



PARK / LOCAL AUTHORITY SUCCESS STORY

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH A LOCAL AUTHORITY: REVITALISING SEMI-DERELICT TENNIS COURTS

North Somerset Council in West of England neighbours major urban areas of Bristol and the more rural county of Somerset. The authority is characterised by coastal conurbations with a history of tourism, alongside growing market towns in a commutable distance of Bristol.

Three tennis courts are situated in Ashcombe Park in Weston Super Mare, which has a population of 75,000. They are the only remaining destination park courts in the town since four tennis courts on the seafront were lost a decade ago.

BACKGROUND

North Somerset Council and the LTA Participation team have been working on tennis court refurbishment in Ashcombe Park since late 2017. As part of the Playing Pitch Strategy Audit, the courts were discovered and deemed an important asset for increasing public participation. As they were in poor condition, the partners embarked on building a business case to refurbish them.



HOW THE PROJECT DEVELOPED

Using modelling techniques, North Somerset Council and the LTA assessed the potential usage and income that refurbished tennis courts could achieve, and the required budget. This presented a strong case for investment and also aligned to the council strategies for public health and creating vibrant green spaces.

Following approval from council managers, project development continued with:

- a more detailed business plan and creation of a shared project management platform
- securing funds from housing development identified for sport and leisure facilities
- a technical survey to produce a scope of works ready to tender
- agreeing and implementing an operational plan, including setting up ClubSpark software and financial monitoring processes
- marketing and communications to the public
- appointing a coaching provider to deliver at the site.

THE OUTCOME

£100k was invested in the complete refurbishment of the three courts, which are now maintained and operated by the councils Parks Team.

Key successes include:

- installation of **Gate Access Technology**, providing an automated (online) journey to booking a court, using a PIN for secure entry
- over **250 households** have bought a **£35 annual pass** since the launch in spring 2021
- **465 unique users** have made a **booking** to play with friends and family since opening
- **4000 bookings** have been made across the three courts since the end of March 2021
- a **sinking fund** has been set up to sustain the courts long into the future.

THE FUTURE

LTA open court sessions such as walking tennis have been launched, with more projects set for spring of 2022. A small coaching programme has been established, with expansion plans.

North Somerset Council has hosted a visit from other similar sized local authorities to share best practice and to showcase project realisation.

The partnership is investigating locations for new courts close to new housing developments in Weston Super Mare and/or other market towns in North Somerset.

Success will be benchmarked once a year's worth of booking data is available, although the numbers are very promising so far.



The need to bring the Ashcombe Park tennis courts back into use was identified as part of the council's Playing Pitch Strategy.

Working with the LTA, the council committed funds and secured Sport England funding to complete a full refurbishment of the courts which were in a very poor condition and hardly used.

The three newly refurbished courts with Gate Access Technology, an easy online booking system and annual memberships are proving extremely popular. Their usage has exceeded expectations and we are developing further opportunities for coaching sessions and leagues.

This project has been a great example of partnership working. It has provided local people with high quality tennis courts and the council with an income to support ongoing maintenance costs."

North Somerset Council

4000 BOOKINGS HAVE BEEN MADE since the end of March 2021

The tennis courts have been transformed from an eyesore into an attractive feature in Ashcombe Park:



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