

THE FA NATIONAL FACILITIES STRATEGY 2013 – 2015

BUILDING, PROTECTING AND ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE FOOTBALL FACILITIES



1863 150 YEARS 2013





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Welcome

The Football Association has put in place a detailed National Game Strategy which sets out a number of key priorities for the game. Within these priorities, the role of facilities has been recognised as being critically important for everyone involved, whether as players, referees, coaches or ground staff. Building on this, The FA decided to set out in more detail the specific role that it will play in improving facilities and these areas are explained in this document – The FA's 'National Facilities Strategy'.

It has been purposely set out as a simple and direct document which clearly identifies the key priorities based on detailed research and consultation with clubs, leagues, local authorities and others involved in the game.

Football has enjoyed a remarkable period of investment since the formation of the Football Foundation in 2000 with over £780m invested into facilities across the country with many thousands of clubs and teams having benefited directly or indirectly from this investment. However, it is clear that there is still a huge amount of work to be done. This is especially true at a time when the country is facing challenging economic pressures – this document fully recognises these pressures and the very real impact they will have on football facilities.

As the popularity of football continues to grow and participation increases, the use of existing facilities, and the demand for new ones, will also grow. Working with a range of partners, The FA will work hard to make sure that investment is targeted towards the top priorities based on continued consultation with the grassroots football community through County Football Associations.

Many of our top professional footballers started their careers playing on park pitches for local clubs within local leagues. Whether used by a young person taking those first steps in football or as a veteran player or as a coach, facilities have a lasting and continuing influence on our experience of the game.

For this very reason, investment in facilities will continue to be a key priority for The Football Association.

Roger Burden
Chairman, The FA National Game Board



The Purpose of This Document

The purpose of this document is to set out The Football Association's long term vision for the development of facilities to support the National Game.

The Football Association has a clear grassroots strategy for the game as a whole – the National Game Strategy 2011 – 2015. This document explains how the National Game will be supported through the development and improvement of both existing and new football facilities in the country.

The role of facilities will be critical in developing the game in England. This document has been developed to link into the National Game Strategy and through facilities investment, will support the wider ambitions of The FA to develop the National Game.

This strategy aims to address and reflect the facility needs of football within the National Game. The National Game is defined as all non-professional football from Steps 1-7 of the National League System down to recreational football played on open public space.



Section 1 Facilities For The National Game

Football in England is predominantly reliant on facilities that are provided by the public sector. The FA estimates that more than 80% of football is played on publicly owned and managed facilities.



Grassroots Facilities in England



33,500 grass pitches, some with changing facilities

1504 sand/water based AGPs

491 3G AGPs

The National Game covers all non-professional football from the National League System down to recreational football played on open public space and park pitches.

As the National Game, football occupies a unique place in the sporting landscape. Its scale is huge – there are currently over 29,000 clubs within this system, accounting for more than 111,000 teams. In addition to this, there are many more players who regularly participate in recreational football across the country. To support this activity there are many thousands of volunteers across the country involved in a broad range of activities from administration through to facility maintenance.

Grassroots football in England is predominantly reliant on facilities that are provided by the public sector. The FA estimates that more than 80% of football is played on publicly owned and managed facilities (52% Education and 31% local authority (Sport England – Active Places 2012)).

Club structures in England are varied, ranging from single team clubs typically playing open age Saturday or Sunday football, through to FA Charter Standard Clubs some of whom – Community Clubs – run in excess of 40 teams. Of the 29,000 affiliated clubs in England, just under 7,000 are FA Charter Standard clubs.

There is also an increasing number of small-sided (5-a-side) football teams who play at public or private small-sided centres – this is a sector that has seen substantial growth in recent years and is expected to grow further as the popularity of the small-sided game continues to increase.

The responsibility for maintenance and management of facilities in England largely lies with the public sector – specifically with our local authority partners and schools.

The FA has always recognised the important role that local authorities and schools play in supporting the National Game and over recent years we have started to work much more closely with these partners in helping to identify and support local priorities for football. This is an area that The FA will be developing further in the coming years especially in areas of high priority and demand.

Since 2001, The FA, along with its funding partners, the Premier League and The Government (via Sport England), has been able to invest substantial sums into the National Game through The Football Foundation. The Football Foundation is a charity dedicated to improving the facilities infrastructure across grassroots football. Since its commencement, the Football Foundation has delivered over £780m of facility improvements across over 1600 projects. The scope of projects developed range from modest repairs and improvements through to multi-million pound projects.

Build the Game – Claygate Royals

Claygate Royals received a £20,000 Football Foundation grant towards a total project cost of £350,000 to build a state-of-the-art community club house. The new building has replaced the old clubhouse which was more than 75 years old, and as part of the project, it has been knocked down and the area cleared. This is the home for Claygate Cricket Club and Claygate Royals Football Club and has already attracted use by a wide range of other community groups.



Facilities Large Grant – Redbourne Upper School

Redbourne Upper School received a Football Foundation grant of £351,731 towards £576,837 final project cost, to build a third generation Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP). The new pitch is full-size and can be sub-divided into three smaller training pitches. Local partner clubs – Flitwick Eagles FC, Maulden Magpies FC, Amptill Youth FC and Westoning Youth FC – will make extensive use of the facility.



There is no doubt at all that the work of the Football Foundation has had a significant and positive impact on the football facilities landscape in England. Many clubs in England will have directly or indirectly benefited from these investments. However, such is the scale of football, that there is still a huge amount to do to create a good quality, sustainable network of football facilities capable of supporting existing as well as future participants.

