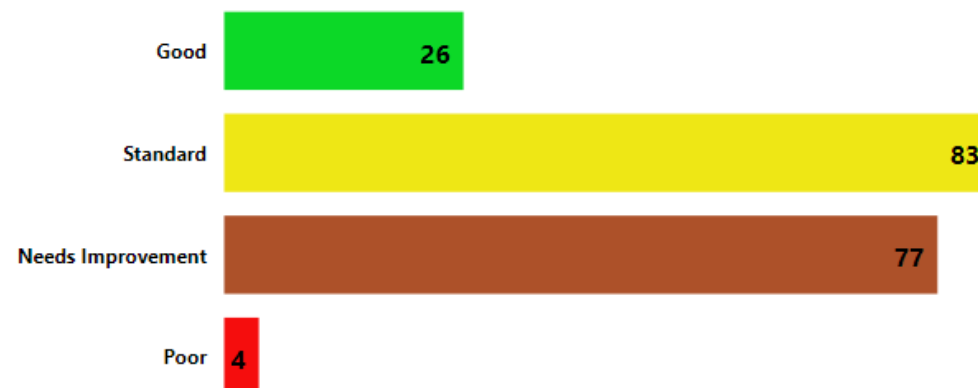
A comprehensive pitch inspection was conducted across 190 out of a total of 202 available pitches (94% of pitches managed by the Council and EL). The assessment excluded pitches which were not owned by the Council (50 pitches).

The assessment was designed to categorise each pitch based on its current state of quality, and the results were classified into four categories: "Good," "Standard," "Needs Improvement," and "Poor." See **Figure 3-6**.

Key points to note include:

- A sizable proportion of pitches fall into the "Standard" category (44%) or "Good" category (14%) – a majority of pitches meet a basic benchmark for usability.
- However, a sizeable proportion also fall into the "Needs improvement" (41%) or "Poor" category (2%) – suggesting a need for continuous assessment and regular maintenance efforts to elevate the quality of pitches and ensure they serve the sporting community effectively.

Figure 3-6: Pitch quality surface rating

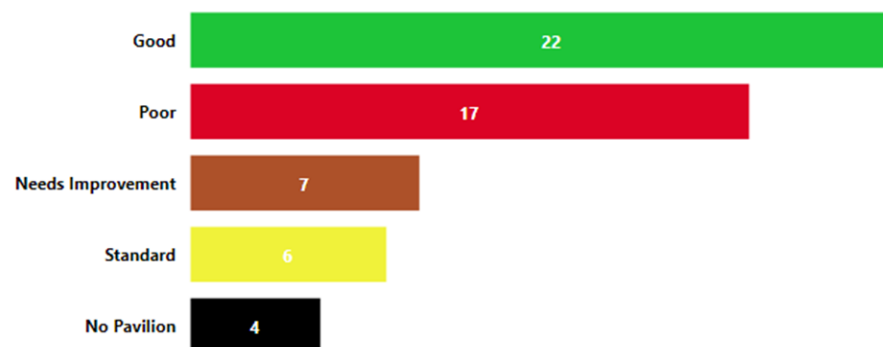


Pavilion assessment

An assessment of 56 pavilions was also conducted, **Figure 3-7**. Points to note include:

- Half of pavilions assessed were categorised as meeting the benchmark, falling into the "Good" (39%) or "Standard" (11%) categories.
- A significant proportion of pavilions were identified within the "Needs improvement" (13%) or "Poor" categories (30%) – regular maintenance and upkeep is required to ensure pavilions are fit for purpose.

Figure 3-7: Pavilion quality rating



Pitch quality by surface type

Table 3-7 provides an overview of the quality distribution across different pitch surfaces. Points to note include that:

- The vast majority of 2G pitches are in “Good” or “Standard” condition.
- The vast majority of 3G pitches are in “Good” or “Standard” condition.
- The one water based astro pitch inspected is in “Good” condition.
- The most variability in pitch quality is among grass pitches – around half “Needs improvement” or are in “Poor” condition (primarily the former category).

Table 3-7: Pitch rating by surface type

Surface type	Good	Standard	Needs improvement	Poor	Total
2G	6	10	2		18
3G	14	7	4		25
Grass	5	66	71	4	146
Water based astroturf	1				1
Total	26	83	77	4	190

Club and Team Feedback

The pitch inspections were supplemented by an online survey aimed at sports clubs and teams that use sports pitches in the city. The survey was distributed by EL to a total of 291 contacts – and the 42 responses to the club survey represents a response rate of 14%. Among other things, the survey captured views on the quality of pitches and ancillary facilities across the city and issues and concerns relating to pitch access and provision.

The feedback from the engagement process provided a snapshot of views, perspectives, and experiences.

Feedback regarding the **quality of pitches primarily for home matches** conveys a level of satisfaction. Some points to note from the survey include that:

- The quality of the surface (3G) stands out, with 78% of respondents finding it “Good”, and only 11% seeing it as “Poor”. Similarly, attributes like pitch markings, bounce of ball on pitch, grip underfoot,

and evenness of pitch all received a "Good" rating from over 66% of the respondents, indicating general contentment.

