

Grace Park Sports Improvement Project – Community Benefit Statement (November 2024)

1. Project Overview

- 1.1 Grace Park and Greengates Playing Fields sit alongside each other between Leather's Lane and Wood Road in Halewood, in the Halewood South ward. The Grace Park area of the site currently has a children's and toddlers play area, outdoor gym equipment, and a large area of amenity grassland. Greengates Playing Field is subject to a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) to Halewood Town Junior Football Academy. The site includes grass football pitches, a clubhouse fabricated from shipping containers and a container for storing football equipment.
- 1.2 The Knowsley Playing Pitch Strategy 2021 identified the Greengates site as one of ten sites in the borough which are a priority for improvements, due to the poor quality of the pitches. Additionally, the report identified the site as one of six in the borough which required "refurbishment, replacement or needed new build facilities" such as a clubhouse or changing facilities.
- 1.3 Halewood Town JFC was established in 1972 and has grown to 22 teams in the 2023/24 season. The club has been the beneficiary of a lease to operate and use the pitches at Greengates since 2016. The poor quality of the pitches, in particular drainage issues during winter, mean alternative external sites are required during large parts of the playing season. The poor quality of the grass pitches and pressures on local facilities result in teams having to travel considerable distances to train. Halewood Town JFC have long had ambitions for an Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) facility at their home ground, in order to grow their community offer and remain rooted in the local community during the winter period.
- 1.4 Knowsley Council were successful in securing
- 1.5 £15.356m for Halewood from the government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) in January 2023. The LUF funding is designed to "Level Up" areas across the UK and support local growth. The funding proposal submitted by the Council includes:
 - i) an expansion of the local district centre
 - ii) improvements to greenspace and leisure facilities
 - iii) Decarbonisation of Halewood Leisure Centre
 - iv) and improvements to active travel connectivity to key employment areas and throughout the district,.

The proposals for Greengates Playing Fields and Grace Park are central to this proposal.

- 1.6 The area proposed for the new AGPs is currently part of one of the grass pitches to the north of the Greengates site, as well as a small adjacent section of the current Grace Park site.
- 1.7 . The need for the proposed Artificial Grass pitch is supported by Knowsley Joint Health & Well-being Plan Strategy 2025, with data and insight which highlights the health inequalities and deprivation in the community the project serves. The project also supports the Knowsley Better Together Strategy and Knowsley 2030.

2. Community Benefit – Sports provision

- 2.1 The Knowsley Playing Pitch Strategy 2021, and Local Football Facilities Plan 2023, report existing AGPs are operating at capacity and that there is a shortfall of two AGPs in the borough. The shortfall increases to three 11v11 AGPs when accounting for future demand. In addition, the AGP at Halewood Academy is approaching the end of its' usable lifespan.
- 2.2 A consultation undertaken as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy revealed a common issue with low availability at AGPs, with some clubs reporting they cannot access sufficient capacity on AGPs for training.
- 2.3 Community consultations on proposals to improve the sporting facilities at Grace Park and Greengates was undertaken in 2024, and the majority of the community were supportive of improving and providing enhanced sports facilities on site as part of the broader developments of Greengates and Grace Park. The response of this Halewood resident was typical of the feedback:

“Very supportive of the ideas, think it will be great to see new opportunities and changes to support the green spaces in this area”.
- 2.4 Halewood Town JFC is the sole user of the grass football pitches and currently have 22 teams, with 396 male and female junior players, for age groups from Under-6 (U6) to Under-17 (U17). Club teams play and train on the grass pitches at Greengates when daylight and weather allow, despite their poor-quality during autumn/winter months, because of the shortage of Artificial Grass facilities in the area. However, the pitches have suffered significant drainage and turf quality issues and the football club The pitches are also used for a popular Junior Academy on Saturday mornings and a number of summer tournaments, which attract teams from across Merseyside.

3. Community Benefit – Wider community impacts

3.1. Halewood South, as with many other Ward in Knowsley, has challenges around poverty, health and inclusion. Related data is shown below:

- One of the 20% most deprived wards nationally;
- 25.8% of children experience child poverty (17.1% nationally), and 26.0% of older people experience poverty (14.2% nationally)
- Life expectancy: women 81.4 years (83.2 nationally). Men 77.8 years (79.5 nationally).
- 42.0% of Primary School Year 6 children are overweight, or obese, compared to England average 36.7%

3.2 In addition to Halewood Town JFC facilities usage, a wide community programme of use has been developed to provide sporting activities to the Halewood community that will help tackle the social challenges the area faces. These include:

- Activities for Older people including walking football and Football Memories dementia support programmes;
- Activities for disabled adults including regular disability-specific football leagues, delivered in partnership with the County FA;
- Activities for women and girls, including indoor activities in the clubhouse space;
- Activities for LGBTQIA+ people;
- Activities to provide targeted diversionary activities to reduce community Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Targeted initiatives, working with Merseyside Police, to reduce crime and engage those at risk of becoming involved in crime;

3.3 The range of activities will be supported by a range of stakeholders who have expressed support and agreed draft Service Level Agreements for the project. These stakeholders include:

- Liverpool County Football Association;
- Merseyside & Halewood Junior Football League
- Liverpool FA 'Ability Counts' Disability Football League
- Everton in the Community;
- Merseyside Police;
- Knowsley School Sports Partnership;
- Merseyside Youth Association;

3.5 In addition, refurbished facilities within the Pavilion, will support wider non-sporting community initiatives including activities to tackle social deprivation, social isolation, mental health, a food pantry and community café.

