

# The Northumberland Sports Facilities Strategy 2010 - 2015



**NORTHUMBERLAND**  
Northumberland County Council



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## Foreword from the Chair of Northumberland Sport



The Northumberland Sport Board is delighted to have developed a sports facilities strategy for Northumberland. This is the first ever comprehensive analysis of sports facilities undertaken across the county.

We are as always indebted to our partners for helping Northumberland Sport establish this strategy and particularly Northumberland County Council, Leisure Trusts and Sport England who have contributed financially to the work but importantly through their staff have offered much knowledge and expertise in bringing it all together.

We are also very pleased that Northumberland County Council has agreed to adopt the strategy as this ensures it will help to guide and influence future decisions for the provision of sports facilities.

Northumberland Sport has very clear objectives and ambitions for sport. At the heart of everything we do, we simply want to ensure that more and more people of all ages are able to participate in and enjoy sporting opportunities and to lead active healthy lifestyles.

We want to make sure young people are able to realise their sporting potential and we want a strong vibrant community sports sector that supports and values the excellent work that local clubs and volunteers do. We also want adults of all ages to stay fit and healthy through sport and exercise and we are absolutely committed to supporting the National Governing Bodies of Sport to deliver their plans across Northumberland.

In order to do all of this of course we need a solid foundation and infrastructure of facilities. Accessibility and the quality of facilities are key factors which influence everyone's decision to play sport or to be active.

We believe that this strategy provides a unique, robust reference point and framework for the provision of facilities and want to ensure it continues to inform decision makers for years to come.

Behind this relatively short strategy document is a very comprehensive report which includes an audit of all facilities and an assessment of supply and demand. Producing this strategy has been a considerable and complex task. Trying to map literally hundreds of different types of facilities across scores of sports and consulting with many, many people and organisations has been quite onerous.

We acknowledge that documents of this nature can almost become outdated the day they go to print. We would therefore wish to assure readers that the Northumberland Sport Board and Northumberland County Council very much see the strategy as an "organic and evolving" document that should be refreshed and reviewed periodically.

Finally we hope that anyone reading or referring to this strategy finds it useful and informative.

Yours in Sport

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Steve Cram". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

**Steve Cram MBE, Chair, Northumberland Sport**

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Northumberland Sport is one of 49 County Sports Partnerships in England, bringing together a range of organisations with a common aim of ensuring the people of Northumberland can access and enjoy quality sporting and physical activity opportunities. The partnership is directly linked to the Northumberland Strategic Partnership via the Culture and Tourism Board and the Health and Well Being Thematic Partnership and is recognised as the lead partnership for sport and physical activity within the County.
- 1.2 The vision for Northumberland Sport is ***to develop and increase participation in sport, building healthy and successful communities***. In order to fulfil this vision, it is important that communities have access to a range of sports and physical activities through sufficient levels of quality facilities.
- 1.3 Partners across the Northumberland Sport network identified the need for a sports facilities strategy prior to the establishment of Northumberland County Council as a single unitary local authority. They deemed that the change from seven councils to one provided an ideal opportunity to establish a new coordinated approach for the development of, and investment in sports facilities.
- 1.4 Partners raised concerns about existing venues and the need to future-proof facilities for the longer term. In essence there was a general consensus that whilst Northumberland was able to boast some new and high quality facilities such as Wentworth Leisure Centre and Swimming Pool, many others were in need of investment. Also there was a perceived imbalance of supply and demand across the county and that there should be better community access to school facilities. The Northumberland Sport Board therefore agreed that a project to establish a new sports facilities strategy should be a priority.
- 1.5 The remit of this strategy involves the built sporting venues and infrastructure including community buildings that are used for sport.

