

Sports Facilities Strategy – Multi Sports Hub Review

Strategic Recommendations

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Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin
**Newry, Mourne
and Down**
District Council

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Strategic Recommendations

1. Executive Summary

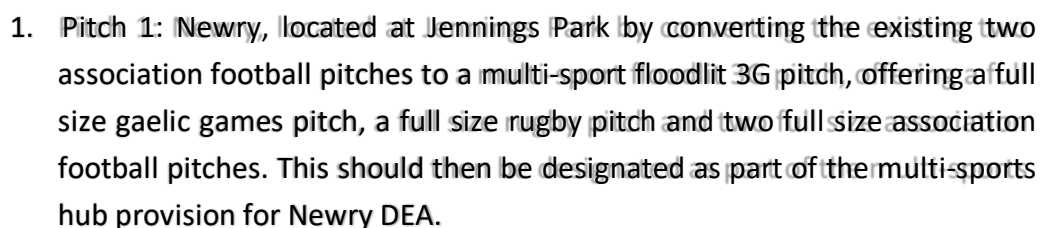
Introduction

- 1.1** Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has commissioned a review of its Sports Facilities Strategy 2017 in relation to Multi Sports Hubs in the 7 DEA Areas, addressing association football, gaelic games, rugby, hockey, cricket, lawn bowls, athletics, water sports. Research carried out during 2021 and 2022 involved desk research, community consultation, surveys, site inspections and liaison with key stakeholders. The terms of reference requires a pitch condition survey with a comprehensive audit, and a strategy presenting recommendations for the development of outdoor sports facilities. This is Part 1: Strategic Recommendations.

Strategic Recommendations

Association Football, Gaelic Games, Rugby

- 1.2** The measure of adequacy of provision highlights a shortfall in the supply of pitches for association football training, for gaelic games and for rugby. Given the maintenance issues associated with training on grass pitches, the recommendation is to develop three multi-sport artificial turf pitches – 3G – strategically located across the district to best achieve geographical spread, taking advantage of partnership/funding opportunities, and reflecting population density.
- 1.3** A recommendation to support clubs to develop additional multi-sport pitch provision via Council's Sport and Community Leasing Policy, Financial Assistance Programme and external funding opportunities not available to Council should continue to be encouraged. Furthermore, the proposal of a higher level financial assistance process to support clubs wanting to establish regional facilities provision should also be considered. Five recommendations have been made for association football, gaelic games and rugby.

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1. Pitch 1: Newry, located at Jennings Park by converting the existing two association football pitches to a multi-sport floodlit 3G pitch, offering a full size gaelic games pitch, a full size rugby pitch and two full size association football pitches. This should then be designated as part of the multi-sports hub provision for Newry DEA.

2. Pitch 2: Newcastle, located at Donard Park by converting the existing AstroTurf pitch to a multi-sport floodlit 3G pitch, offering a gaelic games training pitch and a full size association football pitch. It is understood that partnership opportunities with the Department of Education and Shimna College would further support this recommendation. This should then be designated as part of the multi-sports hub provision for The Mournes DEA.
3. Pitch 3: Downpatrick, located either at the Council's Dunleath Park or Down High School. Converting either existing or planned grass/shale pitch provision to a multi-sport floodlit 3G pitch, offering a gaelic games training pitch, a full-size match standard football and rugby pitch. It is understood that partnership opportunities with the Department of Education and Down High School would further support the recommendation for a pitch at this site. This should then be designated as part of the multi-sports hub provision for Downpatrick DEA.
4. Council should continue to encourage and support additional multi-sport pitch provision across the district via Council's Sport and Community Leasing Policy and Financial Assistance Programme with a weighting system considered to prioritise these types of projects. This process should be considered to designate multi-sports hub provision for Slieve Gullion, Crotlieve, Slieve Croob and Rowallane DEAs.
5. Grass pitches that are under-used or no longer in use; it is recommended that these pitches be considered for leasing to local clubs or considered for disposal.

Water Sports

1.4 The key issue for water sports clubs is a lack of storage and general club accommodation, most felt amongst emerging water sports but also amongst traditional water sports. The Council has approved a capital project to develop water sports at Camlough Lake, is moving forward with a project to bring Warrenpoint Baths back into use and is currently scoping enhancements at Newcastle Harbour and Rockpool. Three recommendations have been made for water sports.

