



ADEL TENNIS CLUB

SMALL BUDGET, BIG IMPACT

BACKGROUND

Adel Tennis Club is a vibrant, five-court, community-focused sports venue located in the picturesque suburb of North Leeds.

It operates as a dedicated section of the historic Adel Memorial Sports Club, formerly the Adel War Memorial Association (AWMA), which was founded in 1928 on land donated by the Tetley family. As a living memorial to those who served in the Great War, the club has evolved into a thriving multi-sport and community hub. Alongside tennis, its vibrant cricket, football, hockey, archery, squash, bowls, snooker and performing arts sections place the club firmly at the heart of community life, creating opportunities for participation, volunteering, social connection and wellbeing across all ages, abilities and backgrounds.



We sat down with Nat Wright, Chair of Adel Tennis Club, to understand how a small community tennis club facing financial challenges discovered that by focusing on becoming a safer, more welcoming and inclusive club, it could foster a greater sense of belonging and strengthen community cohesion. In turn, this approach has helped secure the club's future growth, sustainability and positive impact within the wider Adel Memorial Sports Club community.

THE CHALLENGE

Eight years ago, the club was at risk of closure. The club had just 40 members, approximately £8,000 in reserves, and an uncertain future. Like many small volunteer-led venues, resources were limited and there was a real question about long-term sustainability with the big issue around court availability and capacity.

Rather than accepting decline, the committee worked with the LTA delivery team and developed a recovery plan focused on two simple principles:

1. Build a welcoming and inclusive club culture.
2. Create opportunities for more people to experience tennis.

Today, the club has over **£70,000** in reserves, has secured additional investment for facility improvements, and is preparing to install floodlights and regenerate courts for future growth.

SMALL ACTIONS, BIG RESULTS

One of the simplest initiatives has also proved to be one of the most effective. The club runs regular social sessions coordinated by a volunteer committee member who ensures everyone feels included, regardless of playing standard.

The coordinator helps to introduce new members, balance pairings across different abilities, ensure players enjoy competitive and enjoyable tennis and creates opportunities for people to build friendships and connections both on and off the court. This has helped strengthen member retention and create a welcoming atmosphere without any significant financial investment.

WHAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE?

An Inclusive Committee Culture

The club believes its biggest success has not been a programme or funding bid. It has been having the right people around the committee table. Committee members share a common belief in tennis as a vehicle for positive social impact and work together to create a welcoming environment for everyone who joins the club.

By modelling inclusive behaviours, generosity and a willingness to support others, the committee has helped create a culture that members often describe as welcoming and inclusive.



Getting the right people on the committee matters. No egos, just people passionate about tennis and its power to create positive social change sport.

Nat Wright, Chair of Adel Tennis Club



INCREASING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

To address a lack of female representation, the club introduced a reduced-cost membership offer for women for a season. Alongside this, they appointed a coach with experience of increasing girls' and women's participation and introduced:

- **Women and girls only coaching sessions.**
- **Female only competitions.**
- **Social tennis opportunities**, that proactively encouraged participation of women and girls

The outcome was significant growth in female participation and an eventual move towards an **equal gender split** across the membership.

OPENING TENNIS TO THE COMMUNITY

Over the last eight years the club has actively sought to make tennis accessible to people who may not otherwise have the opportunity to play. They have developed initiatives that have **included free coaching for primary school pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds receiving pupil premium support** and for refugees from **Syria and Iran**.

These programmes have helped strengthen the club's connection with its local community while reinforcing its inclusive identity.



MEMBERS RALLYING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT AND IMPROVE THE VENUE

The club's inclusive approach has delivered benefits far beyond participation, fostering a strong sense of community that has been instrumental in fundraising and long-term sustainability.

Community events that are run by members have attracted people from beyond the tennis club, strengthening local connections and generating vital support. One member, inspired by the club's welcoming atmosphere, helped secure planning permission for floodlights and sponsorship funding, while a successful [Crowdfunder campaign](#) enabled the renovation and floodlighting of a two-court enclosure.

This increased active court capacity will transform the club from three to four courts, plus three mini tennis courts, transforming the venue into a year-round facility. Another member's £10,000 legacy gift reflected the lasting impact of the club's supportive culture and has inspired plans for a dedicated legacy garden.



WHAT YOUR VENUE COULD DO NEXT?

Adel Tennis Club's journey demonstrates that creating a more inclusive venue does not always require major investment. Small, intentional actions can make a significant difference to how welcome people feel and whether they choose to stay involved.

AS A STARTING POINT, VENUES MAY WISH TO CONSIDER:

- **Reviewing** how new members and visitors are welcomed
- Identifying a [volunteer or champion](#) to coordinate social tennis and build connections between members
- **Explore ways to increase opportunities for women and girls** to get involved in your venue. The LTA's [Women and Girls Venue Support Toolkit](#) and [Action Planner](#) provide practical guidance and ideas to help you get started.
- **Strengthening links** with local schools, community groups and partner organisations
- Making inclusion a **regular discussion point at committee meetings** and future planning sessions
- [Better understand your members](#) and their backgrounds, recognising that their lived, professional and volunteer experiences could help shape your committee and support your venue's future ambitions.



The LTA is committed to securing a lasting future for tennis and padel in Britain, through positive climate action and leadership in sustainability.

As part of this, a range of resources and support have been developed for tennis venues, which are available through our [Venue Support Toolkit](#) on a range of areas including [‘creating an inclusive environment’](#).