## 2.0 Context

- 2.1 Northumberland is a large geographic area with significant variations across the county in terms of demographic profile, sports participation and physical activity levels. The range and quality of facilities also varies. It currently has no venues of regional significance within its sports facility infrastructure and as referred to in the Introduction above, whilst it has some high standard facilities, there is a general perception that many more need investment.
- 2.2 Despite not having facilities considered to be of regional or national significance, such as Gateshead International Stadium, St. James' Park or the Sunderland Aquatic Centre, Northumberland does enjoy an outstanding outdoor environment and is able to stage regional and national sporting events and competitions. This is evidenced by the status of sailing competitions at Kielder and Derwent Water Sailing Clubs, the British National Triathlon Championships held at Druridge Bay Country Park in 2009 and many other running and cycling events that are staged across the county each year.
- 2.3 There is of course a clear distinction between the rural North and West of the county (sparsely populated, some areas relatively affluent, ageing population) and the more

urban South East (densely populated, high levels of deprivation, a younger population), in particular the former local authority areas of Blyth Valley and Wansbeck. Any strategic plan therefore needs to take account of these unique factors which in themselves pose challenges.

- 2.4 This strategy sets out an approach taken by Northumberland Sport to establish a longer term perspective and plan for sports facilities. The Northumberland Sport Partnership has a fundamental purpose of helping to create more opportunities and the right environments for more people of all ages to play sport and/or lead active lifestyles. The quality and range of sports facilities in the county is critical to driving up participation and this strategy aims to ensure facility provision is planned, developed and sustained in a coordinated and cohesive way.
- 2.5 The relatively recent creation of a single unitary authority in Northumberland provides the opportunity to take a fresh look at facilities planning and development, including the need for specialist facilities and performance venues. It is intended that this strategy will help the Council and partners to gain a clearer contextual view of sports facility provision and inform the authority as to what sports provision is required in the future; and importantly where investment will have optimum impact and what facilities could be considered within both school and community settings. Of significant importance is the need for this strategy to inform planning decisions and any future proposals for major or multi-sport developments.
- 2.6 It should be noted that the majority of the data and research that informed and helped shape this strategy, was collated in relation to the six former district council areas (i.e. Alnwick, Berwick, Blyth Valley, Castle Morpeth, Tynedale and Wansbeck). Northumberland County Council has since established three new sub areas (North, West and South east). New partnership arrangements in these three areas will drive community engagement, local decision-making and service planning in the future. The development of sports facilities therefore will also need to be considered in this new three area context.
- 2.7 This sports facilities strategy supports the Sustainable Community Strategy for Northumberland and the priorities of Northumberland County Council, particularly the promotion of health and wellbeing. It sits alongside a number of other strategies that the sector has been developing to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy's aims and objectives covering, Play, Festivals and Events, Physical Activity, Playing Pitches, Children and Young People, the Arts and Green Infrastructure; all summarised in the Cultural Strategy.

### **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 Based on the desire of partners as described above, Northumberland Sport negotiated and established a funding package to commission a study that would provide the first ever county-wide audit and analysis of existing sports stock across the most predominant sports. A review of plans and policies previously developed by the former district councils and the leisure operators supported the study helping to determine the rationale and logic for county-wide provision. Simultaneously Sport England decided to commission a regional sports facility strategy. This needed to have a specific link and reference for any work undertaken in Northumberland and importantly the relevance of any cross boundary synergy between larger facilities.

- 3.2 Northumberland Sport therefore, worked with Sport England and the other three north east sub regional sports partnerships (Tyne and Wear Sport, County Durham Sport and Tees Valley Sport); to pool resources in order that a coordinated and consistent approach for facilities strategies could be established across the region. For Northumberland the added cross border dimension to the north of the county needed consideration.
- 3.3 Consultants were commissioned to undertake an initial study of the facilities infrastructure that would inform a new approach for Northumberland Sport, the County Council and key stakeholders including National Governing Bodies and local clubs. An overarching aim of the study and subsequent strategy is to influence and guide decisions for investment in the short, medium and long term. The consultants were appointed by way of a collaboration between Northumberland Sport, County Durham Sport, Tees Valley Sport, Tyne and Wear Sport and Sport England and produced 5 separate reports.
- 3.4 It should be noted that the consultants needed to focus their attentions on facility types and sports where there was existing valid and robust data available which could underpin an approach to engage and consult across the sports sector. Therefore data analysis and subsequent consultations relied primarily on intelligence gathered from Sport England's Active Places database.
- 3.5 Active Places is a website developed by Sport England that currently has listed over 50,000 sports facilities. Active Places is a publicly available website and allows users to search for different sport facilities in their area. It is designed to assist in investment decisions and the development of infrastructure improvement strategies for sport. Further information about sports facilities can be found via the Sport England website ([www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)).
- 3.6 The appointed consultants were asked to consider the following key questions:
- What does the **facility infrastructure** for sport currently look like in Northumberland?
  - What and where are the **gaps in provision**?
  - What are the issues in terms of **quality and accessibility**?
  - What should the County's **future sporting facility landscape** look like?
  - Where do **opportunities** exist to improve the sporting landscape and where is **future investment** required?
- 3.7 They were also asked to utilise the nationally recognised **Facilities Planning Model (FPM)** in analysing different types of facilities. This included sports halls and swimming pools. The Facilities Planning Model is a toolkit developed initially by Sport Scotland in partnership with Edinburgh University and subsequently adopted by Sport England. This is considered to offer the most robust methodology for determining how to plan for sports facilities in order to meet local need.
- 3.8 It should be noted however, that the FPM model is theoretical. It relies on demographic data; assumptions about customer travel times and attitudes; the age of facilities and the history of investment in them. The findings of any FPM run whether generic or bespoke, can identify for example, unmet demand or satisfied demand. However, findings should only be used as a guide. Local intelligence and other data together with additional information such as customer satisfaction surveys