4. Site Management and Leasing

- 4.1.1 On completion of the project, Knowsley Council as the landowner of the site proposes to make a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) to Halewood Town Junior Sports Academy through a 27-year full-maintaining peppercorn lease. Their objectives are: the advancement of amateur and junior sport and to provide recreational facilities for the public benefit, in particular but not exclusively through the provision of facilities for the playing of football and other sports.
- 4.1.3 The Halewood Town JFC committee structure is detailed in Appendix A. The Club Chair will manage and co-ordinate the Site Development Plan. The Chair will undertake Steering Group meetings and support a Community Liaison Champion. The Champion will be responsible for ongoing community engagement, including meeting with priority groups identified to provide information, support access and increase attendance at the new AGP facility. They will organise community social events that encourage local people to attend the hub and use feedback to shape the activity offer.
- 4.1.4 The Club Treasurer will be responsible for the project finances and the Pitch Replacement Fund. Each year an amount will be transferred from the Club bank account into a separate Pitch Replacement Fund account and ring-fenced for future resurfacing of the Artificial Grass pitch.
- 4.1.5 Halewood Town JFC Committee have managed the use of the Greengates' grass pitches for almost 10 years for match play, training, school holidays programmes and events. The Committee are experienced in event and activity planning and delivery, co-ordinating booking slots and allocations, operating social facilities, organising large numbers of participants and managing site access in a safe and conscientious manner.
- 4.1.6 Halewood Town JFC Committee are experienced in co-operating with Knowsley Council through the Knowsley Events Strategic Advisory Group (KEVSAG) system and through working with the Environmental Sustainability Team to ensure site-wide activities are administered in a safe and secure manner across the site.

4.2 Facility Management

- 4.2.1 The facility – Artificial Grass pitch, Car Park and Pavilion will operate as set out in the table below:

Period	Car Park opening hours	Pavilion opening hours	Artificial Grass Pitch opening hours
Monday – Friday	24 hours	8:00am -21:00pm	9am -21:00pm <i>Note pitch closed for Maintenance 9am-10am on Mondays and Fridays</i>

Saturday	24 hours	08:00am 17:30pm	–	8am – 17:30pm
Sunday	24 hours	09:00am 16:00pm	–	9am – 16:00pm

4.2.2 A car park is planned to be built on the site which will provide parking for football and park users. This will alleviate pressure on the existing retail parking and discourage pavement parking which is currently widespread at the site.

4.2.3 Facilities will be closed on Bank Holidays unless for special events. These events will be submitted to Knowsley Council through the Knowsley Events Strategic Advisory Group (KEVSAG) process for authorisation.

4.2.4 The new facility will be available to be booked by community groups working with the Halewood Town Junior Football Academy to deliver social outcomes defined by agreements with the Football Foundation and Knowsley Council, through the funding agreements and Community Asset Transfer (CAT) requirements. Bookings will be administered using an 'off-the-shelf' booking system.

4.2.5 Groups booking the facilities will be required to agree to set terms and conditions for use, which will include a behavioural code of conduct. These terms and conditions will set out:

- expected usages and behaviour
- penalties for breaching these agreements, including exclusion from use of the facilities

4.2.6 A Steering Group will be established that will ensure that the facility is being appropriately managed and meeting the aims as set out below:

1. To deliver the Project Development Plan and ensure a balanced and inclusive Programme of Use
2. To provide user feedback about facilities management

The Steering Group will meet quarterly and be chaired by the Halewood Town Junior Football Academy Chair. The Engagement & Development Lead will act as Secretary. The Chair will be responsible for managing the Development Plan and will work with project partners to collect usage data for monitoring purposes. Signed Service Level Agreements (SLAs) detail partners' commitment to the Steering Group and the Site Development Plan.