This is a substantial challenge that The FA will lead but that will require continued support from Government and the private sector and of course, from the hundreds of thousands of people who participate either as players, coaches, volunteers, administrators or others involved in the game.

As well as investment through the Football Foundation, other investment has made a valuable contribution. The public sector has continued to invest in community facilities as has the private sector, especially in the development of small-sided centres. All of this investment is very welcome, as it plays an important part in providing a facility stock capable of supporting and growing the game.

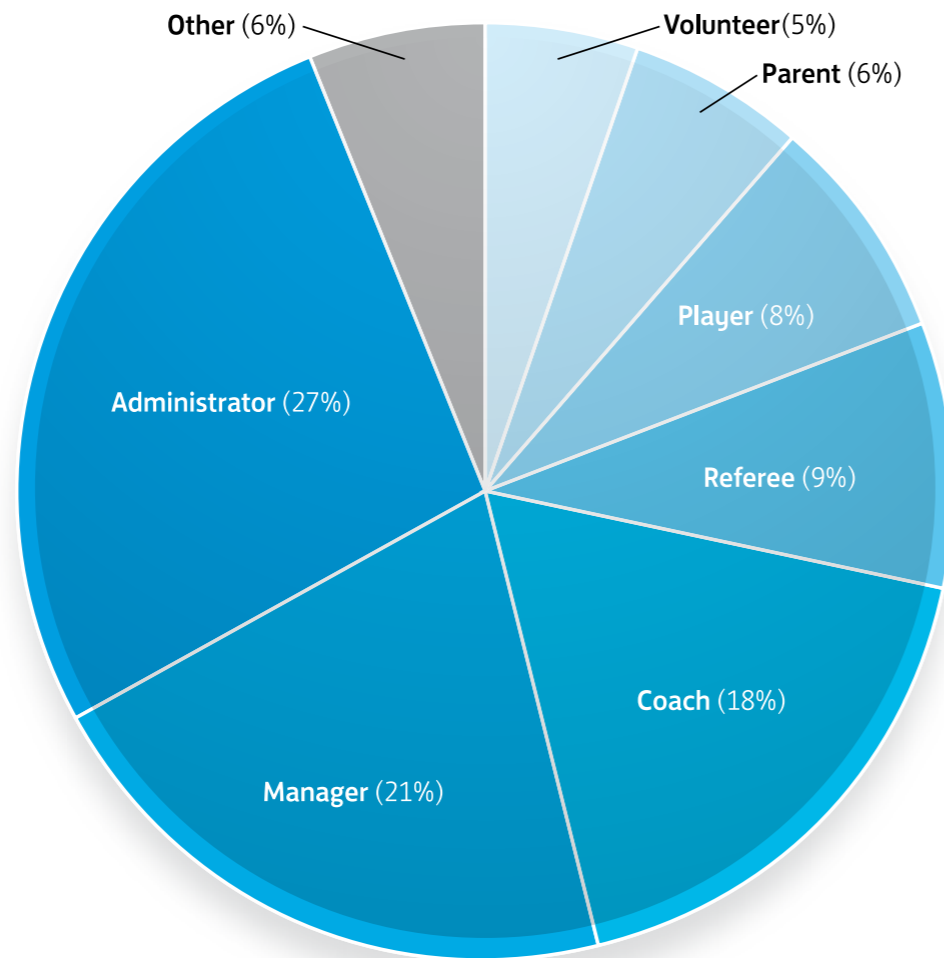
The FA will continue to support all investors – public and private – in plans to continue to invest in facilities and will work hard to secure additional, incremental funds wherever possible.

Research Findings



In May 2011, The FA concluded its largest ever football survey – ‘the Big Grassroots Football Survey’. Within this, the single most pressing issue, raised by 84% of respondents, was that of ‘poor facilities’.

Following this, The FA commissioned an additional piece of research dedicated to facilities issues. This research targeted a broad range of interests in the game from players through to ground staff with over 3200 responses in total from across England. The complete breakdown by role was as follows:



The survey asked respondents a series of questions regarding facilities based on their overall experience and then more specifically around their playing and training experiences.

Overall Views

Cancelled games

- 49% had experienced more than five games per season cancelled, mostly due to pitch and/or weather conditions:
- Frozen pitch or snow – 81%
 - Waterlogged pitch – 64%
 - Lack of a referee – 3%
 - Poor or no changing accommodation – 2%.

Ownership of home grounds

- 1 in 2 respondents said that their home ground was owned by a local authority
- 1 in 5 were privately owned (although not by the club itself)
- 1 in 9 played at school or college sites
- 1 in 10 were owned by the club itself (or operated on a long-term lease)
- 72% of respondents said that their club was FA Charter Standard accredited.

Training and Home Ground Priorities

Training frequency and location

- 73% of respondents train at least once per week
- 20% trained twice per week
- 14% of players did not train with their team
- 6 out of 10 who did train did so at a location other than their home ground.

Training ground priorities

- The top three priorities for training grounds on a weighted scale (+100 for top priorities and -100 for lowest) were:
- Artificial Grass Pitches (+100)
 - Floodlighting (+53.6)
 - Grass Pitches (+37.2).

The least significant training ground issues were:

- Provision of meeting rooms (-100)
- Kitchen and refreshment areas (-70)
- Equipment storage (-34.4).

Home ground priorities

- The top three weighted priorities for home grounds were:
- Grass pitches (+100)
 - Changing facilities (+57.5)
 - Provision of toilets (22.9).

The least significant home ground issues were:

- Meeting rooms (-100)
- Kitchens and refreshments (-38)
- Outdoor storage (-32.6).