- There are areas for improvement. The feedback on grass cover highlights this, with 27% of respondents seeing it as "Poor", although 40% found it "Good". The condition of being free from litter, dog fouling, etc. is another point of concern, as 33% of respondents marked it "Poor".

Club survey feedback on **ancillary accommodation for home matches** reflects a spectrum of perceptions among the respondents from various clubs and teams. For example:

- 53% of respondents rated the social space as "Poor", while only 13% believed it to be "Good". This suggests an area that may need considerable attention. Similarly, the kitchen or catering space is seen as requiring improvement with 57% of respondents rating it "Poor" and 23% finding it "Good".
- Positively, disabled access received favourable feedback, where 50% of the respondents rated it as "Good", contrasting with the 17% who found it "Poor". The car parking facilities were similarly well-regarded, with 57% of the respondents giving a "Good" rating and only 17% rating it as "Poor".

For pitch facilities used during training activities, certain areas stand out. For example:

- The quality of the surface (2G) received a "Good" rating from 54% of the respondents, displaying a notable 12% increase compared to their experience during matches. The quality of the surface (3G) was rated as "Good" by 56% of the respondents, indicating a considerable 15% improvement in the positive feedback from its match-day counterpart. However, the quality of equipment was an area of concern, with a "Poor" rating from 48% of the respondents —

a substantial 14% increase in negative feedback when compared to the match facilities.

- The grass cover maintained consistent feedback, with 32% of respondents rating it as "Poor" showing no perceptual difference between training and match accommodations. Similarly, perceptions regarding areas being free from litter, dog fouling etc remain unchanged with 36% of respondents rating it as "Poor" indicating issues in this area.

When considering **ancillary accommodations provided during training sessions**, there are distinct variations in the perceptions compared to match accommodations. For example:

- The kitchen or catering space was rated as "Poor" by 42% of the respondents, marking a slight decline in the "Good" ratings by 1% from their perceptions during matches.
- The pavilion received a "Poor" rating from 38% of the respondents, with the "Good" category also observing a marginal decline by 1% when juxtaposed with match-day accommodations.
- The shower area improved in its "Poor" ratings by 4% compared to match facilities, though there was a minor 2% decline in the "Good" ratings. Feedback for the changing accommodation also reflected improvement in its "Poor" ratings by 4% from the match-day perceptions, but there was a slight dip in the "Good" ratings by 2%.

Operational Aspects- Opening hours & pitch booking procedures

Opening hours- School pitches

Term-time access

From Monday to Friday most secondary school pitches are open for community use from 18:00, with closing times ranging from 20:00 to 21:45. On weekends, the availability of school pitches becomes more variable.

For Saturday access, the opening times generally start between 08:30 and 09:00. However, the closing times vary widely, from as early as 15:30 at some schools to as late as 19:00 at others. School pitches are reserved for school use until 13:00 on Saturdays, which may limit community access during the morning.

Some schools, such as those within the PPP1 category, open their pitches for limited hours on Sundays, while others remain closed.

While there are various opportunities for community access to school sports pitches across the city, the range of availability is wide and there is scope to explore the extension of school estate pitches opening hours.

School holiday access

During the February, Easter, Summer and October holidays, most schools extend their hours during weekdays (Monday to Thursday and Friday), offering a significantly longer window for community use. However, on weekends, some school pitches remain closed during

school holidays and many schools' close access to pitches throughout the Christmas holiday period.

While the opening hours for pitches increase on weekdays during school holidays, weekend availability is variable with operational hours reflecting demand and/or availability of Council Facilities Management cover. Access to the facilities is also subject to Council maintenance works which can cause variations in the actual availability of the pitches.

Potential to increase pitch capacity

Based on analysis of the opening hours of school pitches in Edinburgh, there is potential to increase pitch capacity by exploring the extension of their availability during periods they are currently closed to the community. This would not only maximise the utility of these assets but would also provide valuable additional options for local sports clubs and community groups.

It will be essential to balance any future changes with the levels of demand, school requirements, maintenance needs of the pitches, staff availability, and any potential impact on the surrounding community.

Non-school pitches

Non-school pitch opening hours analysis was limited to three of EL's prominent venues: Meggetland, Saughton, and the Jack Kane Centre which have extended opening hours. Grass pitches were excluded from the analysis due to operational nuances (for example, susceptibility to weather, and limited capacity for training and matches). The findings suggest that there may be opportunities to explore increasing the opening hours of some community pitch venues.

Pitch booking procedures

The booking processes for Council and EL sports pitches are a critical element in ensuring fair and equitable access to pitches for clubs and teams.

EL booking process

EL manages its booking process annually via an extended lets mechanism. This system primarily ensures continuity for teams by offering the same pitches to them year after year, however, it raises questions about equitable opportunity and access for new clubs.

Council booking process for grass pitches

The Council's approach to booking also uses an extended let process, mainly for grass pitches.