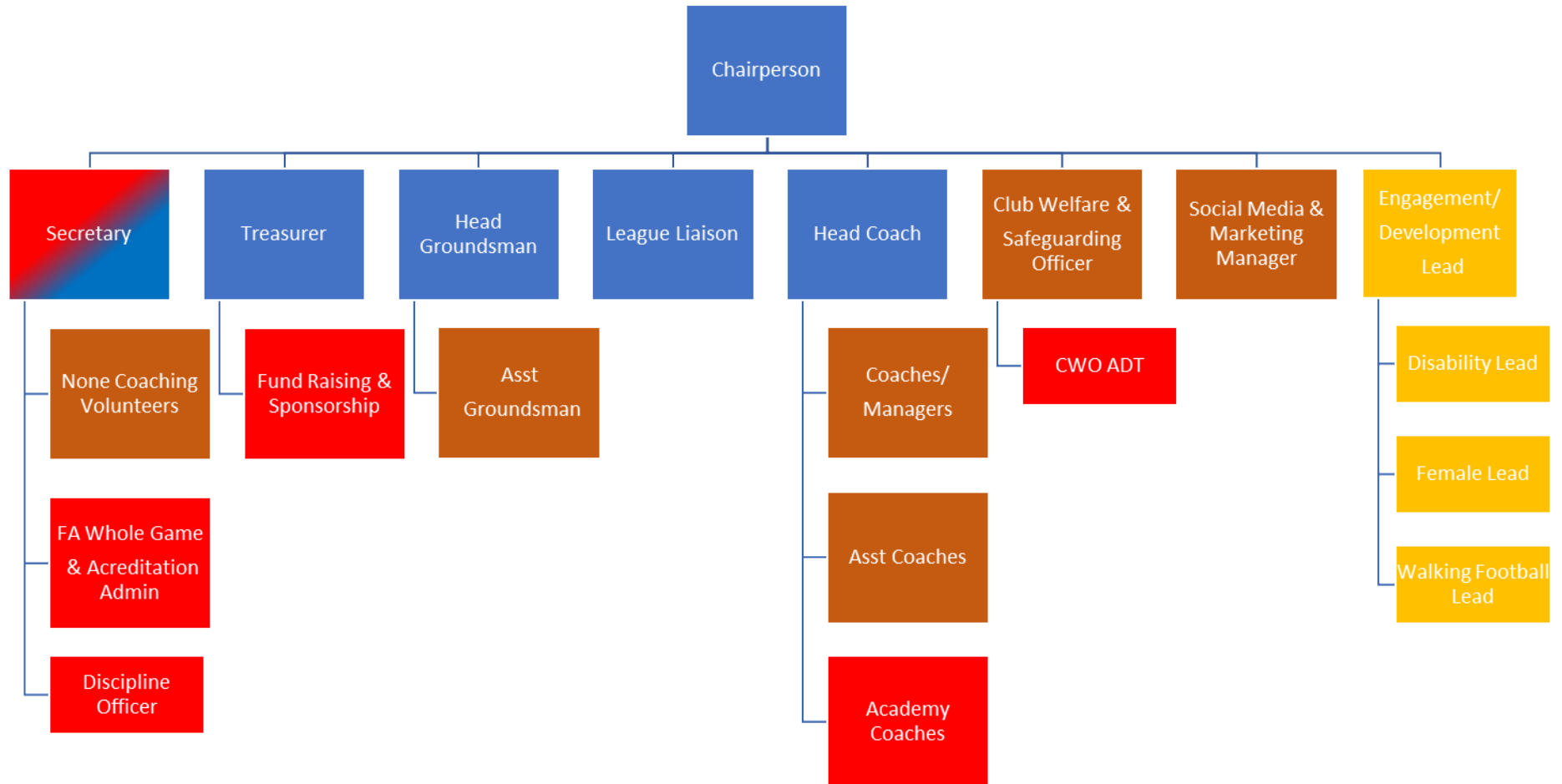
Partners will deliver activities to achieve their specific targets and collaborate on joint initiatives such as women and girls' football development, disability football, and recreational football for priority groups. The Chair will ensure partners are delivering against their objectives and agree interventions as needed if objectives are not being met. The Steering Group will act as a forum for users to provide

feedback and constructive suggestions to the management. Membership will be as follows:

- Junior Football Academy Chair
- Junior Football Academy Engagement & Development Lead
- Junior Football Academy Committee Member
- Junior Football Academy Committee Member
- Knowsley Council Sports Development Officer
- Liverpool FA Facility Investment Manager
- Liverpool FA Active Through Football Co-ordinator
- Everton in the Community Interventions Manager
- Merseyside School Sport Partnership
- Merseyside Police Neighbourhood Team

Appendix A

Structure of Halewood Town Junior Football Academy



Chair

Oversee the day to day running of the Club and chair meetings.

Secretary

Undertakes administrative duties and league registrations.

The Treasurer

Manages club finances on a day-to-day basis to ensure club is financially sustainable

Club Welfare Officer

Ensures Halewood Town JFC provides a safe, fun and inclusive environment for members. Liaises with the County FA Safeguarding Officer and external organisations as appropriate.

Head Coach

Leads on training and recruitment of volunteers. Oversees the Club Development Plan and the player pathway from U6 academy to seniors. Manages the club tournament.

Engagement & Development Lead

Oversees the club's diverse offer, developing opportunities for underserved groups and engaging with community partners