

## Introduction

Local authorities are a key partner for the LTA and British tennis. If we are to succeed in growing the sport and take tennis to new markets we need to effectively engage with local authorities and support our existing places to play to develop relationships with their local authority.

This guide is designed to support the field team to develop mutually beneficial relationships with local authorities and has been developed following extensive consultation with local authorities, existing operators based on park sites and clubs that have expanded their programme onto local authority owned facilities.

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## Why engage with local authorities?

There are over 10,000 tennis courts within the public sector. Working with local authorities to support them to improve the quality of existing community tennis facilities and develop affordable quality tennis programmes is an effective way of increasing participation and widening access to tennis at a local level.

It has never been more important to build and invest in relationships with local authorities to help us take tennis to new markets and particularly during the current economic climate, promote the benefits of tennis and the value of maintaining tennis provision.

## Why tennis?

Tennis is a low cost, social participation sport that can be enjoyed whether you are 4 or 84.

- Tennis is a family sport.
- Tennis is a lifelong participation sport.
- Tennis is one of the country's most popular sports with approximately half a million adults (16+) participating in tennis once a week and 800,000 adults (16+) participating at least once a month.
- Tennis is one of the top 5 favourite sports for children aged 5-10 outside of school as shown in the Dept. for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Taking Part Child Survey (October 2010).
- Statistics show that 79% of schools already offer tennis and 47% of schools also have established links with a local tennis club.
- Courts are widely available and equipment is relatively inexpensive, making it an ideal sport for all sections of the population.
- Tennis has broader appeal than you may think. Programmes, like mini tennis, already exists to get more young people playing the sport and Cardio tennis offers participants of all abilities a high energy workout using skills and drills as part of a fun group activity.
- The many variants of the sport allow people of all ages, abilities and fitness levels to get involved from an early age – keeping them fit and active and greatly reducing the threat of obesity.

## How can tennis help local authorities to achieve their targets?

Local authorities work under guidelines from Government which set them targets on specific local priorities such as health and well being. Tennis can support local authorities to deliver benefits across a wide range of public policy agendas including:

- Strong, sustainable and cohesive communities
- Healthier communities
- Safer communities

*Pavilion Tennis in Haringey, London. When Robby Sukhdeo persuaded Haringey Council to give him a lease to run the park, he had no idea that he would become embroiled in a battle of willpower with a gang who saw*

*it as their territory, thus making the park a 'no-go' area for locals. Despite weeks and months of disgruntled teenagers vandalising the tennis courts, Robby persevered and eventually smoothed relations with gang members to a degree where they began working for him as tennis leaders and café staff. Now many of the former gang members have left Robby as well adjusted members of society to move on to full-time employment with references supplied by Robby.*

*Today the park is home to a thriving tennis club. Robby's good work has resulted in the LTA providing capital funding to provide 6 floodlit courts. Crime stoppers have applauded Robby's work and expressed an interest in working with him to further help the young people in the area.*

### **What are the benefits of local authorities working with the LTA?**

The LTA can support local authorities to achieve their targets by:-

- Facilitating the development of high quality programmes on park sites to engage the local community and support them to become more active.
- Helping bring back into use existing facilities, leading to their increased use and improving the safety of the parks in which they are situated.
- Providing opportunities for training and volunteering. The Level 1 Coaching Assistant qualification provides a great opportunity for people to start on the coaching pathway. British tennis also has a comprehensive volunteering network providing opportunities for people of all ages to gain new skills and experience.

Support provided by the LTA includes:-

- Local support and expertise.
- Ability to link existing community tennis clubs to local authority facilities.
- Models for developing tennis programmes on park sites.
- Case studies demonstrating how the models work in practice.
- Capital and revenue funding to bring projects to fruition.

### **Who to speak to at local authorities and how County Sports Partnerships can help?**

There are 424 local authorities (councils) in England and Wales and 32 local councils in Scotland. Single tier (or unitary) authorities manage all services in the local area, including parks and sport. All councils in Scotland are single tier authorities, as are all London boroughs and many towns and cities across England and Wales. Elsewhere the management and delivery of services is split between county councils and district councils. In most two tier areas, district councils will oversee parks and sports.

To find details of local authorities in your area visit: <http://bit.ly/localauthority>.