Strengths and challenges of the current booking arrangements

The existing arrangements offer some advantages. These include a structured, albeit separate, system for EL and the Council, and provisions that ensure clubs get the same pitches year after year, providing a degree of certainty and continuity. However, the management of the booking system is undertaken by EL and the Council and it may be beneficial to explore integration into a single system booking platform.

Several challenges were identified with the current booking arrangements which suggest a need to review the process and make improvements.

Pricing

An in-depth price benchmarking exercise was carried out to establish how EL's pitch prices compare nationally. Generally speaking, the cost of EL pitches are higher than the national average. Even when taking into consideration a strategic decision by EL in recent years to reduce some of its pitch prices to align with school estate pitch prices.

EL offers a detailed pricing model catering to various facilities and user needs, with specific rates for adults, juniors, and disabled individuals. The pricing is higher than the Council's pricing likely reflecting better facilities. It also includes commercial and inclusive rates, making it versatile and accessible. The Council offers a range of 30-week pitch rentals with varying costs aiming to accommodate teams with diverse financial capabilities. There is a need to review the current pricing model to address questions of consistency and sustainability.

Maintenance arrangements

Current maintenance arrangements

Maintenance of sports pitches is currently the responsibility of several different organisations. Grass pitches are maintained by the Council grounds maintenance teams, whilst 3G pitches have three maintenance arrangements

- PPP schools – are maintained and replaced by PPP Contractor
- Council 3G – are maintained under contract by Sportex
- EL maintenance teams do some 3G maintenance and have some works undertaken under contract by Sportex

2G and 3G pitches

The synthetic turfs, such as 2G and 3G pitches, have experienced an increase in their adoption due to their all-weather resilience and lower upkeep. However, their maintenance remains paramount. EL independently oversees the maintenance of its 2G and 3G pitches via contracts with specialist contractors and their own in-house maintenance teams.

The Council also utilises specialist contractors to manage its 2G/3G turf maintenance. The PPP school management contractors, have responsibility for pitch maintenance, adhere to the **sportscotland** guidelines which, in turn, are based on the Sports and Play Construction Association (SAPCA) [Code of Practice](#) document.

Grass pitches

The vast majority of grass pitches fall under the council's direct grounds maintenance. Notably, the maintenance intensity varies. The maintenance of grass pitches has been identified as an area for improvement as the feedback from clubs and teams and assessment surveys suggest that the current standards of grass pitch upkeep could be improved.

Sports pavilions

The responsibility for the upkeep of sports pavilions is divided between EL and the Council. The condition of pavilions has also been identified as a key area for improvement as identified by the feedback from local sports clubs and assessment surveys. The poor state of many pavilions' ranges from inadequate segregation facilities for changing and restrooms, especially for women and girls, to the absence of disability-friendly amenities. This impedes the growth and inclusivity of many clubs.

Ancillary equipment

Ancillary elements like nets, floodlights, and pitch linings play a crucial part in the overall sports environment. The ancillary equipment maintenance, especially within school facilities, has also been identified by clubs as requiring improvement.

Club feedback

Club survey (and one-to-one consultation) feedback on the quality of pitch and wider ancillary provision is relatively mixed. There is positive feedback from clubs relating to aspects such as: ease of booking pitches, accessibility, quality of pitches, quality of the playing surface, and availability of pitches. However, there is negative feedback on the quality of pavilions and wider ancillary provision such as social space, kitchen or catering space, changing accommodation, showers, and toilets, as well as wider concerns relating to anti-social behaviour at some pitches.

A positive finding is that almost all clubs that responded to the survey aspire to grow what they do over the short-term, most notably through increasing membership and the number of teams. Some clubs also want to develop community, social, and health activities or explore lease or ownership opportunities for pitches. These represent future opportunities.

In terms of the future of pitch provision in the city, the main priorities for clubs are reported as:

- **Higher quality pitch provision** – this priority underscores the clubs' desire for enhanced playing conditions. A focus on quality could lead to increased usage and satisfaction among coaches, players and spectators, thereby potentially boosting club membership.
- **More regular and improved pitch maintenance** – the call for better maintenance suggests that while existing facilities may be structurally sound, upkeep leaves room for improvement. Regular and professional maintenance could extend the lifespan of pitches, mitigate issues such as waterlogging and uneven surfaces, and improve the overall quality of play and user experience.
- **More 3G pitch capacity provision** – the demand for more 3G pitch capacity indicates a preference for multi-use, weather-resistant

surfaces. Given Edinburgh's climate, the addition of 3G pitch capacity could ensure more consistent play throughout the year and accommodate a broader range of sports.

- **Improved access to pitches within the school estate** – football clubs specifically raised concerns about the availability of pitches within the city, including within the school estate.

Energy efficiencies

Although both schools and sports pitch operations are largely efficient, the consistent 40% rise in energy costs experienced site-wide taken alongside the Council's ambition to respond to the climate emergency and become a net zero city by 2030 suggest additional energy- saving actions should be explored including:

- Lighting: LED retrofitting and motion sensors.
- Heating and Cooling: Enhanced insulation and smart thermostats.
- Appliances: Upgrade to energy-efficient models and implement centralised control systems.
- Renewable Energy: Explore solar and wind energy options.
- Water Heating: Evaluate solar and instant water heaters.
- Monitoring: Implement smart meters and annual energy audits.

