

		AGENDA ITEM 8
		GTP/03/11
Committee:	Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board	
Date:	28 July 2011	
<u>Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) & Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), Gt Notley County Park</u>		
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Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the management and operation of the Artificial Grass Pitch & Multi Use Games Area (AGP and MUGA) at Gt Notley County Park.

The new facilities were opened in November 2009, having been partly funded by a grant from the Football Foundation, with match-funding provided by Essex County Council, Braintree District Council and Great Notley Parish Council.

The grant awarded by the Football Foundation was conditional upon the delivery of the 5-yr Football Development Plan (FDP) by the key partners, which was designed to achieve a phased increase in use of the facilities during peak and off-peak periods over the 5 year period and a corresponding increase in income. Failure to deliver the FDP could result in the Football Foundation demanding repayment of the grant (103k).

On 5 May 2011, we had our first Support Day Visit by the Football Foundation and County Football Association (FA), the purpose of which was to monitor progress and performance against the FDP and compliance with the grant conditions. Their written report concluded that currently the partners are not meeting the objectives of the FDP and recommended that greater emphasis be placed on sports development.

This was not altogether unexpected, as although uptake during peak periods (4pm – 10pm, Mon-Fri and at all times at weekends) has been extremely good to the point where sometimes demand exceeds supply, off-peak usage has proved more challenging and it became clear that we would need dedicated support to promote/market the facilities if we are to meet the targets within the FDP – both in terms of usage and income.

Prior to the Support Day Visit, the partners sought advice from Nacro through their Braintree Community Sports Project (BCSP) programme and have agreed to engage them in a part-time capacity from 1 September 2011 for a period of 12 months, to strengthen our performance in this area.

Recommendation

That the Joint Partnership Board notes the engagement of Nacro from 1 September 2011 to work with all partners in delivering the Football Development Plan over the coming year.

Report to Gt Notley Joint Partnership Board – 28 July 2011

Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) & Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), Gt Notley County Park

Background

The AGP & MUGA at Great Notley Country Park opened in November 2009 and is managed and operated by Essex County Council (ECC) through a joint partnership with Braintree District Council (BDC).

Capital funding for the facility was secured through a grant of £130k from The Football Foundation, with match-funding from key partners Essex County Council (£225k), Braintree District Council (£25k) and Great Notley Parish Council (£5k). The final cost of building the facility was £365k of which £103k was funded by the Football Foundation's grant. The annual revenue cost of operating the facility was estimated at £45k per annum, which included £19.5k towards a sink fund to replace the artificial surface (carpet) within 10 years of the facility being opened, subject to wear and tear.

The facility consists of a 3rd generation synthetic football pitch area of 60.9 x 42.6 mts (that can be split into two pitches) and a macadam multi use games area of 42.6 x 18.5 mts with 8 flood light columns. The AGP and MUGA complements the other facilities on offer at the County Park, providing sport and recreational activities for all ages to use and enjoy.

The MUGA is open free of charge to users who just turn up and play (informal play), although along with the AGP, bookings are taken from football and other sports clubs who play as part of organised leagues. This includes the Great Notley Football Club who, in addition to being a key partner, is one of the main users of this facility and the existing traditional grass pitches at the Country Park. Fees and Charges were set in line with other facilities in and around the District, although the prices are currently out of sync given that there has been no increase since 2009. The charges will be reviewed as part of the 2012/13 estimate process, taking into account the impact on user demand and the need for the facility to remain competitively priced for all users.

The management and operation of the facility is subject to an annual monitoring and evaluation review by the Football Foundation and Essex County FA, as well as regular meetings with key partners including an on-site visit to ensure that the objectives set out in a 5 year Football Development Plan (FDP) submitted as part of the original grant application are being met.

Operational Overview

Since the facility opened, uptake during peak periods (4pm - 10pm Monday to Friday and at weekends) has been extremely good to the point where sometimes demand has exceeded supply. However, usage during off-peak hours (weekdays) has proved more challenging and we have been unable to meet the targets within the FDP (see below).