### **Local authority structure**

Local authorities are made up of elected representatives – local councillors, who represent a specific/certain area within the borough – and officers, council employees who are tasked with advising local councillors and implementing council policy. The party which has the most councillors runs the council, although many authorities are run by a coalition or minority administration.

### **Who to speak to**

In dealing with sports issues, the best place to start is to find out which officer deals with the provision of sports and sport facilities and which councillor is responsible for sports issues – this person is called the portfolio holder, cabinet member or lead member. These will vary from local authority to local authority but will be probably be called something like: Portfolio Holder for Culture, Cabinet Member for Environment, Lead Member for Community Well-being or Executive Member for Adult Services.

If you are in any doubt, just contact your council and ask who the relevant officer and relevant councillor are. You should contact both the officer and relevant councillor separately. The officer will be able to discuss the issues around local sport provision with you.

The councillor responsible for sport and parks should be kept up to date on these discussions. In some local authorities the provision and management of sports and leisure has been given to a trust or private delivery

body (although sport policy may still be dealt with by the council). Again, the relevant officer will be able to identify the best contact.

You should also find out which ward the facility or place to play, is in and contact the local councillor or councillors (depending on the structure of the council, a ward can be represented by between one and three councillors). Local councillors can often be your most vocal champion – though their influence will vary greatly depending on who they are.

### Role of County Sports Partnerships

Developing effective relationships with your CSP NGB officer can support you to engage with local authorities. A key part of the remit of CSPs is to support NGBs to engage and broker relationships with local authorities. Engaging with local authorities and supporting the development of programmes on local authority sites should form a key component of your regular conversations with CSPs.

### Models to support local authorities to develop tennis on park sites

There are 2 main types of venue for tennis participation – clubs and parks. Whilst both are important to the success of British tennis the perception of the venue and opportunities provided can differ significantly.

CLUB	PARK
Members ONLY	Accessible
Intimidating for non players	FUN, Knockabout, Laugh
Formal	Informal
Structured	Flexible
Professional Coaches	No Instruction
Progressive Programme	No Progression
Expensive	Cheap
Dress Code	T-shirt, Trainers
Etiquette	Anything goes
Leagues and Teams	Fun Matches
Managed by Tennis People	Council Operated

It is clear that many of the characteristics listed above are perceptions....in many instances this is what determines a persons' choice of activity and attitude towards it.

If we are to widen access to tennis we need to deliver high quality tennis opportunities within both settings. If we can align the two by supporting clubs and parks to work in partnership, this will enable each side to bring their strengths and reaps the benefits.

### What do we know about existing successful park sites?

There are 2 basic models used to set up and run successful tennis programmes at park venues:

1. An existing club expands its programme onto a local park site(s).
2. Entrepreneurial coach sets up a programme at a park site arrange a lease with the local authority.

### What are the costs of each model?

#### 1) An existing club expands its programme onto a local park site(s)

The table below sets out the costs associated with an existing club expanding its programme onto a park site.

Key Requirement	Description
Registration	The club would need to register additional courts as part of their site or

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	register the site in its own right.
Lease agreement with local authority	Outlines the terms and conditions of using the park/community courts. There are 2 options either the club pays a rental fee to the LA on the condition that the LA maintains the facilities or the club has a FREE lease or peppercorn rent in exchange for managing and maintaining the facilities, i.e. sinking fund created will replace any rent paid. See template.
Secure locks on gates	Approximately £2000 to install per gate, which allows courts to remain secure and only allows access to those with a key fob
Key fobs	Approximately £5 per fob, which can be purchased through the council or club or both – it provides access to the facility and can be deactivated on expiry of membership. The club can sell the key fobs for a small fee to generate a profit or invest in the sinking fund.
Court Booking System	The club may already use an electronic booking system, with online access, so difficult to associate a cost with this resource. However, there are a number of affordable online booking options available including BookIt
Membership System	The 'park' membership can be simply added into the existing membership system; administered by the secretary or electronic system if in place.
Promotion	This access/park membership scheme can be promoted throughout the tennis club, existing members as well as in conjunction with the local authority and current sources of promotion i.e. local magazines, leisure centres, shopping centres etc

### 2) Entrepreneurial coach sets up a 'club' at a park site, which provides additional streams of income from membership fees, café sales and pro shop sales.

