



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 24 NOVEMBER 2021**

SUBJECT: MORAY ARTIFICIAL TURF PITCH DEVELOPMENTS

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Committee with an update in relation to the proposed replacement plan for Moray's artificial turf pitches and to consider the feasibility study report in connection with a pitch for the Forres area.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) (13) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to exercise the Council's statutory functions to provide facilities and support activities related to the development of recreation, sport, culture and social activities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- i) scrutinise and consider the options in regards to replacement of Moray's artificial turf pitches;**
- ii) agree to proceed to competitive tender stage for a full replacement of the Buckie artificial turf pitch using a similar 3G surface replacement with additional mitigation measures to reduce the migration of polymeric infill into the environment;**
- iii) agree that Council Officers continue to work in collaboration with Forres Community Football Trust in regards to the development of an artificial turf pitch and associated facilities in Forres and a future decision on preferred location for this development is brought back to a subsequent Committee;**
- iv) note that work is ongoing to create a sustainable maintenance and replacement plan for all artificial turf pitches from 2022 onwards; and**
- v) approve that Moray Council sign up to the Sports for Climate Action Initiative to ensure that future developments within the**

Service pursue climate action in a consistent and mutually supported fashion.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the meeting of Moray Council on 18 February 2021, the Council considered the indicative capital plan 2021/22 to 2031/32. Within this plan £430,000 was identified for resurface and rejuvenation of 3G pitches in 2021/22 and a further £25,000 in 2023/24 (para 6 of the minute refers).
- 3.2 At the meeting of Moray Council on 3 March 2021, the Council approved capital expenditure for 2021/2022 as set out in the indicative ten year Capital Plan confirming the above figures (para 5 of the minute refers).
- 3.3 At the meeting of Education, Communities and Organisational Development Committee on 11 August 2021, the Council requested a further report be presented to Committee detailing all the options including environmental impacts, multi sports use, real grass option and costs for the full replacement of the Buckie artificial pitch (para 15 of the minute refers).
- 3.4 Significant research has been undertaken nationally and worldwide in regards to the debate over natural grass versus artificial turf surfaces. One of the most significant factors to note is that a well-maintained natural grass pitch will accommodate about 8hrs of usage per week whereas an artificial surface can accommodate over 30hrs of usage per week. This level of capacity has major benefits on the health and wellbeing of the community and to lose such an asset would have an impact on sport and physical activity levels, which would then have consequences for obesity, type 2 diabetes and other healthcare issues linked to inactivity. A background paper on this research is available via the Members' CMIS portal.
- 3.5 There are a number of options available in regards to the artificial turf replacement of our pitches and these are contained in **Appendix 1**. Unfortunately technology has not advanced in regards to alternative infill materials for artificial surfaces at this current time that meets the necessary governing bodies of sport and safety standards. Due to this the majority of local authorities and sports organisations across Scotland are currently opting for a shorter 3G pile carpet replacement which requires less infill material and additional kickboards and gate detox areas to ensure retention of infill within facility area. The mitigation measures to reduce the migration of polymeric infill into the environment are deemed the best way to mitigate the environmental impact over the socio economic impact at this current time.
- 3.6 From the options in Appendix 1 it is recommended that Council progresses with the 3G replacement with similar surface replacement with additional mitigation measures to reduce the migration of polymeric infill into the environment. This will ensure that the usage and income levels of this pitch will be at least maintained at current levels, all other options at this current time would be detrimental to usage and income.
- 3.7 Artificial surface infill materials are advancing swiftly and over the next few years it is anticipated that approved alternatives will meet the necessary governing body standards. If Moray Council were to sign up to the Sports for

Climate Action initiative then regular updates on the progress and developments of the alternative infill materials would be communicated in a timely fashion.