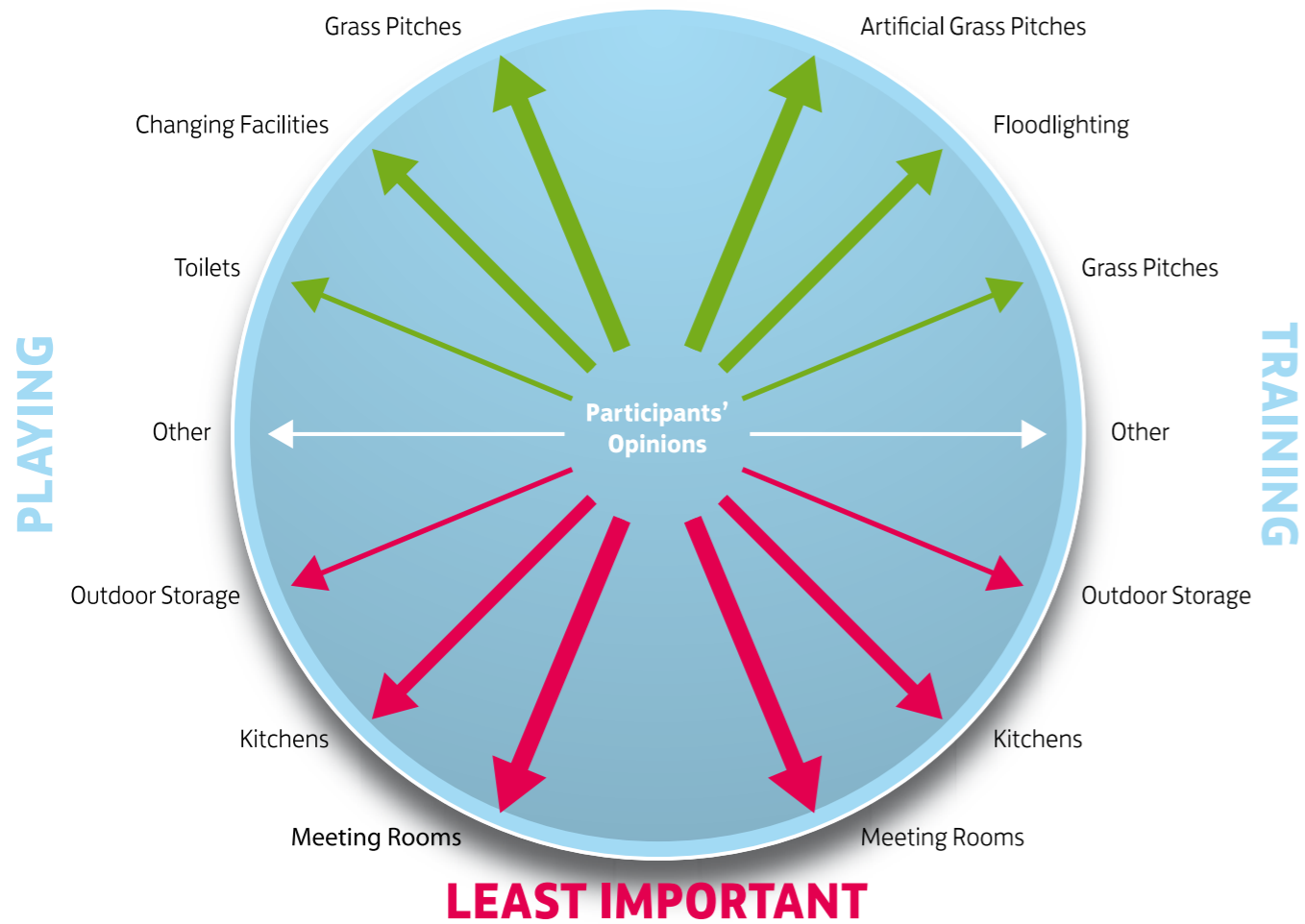
Perceived Threats

Respondents were asked to rate the significance of four threats to facilities with the following results on a 0-5 scale where 0 indicated no threat and 5 indicated high threat:

- Threat of increased cost to access facilities to play and train – rated 3.98
- Reduced maintenance of pitches and facilities – 3.93
- Cost of playing and training equipment – 3.38
- Loss of playing pitches to developers – 2.63.



MOST IMPORTANT



Summary Chart of Findings

The results reflect the regular feedback The FA receives regarding playing and training facilities. It also reflects what many involved in the grassroots game have recognised for some time – that the specific facility needs of those involved in the grassroots game are relatively modest and pragmatic – consisting of reasonable quality playing and training surfaces, a place to change and provision of toilet facilities on site. However, whilst in their own right, these needs are modest, the scale of football is such that any investment made must be prioritised against the most pressing need.

The FA has developed a close awareness of facility need through a dedicated Facilities and Investment Team based at The FA and County FAs. This team has worked closely with many grassroots clubs, leagues and other partners for over 10 years supported by colleagues within the Football Foundation. The survey findings are consistent with the day-to-day feedback received by The FA's Facilities and Investment team.

In assessing all of this information, some headline issues emerged.

Playing pitch surfaces

The majority of matches are played on natural grass pitches; some of these fall below acceptable standards and in many cases contribute to poor play and generally impede the development of a player's technical ability.

A lack of high quality 3G Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs)

Required for both playing and training use, 3G AGPs are essential in the promotion of coaching and player development. These facilities can support intensive use and as such are great assets for playing and training.

Lack of floodlighting

For playing and training purposes. In order to ensure that facilities are used to their maximum potential, floodlighting is considered to be a priority by many clubs.

Basic facilities

Facilities such as toilets and changing areas are often completely absent, or fall below reasonable minimum standards with an overall negative effect on the football experience.