are all suggested to be considered alongside the FPM model and the reports that it is able to generate.

3.9 The consultants produced a very comprehensive and commendable report which is of significant size. It has many tables, maps and technical data included within it. The report can be made available to any interested party and via the Northumberland Sport website at ([www.northumberlandsport.co.uk](http://www.northumberlandsport.co.uk)).

3.10 However, the report is intended more as a reference point and whilst it will offer an invaluable resource for specific project developments as an evidence base and for example planning considerations, as the Chair of Northumberland Sport alludes to (in the foreword to this strategy), documents of this scale and scope can soon become outdated. Whilst it is the intention of Northumberland Sport and the County Council to periodically refresh the report, this will be dependent on time and resource availability.

3.11 This sports facilities strategy which is derived from the consultants' report has been developed in essentially three phases. Phases one and two were undertaken by the consultants and phase three through the Northumberland Sport Partnership and core team:

- **Phase One;**

Involved the production of a summary paper which extracted the detail from within the aforementioned Regional Facilities Strategy, produced by Sport England, that relates specifically to Northumberland

- **Phase Two;**

Provided a detailed analysis of information with regards to the existing facility infrastructure. It highlighted key issues, gaps in provision and future development opportunities. As part of the second phase, consultation was undertaken with each of the former district councils (as well as the county council) and leisure service providers to gain an understanding of issues and opportunities specific to each of the geographical areas of Northumberland. This was in addition to consultation with National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), which set out to understand the needs and requirements for the sub-region for their specific sport. An Executive Summary Report was also produced by the consultants as part of Phase Two.

- **Phase Three;**

Involved an extensive consultation exercise undertaken by Northumberland Sport and Northumberland County Council with a wide range of local partners. This included all those consulted in Phase Two and other targeted stakeholders including for example all elected County Councillors of the new council and all Parish and Town Councils. A full list of those consulted in Phase Three can be found at **Appendix 1**. Phase Three also resulted in this strategy document being produced by Northumberland Sport supported by senior managers from Northumberland County Council and leisure operators.

## 4.0 Facility Analysis and Development Opportunities

- 4.1 From the work above a summary analysis of existing provision by facility type has been produced, highlighting the issues and gaps in facilities. This forms the basis of the first two columns of the tables/action plan at **Appendix 2**. The following commentary sets out other issues of specific relevance to the county as a whole and its sports facilities profile generally.

### *National and regional significance*

- 4.2 As referred to earlier, at present there are no nationally recognised sports venues in Northumberland that provide for professional sport and there are only limited opportunities for the development of regionally significant facilities. However some facilities and some sports such as sailing and golf can and do deliver national/regional competitions (e.g. Derwent and Kielder Reservoir Sailing Clubs, and Slaley Hall Golf course).
- 4.3 Northumberland College also has plans to provide a centre of excellence for the Modern Pentathlon which could provide Northumberland with a venue of regional, if not national, significance. There are currently no facilities in England that focus solely on this discipline and the college's plans to make it central to the development of a specialist sport science qualification is an exciting development that could potentially bring increased focus to the county in terms of students, athletes, funding and facilities.
- 4.4 More recently developments with the County Council and the British Equestrian Federation have led to a regeneration driven project for investment in facilities at Burgham, north of Morpeth. This has enabled delivery of the Northumberland Horse Festival in July 2010 with an ambition and aspiration for National Horse Trials Events in future years.