Planned future investments & optimisation of existing assets

In an increasingly dynamic sports environment, the strategy for future development must be underpinned by both foresight and targeted resource allocation. As and when the Council and EL commit to further investments in pitches and related infrastructure, the emphasis should not solely rest on new developments. The potential of existing, underutilised pitches, particularly within the school estate, presents an invaluable opportunity.

Sports pitch developments planned or in the pipeline by other organisations (for example, private schools, universities, private sector) should also be considered as part of a balanced and informed approach. Before committing scarce capital resources to construct new facilities, it

will be important to harness these latent assets more effectively. Such an approach, which combines innovative development with optimisation of existing resources, requires concerted coordination among key stakeholders. This includes the Council, EL, local clubs, and other key stakeholders (for example, **sportscotland**, National Governing Bodies).

Other factors

A range of factors will guide decision-making on future pitch investments to ensure that investments are both timely and appropriate.

- Firstly, development constraints play a pivotal role. The classification of land, be it under "Pitches in Trust" status or designated as "Common Good" land, are likely to pose certain challenges. While the commitment to sports infrastructure is unwavering, these designations may require special considerations, additional consultation and engagement, or adaptive strategies to move forward.
- Additionally, third-party developments significantly impact the landscape of the supply of pitches. Contributions from the private sector, third sector, private educational institutions, tertiary sector including universities, and colleges often introduce new pitches and related facilities, enriching the sports ecosystem of the city. A cross-sector collaborative approach may present synergies and will ensure that any new developments align with overarching community goals.
- The rise in Community Asset Transfers (CAT) will also shape the direction of future investments. As more community groups aspire to take ownership and management of public assets, there is a pronounced inclination towards establishing new pitch facilities. Community-driven projects often resonate with local needs, making them valuable additions to the city's sporting infrastructure.
- Of course, the availability of funding remains a cornerstone. Capital allocation decisions must strike a balance between introducing new facilities and optimising existing facilities, especially those that are underutilised. Recognising and leveraging pitch capacity in schools and other venues can offer a cost-effective way to meet rising demands without substantial capital outlays.

- A pitch replacement programme is another essential consideration. As the current 2G, 3G, and water-based astroturf pitches age, they will inevitably reach the end of their operational life. Proactively planning for their replacement will ensure that there are no gaps in facility availability and that users continue to enjoy high-quality pitches.
- Lastly, accessibility remains at the heart of these investments. The principle of 20-minute neighbourhoods underscores the importance of making sports facilities readily accessible to residents. Every pitch development or enhancement should ideally be within a short distance, ensuring that sports and recreational activities are an integral, easily accessible part of community life.

In summary, while the city's commitment to future investment in pitches and related infrastructure is evident, the careful navigation of the aforementioned influencing factors will help to determine the success and longevity of such investments. Through collaborative efforts, foresight, and a commitment to pitch accessibility and optimisation, the city is poised to offer a robust, dynamic, and inclusive sporting environment for all its residents.

Appendix 4: Pitch demand findings summary

Introduction

This summary provides a detailed analysis of the current demand for sports pitches in Edinburgh, focusing on peak times of usage during the main activity season. Demand for cricket pitches is measured separately as the booking dynamics for this sport differ from football, rugby, and hockey. The data presented has been sourced from EL and the Council and is supplemented with insights from the club survey and consultations. It does not include sites that are not operated by either the Council or EL as no demand data is available for these pitches.

This analysis not only seeks to understand the current levels of demand but also aims to understand factors which affect future demand. Recognising that the demand patterns vary depending on the specific pitch, location, and other factors, the overarching goal is consistent: to maximise the use of existing capacity. In terms of the future, the emphasis is on ensuring that there is adequate capacity to meet the anticipated future demand.

Demand Analysis

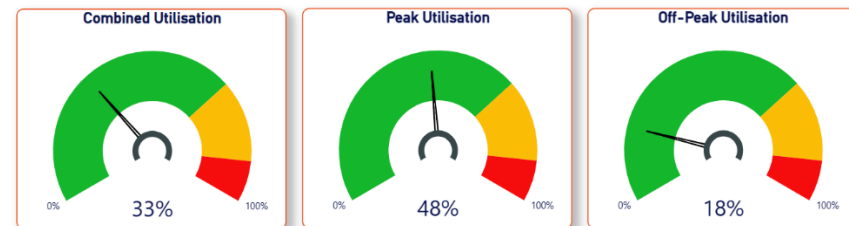
Utilisation

For the purposes of calculating levels of demand, each pitch has had its number of bookings calculated as a percentage of its available booking capacity. Each pitch surface is viewed differently and has a different capacity (for example, a grass pitch can accommodate significantly less

bookings than a 3G pitch). Levels of demand do not include use of school pitches during school hours of operation.