1. In tandem with the development of Albert Basin City Park, water sports provision should be considered as part of this project, accommodating water sports clubs and maximising the potential of the Newry Canal and Albert Basin.
2. Council Capital projects located in areas where there is lack of provision and identified need should consider incorporating water sports provision within the project. Camlough Lake, Warrenpoint Baths, Rockpool, Kilkeel and Newcastle Harbour, projects should be considered for multi-sports hub provision in their respective DEAs.
3. Council should continue to encourage and support additional water sports provision across the district via Councils Sport and Community Leasing Policy and Financial Assistance Programme with a weighting system considered to prioritise these types of projects. This process should be considered to designate multi-sports hub provision for Slieve Croob and Downpatrick DEAs.

Cricket

1.5 The four cricket clubs in the district operate their own facilities with one club leasing its ground from the Council. They are in need of ongoing support to assist in developing their sport, especially female participation. Needs include training nets, rain covers and ground maintenance equipment whilst some clubs need changing accommodation for females. One recommendation has been made for cricket.

1. Council should continue to encourage and support cricket provision across the district via Council's Sport and Community Leasing Policy and Financial Assistance Programme with a weighting system considered to prioritise these types of projects.

Athletics

- 1.6** In recent years interest in athletics, mostly running, has grown significantly to a present estimate of 70,000 to 80,000 participants in Northern Ireland, making it one of the highest participation sports. The district presently has one athletics track, located in Newry. One recommendation has been made for athletics.

1. Develop second athletics track for the district, strategically located in Downpatrick to best achieve geographical spread, reflecting population density and taking advantage of partnership/funding opportunities, 400m x up to 6 lanes, synthetic surface, floodlit, and fenced. This should then be designated as part of the multi-sports hub provision for Downpatrick DEA.

General

- 1.7** In addition to the sports-specific recommendations there are two general recommendations that cover all sports that should be considered.

1. Council should continue to encourage and support sports provision across the district via Council's Sport and Community Leasing Policy and Financial Assistance Programme with a weighting system considered to prioritise projects that have an under-provision and identified need that has not been addressed or is in the process of being addressed and would contribute to multi-sports hub provision in a particular DEA.
2. A higher level financial assistance process to support clubs wanting to establish multi-sports hubs facilities where there is an identified under-provision and identified need that has not been addressed or is in the process of being addressed, should be considered.

2. Need

Introduction

- 2.1** The audit process and findings inform the recommendations, based on need, for the strategic development of facilities. The methodology adopted in the approach to considering recommendations is as follows:-

Identify need for sports facilities in each District Electoral Area.

Establish how investment in and development of facilities should be approached:-

- **Approach 1 - Council investing in Council-owned facilities.**
- **Approach 2 - Council in partnership with other statutory-owned facilities.**
- **Approach 3 - Community/Voluntary sector, supported by:-**

Leasing Council land and/or facilities to community/voluntary sector organisations, so enabling them to seek external funding, or

- **The Council's financial assistance programme, either (i) Minor and Major Facilities Capital Fund, or (ii) Higher Level Capital Fund.**

Need Identified

- 2.2** The audit process, which involved survey work, facility inspections and consultation with sports groups, resulted in identification of need for each of the eight sports being considered – association football, gaelic games, rugby, hockey, cricket, lawn bowls, athletics, water sports. Need is identified through analysis of *adequacy of provision* using the Sport England methodology 'Towards a Level Playing Field: Playing Pitch Model.' The following table presents a summary of adequacy of provision expressed as 'facility shortfall – yes/no' for each sport in each DEA, recognising that;