### *A local approach*

- 4.5 Due to Northumberland's geographic profile (i.e. its largely rural nature) access to sporting facilities can be an issue for a significant proportion of the population. Unlike more densely populated areas (e.g. Tyne & Wear), where facilities can service vast numbers of the local population and where public transport and travel links generally make these more accessible, the provision of facilities in Northumberland has to be considered at a sub regional level whilst at the same time ensuring that any developments are considered in terms of the effect this might or might not have at a local level.
- 4.6 This strategy aims to provide Northumberland Sport and all its' partners with the single reference point to help inform decisions related to sports facilities, whether these are community or school based, and there is an opportunity through the new unitary authority landscape to:
- Take a strategic view of facility provision across the county to identify priority sports and engage with schools, private providers and other community use spaces
  - Adopt localised strategies which address the unique issues that exist in rural and urban communities.

- 4.7 In order to ensure that this approach is effective, there is a need for negotiations between Northumberland County Council, leisure trusts and education establishments with regard to improved access to school sites.
- 4.8 There is also an opportunity to use the largely rural nature of the County to differentiate it from the other sub-regions and provide facilities and activities that take advantage of the landscape (e.g. outdoor activities such as cycling, sailing, canoeing etc).
- 4.9 Finally, the County Council should work with leisure operators and other partners to establish a long term (25 years or more) maintenance and renewal/replacement plan for key facilities including leisure centres.

## 5.0 Consultation and Feedback

- 5.1 Formal consultation on the consultants' report took place between March and May 2010. Each of the organisations listed in **Appendix 1** received a written invitation to comment on the work undertaken in Phases One and Two. This afforded consultees the opportunity to return commentary on the accuracy and relevance of the report and also the emerging recommendations and priorities proposed by the consultants.
- 5.2 In addition to this, consultation also featured as a news item on the Northumberland Sport website for the duration described above and in an electronic newsletter circulated to some 240 stakeholder contacts. A Leisure Management Review Group led by County Councillors and senior officers of the County Council also considered the report.
- 5.3 Although fairly extensive engagement with key organisations had already taken place in Phase Two, the consultation did result in twenty four formal responses being returned. These can be grouped as follows;
- National Governing Bodies of Sport (8)
  - Local Clubs (3)
  - Community Groups (2)
  - Town and Parish Councils (6)
  - Sport and Physical Activity Alliances (1)
  - Leisure Trusts (1)
  - Sport England (1)
  - Individuals (2)
- 5.4 The NGBs generally provided brief feedback on specific facilities or sites where they felt investment should be targeted or where very recent improvements have in fact already been undertaken. The local clubs sought recognition for events and competitions they stage and one lobbied for new facilities.
- 5.5 More generic responses were received from Community Groups, one suggesting multi-sport sites offered a more likely resolution to investment in the current financial climate and reference was also made to the need for improvements to the quality of playing pitches.

- 5.6 Town and Parish Councils comments focussed on specific locality facilities but also highlighted the importance of smaller facilities such as welfare grounds and public parks and their value to local communities.
- 5.7 The Sport and Physical Activity Alliance for North Northumberland suggested that community access to school sports facilities was a key issue. There were particular concerns for the future of swimming pools and the provision for teaching swimming. A suggestion was made that every High School should have a floodlit synthetic pitch (with community use) and that outdoor sports were becoming more important to Northumberland.
- 5.8 Sport England provided detailed feedback on specific facility developments, the importance that should be placed on this strategy and indeed planning for facilities generally in the longer term.
- 5.9 North Country Leisure (West Northumberland Board) welcomed the report and generally endorsed the conclusions. Protecting and maintaining existing facilities was highlighted as a priority as was making better use of school facilities. Access issues in rural areas and the need for a broader consideration of transport was raised.
- 5.10 Individual feedback sought more profile and recognition for a specific facility with another lobbying for investment.
- 5.11 By and large the feedback was very positive and most organisations were complimentary about the consultants' report and general recommendations made. Virtually all organisations were pleased that a strategy was being developed and indicated that this should have appropriate recognition and influence over future decision-making for all sport facilities. The most common feedback focussed on;
- Better and more consistent access for the community to school facilities
  - The quality of playing pitches and need for planned investment
  - Protecting facilities and having a long term maintenance and improvement approach
  - Setting county-wide standards such as floodlit synthetic pitches at High Schools
  - Developing more opportunities for outdoor sports
- 5.12 The tables at **Appendix 2** include the analysis findings of the consultants about current provision and issues and gaps, with some factual amendments based on the feedback from the consultation exercise. Action is then proposed based on the consultants' suggestions and on the consultation exercise, drawn together by Northumberland Sport partners in line with the proposed strategy below.