Figure 4-1 shows that the overall level of utilisation is low across all bookable pitches and all opening hours (33%). However, demand at peak times (48%) is significantly higher compared to off-peak times (18%). This reflects the times that most clubs and teams are available for training and match play. The level of utilisation at peak times suggests that there is spare capacity that could be better used.

Figure 4-1: Pitch utilisation – all pitches

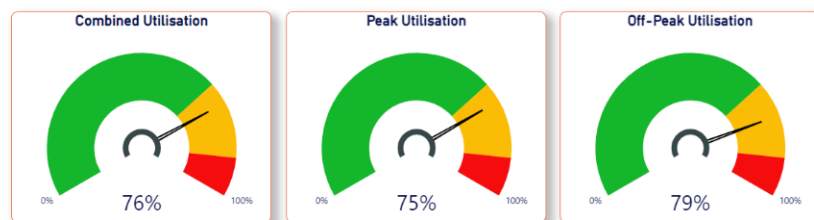


Grass pitches

The grass pitch estate is predominantly composed of full-sized football and rugby pitches. Additionally, a substantial number of these pitches are designed for 7-side and 9-side games. The Council has allocated certain pitches exclusively for specific clubs through its extended let process. Even though grass pitches inherently offer a lower capacity for training activities and match play compared to 2G or 3G pitches, their overall utilisation remains high.

As illustrated in **Figure 4-2**, during peak times, grass pitch utilisation reaches up to 75%. Notably, many grass pitches experience utilisation levels surpassing what is conventionally deemed sustainable, leading to overuse. A considerable proportion of these overplayed pitches cater for rugby. Conversely, there is also a significant subset of grass pitches that have low utilisation, suggesting infrequent usage by clubs. The booking data reveals that juveniles account for nearly 70% of users, with adults constituting the remaining 30%.

Figure 4-2: Pitch utilisation – grass pitches



Several heavily utilised grass pitches, especially those situated within larger pitch hubs (e.g. Meggetland and Forresters) might benefit from a transition to a 3G surface (some to be rugby compliant) to better accommodate the higher levels of demand. This elevated demand can

be attributed, in part, to the low pricing, especially for those pitches leased for extended use.

Underutilised grass pitches could be earmarked for alternative uses, and the existing demand reallocated to pitches with surplus capacity — potentially some of the underutilised 2G or 3G pitches.

The overabundance of grass 7-side pitches could also be considered for alternative purposes, and some could be considered where feasible to convert to 9-side pitches where capacity is lacking.

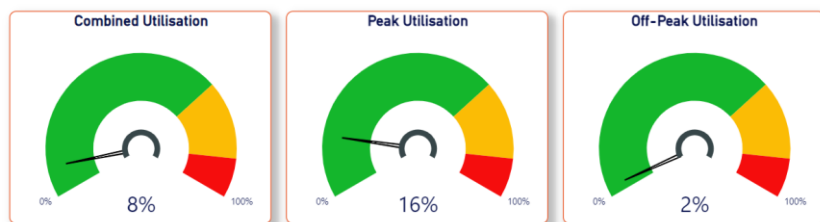
Artificial pitches

2G pitches

2G pitches possess a greater capacity in comparison to grass pitches. Despite this, **Figure 4-3** indicates that their overall utilisation rates remain below those of grass pitches, albeit with a marginal increase during peak times. Predominantly, 2G pitches are located within the school estate, except for two 5-side areas that are part of the EL estate. In a school context, the 2G surface may offer more flexibility to accommodate a range of sporting activities than for example 3G surfaces.

During peak times, there is a pronounced preference for full-sized 2G pitches. Evaluating the utilisation on a venue-by-venue basis reveals that no venue exceeds 50% utilisation. The breakdown of bookings indicates that 60% are for juvenile users, while the remaining 40% are for adults.

Figure 4-3: Pitch utilisation – 2G pitches



This underutilisation points to potential opportunities. Specifically, there seems to be room to optimise the use of 2G pitches, especially for hockey and training sessions for younger children and for small-sided match play (mini kickers, soccer 4's, 5's and 7's). Furthermore, these pitches might be suitable for certain training activities intended for older age groups.

The underutilisation implies that clubs do not prefer 2G surfaces for sports, with the notable exception being hockey. Their application for broader community activities also seems limited. Given the circumstances, it may be prudent to contemplate transitioning some of the existing 2G surfaces to 3G surfaces.

3G pitches

As highlighted in **Figure 4-4**, 3G pitches demonstrate a notably higher overall utilisation than both 2G and grass pitches, especially during peak demand periods. The majority of 3G pitches are situated within the school estate, though a significant number are also part of the EL estate, which includes some full-sized pitches and a limited number of 5-aside and 7-aside pitches.