- 3.8 As part of any procurement process in regards to replacement of surfaces it would be essential that environmental factors and reduced carbon footprint measures were an important criteria within the evaluation process for approving the most suitable contractor.
- 3.9 An improved artificial maintenance plan has now been developed for all Moray Council artificial pitches ensuring increased maintenance of these pitches by external skilled contractors. Over and above this the capital plan allocations connected to these assets have been updated for the next 10yr period to reflect accurate replacements and associated timelines. Capital plan funding to resurface the Buckie pitch is currently available for the 2021/22 financial year.
- 3.10 A recent letter was shared from the Scottish Football Association in regards to reports of potential health risks through exposure to artificial turf pitches. There is no evidence of a link between contracting cancer and playing on an artificial surface. A copy of this letter is available as a background paper via the Members' CMIS portal.
- 3.11 Forres Community Football Trust is a newly established community led organisation that became a registered Scottish charity in March 2021. Their charitable purposes are the advancement of public participation in sport and the provision of recreational facilities with the objective of improving health and wellbeing and conditions of life for the persons for whom the facilities or activities are primarily intended.
- 3.12 During 2021 Forres Community Football Trust procured a consultancy company to undertake a feasibility study and options appraisal for the proposed development of new 3G pitch facilities in Forres. The consultancy firm interviewed a vast array of local individuals and organisations as part of their investigations including Council Officers within Sport and Culture, Education, Planning and Estates. A background paper on this study is available via the Members' CMIS portal. The main findings of the study were;
- Roysvale/Applegrove present the most favourable options in terms of where a new 3G pitch facility should be developed.
 - There is a lack of floodlit outdoor leisure facilities in the Forres area which makes training and matchplay difficult in the winter.
 - There is widespread support and demand from schools, clubs and local community organisations in regards to this proposed development.
 - Forres Community Football Trust have a desire to collaborate in partnership with Moray Council to progress this capital development in a timely fashion and are keen to enhance the facilities beyond the Council's Capital Plan intentions.
- 3.13 Hubco North are currently supporting Moray Council with options development in regards to the Learning Estate Strategy. A Business Case is anticipated to be presented to Council in March in regards to this which will include Forres proposals and therefore the intention is to await the outcome of this Business Case before identifying a suitable location for a 3G pitch facility in Forres.

- 3.14 The UN Climate Change organisation are currently encouraging sports organisations to sign up to a Sports for Climate Action Initiative which will provide sports organisations with a forum where participants can pursue climate action in a consistent and mutually supportive fashion by learning from each other, disseminating good practices, lessons learned, developing new tools, and collaborating on areas of mutual interest. A background paper on this framework is available via the Members' CMIS portal.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

In relation to the LOIP, this report supports the healthier children focus within the Moray priority to build a better future for our children and young people in Moray. It also supports the improving life chances and development of stronger, more resilient, supportive, influential and inclusive communities focus within the Moray priority for empowering and connecting communities.

In relation to the Corporate Plan, this report contributes to ensuring our communities are caring and healthy and working towards a financially stable Council that provides valued services to our communities.

(b) Policy and Legal

Local Authorities have a legal duty to ensure adequate provision of facilities for recreational, sporting, cultural and social activities. Improving the health and wellbeing of the Moray community through sport, leisure and recreation is not only an integral part of the local vision, but it is also a national priority. In particular, the report aims to fulfil the aspirations of everyone having access to a network of quality places where you can get involved in sport, as identified as a key objective in sportscotland's Corporate Strategy "Sport for Life". The report also links to the Scottish Government's Active Scotland Outcomes Framework, which aims to improve our active infrastructure – people and places.

Within the Moray Local Development Plan 2020 there is reference to the provision of an enclosed floodlit synthetic turf pitch as an infrastructure requirement for Forres – failure to progress this requirement would result in the Local Development Plan being unable to be fully implemented.

(c) Financial implications

The financial implications arising from this report if approved will include approx. £300,000 of capital plan investment for the replacement of the Buckie artificial pitch surface.

(d) Risk Implications

The risk of not resurfacing the Buckie artificial turf pitch will result in the facility being deemed a health and safety hazard at some point in 2022 and no longer fit for purpose. This may lead to vandalism and unlawful entry due to the facility being locked and left unused.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

(f) Property

The property implications are set out in this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

There are no equality implications arising from this report.

(h) Consultations

In preparing this report, consultations have been undertaken with the Head of Financial Services, Head of Education Resources and Communities, the Learning Estate Programme Manager, Head of Development Services, Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer and the Legal Services Manager whose comments have been incorporated in the report.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 That the Committee considers the options in regards to replacement of Moray's artificial turf pitches and agrees to proceed to competitive tender stage for a full replacement of the Buckie artificial turf pitch.

5.2 That the Committee agrees to continue the collaboration with the Forres Community Football Trust in regards to 3G facilities in the town and approves that Moray Council sign up to the Sports for Climate Action Initiative.

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Background Papers:	SPMAN-1315769894-171 / SPMAN-1315769894-173 / SPMAN-1315769894-193 / SPMAN-1315769894-174
Ref:	SPMAN-1315769894-148 / SPMAN-1315769894-172