A lack of support for volunteers

Not enough support for those whose role it is to look after facilities.

Sport England has produced a series of 'Insight' reports which further inform the facilities debate. More recently additional 'State of the Nation' reports have provided further data relating specifically to Artificial Grass Pitches and natural grass pitches.

All of this information, consultation and feedback have led to the development of some national priorities for investment as set out later in this document.

The specific facility needs of those involved in the grassroots game are relatively modest and pragmatic

Facilities Designed to Develop and Sustain the Game



In 2011, The Football Association published its plans for the development of coaching and coach education – entitled ‘The Future Game’. This document describes how The FA intends to develop the game and promote better coaching standards and techniques to improve the technical ability of players at all levels.

In 2011, The FA also proposed how youth football should be reformed and delivered as part of the ‘Youth Development Review’. This is a detailed piece of work which sets out some significant changes in the format and structure of youth football some of which will have a direct impact on football facilities. For example, the review strongly advocates the adoption of a 9v9 football format to sit between mini-soccer and 11-a-side football.

It is recognised that these changes will have an impact on facilities, for example, some pitches will need to be re-marked to FA recommended dimensions and appropriate sized goalposts adopted (a separate guide is available from The FA detailing these changes). There are already many examples of leagues and clubs successfully adopting a 9v9 football format and The FA plan to support the facility needs of those looking to develop this and other varying formats of the game. The FA is developing a new Coach Development Strategy (2013 onwards) which will set out detailed plans to create a world class coaching system in England.

In taking advice from The FA’s experts on coaching and player development, there is a requirement that facilities satisfy the following criteria:

Flexible

Capable of supporting a variety of training and playing formats – whether on natural grass or on Artificial Grass Pitches.

Where identified as a priority, sites should be floodlit to support extra training and playing hours. There should be adequate changing and showering provision and on key sites, access to modest meeting/classrooms spaces for coaching/coach education purposes.

Facilities, especially 3G AGPs, should be flexible enough to allow formal and informal formats of the game to be played and should provide for any specific requirements around gender and / or disability.

Reflective of Demand

Girls’ and women’s football is recognised as a key growth area of the game. The formation of the FA Women’s Super League, (FAWSL) and planned expansion into a second division, provides an excellent opportunity to support the development of women’s and girls’ football. The FAWSL is a summer-season league which will require The FA and facility providers to take a pragmatic approach to facility provision – ensuring that maintenance regimes are put in place to cater for summer and winter play.

Future investment in facilities will reflect this growth area and support its development wherever possible – from stadia development to local community-led facility improvements.

Similarly, provision for disability formats will be made through The FA’s investment programme. Properly designed facilities are critical here as opportunities for wider use by disabled groups can be significantly improved with often modest facility design amendments. A competitive player pathway has been developed for players with a disability and every effort will be made to ensure that disability programmes are included as part of the development plans linked to facility investment.

Well Maintained

Natural grass pitches should be maintained to an agreed basic specification, be well drained and free from contaminants.

Club Centred

The most sustainable clubs are those that have a development-led ethos – ideally FA Charter Standard clubs seeking to invest in players and volunteers.

Financially Sustainable

Some facilities are capable of creating revenue opportunities for clubs – especially Artificial Grass Pitches. This will become a critical issue for clubs as subsidy and income from other sources becomes more difficult to access. Revenues generated through wider use of facilities should be re-invested back into development and maintenance programmes.

Inspiring Places to Play and Train

While there are some excellent facilities, some are so poor that they act as a disincentive to participation – no changing provision, showers, toilets, water-logged pitches and so on. This presents a huge challenge to The FA and all those involved in the game. However, The FA remains committed to addressing these issues and investing into facilities to improve the experience of all participants.

The FA recognise that with more than 30,000 affiliated adult 11v11 teams, large local authority based multi-pitch sites will be important in sustaining the game. The FA will invest more time working with local authorities to help identify those sites considered to be the most important priorities for improvement. This will involve closer involvement in the development of new playing pitch strategies and planning work with local authorities to ensure that investment decisions can be co-ordinated to ensure the greatest possible outcomes for football.

The FA recognise that the private sector will continue to develop opportunities for commercial 5-a-side centres and will work with them to ensure that football opportunities are maximised wherever possible. There is also an opportunity for small-sided football to be provided by social enterprise and the public sector. There are now several examples of small-sided football facilities being developed by local authorities who recognise that such sites are capable of repaying capital investments over a reasonable period and where subsequent revenues can be recycled back into local communities for wider sport development purposes.

Recognising a Changing Grassroots Landscape

Over the next decade, there will be substantial changes to the way in which facilities are developed, managed and maintained. The FA will seek to find new ways of delivering facilities and facility improvements through new partnerships

The FA recognises that the landscape for the development of community sport – and within that, the development of football – is changing rapidly.

From a facilities point of view, this will mean that more effort will need to be made to ensure that capital invested is financially sustainable wherever possible. This will be a challenge for football, especially at a time when public sector budgets are under continued pressure.

There are several forces impacting on the future development and management of facilities.





Public Funding Cuts

Over 80% of football facilities in England are managed / maintained by the public sector (local authorities and schools). At a time when public budgets are under pressure, it will be essential that the The FA, County FAs and all involved in the National Game continue to work closely with local authorities and schools to protect and enhance these facilities. This will not be easy, but continued support of local authorities and schools will help ensure that the National Game remains at the heart of sport within our communities. The FA will look to work closely with all partners to find ways to reduce costs and make the most efficient use of football facilities.