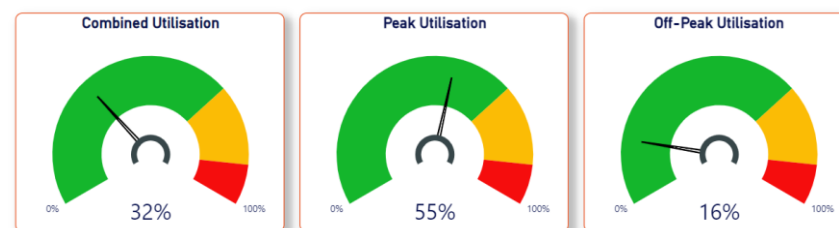
During peak hours, the data highlights a distinct preference for full-sized 3G pitches, which by themselves register a utilisation rate of 64%. Factoring in the 5-aside and 7-aside variants brings the aggregate

utilisation to 55%. When assessing individual venues, a majority of full-sized pitches exhibit utilisation rates exceeding 60%. However, there exists a subset of pitches whose utilisation rates range from 23% to 57%. The demographic distribution of bookings is weighted in favour of juvenile users at 60%, leaving 40% allocated for adult users.

The evident underutilisation signifies untapped potential to increase utilisation for training and match play. Several factors might account for the underutilisation. Feedback from some clubs suggests that pitch hire costs are a deterrent. Furthermore, the prevalence of more affordable grass pitches could be an influencing factor, leading some clubs to gravitate towards these cost-effective alternatives when available.

Analysis of operational hours highlights that increasing 3G pitch capacity is feasible. This could be achieved by exploring opportunities to extend operational hours for high school-based 3G pitches and considering whether currently unavailable primary school pitches could be made accessible for community use.

Figure 4-4: Pitch utilisation – 3G pitches

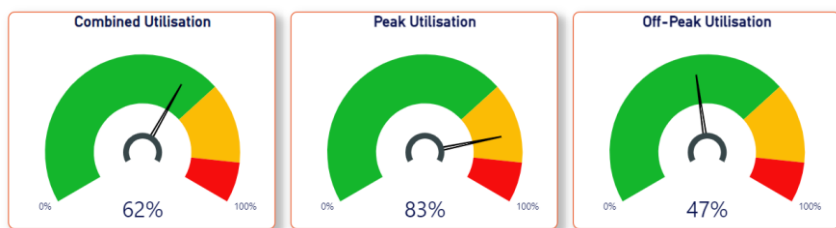


Specialised pitches

Water based astroturf pitches

There is only one water based astroturf pitch within the combined Council and EL pitch estate located at Meggetland. This pitch is well used and has very high levels of utilisation at peak times and is well used even at off peak times. Feedback from clubs and Scottish Hockey suggest that additional pitch provision is required, however, clubs make use of hockey pitches that are provided through other pitch providers such as the University of Edinburgh and some private schools.

Figure 4-5: Pitch utilisation – water based astroturf pitches



Cricket

Demand levels for cricket pitches necessitate a different form of analysis from the traditional sports pitches due to the nature and length of match play for the sport and the relatively short sporting season.

Figure 4-6 shows the utilisation rates of cricket pitches across Edinburgh display a significant range of variance. Highest on the scale is Kirkbrae (Double Hedges) with a utilisation rate of 88%, closely followed by Roseburn Park at 80%. These sites appear to be the most popular and are operating near their capacity limits. At the other end of the spectrum, the Gyle Playing Fields and Campbell Park have low utilisation rates of 20% and 26%, respectively. One of the reasons for the Gyle being so

low is that one of the wickets was damaged by a utility provider and has not been fully reinstated.

Inverleith Park, Cavalry Park (Duddingston Playing Fields), Meadows, and Meggetland Sports Complex fall within the middle range, with utilisation rates between 36% to 56%. These pitches may benefit from targeted promotional efforts or quality upgrades to improve their utilisation.

Overall, the analysis suggests that while some cricket pitches are highly utilised (Kirkbrae and Roseburn) and might require capacity enhancements, there are also pitches that are significantly underused (e.g. Campbell Park and The Gyle). Focused strategies for each site, based on these utilisation metrics, could help to optimise the cricket pitch portfolio.