Key Requirement	Description
Registration	NEW P2P will be able to register for the introductory price of £200, which will provide all the benefits required to operate responsibly on start up.
Lease agreement with local authority	Outlines the terms and conditions of using the park/community courts – ideal scenario is to have FREE or peppercorn rent in exchange for managing and maintaining the facilities, i.e. sinking fund created will replace any rent paid. Alternatively the coach could pay a rental fee to the LA on the condition that the LA maintain the facilities. See template
Secure locks on gates	Approximately £2000 to install per gate, which allows courts to remain secure and only allows access to those with a key fob. The coach can sell the key fobs for a small fee to generate a profit or invest in the sinking fund.
Key fobs	Approximately £5 per fob, which can be purchased through the council or coach direct – it provides access to the facility and can be deactivated on expiry of membership
Court Booking System	The coach may invest in an online booking system or utilise the services of an existing nearby leisure/council facility.
Membership System	The coach can manage the users and set up a 'membership' system, which will provide income to support the overall running costs including administration, security gates/fobs and in time sinking fund.
Secondary Spend	If the park facility has an onsite café, this could be used to generate secondary spend which further increases income and helps contribute to covering running costs. NB. Something to consider writing into the lease agreement.
Promotion	Promotion can be through the local authority and other local services i.e. local magazines, leisure centres, shopping centres etc

Both models combine 'club infrastructure' with 'park appeal' to maximise the differences between the two set ups, with the following benefits: attraction, retention, utilising existing systems, enhanced programme of activity and new promotional opportunities through wider partners.

Although all the above models are successful, in the next section we will explore model 1 (existing club expands its programme onto a local park site) in more detail.

### A visual of the key elements of 'club' and 'park' working together



### **How linking parks to clubs can support us to grow and sustain the sport?**

#### **Attraction**

Parks attract a wider audience as it appeals to all ages and abilities, also non traditional tennis types – these new/seasonal players may be interested in having more structured coaching/competition if it were available in an informal environment. The really keen players may then progress into players that access the main club programme and eventually join as full club members.

#### **Retention**

Taking ownership of some additional park courts will increase the number of court hours available to all existing club members, providing a larger facility. The programme can also expand, as to can the number of teams, competitions, coaches and in time, members. The tennis offering is enhanced and members feel like they are getting better value for money. New park members are welcomed into a club structure in an informal manner, which may help to retain casual players who would not join a traditional club.

#### **Utilising existing systems**

Creating a 'bolt-on' park membership is easily incorporated into an existing club membership system, either on a specific software package or a basic excel managed system. By creating a sub category of membership, park players will feel like they are part of a well managed set up, whilst still be flexible, affordable and catering for their needs. The club ensures that all park members are covered by the club's public liability insurance and can also offer FREE BTM to these 'casual' members.

Expenditure for staffing, administration and management are minimal, as systems and staff/volunteers are already in place to support membership, bookings and coaching activity.

#### **Managing an expanding programme**

As the club will be managing the park site, they can utilise the courts to support activity that may require more court time, which is currently not available at the club, i.e. HPC/Performance programme. Members feel that they are given enough opportunity to use the facilities and have the ability to play on other sites as and when suits. Park members are also exposed to other aspects of tennis that they would not typically see happen on a community/public facility. This may create more interest and support the promotion of performance level tennis.

#### **Promotional Opportunities**

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As a non traditional club, which is open to the wider community, local authorities, leisure centres and community centres will be keen to promote tennis activity on the park sites. This promotion will reach a much wider audience and possibly hit people that the club would not normally target, either through lack of knowledge or awareness of the non traditional routes of promoting tennis.

This support allows the club/park to promote more cost effectively across the entire community; cheaper marketing and promotional costs and a more effective outcome.

### **Cost effective way of expanding the club**

Given that councils do not/will not have the budget to properly maintain the community tennis facilities, the club could capitalise on this situation by offering to maintain the courts in return for FREE usage and management rights. An example lease is available and already works within 2 large, successful club/park sites.

### **Case studies of how these models work in practice**

The Parklangley Club, Beckenham - Expanding into the local community and utilising park courts.  
Salts Tennis Club – Creating tennis opportunities for the local community by linking to schools and parks  
Coach led scheme – to follow

Lease Guidance – Head of Terms Checklist