Financial Sustainability

In light of the fact that budgets will be very tight over the coming years, clubs and leagues must work with their County FA and The FA to identify how opportunities for income can be maximised and how costs can be minimised. The FA will work with other partners such as the Football Foundation and Sport England to continue to provide free-to-access resources for clubs and leagues to support them in this process, sharing good practice across the country.

Environmental Sustainability

Medium to long term projections indicate that there will be a requirement for facilities to become increasingly environmentally sustainable. Innovations may include rainwater harvesting systems for irrigation, energy efficient design and management. The FA will develop advice and support for clubs seeking to address environmental sustainability issues.

New Formats of the Game

The game continues to change and develop with more participants expressing a desire to get involved in new formats. The small-sided game, Futsal and disability football are good examples. Facilities will need to be as flexible as possible to provide for a broader range of uses for playing and training, especially in light of The FA's Youth Development Review.

Changes in Society

Population changes, areas of projected housing growth, levels of disposable income, geographical mobility, time available for volunteering – these are all issues which will have an impact on the provision of facilities in the future and that The FA will be mindful of in terms of future investment and support.

Increased Club Ownership

Opportunities for clubs to take on long-term leases and acquire football facilities through 'asset transfer' will increase over the coming years. This process will present many clubs with a good opportunity to set down roots and develop a permanent base. The process of acquiring long-term access to sites is often complex and demanding. The FA will continue to work with partners such as Sport England to ensure that the best advice and good practice is freely available to clubs/leagues wishing to take on site ownership options.

Understanding Demand

Sport England recently produced some research detailing trends in football ('Insight reports' January 2012). These presented a detailed analysis of the prevailing trends in the game:

- Occasional players who play relative infrequently but who expressed a desire to play more are on the increase – there has been a 32.6% growth in this group since 2007-08 (or over 195,000 people). Interestingly, this group largely opt to re-engage with football outside of a football club environment, perhaps through recreation forms of the game – on small sided facilities and/or Artificial Grass Pitches.
- Three top drivers for participation were identified some of which could be further supported through facilities:
 - Ease of access and participation – the right time and place to play
 - Opportunity for exertion and fitness
 - Socialising through sport – recreation through participation.

There is a clear trend, through this analysis, of a growing demand for recreational participation. Facilities have an important part to play in this regard:

- providing for a range of flexible uses;
- local and accessible – either through a club environment or recreationally;
- located at sites that encourage a reduction in drop off between the ages of 16-19 – ideally on school sites or sites connected to school/educational use.

Clubs and leagues will be central to the longer term development of facilities – for club use but recreational use too. Those clubs best placed to create revenues and re-invest are those that have:

- sound foundations in the shape of strong volunteer structures;
- security of tenure with facilities capable of supporting growth;
- well thought through business plans;
- a growing participation base;
- a good reputation for the delivery of quality coaching.

Most of these clubs will either already be operating as FA Charter Standard Community Clubs or be close to that award.

Overall, The FA recognises that, over the next decade, there will be substantial changes to the way in which facilities are developed, managed and maintained. The FA also recognises that new innovative partnerships will be necessary. To this end, new means of delivering facilities will be explored through partnership working alongside the public, private and voluntary sectors. Examples may include closer working with housing developers to 'design sport in' especially in areas of high population growth. Other examples may include developing opportunities for leagues to manage facility bookings and elements of maintenance, especially in dense urban areas where there is high demand for facilities.

Taking a longer term view



Looking to the future – a longer term view of facilities

Football clubs

Many clubs will have been offered or explored the opportunity to take on their own facilities on a long term basis. Volunteers within clubs will need to be supported through this process to ensure that the club's interests are protected. Clubs will need to have a well developed business plan capable of covering operational costs and using revenues to drive football development programmes.

Many well established clubs will experience expansion – there will be a greater number of multi-team FA Charter Standard Community Clubs which will place a development pressure on facilities for these clubs, especially in urban areas where sites will be limited. Conversely, in rural areas, the role of smaller clubs will continue to thrive – offering a real focal point for many communities.

The FA will work with clubs seeking to attain long-term (20+ years) security of tenure on their sites.

Leagues

The FA anticipate that the role of leagues will grow significantly over the coming years, especially in representing the facility interests of their member clubs and also in delivering some facilities services to them, such as bookings and basic maintenance.

Leagues will be expected to cater for new formats for football reflecting new patterns of demand. Some leagues will merge and many will grow in reach and membership.

Larger leagues may play an increasingly important and proactive role in the management, maintenance and booking of local football facilities – there are already examples of this working successfully.

The FA will work increasingly with leagues to help them develop appropriate skills to enable them to address the expanding needs of their member clubs.

Players

Those involved in the game, either as affiliated or recreational players, will have a raised level of expectancy regarding the quality of facilities available. Comparisons will be made to the quality of facilities provided by the commercial / private sector.

Football will remain a low-cost sport, but will move towards a more realistic charging system in order to be able to provide better quality playing environments. Formats of football will have changed, with a far broader range on offer and different 'entry points' into the game – both recreational and affiliated. These flexible formats will require that facilities are similarly flexible and capable of supporting new and emerging game formats.

The FA will work to raise standards of football facilities across the game and in so doing, improve the experience of all players involved.

Local Authorities and Town / Parish Councils

Local Authorities and Town / Parish Councils

There will be broader awareness of the role that football plays within the community and far greater use of the game in delivering outputs aligned to health, education and community safety.

Such is the scale of football, local health providers and other public bodies may seek to commission with Leagues and Clubs to deliver key public health outcomes on their behalf. Local Authorities will seek to improve the efficiency of their footballing facilities and look increasingly (especially in urban areas) towards central venues and central footballing hubs with concentrated and sustainable activity. This, in time, may open opportunities for clubs to take on longer term leases from local authorities on smaller sites.