## 6.0 The Strategy

- 6.1 The work undertaken has demonstrated that there are no significant gaps in the basic infrastructure of major facilities in the County. Swimming pools and sports centres, for example, are located where you would expect them to be in the larger towns with few overlapping catchment areas. There is theoretical unmet demand because of the distance some people live from pools and centres, but there is no concentration of unmet demand in any one area of the County.

- 6.2 Northumberland is relatively well off for some facilities such as golf courses and fitness centres. There are shortages of smaller scale facilities such as pitches, especially synthetic turf pitches, and accessible indoor spaces in some areas – some of which can be addressed by bringing public owned assets more effectively into community use.
- 6.3 There is scope to work towards some specialist facilities particularly in relation to outdoor sport, building on Northumberland’s great strength of high quality landscape. Whilst there can be long distances to travel to specialist indoor facilities in some cases, this is an inevitable consequence of Northumberland’s large size and sparse population, and more talented athletes will normally need to travel to the Tyneside conurbation to access the levels of coaching and competition they need. Nevertheless opportunities should be taken if there are housing developments or replacement schools, or if Sports Governing Bodies wish to invest in the County, to broaden and develop the range of facilities available. The nature of Northumberland means that the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people will come through a broad range of improvements, adaptations and replacements commensurate with the scale and size of the County’s communities.
- 6.4 Leading on from the results of the study, the key strategic objectives are:
1. To maintain the current stock of facilities to a high standard, continuing to maintain a stock of public sports facilities which serves the majority of the County’s population, and seeking opportunities to refurbish them to keep quality high and to refresh and adjust the facilities on offer to meet changing demand.
  2. To seek to replace facilities when they reach the end of their useful life; taking the opportunity to provide updated facilities to meet current and future demands and considering the most appropriate location for replacement facilities bearing in mind changes in population and demographics.
  3. To work with partners such as schools, colleges and community organisations to maximise the community use of local assets, particularly those in public ownership such as schools, making small scale improvements and adjustments where appropriate.
  4. To work with Governing Bodies to develop specialist facilities particularly relating to outdoor sport.
  5. To work towards setting a hierarchy of standards for provision commensurate with local needs, for example standards for the provision of synthetic surface pitches being considered through the playing pitch strategy.
- 6.5 The actions in **Appendix 2** show how Northumberland Sport and its partners, in particular Northumberland County Council which has a key role as owner of the majority of major facilities, intend to work together to implement the key strategic objectives shown above.

## 7.0 The Investment Challenge

- 7.1 The current economic and financial climate and the recently announced cuts to public sector spending by the new Coalition Government are now well documented. The implication that this will have on local authorities and other public sector services

is the cause of much speculation. However, what is known already is that Northumberland County Council, as with most local authorities, has to deliver unprecedented efficiencies over the next two years and possibly beyond. The full extent of the impact of government fiscal policy in relation to the public sector will not in fact be fully understood until after the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 and the subsequent Budget Announcement in 2011.