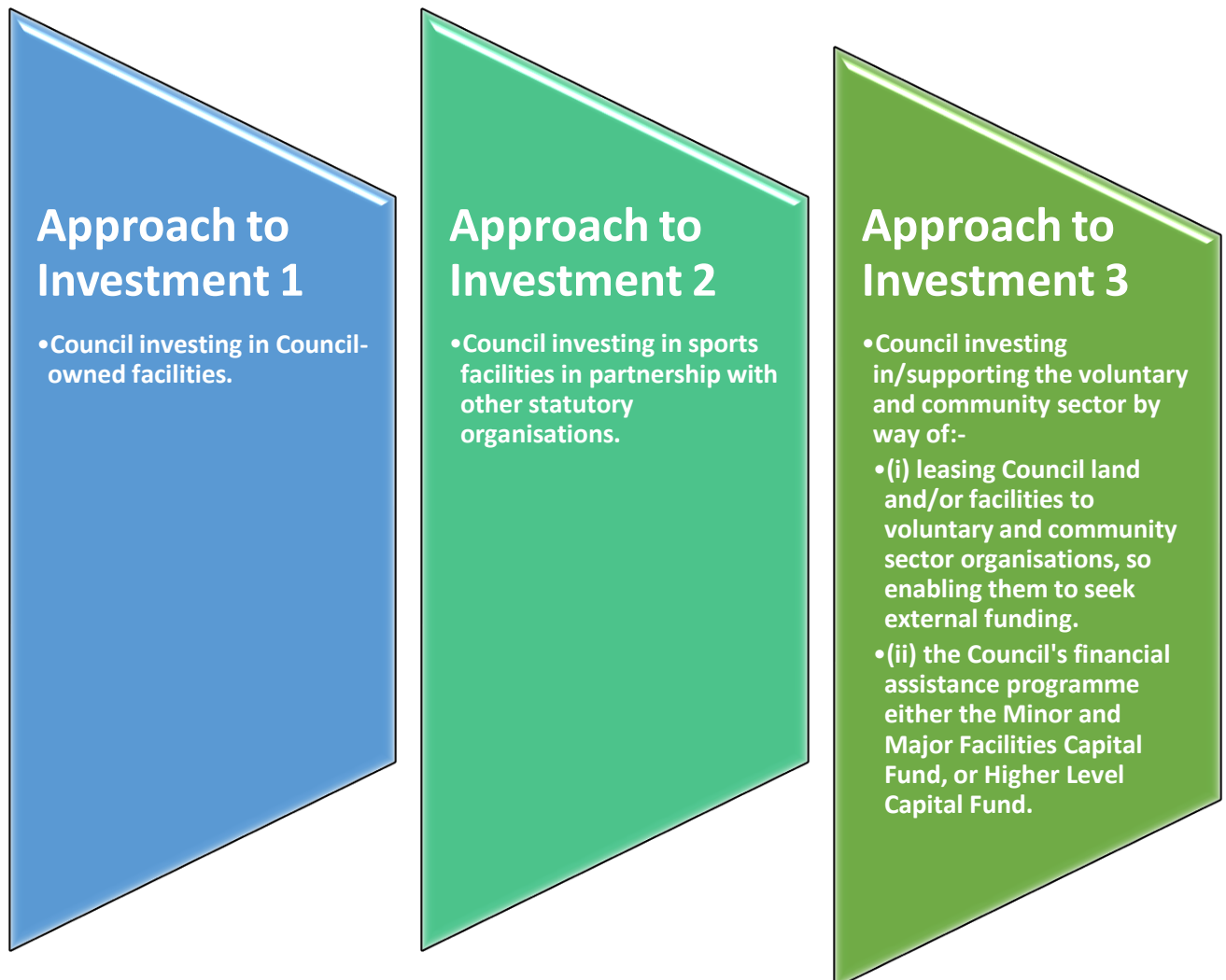
- ❖ For association football, gaelic games, rugby and hockey, adequacy of provision is *measured* using Sport England's Playing Pitch Model.
- ❖ For cricket, athletics, lawn bowls and water sports adequacy of provision is *assessed*, using information gathered from the clubs' survey and focus groups.
- ❖ A 'n/a' result indicates there are no clubs in the DEA for that sport.