The FA recognise the important role played by local authorities and will further commit to working with targeted local authorities in developing sustainable, long term plans for the development and protection of football facilities.

Volunteers (Facilities)

Volunteers (facilities)

There will be greatly improved opportunities for those involved in the management and maintenance of facilities to access formal and informal training and education programmes. These skills will be of increased importance and value to many clubs.

Facilities management and maintenance will be an area of work of interest to the 'third sector' with established social enterprises in place to deliver this service not just for football but for wider community sport.

The FA will work to open up training and development opportunities for volunteers involved in facility maintenance/management – recognising the crucial role that they play in clubs and leagues.



Section 2 The Long Term Vision

The FA has a focused vision for the future of facilities in England: to build, protect and enhance sustainable football facilities to improve the experience of the nation's favourite game.

The FA Vision for Facilities

“Building, protecting and enhancing sustainable football facilities to improve the experience of the nation’s favourite game”

Building

Protecting

Enhancing

Building

Provide new facilities and pitches in key locations to FA standards in order to sustain existing participation and support new participation. The FA will also seek to provide opportunities for volunteers to build skills in areas of facility development, management and maintenance.

Protecting

Ensure that playing pitches and facilities are protected for the benefit of current and future participants.

Enhancing

Invest in existing facilities and pitches, ensuring that participation in the game is sustained as well as expanded.

FA FACILITY PRIORITIES

1. Leading the development of technical standards

2. Facility planning and protecting playing fields

3. Supporting club and league volunteers

4. Targeted facility improvement schemes

5. Capital investment

The Long Term Vision

1. Leading the Development of Technical Standards


The FA is responsible for the development of the National Game. Part of this responsibility is to lead the establishment of simple to understand, free-to-access technical standards relating to all facility types – from pitch dimensions to goal sizes – for current and future formats of the game.

Standards will be set for a range of facilities such as goalposts, changing provision, and coach education rooms. These standards will reflect the different needs and aspirations of football at all levels within the National Game and be regularly maintained, updated and communicated across the grassroots game.

The FA will ensure that these standards are informed through appropriate and targeted research.

The FA will:

- Build on existing standards and publish / maintain a simple to use and free-to-access complete library of technical standards addressing all facility elements across all formats of the game. These resources will be in printed form and available electronically.
- Update and maintain these standards and communicate changes/ improvements across the National Game on a regular basis.
- Lead the industry and ensure compliance with relevant FIFA / UEFA standards.
- Carry out relevant research to support and advise these standards over time.
- Monitor feedback from the grassroots community regarding facility standards.



The FA is responsible for the development of the National Game. Part of this responsibility is to lead the establishment of simple to understand, free-to-access technical standards relating to all facility types.

The Long Term Vision

2. Facility Planning and Protecting Playing Fields

Football at the grassroots level is a game heavily dependent on public sector support and as such The FA needs to ensure that it does all it can to support facility planning especially with local authority partners.

The value of grass pitches used for formal and informal football in local communities across the country cannot be overestimated and The FA takes very seriously its role in protecting these spaces. The FA, along with Sport England and other National Governing Bodies will continue to protect these spaces for the benefit of current and future participants.

The FA will:

- Have developed closer working relationships with target local authority partners to ensure that provision meets local demand.
- Support local authority playing pitch strategies and other facilities planning impacting on football facilities.
- Make available accurate and reliable data regarding local football facilities and participation to those involved in facilities planning on an annual basis.
- Working pro-actively with public and private partners in planning – for example working with developers to ensure that football's needs are considered in areas of projected population growth and also working with small-sided football providers to open participation opportunities for as many people as possible.
- Fully support Sport England in their statutory planning role in protecting playing fields from the threat of development.



The value of grass pitches used for formal and informal football in local communities across the country cannot be overestimated and The FA takes very seriously its role in protecting these spaces.

The Long Term Vision

3. Supporting Club and League Volunteers

The FA recognises that more needs to be done to support those volunteers responsible for managing and maintaining football facilities.

At a time of scarce resources, it will be essential that facilities are managed and maintained as effectively and efficiently as possible. Many clubs will be interested in taking up ownership of football facilities on long-term leases ('Asset Transfer') and The FA will make available resources to support and guide these clubs.

Other support will be required by all those involved in developing, managing and maintaining football facilities, especially in areas of:

- Grounds maintenance
 - natural and artificial surfaces
- Facility planning / management
- Financial/Business planning for facilities
 - governance / CASC / VAT
- Fundraising for facility development
- Taking ownership of facilities
 - 'Asset Transfer'
- Developing commercial opportunities for FA Charter Standard Clubs
- Opportunities for apprenticeships.

Courses offered will reflect volunteers' requirements for short, easy to access training delivered as flexibly as possible.

The FA will:

- Create detailed and relevant resources for leagues and clubs in specific areas of facility management, facility maintenance, business planning, asset transfer and fundraising.
- To make available to as many clubs as possible, relevant facility training packages in partnership with external agencies / partners covering key areas as above.
- Continually monitor volunteer feedback so as to ensure that support is accessible, relevant and up to date.



At a time of scarce resources, it will be essential that facilities are managed and maintained as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The Long Term Vision

4. Targeted Facility Improvement Schemes

The FA will provide a range of opportunities to support and offer advice for those clubs and leagues seeking to develop and improve their own facilities.

The FA recognises that quite often clubs are able to 'unlock' internal resources (human, skills and financial) to help drive significant improvements for themselves. Within the life of this strategy, The FA will develop a number of FA-led national programmes established to support the facility needs of clubs in different ways.