- 7.2 Moreover, Northumberland was until recently expected to join the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in around 2013/14. However the announcements by the new Coalition Government have in effect confirmed that investment in schools for the foreseeable future will be slowed down and for most counties including Northumberland this is likely to have a considerable impact on the capacity of local authorities and schools to bring new sports facilities to fruition. Nonetheless potential through new Academies and/or other potential capital investment plans for schools should consider this sports facilities strategy and the recommendations made for increased community use.
- 7.3 Other less traditional sources of income may come from regeneration projects or housing and commercial developments. There are already good examples of sport and leisure developments provided by this sector. Therefore to build on this it is essential that the strategy gives planners the evidence they need to draw down developer contributions and is flexible to inform any future regeneration proposals.
- 7.4 Financial contributions raised through the planning system can fund or form part of funding packages for the development of sporting facilities. In the past these have included individual and pooled contributions secured through planning obligations attached to planning permissions, primarily for residential development. However, following changes to planning legislation enacted in April 2010, the extent to which pooled contributions could be collected through the planning system will be more limited in the future. In order to secure contributions in accordance with statutory limitations towards sport and play from development using planning obligations it will be necessary to demonstrate clear links between the development proposed and the sport and play infrastructure for which contributions are being sought.
- 7.5 Whilst planning policies and detailed supplementary planning documents currently exist in the former Tynedale and former Wansbeck areas whereby tariff based contributions are sought from residential development for sport and play facilities and their maintenance, these arrangements are likely to be limited in the longer term due to the changes in planning legislation.
- 7.6 A new Local Development Framework is being prepared for the county, which will enable a consistent policy on the use of planning obligations to be applied across Northumberland having regard to current legislative requirements and best practice. In addition, recent legislation regarding the opportunity to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will change the way that financial contributions could be received and allocated in terms of procuring infrastructure required to help in delivering the spatial strategy for the county. It will be important to ensure that the investment requirements for sport are highlighted in the council's strategic infrastructure study, the infrastructure delivery plan associated with that study and any subsequent planning policy documents, to ensure that sporting facilities obtain a reasonable share of any future contributions collected under the CIL system.

- 7.7 Invest to save may be another funding stream to follow in the future particularly in replacing ageing facilities. A new build will be cheaper and more efficient to run therefore revenue savings can be achieved which can be used to service any capital costs.
- 7.8 It is also important to recognise that some of the more traditional funding routes and opportunities that were available to the sports sector until relatively recently have either reduced or no longer exist. Most notably are the changes to Sport England's policy and strategy for investment of both Lottery and Exchequer funding. From 2009 the majority of resource available for capital investment in facilities and equipment is by and large now placed with National Governing Bodies. A relatively small resource is set aside and available nationally (not regionally) through competitive funding rounds. Early indications from the new or developing facilities strategies of National Governing Bodies are that Northumberland is unlikely to see significant investment for most sports although the Football Association in particular still sees Northumberland as a priority county.
- 7.9 Funding and resources for investment in sports facilities does not of course need to rely entirely on the public sector, the County Council or traditional funding routes. Opportunities from the private and commercial sector or perhaps through non-traditional routes such as regeneration may emerge from time to time.
- 7.10 This Sports Facilities Strategy can and should inform any facilities development regardless of how and where funding is sourced and whilst there may be some developments considered a priority over others, any opportunities for investment need to be exploited. So whilst this strategy does need to categorise (and therefore to an extent prioritise) actions as set out above and in **Appendix 2**, in the current climate any opportunity for investment should be taken.
- 7.11 In view of the financial challenge as set out above this strategy provides an aspirational vision of Northumberland's ambitions. Inclusion in this strategies Action Plan does not mean that funding is either available or agreed and it must be stressed that funding is not currently in place for many of the proposed actions. Delivery of these will depend on new resources being identified. The action plan which supports this strategy has therefore been established with the current financial climate in mind and in essence seeks to establish;**
- **What is deliverable without a reliance on new resources?**
  - **What should be a priority as and when resources can be identified?**
  - **What else could be done should resources become available?**
- 7.12 In order to demonstrate the broad resource implication associated to the provision of new facilities, **Appendix 3** provides a guide to the estimated costs of various facility types. These are "Benchmark Capital Costs" provided by the Building Cost Information Service which bases figures on recently built schemes and updated to reflect forecast price indices.