Adequacy of Provision – All DEAs								
Sport	District	Adequacy of Provision Facility Shortfall – Yes/No?						
		Rowallane	Slieve Croob	Downpatrick	The Mournes	Crotlieve	Slieve Gullion	Newry
Assoc Football – Matches	+13 pitches	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
Assoc Football – Training	- 184 one-hr training slots	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gaelic Games	- 6 pitches	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rugby	+ 2 pitches (shortfall of training facilities)	n/a	No	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a
Cricket – Matches	Even	No	No	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cricket – Training	Shortfall	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hockey	+ 2 pitches	No	n/a	n/a	No	n/a	n/a	No
Athletics	Shortfall	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Lawn Bowls	Surplus	No	n/a	No	No	No	No	No
Water Sports	Shortfall	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

2.3 The analysis of adequacy of provision shows the sports of association football, gaelic games, rugby, cricket, athletics and water sports have *need* to a greater or lesser extent. In the case of association football the need is for facilities to accommodate mid-week training. In the case of gaelic games the need is for facilities to relieve the over-use of club-based pitches for training and matches. In the case of rugby the need is for training facilities for one of the district's two clubs. For cricket the need is for financial assistance to support development of the sport. For athletics the need is for a second athletics track to support the further development of the sport in the northern part of the district. For water sports the need is to support clubs in a number of traditional and emerging water sports activities.

3. Approach to Investment

- 3.1** For the district electoral areas, consideration is given to each facility shortfall identified under adequacy of provision as a precursor to recommending how investment may best address need. Commentary on investment considerations is given under (i) adequacy of provision; (ii) perceived benefits; (iii) other factors. The following table presents the commentary on each consideration along with summary comments and an approach to investment attributed to each project based on one of three options:-



Project Identifier	INVESTMENT CONSIDERATIONS			Summary Comments	Approach to Investment
	Adequacy of Provision	Perceived Benefit	Other Factors		
ROWALLANE DEA					
1. Multi-sports pitch	There is an under-supply of pitches in Rowallane DEA most especially in training accommodation for association football, reckoned to be an under-supply of 39 one-hour periods/slots. Gaelic games pitches are generally over-used for a combination of training and matches. Three association football clubs in Rowallane DEA each aspire to develop a 3G facility at their own grounds.	A 3G multi-sports pitch will benefit both association football and, potentially the one gaelic games club in Rowallane DEA.	In the event that one or more local clubs progresses the development of a 3G facility at their own grounds, this will contribute to reducing the under-supply of training periods/slots.	A multi-sports pitch in Rowallane DEA could be located at the Council’s Langley Road Recreation Grounds in Ballynahinch. In the knowledge that a number of association football clubs in Rowallane DEA aspire to develop a 3G facility at their own grounds, the need for a 3G pitch on a Council site should be kept under review.	Approach 3
2. Cricket facilities	Whilst district-wide supply for cricket matches is meeting demand, the cricket club in Rowallane DEA has a need for training nets.	Cricket participation district-wide is predominantly male, however, Cricket Ireland is promoting female participation and the local club in Rowallane DEA is keen to involve more female players; training nets should help achieve this.	Saintfield Cricket Club operates within a club that also offers hockey, helping to increase awareness of both sports.	The district’s four cricket clubs are in need of better facilities, including training nets, changing accommodation, rain covers, maintenance equipment, etc. The Council supports cricket through its financial assistance programme.	Approach 3

Project Identifier	INVESTMENT CONSIDERATIONS			Summary Comments	Approach to Investment
	Adequacy of Provision	Perceived Benefit	Other Factors		
3. Water sports facilities	The development of several 'new' water-based sports across the district in recent times has outstripped the supply of facilities. The need for better accommodation – clubhouse, storage, equipment – has been emphasised by most of the 13 water-based sports clubs that responded to the survey for this review.	Better accommodation will contribute to more people getting involved, both male and female, in traditional and emerging water sports.	There may be partnership opportunities for emerging water sports to work with established clubs such as sailing clubs.	Water sports clubs/groups throughout the district have highlighted the need for support. In the case of clubs which operate their own facilities there is an ongoing need for improvement works; in the case of some recently established clubs there is a need for a club base (see Newry DEA).	Approach 3
4. Athletics facilities	Athletics, the third largest participation sport in the district, is largely represented by running rather than field (jumping, throwing) events. The district has one synthetic running track – 400m x 6 lane – at St Colman's College in Newry. Whilst a good deal of running takes place on roads, especially in urban areas to avail of street lighting on dark evenings, this is generally unsatisfactory.	A second athletics track in the district has the potential to attract more young people, females and people with a disability, especially if wheelchair-bound, to athletics. An athletics track offers a safe and well-lit environment for newcomers and seasoned runners alike.	Athletics NI is supportive of the development of more athletics tracks and the need for a second running track in the district is identified in the Council's Sports Facilities Strategy.	In recent years interest in athletics, mostly running, has grown significantly to a present estimate of 70,000 to 80,000 participants, making it one of the highest participation sports in Northern Ireland. The district has one running track, a 400m x 6 lane facility at St Colman's College in Newry; the need for a second track to serve the district has been identified (see Downpatrick DEA).	Approach 1