The FA has already started work in the following areas in direct response to demands from clubs and leagues.

Floodlighting improvement scheme

A national scheme open to all clubs offering investment into floodlighting on selected sites with a private sector partner.

Pitch improvement programme

A programme specifically aimed at the improvement of natural grass pitches linking clubs to expert advice and support from professional ground staff and further opportunities to access maintenance equipment, materials and training.

Self-help facility improvements

A national scheme is being planned whereby clubs can embark on modest improvements to their club facilities on fixed dates pre-season, harnessing local volunteers, local suppliers and potentially the support of national partners.

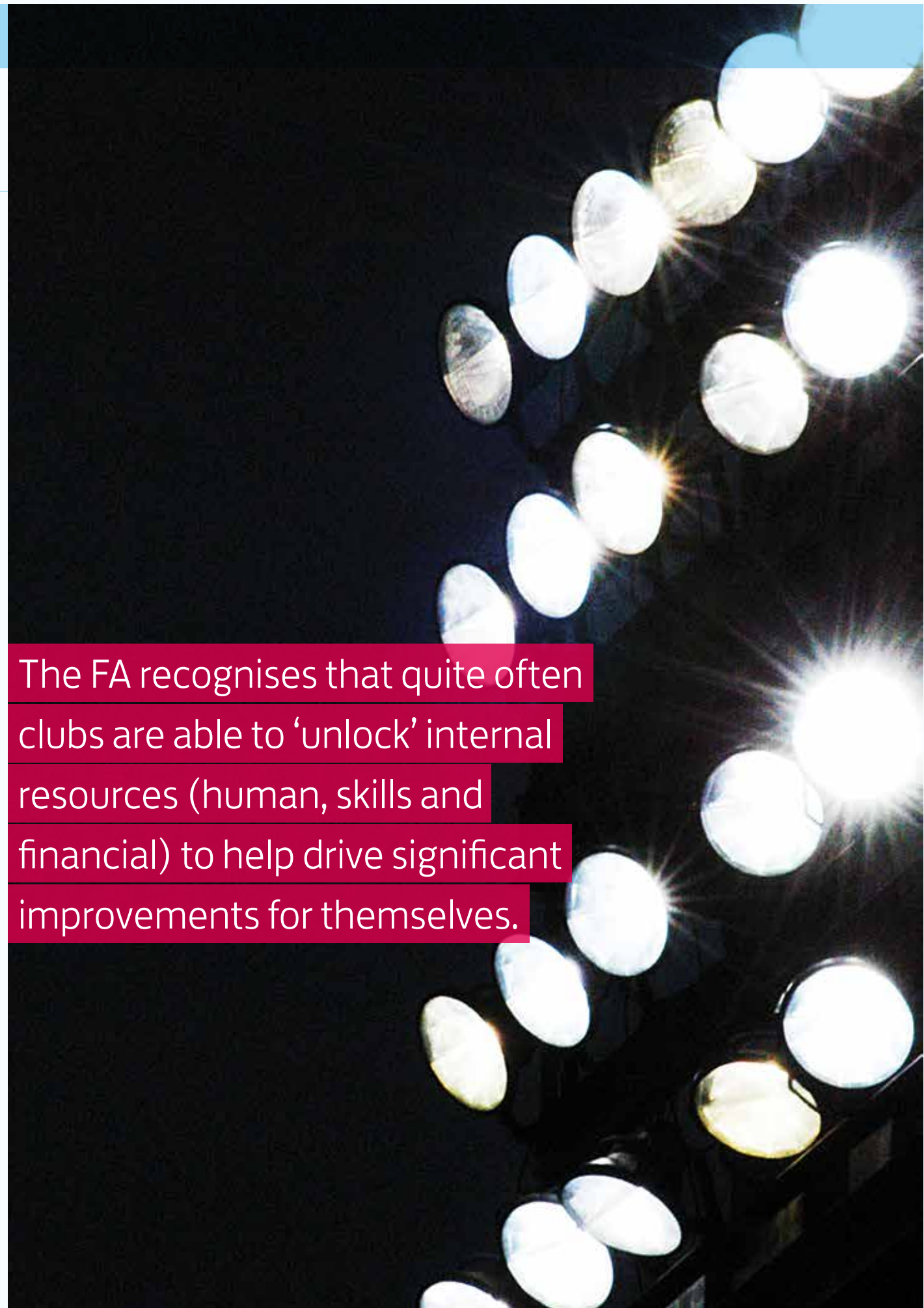
Energy advice

Providing zero cost energy advice for clubs to reduce annual energy tariffs.

The FA will:

Provide a range of facility improvement opportunities for clubs and leagues to support facility improvements based on specific needs including:

- A national floodlighting scheme for all clubs in with the assistance of external partners.
- A natural grass pitch improvement programme aimed at providing high quality technical expertise to grassroots clubs seeking to improve grass playing surfaces.
- A national club-based self-help facility improvement programme targeted at volunteers.
- Making available to clubs and leagues equipment banks to open up opportunities for self-managed maintenance.
- Provide advice to clubs regarding environmental efficiency measures and energy reduction schemes.



The FA recognises that quite often clubs are able to 'unlock' internal resources (human, skills and financial) to help drive significant improvements for themselves.

The Long Term Vision

5. Capital Investment

Since 2001, The FA, the Premier League and Sport England have invested capital into the Football Foundation who in turn assess and award grants for facility improvements.

The impact of these grant awards cannot be overestimated, with more than £780m invested (total project cost) across 1600 projects, impacting on over 7000 clubs. Over the coming years, it is anticipated that The FA and its fellow funding partners will continue to invest in clearly prioritised facility projects administered through The Football Foundation.