## 8.0 Taking the Strategy Forward

- 8.1 As described above, there is considerable financial pressure and uncertainty across public sector services and this poses a huge challenge for capital investment in new or improvements to existing sports facilities. Nonetheless this strategy aims to guide investment and a collaborative approach to facility development for years to come.
- 8.2 Whilst the current climate therefore will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the shorter term investment plans for schools, this should not detract from an aspiration to ensure that Northumberland has an appropriate portfolio of high quality facilities that meets local need and customer expectations. Without this, participation in sport and physical exercise will suffer and this in turn will be detrimental to a whole host of health and social policy agenda's in the county.
- 8.3 There is an argument therefore that taking a strategic approach in the existing financial environment is essential and even more important as there is no doubt that rationalisation and prioritisation will be necessary. The most pressing challenge is perhaps how to manage delivery against the strategic ambitions that this strategy proposes and to be realistic about what can and cannot be achieved in the short term whilst sustaining the intention to deliver long term.
- 8.4 In this context, **Appendix 2** sets out the priorities for action and aims to categorise these according to their likelihood or probability for delivery.

## 9.0 Monitoring and Review

- 9.1 The Northumberland Sport Board will be responsible for monitoring progress on the achievement of the Strategy's objectives and reviewing and amending the Strategy. A full annual review of progress on the action plan is proposed with a brief progress report to each Board meeting. A full formal review including a consultation exercise is proposed after 5 years, i.e. in 2015.

## List of Consultees

Blyth Valley Arts and Leisure  
 County Durham Sport  
 Government Office North East  
 Kielder Partnership  
 Leisure Connection  
 National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) - Listed below  
 North Country Leisure  
 Northumberland County Council  
 Northumberland County Council Councillors  
 Northumberland Care Trust  
 Northumberland Sport Board  
 Northumberland Strategic Partnership (Health, Care and Well Being Thematic Partnership)  
 Northumbria University  
 Parish Councils  
 School Sports Partnerships  
 Sport & Physical Activity Alliances (SPAAs)  
 Sport England  
 Tees Active  
 Town Councils  
 Tyne and Wear Sport

### **National Governing Bodies (NGBs)**

Amateur Rowing Association  
 Amateur Swimming Association  
 Angling Development Board  
 Badminton England  
 British Judo  
 British Orienteering Federation  
 British Tennis  
 British Triathlon  
 Canoe England  
 England Athletics  
 England Basketball  
 England Hockey  
 England Netball  
 England Squash and Racketball  
 English Cricket Board  
 English Golf Union  
 English Indoor Bowling Association  
 English Lacrosse  
 Golf Foundation  
 Gymnastics England  
 Northumberland Football Association  
 Rounder's England  
 Royal Yachting Association  
 Rugby Football League  
 Rugby Football Union  
 Table Tennis  
 Volleyball England

## Action Plan

The tables which follow set out a range of actions that are designed to deliver against the objectives of the strategy and are ordered by different types of facility provision. Importantly we have categorised each action based on the following descriptions

**Category 1 Deliverable without a reliance on new resources**

**Category 2 What should be a priority as and when resources can be identified?**

**Category 3 What else could be done should resources become available?**

Actions have been allocated to various organisations which are abbreviated as follows. Where there is a lead organization, it is indicated in **Bold**:-

|               |   |   |
|---------------|---|---|
| <b>BVAL</b>   | = | <b>Blyth Valley Arts and Leisure</b>          |
| <b>EA</b>     | = | <b>England Athletics</b>                      |
| <b>EH</b>     | = | <b>England Hockey</b>                         |
| <b>LC</b>     | = | <b>Leisure Connections</b>                    |
| <b>LTA</b>    | = | <b>Lawn Tennis Association</b>                |
| <b>NCC</b>    | = | <b>Northumberland County Council</b>          |
| <b>NCL</b>    | = | <b>North Country Leisure</b>                  |
| <b>NFA</b>    | = | <b>Northumberland Football Association</b>    |
| <b>NGB's</b>  | = | <b>National Governing Bodies of Sport</b>     |
| <b>NNPA</b>   | = | <b>Northumberland National Park Authority</b> |
| <b>NS</b>     | = | <b>Northumberland Sport</b>                   |
| <b>SPAA's</b> | = | <b>Sport and Physical Activity Alliances</b>  |
| <b>TA</b>     | = | <b>Tees Active</b>                            |