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SLIEVE CROOB DEA					
5. Multi-sports pitch	The significant need for a multi-sports pitch to serve Slieve Croob DEA is for association football training given an under-supply of 62 one-hour periods/slots. Whilst the 9 gaelic games clubs in Slieve Croob DEA are judged to have a surplus of 3 pitches, gaelic games pitches are generally over-used for matches and training.	A multi-sports pitch in the locality will help in reducing the considerable under-supply of one-hour periods/slots for mid-week training in association football. It will also reduce the pressure to use grass surfaces for training.	Down GAA is moving ahead to develop a county facility at Ballykinlar providing 4 gaelic games pitches and ancillary accommodation; it is being presented as multi-purpose.	A multi-sports pitch in Slieve Croob DEA could be located at the Council’s Bann Road Playing Fields in Castlewellan, presently used by gaelic games and association football clubs.	Approach 3
6. Cricket facilities	The two cricket clubs in Slieve Croob DEA express a need for improvements to their facilities, not least to better accommodate training with the club pointing to the need for indoor cricket training nets.	Cricket participation district-wide is predominantly male, however, Cricket Ireland is promoting female participation and improved club-based facilities in Slieve Croob DEA should encourage more female participation.	Both clubs have plans to progress capital development projects.	The district’s four cricket clubs are in need of better facilities, including training nets, changing accommodation, rain covers, maintenance equipment, etc. The Council supports cricket through its financial assistance programme.	Approach 3
7. Water sports facilities	The development of several ‘new’ water-based sports across the district in recent times has outstripped the supply of	Better accommodation will contribute to more people getting involved, both male	There may be partnership opportunities for emerging water sports to work with	Water sports clubs/groups throughout the district have highlighted the need for support. In the case of clubs	Approach 3

Project Identifier	INVESTMENT CONSIDERATIONS			Summary Comments	Approach to Investment
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	facilities. The need for better accommodation – clubhouse, storage, equipment – has been emphasised by most of the 13 water-based sports clubs that responded to the survey for this review.	and female, in traditional and emerging water sports.	established clubs such as sailing clubs.	which operate their own facilities there is an ongoing need for improvement works; in the case of some recently established clubs there is a need for a club base (see Newry DEA).	

DOWNPATRICK DEA

8. Multi-sports pitch	There is an under-supply of pitches in Downpatrick DEA for association football training, reckoned to be 24 one-hour periods/slots, whilst the supply of gaelic games pitches is at breakeven.	A 3G multi-sports pitch will benefit the six association football clubs and five gaelic games clubs in Downpatrick DEA, encouraging more participation amongst young people in particular.	Local association football clubs comment on the lack of training facilities in Downpatrick DEA and observe that ‘away’ matches in other Council areas are increasingly played on 3G.	The Council’s Dunleath Park is a potential location for a multi-sports 3G, however, it’s known there are technical challenges linked to the risk of flooding in considering any type of pitch surface at Dunleath Park other than natural grass. Down High School is also a potential location for a multi-sports 3G pitch, converting an existing grass rugby pitch to a multi-sport 3G surface for shared use, ie, school use during curriculum time and community use outside curriculum time.	Approach 2
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Project Identifier	INVESTMENT CONSIDERATIONS			Summary Comments	Approach to Investment
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9. Cricket facilities	Whilst district-wide supply for cricket matches is meeting demand, the cricket club in Downpatrick has a need for training nets.	Downpatrick Cricket Club aspires to develop female participation which is presently very low across the district.	Cricket Ireland is promoting female participation, an initiative which should have an impact locally through time.	The district's four cricket clubs are in need of better facilities, including training nets, changing accommodation, rain covers, maintenance equipment, etc. The Council supports cricket through its financial assistance programme.	Approach 3
10. Water sports facilities	The development of several 'new' water-based sports across the district in recent times has outstripped the supply of facilities. The need for better accommodation – clubhouse, storage, equipment – has been emphasised by most of the 13 water-based sports clubs that responded to the survey for this review.	Better accommodation will contribute to more people getting involved, both male and female, in traditional and emerging water sports.	There may be partnership opportunities for emerging water sports to work with established clubs such as sailing clubs.	Water sports clubs/groups throughout the district have highlighted the need for support. In the case of clubs which operate their own facilities there is an ongoing need for improvement works; in the case of some recently established clubs there is a need for a club base (see Newry DEA).	Approach 3
11. Athletics facilities	Athletics, the third largest participation sport in the district, is largely represented by running rather than field (jumping, throwing) events. The district has one synthetic	A second athletics track in the district has the potential to attract more young people, females and people with a disability, especially if wheelchair-bound, to	Athletics NI is supportive of the development of more athletics tracks and the need for a second running track in the district is identified in the	In recent years interest in athletics, mostly running, has grown significantly to a present estimate of 70,000 to 80,000 participants, making it one of the highest	Approach 1

