

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**PORTFOLIO HOLDER DELEGATED DECISION**  
**by**  
**COUNTY COUNCILLOR DAVID SELBY**  
**PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR A MORE PROSPEROUS POWYS**  
**January 2024**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Jenny Ashton / Rhys Stephens

**REPORT TITLE:** Replacement Surface for Ystradgynlais Synthetic Pitch

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To approve a recommendation for a replacement pitch surface at Ystradgynlais Sports Centre.
- 1.2 To ensure the replacement surface will maximise participation and opportunities for healthy physical activity and meet the requirements of learners and community clubs, the local communities and surrounding areas.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The current surface is a sand based astroturf. The existing carpet is 19 years old and has exceeded its expected surface life of 12 years. The pitch currently enables the playing of hockey, football training, and rugby training. The school utilise the pitch for lessons and extra-curricular sessions for football, rugby, hockey, cricket, rounders, athletics, and multi-sport activities. Community clubs and other organisations hire the pitch for a range of sports such as walking football, multi-sport activities and pickleball.
- 2.2 Due to the geographical make up of Powys, artificial pitch surfaces divides opinion amongst communities. There are significant distances between facilities and communities in Powys, which means that many participants travel on a regular basis to access outdoor pitch provision.
- 2.3 Due to the nature and requirements of the various sports, they unfortunately cannot utilise the same pitch surface with different 'pile lengths' required for different sports, for example hockey (12mm-18mm), football (15mm-40mm) and rugby (15mm – 60mm) for competitive matches and especially with contact rugby.

- 2.4 To provide context, most sports can utilise an artificial 'astroturf' pitch (typically 12mm – 18mm) for training and recreational purposes. Schools / educational facilities also prefer this surface as it can accommodate a greater number of sports including cricket, athletics, netball, rounders and tennis. This would be an example of a surface suitable for Hockey.
- 2.5 Football can be trained and played to certain levels/standards on the pitch surface as described in 2.4. However, for some leagues, it is a requirement that a '3G' surface with a 40mm pile is used for matches and fixtures. Specific footwear is also required for this type of surface. This surface is not suitable for hockey or a number of other sports.
- 2.6 Rugby, require a longer surface pile at 60mm, which includes a 'shock pad' due to the nature of the sport and the contact elements. This surface / pile length is not suitable for hockey and a number of other sports.
- 2.7 Freedom Leisure approached the Council to ask whether the pitch surface should be changed during discussions regarding the capital programme, which prompted the review and subsequent local engagement.
- 2.8 A local engagement survey was undertaken with local clubs, service users, and stakeholders. A total of 286 responses were received to the survey that was administered by Powys County Council's Communication & Engagement Team. Meetings were also held following requests with the local hockey clubs, Welsh Hockey, and the school.

### 3. **Advice**

- 3.1 Following the local engagement survey, the proposal for the replacement pitch is a 'Sand Dressed Astroturf – Gen 2 multi-sports area' (pile length 12mm – 20mm). This is considered to be the most appropriate surface to host the variety of sports required for school and community use *i.e. hockey, tennis, netball, football training school PE (but not for official local leagues), Tag Rugby, lacrosse, rounders, cricket (not hard ball), general PE & games*).
- 3.2 A 'Sand Dressed Astroturf – Gen 2 multi-sports area' (pile length 12mm – 20mm) will sufficiently accommodate the range and number of sports that can be played on this type of surface. Maintenance and footwear requirements were also highlighted by industry experts – as to why this would be the most appropriate surface to cater for the range of sports and school/community use. Other surfaces were more specific to one or two sports and would restrict the range and number of other sports that could be played. Maintenance costs would be higher and specific footwear would be required, which would be a challenge for the school and pupils.
- 3.3 *'The issue with 3G long pile surfaces which are around 40-60mm filled normally with rubber crumb is they are designed for football, contact rugby pending the shock pad/pile depth and are not suitable for hockey, netball, tennis, cricket. The*

*footwear also limits use as to prolong the life studded boots should be used. It is also fair to say the maintenance required is greater on 3G surfaces requiring around 1hr of maintenance (brushing) for every 40 playing hours of use. (1 hour of use relates to 22 players on the pitch for an hour, thus is 44 player use the pitch that equates to 2 playing hours).’ Jamie Oxley, Tarkett Sports.*

- 3.4 The requirements for multi-use and the concerns of footwear were also raised by the Head of PE at the school.
- 3.5 There was a lot of support for a ‘3G’ surface in the responses, especially regarding football and rugby. Whilst this was the case, we need to consider the following: -
- Clubs have been using the current facility to train on for years. The new technology means a new sand dressed surface would be more forgiving on joints, slips etc. than the old surface. This reason was mentioned for the preference of 3G.
  - The ability to play matches on the pitch was highlighted. However, of the two football clubs in the area, one of the clubs Chairman (it doesn’t state which club), suggested just by resurfacing the carpet, wouldn’t be sufficient for their needs. The FAW and Area Associations have rules that require changing rooms, stands etc to all be of a standard. For most Tiers in the Welsh Pyramid there would be a lot more work required other than just the pitch to comply (Ground Criteria can be found online).
- 3.6 A small 3G pitch was installed last year in the Ystradgynlais area that is big enough to accommodate matches up to Under 12’s age group for football.
- 3.7 Given the geographical make-up of Powys, we are never going to be able to please everyone when it comes to artificial pitch surfaces. There was a lot of support, and some negativity regarding both types of surfaces.
- 3.8 We believe a Sand Dressed Astroturf – Gen 2 multi-sports area, is the best surface to benefit as many of the learners and residents of Ystradgynlais, and its wider community as possible.

#### **4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1 The project has received full Grant Funding of £350,000 from Welsh Governments ‘Community Focus Schools Grant’. This was achieved through a collaborative bid by the Schools and Leisure Services.
- 4.2 The budget is already in place and will be paid into and managed by the Schools Estates/Facilities team. They have confirmed that no virement is required.

- 4.3 The new surface will be procured through Powys and will be managed by the Engineering Design team (who have managed all previous procurements and associated works).
- 4.4 It is not expected that there will be any additional revenue costs as a result of these works. All revenue cost are covered by the Freedom Leisure Contract.
- 4.5 The Head of Finance notes the report and that the funding is in place and can support the recommendation.

## **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 The recommendations can be supported from a legal point of view
- 5.2 The Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows "I note the legal comment and support the recommendation."

## **6. Finance**

- 6.1 Comment in 'resource implications' section 4.2.

## **7. Data Protection**

- 7.1 There are no data protection requirements.

## **8. Comment from local member(s)**

- 8.1 Local Members (x5) were made aware and sent draft links prior to the engagement survey going out to the public. No comments were received. Subsequently, the five Member have been made aware of the engagement findings. Only one comment was received and was supportive of the outcome.

## **9. Impact Assessment**

- 9.1 An impact assessment is not required as the surface will enable a range of sports / activities to take place and it will not displace hockey.

## **10. Recommendation**

- 10.1 To approve the purchase and installation of a replacement carpet on the pitch at Ystradgynlais Sports Centre, which will be replaced with a Sand Dressed Astroturf – Gen 2 multi-sports area surface (pile length between 12mm – 20mm) which will enable a wide and varied range of sports and activities, to include school curriculum, community use, training and some matches.

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