In addition to investment delivered through The Football Foundation, The FA will continue to work closely with Sport England and other funders to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to capital investment – ‘a single plan for football’.

The FA also works closely with other investors in facilities to influence decisions in support of grassroots football. The FA will continue to promote facility standards and good practice alongside those prepared to invest in the game.

The FA recently completed a National Facilities Survey which highlighted the key priorities for clubs in terms of priority investment.

The FA will prioritise investment primarily through FA Charter Standard Clubs into various key areas as detailed overleaf.



The impact of these grant awards cannot be overestimated, with more than £780m invested across 1600 projects.

The FA will direct future investment into key priorities based on research and continued consultation.



Natural grass pitch improvements and maintenance

Grants to support the development of new and improvement to existing natural grass pitches. There are an estimated 33,500 natural grass football pitches in England which carry the vast majority of grassroots football activity. It is anticipated where grants are made in this area, additional support will be made available, as appropriate, to clubs wishing to develop their own skills in the future maintenance of natural grass – through relevant training and advice.

Development of new Artificial Grass Pitches

There are currently 491 full-size Artificial Grass Pitches in England (Source – Active Places 2012). The latest Artificial Grass Pitches are capable of delivering a high quality football experience and in addition are capable of carrying much greater activity than natural grass. An increasing number of leagues are allowing games to be played on these surfaces and many grassroots clubs compete to access them for training purposes.

The FA estimates that a typical full size floodlit AGP can accommodate the training needs of up to 60 teams in any given week let alone wider use for matches and informal participation. Recent consultation with clubs and leagues has further reinforced to The FA that investment in these facilities is a priority. AGPs are also the preferred facility type for grassroots pan-disability football. The FA will continue to work with Leagues and Competitions to encourage appropriate use of AGPs.

Refurbishment of old Artificial Grass Pitches

There are over 1,500 existing sand-based or water-based artificial pitches in England (source Active Places – 2012) some of which are at the end of their useful lives. The FA will work closely with other relevant National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and map out priority sites where existing old-style pitches might be replaced to reflect local need / demand. This approach will offer a value for money approach to sustaining and growing participation, and at the same time, create a financially sustainable network of AGP sites in England.

Provision of suitable changing accommodation and toilet facilities

The FA will seek to ensure that suitable proposals for improvements to changing rooms and associated facilities are properly assessed against need and value for money and that standards are put in place that are consistent with the needs of clubs at all levels. New construction methods will be assessed and implemented where these meet with local needs and are cost effective.

Small Grants Programme for modest facility improvements

Since the opening of the Football Foundation's 'Build the Game' programme, The FA has recognised the popularity of this programme with a steady increase in volume of applications. This programme will continue and will aim to address the often very basic facility requirements of clubs. The FA and Football Foundation will set down some broad guidelines for access to this funding although the intention will be to minimise red-tape and keep access as open as possible.

New / replacement goalposts

In support of the proposed implementation of 9v9 football and other flexible formats of the game, a dedicated fund for new/replacement goalposts will be established through the Football Foundation. The FA will also ensure that awareness regarding goalpost safety is refreshed and publicised. Funding to replace unsafe goalposts will continue.

Demand for capital investment consistently exceeds available resources. The FA will therefore put into place a process that weights applications based on the following factors:

- Meets with stated FA facility priorities and standards and is technically viable
- Capable of sustaining and / or growing participation
- Provides facilities that in themselves are flexible and adaptable for a range of uses and formats of the game
- Focuses on FA Charter Standard Clubs and Charter Standard Leagues
- Creates clear linked programmes between clubs and school sites / facilities
- Clear, deliverable football development plan supporting FA development programmes tailored to specific local demand
- Demonstrates realistic and sustainable business planning with a reduced reliance on external subsidy
- In designated FA priority geographical areas.

The FA will also commit to joint working with other NGBs and Sport England in delivering capital improvements so as to exploit all opportunities to minimise costs and maximise outcomes for football.

The FA will:

- Deliver in excess of £150m (through Football Foundation) into facility improvements across the National Game in line with identified priorities:
 - natural grass pitches improved – target: 3000;
 - a network of new Artificial Grass Pitches built – target: 100;
 - a network of refurbished Artificial Grass Pitches – target: 150;
 - on selected sites, new and improved changing facilities and toilets;
 - continue a small grants programmes designed to address modest facility needs of clubs;
 - ongoing support with the purchase and replacement of goalposts.
- Direct other sources of investment into FA facility priorities.
- Communicate priorities for investment across the grassroots game on a regular basis.
- Work closely with Sport England, the Premier League and other partners to ensure that investment is co-ordinated and targeted.

Partners / Acknowledgements / Contacts

Delivery and Partners

The FA will work in close liaison with everyone involved to deliver the ambitions of this plan through The FA's Facility and Investment Team.

These partners will include:

- County Football Associations
- Clubs and Leagues
- The Football Foundation and its partner funders (Sport England and the Premier League)
- Sport England
- County Sports Partnerships
- Public sector bodies including Local Authorities
- Schools (primary and secondary)
- FE and HE establishments
- The private commercial sector (sport and non-sport)
- Small-sided football providers.

Above all, The FA will continue to work as closely as possible with everyone involved in day-to-day grassroots football activity.

Specific details regarding delivery arrangements will be agreed as required with each delivery partner.

Acknowledgements

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- The grassroots football community
- County Football Associations
- The Premier League
- Sport England
- The Football Foundation
- Public sector partners.

Supporting documentation can be found at TheFA.com.

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