Figure 4-6: Cricket pitch utilisation

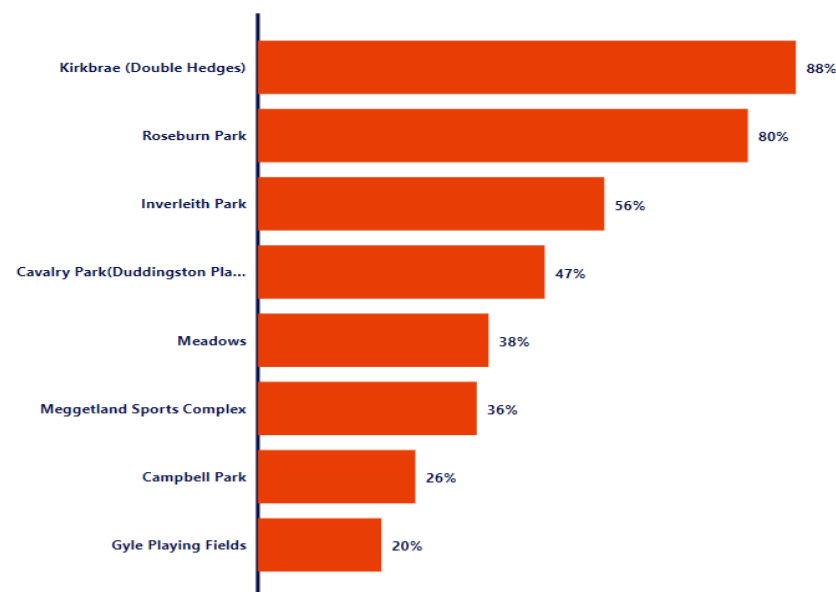
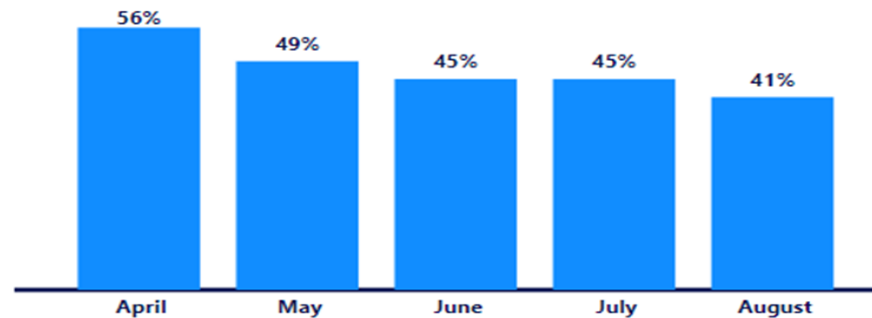


Figure 4-7 shows the levels of pitch utilisation across the months that make up the cricket season. Demand is fairly evenly spread across each of the months but tails off slightly in August.

Figure 4-7: Cricket pitch utilisation by month (2022)



Consultation with local clubs and Cricket Scotland suggest that demand is growing and that there may be need for additional cricket pitch capacity. However, more in-depth analysis shows that the peak demand for cricket pitches is on Saturday with limited use on Sunday.

Before the development of new pitches is considered, work should be undertaken with clubs and Cricket Scotland to see if demand can be more evenly split across both Saturdays and Sundays and remove the necessity to consider the development of new pitches. Improved maintenance may also create opportunities for increased utilisation of less well used pitches.

Hub sites demand

Utilisation data is not available for all pitch hub sites, however, relative to the number of pitches, the utilisation within the hub sites is disproportionately high when compared to all other pitches with 50% (2G pitch utilisation), 40% (3G pitch utilisation) and 42% (grass pitch utilisation).

For grass pitches:

Meggetland Sports Complex has a high average of nearly 11% share of total grass utilisation.

At the lower utilisation end, Broughton High School has 0.03% share.

For 2G pitches:

Broughton High School has the highest level of use with 22% of all 2G utilisation.

This is followed closely by Forrester High and St Augustine's RC High School (17% of total 2G utilisation).

At the lower utilisation end, Meggetland Sports Complex has 0.34% of total 2G utilisation (Cricket Wicket).

For 3G pitches:

Forrester High School and St Augustine's RC High School have 10% total share of 3G utilisation.

Jack Kane Sports Centre follows with a 9% utilisation rate.

Meggetland follows closely with an 8% share of all 3G utilisation.

Current pitch hub sites are a preferred option for teams to train and play matches if they can access bookings. This may be because hub sites in most cases have better quality pitches and ancillary facilities which encourage higher demand.

As part of the future strategy, opportunities could be explored to increase hub venue capacity and further improve the quality of pitches and ancillary facilities.

Geographical demand

Table 4-1 provides an overview of sports pitch peak time utilisation rates across different Council Wards. Points to note include that:

- Individual Wards, for example, Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart have a high utilisation rate of 91% for all pitches (and grass pitches are over-utilised).
- Whilst the Morningside Ward has zero utilisation.
- Demand for sports pitches will likely continue to vary across different Council Wards and specific venues in the coming years.
- Several factors will contribute to this disparity, including: the existence of clubs and pitches within Wards; population growth projections in Edinburgh; and current and planned housing developments in the city. This underscores the importance of strategic planning for the future provision of sports pitches and facilities.

Table 4-1: Pitch demand by Council Ward

Ward	All pitch utilisation	Grass utilisation	3G utilisation	2G utilisation
Almond	38%	89%	41%	7%
City Centre				
Colinton/Fairmilehead	65%	71%	59%	
Corstorphine/Murrayfield	71%	71%		
Craighentinn/Duddingston	39%	45%	48%	7%
Drum Brae/Gyle	60%	89%	68%	13%
Forth	49%	55%		36%
Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart	91%	108%	70%	
Inverleith	48%	37%	81%	33%
Leith	90%	97%	76%	
Leith Walk	10%			10%
Liberton/Gilmerton	56%	71%	37%	
Morningside	0%			0%
Pentland Hills	70%	16%	77%	
Portobello/Craigmillar	57%	60%	56%	
Sighthill/Gorgie	40%	69%	42%	7%
Southside/Newington	5%	5%		
Total	56%	75%	56%	13%

Clubs and community demands- Feedback

The section covers key insights from club surveys and one-to-one consultations conducted as part of the pitch strategy development process. The data aims to understand the current and future demand for sports pitches in the city.

