

**Report to: Communities Committee, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**Report of: Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and Communities**

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**Subject: SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT ON THE POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF A 3G ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCH AT PERDISWELL LEISURE CENTRE**

**1. Recommendation**

**That the Committee:**

- 1.1 Note the content of this supplementary report and particularly the information contained within the FAQ link in 3.14, when reaching a decision on the proposed installation of a new 3G Artificial Grass Pitch at Perdiswell Leisure Centre.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Please refer to the main report to be presented at the above meeting - PROVISION OF A NEW ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCH AT PERDISWELL.

**3. Information**

- 3.1 **POSITION STATEMENT ON 3G PITCHES – The result of a collaboration between key stakeholders in response to questions and concerns regarding ‘Third Generation’ (3G) Artificial Grass Pitches.**
- 3.2 The following is a joint statement produced by key stakeholders (DCMS, Sport England, Sport Scotland, Sport Wales, the Grounds Maintenance Association, Football Foundation, The Football Association, Rugby Football League, Sport and Play Construction Association, and England Rugby on common areas of interest relating to the environmental sustainability of artificial grass pitches and the use of rubber crumb in 3G pitches:
- 3.3 Final updated position statement (April 2023) - “Artificial grass pitches (AGPs) are recognised as a durable, safe, year-round playing surfaces, able to withstand intensive use and all kinds of weather. The pitches are used for playing multiple sports including football, hockey and rugby and they are an important community resource that mean more people can benefit from the social and health benefits of physical activity.”
- 3.4 “However, concerns have been raised about the environmental impact of these pitches. Most commonly this relates to the fibre loss of microplastics and; in the case of third generation or 3G pitches, the presence of rubber infill, which is also a microplastic. We understand these concerns and are taking them very seriously.”

- 3.5 “We are aware of potential developments in the EU following the European Commission’s statement (released in September 2022) which recommended the introduction of a ban on the future sale of ‘intentionally added microplastics’ onto the European market, which includes rubber infill for 3G AGPs. The Commission proposed a six-year transition period before the new restriction becomes effective, although the timing for it to become law has not yet been made clear. Following the UK’s exit from the EU, the regulatory framework for these matters now sits at a UK level (except for Northern Ireland, which will continue to follow EU REACH requirements).”
- 3.6 “The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) commissioned an evidence project, under the UK REACH 2022/23 Work Programme, to review emissions of intentionally added microplastics. It will consider the risks they pose to human health and the environment and include a socio-economic assessment. The project will include rubber infill and will inform any future regulatory actions in the UK.”
- 3.7 “The Sports Councils – Sport England, Sport Wales, Sport Scotland, Sport NI – and leading sport bodies are working together and with respective governments to understand what the EU ban will mean for the stock of 3G AGPs in the UK and the timings for any legislative decisions.”
- 3.8 “If the EU law on a ban is passed, it will be important to have a transition period because 3G AGPs are in widespread use by communities across Europe, were costly to put in place, and will be to remove. It is also important to note that there are currently no widely available alternative infill products on the market that are as effective, suitable for all weather conditions and deliver the required performance standards. That is why we are also committed to exploring alternative artificial pitch systems and more sustainable infill products. We will continue to work with partners across the UK and Europe to research and reduce the spread of microplastics into the environment.”
- 3.9 This statement has been prepared as result of a collaboration between the key stakeholders listed in 3.2 who have worked together to produce a series of frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding the use of infill materials in “third generation” (3G) artificial grass (aka synthetic turf) pitches.
- 3.10 The FAQs are provided for general information only and are based on information, research and material that is currently in the public domain.
- 3.11 [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- 3.12 Additional Information - What effect will the pitch material have on the local environment?
- 3.13 Unlike natural grass, synthetic turf requires very little water. Excessive water consumption is not only bad for the environment, but financially damaging for local authorities, football clubs and schools. Artificial grass also doesn’t require any form of fertiliser to keep it in a usable condition, whereas chemicals used to maintain real grass can have potentially harmful effects on players and the environment.

- 3.14 Natural grass is also far more labour intensive in the amount of maintenance required to regularly cut the grass, mark out the pitches, feed it and weed it throughout the season, and at the end of season an extensive period of maintenance works is required to repair the damage caused by regular use throughout the winter. Therefore, the maintenance requirements for an artificial pitch are far less both in time and cost.
- 3.15 Artificial turf can be repurposed or recycled into other products. After recycling, old artificial grass may be used for anything from school bags to dog bowls or even as topdressing on natural grass. It may also be repurposed and used in areas of highest need.
- 3.16 Since being founded in 2000, the Football Foundation have funded more than 1,000 artificial grass pitches in England alone, and the National Football Facilities Strategy (NFFS) sets out the Football Foundation's ambition to transform England's grassroots game by funding another 1,000 pitches over the next ten years, meeting demand within local communities in a way that natural grass pitches never could.

**Ward(s):** Claines and St Stephen

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**Background Papers:** None