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	running track – 400m x 6 lane – at St Colman’s College in Newry. Whilst a good deal of running takes place on roads, especially in urban areas to avail of street lighting on dark evenings, this is generally unsatisfactory.	athletics. An athletics track offers a safe and well-lit environment for newcomers and seasoned runners alike.	Council’s Sports Facilities Strategy.	participation sports in Northern Ireland. The district has one running track, a 400m x 6 lane facility at St Colman’s College in Newry; the need for a second track to serve the district has been identified. A second athletics track for the district could be strategically located in Downpatrick to best achieve geographical spread.	

THE MOURNES DEA

12. Multi-sports pitch	In the Mournes DEA gaelic games doesn’t have a buffer of pitches and association football has an under-supply of 61 one-hour periods/slots for training; there are 8 gaelic games clubs and 7 association football clubs.	Both sports of gaelic games and association football would benefit from having access to a 3G multi-sports pitch in The Mournes DEA.	Shimna Integrated College in Newcastle will commence construction of a new school this year; the Council is discussing the potential for shared facilities between the school and the community. The Council’s AstroTurf pitch at Donard Park in Newcastle is no longer used for hockey since the demise of the local hockey club.	The Council’s Donard Park in Newcastle is a potential location, converting the existing ‘AstroTurf’ pitch to a multi-sports 3G surface which could be shared with the adjacent post-primary school, Shimna College. Given the scale of the shortfall in training slots for association football in The Mournes DEA, a multi-sport 3G pitch would help address	Approach 2
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Project Identifier	INVESTMENT CONSIDERATIONS			Summary Comments	Approach to Investment
	Adequacy of Provision	Perceived Benefit	Other Factors		
				this shortfall; a suggested location is at the Council's Mournes Esplanade site in Kilkeel.	
13. Water sports facilities	The development of several 'new' water-based sports across the district in recent times has outstripped the supply of facilities. The need for better accommodation – clubhouse, storage, equipment – has been emphasised by most of the 13 water-based sports clubs that responded to the survey for this review.	Better accommodation will contribute to more people getting involved, both male and female, in traditional and emerging water sports.	There may be partnership opportunities for emerging water sports to work with established clubs such as sailing clubs.	Water sports clubs/groups throughout the district have highlighted the need for support. In the case of clubs which operate their own facilities there is an ongoing need for improvement works; in the case of some recently established clubs there is a need for a club base (see Newry DEA).	Approach 3
14. Athletics facilities	Athletics, the third largest participation sport in the district, is largely represented by running rather than field (jumping, throwing) events. The district has one synthetic running track – 400m x 6 lane – at St Colman's College in Newry. Whilst a good deal of running takes place on roads, especially in urban areas to avail of street	A second athletics track in the district has the potential to attract more young people, females and people with a disability, especially if wheelchair-bound, to athletics. An athletics track offers a safe and well-lit environment for newcomers and seasoned runners alike.	Athletics NI is supportive of the development of more athletics tracks and the need for a second running track in the district is identified in the Council's Sports Facilities Strategy.	In recent years interest in athletics, mostly running, has grown significantly to a present estimate of 70,000 to 80,000 participants, making it one of the highest participation sports in Northern Ireland. The district has one running track, a 400m x 6 lane facility at St Colman's College in	Approach 2

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	lighting on dark evenings, this is generally unsatisfactory.			Newry; the need for a second track to serve the district has been identified (see Downpatrick DEA).	