Key Points include:

Membership trends - post-pandemic, most clubs report stable or growing memberships.

Transport to facilities – a majority of club members use private transport to reach facilities. A need exists for reducing city-wide travel for accessing pitches and encouraging active travel.

Frequency of pitch use - clubs predominantly use city pitches for home matches and training multiple times a week. On average, clubs access pitches within the city for 40 weeks a year, although this varies by sport.

Availability and quality – a majority of clubs do not need to use pitches outside the city. Those who do cite lack of local availability. Feedback is generally positive regarding ease of booking, accessibility, and pitch quality.

Concerns and issues - negative feedback is largely about the quality of pavilions and wider ancillary provisions. Other concerns include anti-social behaviour, dog fouling, littering, and equipment quality.

Sport-specific feedback:

Football clubs express concerns about pitch availability, including but not limited to within the school estate. Demand is growing for the girls' game and the wider player offering – for example, walking football, para football, other social interventions. Some football clubs operate waiting lists and report that they are turning away potential participants due to

lack of suitable facilities. The demand from different groups necessitates investment in ancillary facilities to provide suitable toilet and changing accommodation. Further, some clubs perceive that bigger or more well-known clubs get preference for bookings, and that as a result, their own club loses out. Another issue, though reported less often, was that some clubs may be maintaining the status quo given that pitch availability can already be difficult and may be more challenging to support growth in membership/provision.

Hockey clubs report growing demand especially for older age groups including walking hockey. Youth hockey demand is stable. Edinburgh Hockey clubs attract participants from neighbouring local authorities which increases demand on local pitches.

Ruby clubs and Scottish Rugby also report anticipate that growth in participation will come from the women and girls' game in future years.

Cricket clubs also report increasing demand coming from additional engagement in schools and through the women and girls' game. This expansion can often cause challenges around suitable facilities that have adequate changing and toilet facilities.

Future aspirations and challenges - clubs largely aim to grow, including expanding memberships and team counts. They face challenges like facility capacity, member recruitment/retention, rising costs, and volunteer reliance.

Future priorities - clubs seek higher quality pitches, improved maintenance, increased 3G pitch provision, and more suitable ancillary facilities such as toilets and changing rooms.

Strategic planning- Future demand

Several sports pitch-related projects are currently being planned or actively discussed. These projects include some new 3g pitches and the replacement of some 2G pitches in schools with 3G surface. These investments are in line with and address a number of demand priorities. Other potential pitch investments through external partners will also help to address gaps in provision but may also have a diluting effect on existing demand, migrating demand from one pitch to another. There is a need to strengthen links with other relevant partners such as the tertiary sector including universities and colleges, private schools and National Governing Bodies to ensure a holistic and integrated approach to the future development of sports pitches in the city.

Future Demand Summary

As Edinburgh continues to grow and evolve, so does its sporting landscape. Understanding the factors that drive the demand for sports pitches is crucial for city planners, sports organisations, and community leaders. An effective strategy must consider a variety of indicators, ranging from demographic shifts to emerging sports trends.

Factors driving increased demand for sports pitches and future demands for sports pitch provision in the city include:

Population growth: areas such as Almond, City Centre, Drumbrae/Gyle, Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart, Leith, Portobello/Craigmillar, and Southside/Newington are experiencing significant population growth. As the city grows, more individuals and families will seek sports and recreational activities, thereby increasing the demand for sports pitches.

Housing developments: the expansion of housing developments in Almond and Drumbrae/Gyle are particularly noteworthy. With new

communities setting roots, sports pitches serve as focal points for social interaction and community-building, augmenting their necessity.

Club membership stability and growth: the post-pandemic era has seen a resurgence in sports participation. Clubs report stable or growing memberships, highlighting an increasing need for sports pitches for both training sessions and matches.

Sports-specific demand: Football, Hockey, Rugby and Cricket clubs have pointed out an increasing demand for facilities particularly from the rise of women's and girls' sports participation including gender-specific accommodations such as changing facilities and scheduled time slots tailored to their needs.

Current pitch utilisation: certain areas like Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart already show high pitch utilisation rates, suggesting that existing facilities might soon be insufficient to meet both current and future demands.

Aspirations for club growth: many clubs aspire to expand, not only in terms of increasing memberships but also by establishing additional teams and initiating new community, health, and social activities. This translates to additional demand for facilities.

Growing popularity of women's sport: women's sports are gaining traction due to increased media coverage and the successes of female athletes. This growing interest will require additional facilities and programming, further increasing demand for sports pitches.

Increasing awareness of physical activity's importance: as people become increasingly aware of the physical and mental health benefits of regular exercise, participation in sport is likely to rise, leading to a corresponding increase in the demand for sports facilities.

In summary, understanding the multifaceted drivers of sports pitch demand is imperative for creating effective, forward-thinking strategies for the City of Edinburgh. The demand for sports pitches is driven by a complex interplay of factors, from demographic shifts and emerging sports trends to broader societal changes. By comprehensively accounting for these factors, planners and stakeholders can create a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable framework for sports pitch provision, ensuring that the needs of a growing and diversifying population are met.