	Peak	Off-Peak	Total Hours	Income
Low	40%	20%	1,368	£23k
Medium	60%	30%	2,052	£34k
High (Breakeven Point)	80%	40%	2,736	£45k

Fully Booked	100%	100%	5,100	£78k
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This compares with actual usage:

	Peak	Off-Peak	Income
2009-10 (4 months)	50%	4%	£ 3,751
2010-11	60%	8%	£23,917
2011-12 (3 months)	73%	35%	£ 5,900

All of the income generated from the facility is retained by ECC. Whilst this is lower than projected, there has also been a corresponding reduction in the operating costs, with less upkeep/maintenance being required.

It is a condition of the grant awarded by the Football Foundation that £19.5k is set aside annually in a sinking fund to pay for the replacement carpet. Whilst Gt Notley Football Club has contributed a total of £3k for 2010/11 and 2011/12, no other funding will be allocated until such time as the facility exceeds its breakeven point and any surplus will allocated to the sinking fund. There is a risk this may leave a shortfall in funding at the time the carpet needs replacing (10 years), which would have to be met through a capital bid.

Football Development

The ongoing success of the facility is dependent on the delivery of the 5-year FDP and continued promotion and marketing of the facility. The FDP sets out a clear plan and programme for developing football involving the following groups:-

- Women and Girls
- Disabled People
- Migrant Workers
- Children under 10, 12 and 16 years of age

It is recognised by ECC and BDC that our existing staff lack the professional skills, knowledge and experience required for this piece of work, which is essential if we are to meet the targets within the FDP.

This was also raised at the annual Support Day Visit (monitoring and evaluation) meeting by the Football Foundation and County Football Association which was held on 5 May 2011. The County Development Manager, Brendan Walshe, considered it essential to the successful delivery of the FDP and the facility in general, that a sports development resource be urgently engaged to take direct responsibility for delivering this area of work.

The lack of progress in this area of work was reflected in the overall score given by the FF & FA for 2010/11 which was *Level 1 - unsatisfactory, not meeting expectations, needs support*.

Risks

The worst case scenario if the FDP is not delivered (i.e. we fail to comply with the grant conditions), is that the grant could be withdrawn and BDC would be required to refund the Football Foundation the full grant paid of £103k.

Way Forward

Since neither BDC nor ECC have resources that can be deployed to lead and manage the FDP, officers have negotiated with Nacro, who already use the facility through the Braintree Community Sports Project (BCSP), that they undertake this role on a part-time basis from 1 September 2011. Nacro is the leading crime reduction charity in England, dedicated to changing lives and creating opportunities for young people aged 10 – 19 years and the BCSP is a partnership project with Nacro and Greenfields Community Housing Association, which is funded by the Football Foundation until October 2011.

The BCSP is a social inclusion project that uses sport (predominantly football) as a tool to engage young people within the District of Braintree in a positive and rewarding environment. Through the language of sport, the project aims to:-

- Provide structured opportunities for young people to take part in sport and physical activity.
- Reduce anti social behaviour and nuisance behaviour
- Increase self confidence and self expression
- Develop communication and team working skills with young people
- Encourage young people to make new friends
- Provide positive role model examples for young people
- Provide opportunities for young people to learn and achieve
- Empower young people to make a positive change in their lives.
- Access local provisions/resources and facilities that young people would not otherwise access e.g. leisure centres

Nacro has strong links to both the FF and County FA and previously with BDC, as well as an extensive network with various football and other sports clubs in the Braintree District including Great Notley FC. It is considered that they are best placed to work in partnership with BDC and ECC in delivering the FDP on behalf of our respective Authorities. The cost of engaging Nacro in a part-time capacity is £15k, which is being funded by ECC on an 'invest to save' basis in the expectation that their work will generate a significant amount of new business and income from bookings etc. which they will retain.

It is proposed that monthly meetings be held with Nacro to review progress and performance against the FDP. The FF and County FA have been invited to attend quarterly to keep them fully involved and to enable them to provide additional support (where required) and to monitor and evaluate progress during the year including the football season.

The FF's and County FA's response to the above approach has been very positive and we are confident that Nacro will help us deliver the objectives set out in the FDP, ensuring compliance with the conditions set out in the original grant.

Members of the Board will receive a progress report at the next meeting.

Paul Partridge
Head of Operations

Tim Dixon
Head of Country Parks

18 July 2011