CROTLIEVE DEA

15. Multi-sports pitch	Gaelic games has an under-supply of 3 pitches, association football has an under-supply of 13 one-hour periods/slots for training and rugby has an under-supply for training. There are 9 gaelic games clubs, 4 association football clubs and 1 rugby club in Crotlieve DEA.	A multi-sports pitch in Newry has the potential to assist the training requirements of the three 'large ball' field sports.	The Council is proposing to develop an association football grass pitch and a gaelic games grass pitch at its Kilbroney Playing Fields site; this will help address matches and perhaps some training during daylight hours. Presently, sports clubs within Crotlieve DEA tend to travel into Newry to access training facilities; in the case of Newry Rugby Club which is located in Crotlieve DEA but close to Newry city, the club uses the 3G pitch at St Colman's College and the Council's AstroTurf training-size pitch at the Ropewalk site.	The Council is proceeding with a re-development project at its Kilbroney Playing Fields site, providing a full-size gaelic games pitch and an association football pitch, both grass, along with changing accommodation.	Approach 1
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Project Identifier	INVESTMENT CONSIDERATIONS			Summary Comments	Approach to Investment
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16. Water sports facilities	The development of several 'new' water-based sports across the district in recent times has outstripped the supply of facilities. The need for better accommodation – clubhouse, storage, equipment – has been emphasised by most of the 13 water-based sports clubs that responded to the survey for this review.	Better accommodation will contribute to more people getting involved, both male and female, in traditional and emerging water sports.	There may be partnership opportunities for emerging water sports to work with established clubs such as sailing clubs.	Water sports clubs/groups throughout the district have highlighted the need for support. In the case of clubs which operate their own facilities there is an ongoing need for improvement works; in the case of some recently established clubs there is a need for a club base (see Newry DEA).	Approach 3

SLIEVE GULLION DEA

17. Gaelic Games facilities	The dominant pitch-based sport in Slieve Gullion DEA is gaelic games, with 13 of the district's 50 gaelic games clubs and 28.5% of its players; there is a shortfall of 2 gaelic games pitches in Slieve Gullion DEA. The need is for additional training accommodation for gaelic games.	Gaelic games would be the main beneficiary of additional pitch capacity in Slieve Gullion DEA.	Given Slieve Gullion DEAs proximity to Newry, a multi-sports pitch in Newry may help to alleviate some of the shortfall of gaelic games pitches.		Approach 3
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Project Identifier	INVESTMENT CONSIDERATIONS			Summary Comments	Approach to Investment
	Adequacy of Provision	Perceived Benefit	Other Factors		
NEWRY DEA					
18. Multi-sports pitch	In Newry DEA the two multi-sports/3G pitches are both school-based – St Colman’s College, The Abbey Grammar School. Adequacy of provision for gaelic games in Newry DEA is a shortfall of 4 pitches whilst association football has a surplus of 4 pitches for matches but a shortfall of 40 one-hour periods/slots for training.	Gaelic games and association football will both benefit from a Council-operated multi-sports pitch in Newry DEA. Newry Rugby Club, which is located in the neighbouring Crotlieve DEA, may also benefit from a multi-sports pitch in Newry DEA for training sessions.	Sports facilities in Newry DEA are able to be accessed by clubs from neighbouring district electoral areas that are within travelling distance/time, especially Slieve Gullion, Crotlieve and, to a lesser extent, The Mournes.	A multi-sports pitch could be located at the Council’s Jennings Park site on the footprint of the two grass association football pitches. This would take advantage of the adjacent Newry Leisure Centre for changing accommodation.	Approach 1
19. Water sports facilities	The development of several ‘new’ water-based sports across the district in recent times has outstripped the supply of facilities. The need for better accommodation – clubhouse, storage, equipment – has been emphasised by most of the 13 water-based sports clubs that responded to the survey for this review.	Better accommodation will contribute to more people getting involved, both male and female, in traditional and emerging water sports.	There may be partnership opportunities for emerging water sports to work with established clubs such as sailing clubs.	In tandem with the development of Albert Basin City Park, a water sports centre should be located here, accommodating water sports clubs and maximising the potential of the Newry Canal.	Approach 1

