

UPDATE:
**Community Use of School Sports
Facilities – Advocacy Document**

Places SMIG

Tuesday 19th September 2011

Introduction:

- Northern Ireland schools have the potential to transform sport and club infrastructure whilst supporting the delivery of education and the development of local communities;
- By growing and establishing new community sport hubs on the school estate, a sport participation legacy for all could be created;

Background:

- In 2009, SNI's Active Places Research Report identified a significant shortfall in sports facilities throughout Northern Ireland;
- The report highlights the valuable supply of sporting facilities within the school estate and suggests that if this infrastructure was made available to local communities, school facilities could considerably assist in 'bridging the sports facilities gap' in Northern Ireland;

Background:

- By way of example: Table one shows the facility shortfall identified in the research report. The table also shows the contribution that sports facilities within the school estate throughout Northern Ireland could make in addressing the shortfall;

Facility Type	Facility shortfall (if no schools are available for community use)	Facility shortfall (if all school sports facilities were available for community use)
Sports Halls	142 Courts	0
Tennis Courts	612 Courts	208
Pitches	829 Pitches	464

Background:

- The valuable supply of sporting facilities within the school estate is further evidenced by the following statistics extracted from the Active Places facilities database:
- 55% of sports halls (with three courts or more) in Northern Ireland are located on the school estate;
- 35% of grass pitches in Northern Ireland are located on the school estate;
- 29% of synthetic turf pitches in Northern Ireland are located on the school estate;

Context:

- At the July Places Committee, the group asked SNI to undertake an advocacy/guidance document that would highlight examples of community use ‘best practice’ within the school estate;
- This decision was taken on the back of the reshuffled NI Executive, and the subsequent opportunities to re-address the concept of community use with newly appointed Ministers.

Context:

- At the recent Sinn Fein Ard-Fheis (Annual Conference), Minister O'Dowd spoke to the BBC about “education being the engine of the economy” and the important role that schools could play in developing local communities.
- The statements of John O'Dowd, coupled with the recommendations of Sir George Bain should provide renewed opportunities to address the concept of community use at the highest level.

Update:

The Community Use of School Sports Facilities – Advocacy Document introduces the following chapters:

- The benefits of community use (for communities, schools & education)
- Policy context
- Approaches to community use (single & dual management)
- Core principles of community use (including case studies)
- What should community use look like
- Conclusions

Update:

- SNI met with the Department of Education (DE) on Friday 20th September 2011 to discuss a draft of the Community Use Advocacy Document;
- During the meeting DE committed time and resources to the development of the Community Use document;
- DE would welcome the opportunity for cross-departmental funding and subsequently shared facility provision in schools. DE recognise the value in achieving a 'bigger bang for the buck', but referenced barriers in relation to security, insurance and maintenance;

Update (Discussion areas):

- DE asked: what is the purpose of the document, and what is the target group;
- DE highlighted: the department are responsible for building and refurbishing the school estate, but do not own or manage any schools:
 - 50% of schools are owned by ELB's;
 - 50% of schools are owned by other authorities;
- DE referenced: a £700 million maintenance backlog in schools and stated that sport and recreation facilities would not be considered a priority at this time;

Update (Discussion areas):

- DE suggested: arrangements between schools and user groups should be negotiated at a 'local level'. DE would not be in a position to get involved or offer guidance;
- DE noted: any document encouraging community use would need to be approved by the DE minister;
- DE referenced: item 6.3 in the previous minutes (focus group/brainstorming). DE happy to contribute/attend. This could provide the appropriate forum for focused discussions;

THANK-YOU

**QUESTIONS &
ANSWERS**