**Table 1 – Swimming Pools**

| Current provision  | Issues/gaps  | Actions   | Success Measures  | Category and Timescale  | Responsibility   |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| <p>24 facilities identified by Active Places in Northumberland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 local authority</li> <li>• 5 school sites</li> <li>• 10 private.</li> </ul> <p>The following pools were also identified via consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Granary Swimming Pool</li> <li>• Haltwhistle Swimming &amp; Leisure Centre</li> <li>• Leaplish Waterside Park</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unmet demand spread across the County, with particular issues in West Northumberland (suggesting accessibility issues).Note: Haltwhistle and Leaplish pools excluded from the (FPM) model.</li> <li>• Variable quality of facilities in Northumberland</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule meetings with private providers (e.g. holiday parks/hotels) to investigate increased local awareness and access.</li> <li>• Investigate use of the pool at Collingwood School to meet some of the unmet community and club demand in the South East</li> <li>• Develop a standardised Community Use Agreement that can be tailored to local circumstances</li> <li>• Taking into account opportunities that may present themselves through invest to save, planning contributions and regeneration schemes:</li> <li>• Produce a structured maintenance/ upgrade/refurbishment plan to record and address quality issues for all public swimming pools.</li> <li>• Develop a facility replacement plan for the next 25 years.</li> <li>• Over time – and as and when resources can be released from the Capital Programme               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Implement the agreed maintenance/upgrade/refurbishment programme</li> <li>b) Implement the facility replacement programme.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased public use of private sites</li> <li>• Increased public use of Collingwood school pool</li> <li>• New standard 'core' CUA</li> <li>• Pool Upgrade &amp; Refurbishment Plan</li> <li>• Facility Replacement Strategy</li> <li>• Well maintained, modern, quality pools.</li> <li>• Modern, fit for purpose pools</li> </ul> | <p><u>Category 1</u><br/>March 2012</p> <p>March 2011</p> <p>December 2011<br/><u>Category 2</u><br/>March 2012</p> <p>March 2012</p> <p>Phased Programme</p> <p>ed Programme</p> | <p><b>NCL/BVAL</b></p> <p><b>BVAL</b></p> <p>NCC/NS/NCL/<br/><b>BVAL</b></p> <p><b>NCC/NCL/BVAL/LC/TA</b></p> <p><b>NCC/NCL/BVAL/LC/TA</b></p> <p><b>NCC/NCL/BVAL/LC/TA</b></p> <p>NS/NCL/BVAL/LC/TA</p> |

|  |  |  |   |  |            |
|--|--|--|---|--|------------|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible underutilisation of existing facilities in some areas, possibly linked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Accessibility (travel distance) North &amp; West</li> <li>– Some poor quality facilities (South East)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore options relating to transport/access at Council owned facilities to address unmet demand and accessibility issues in North and West Northumberland.</li> <li>• Work with local public transport authority/providers to improve community transport links to local authority swimming pool facilities within rural areas.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved 'regular' public transport schedules linking swimming pools to rural communities</li> </ul> | <p><u>Category 1</u><br/>(initial contact)<br/>March 2011</p> <p><u>Category 3</u><br/>(any significant investment need identified)<br/>March 2012</p> | <b>NCL</b> |
|--|--|--|---|--|------------|

Table 2 – Sports Halls

| Current provision  | Issues/gaps  | Actions  | Success Measures  | Category and Timescale   | Responsibility  |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| <p>52 sites identified by Active Places in Northumberland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40 education</li> <li>• 10 local authority</li> <li>• 2 private</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unmet demand identified equivalent to 11 badminton courts spread across the County</li> <li>• Unmet demand is spread across the county, with particular issues in the North and West (suggesting accessibility issues)<br/>Note: Rede, Tyne and Coquet Centre at Otterburn and other smaller facilities excluded from the (FPM) model</li> <li>• Possible underutilisation of existing facilities in rural areas (North and West). Likely to be linked to accessibility issues</li> <li>• The <b>rural North and West</b> would require an emphasis on 'multi-use' facilities due to the sparse population with limited access to facilities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a prioritised phased programme to improve opportunities to access sport in smaller facilities (e.g. village/church halls, school sites) to address accessibility issues in rural areas.</li> <li>• Develop a standardised Community Use Agreement (CUA) that can be tailored to local circumstances.</li> <li>• Devise and implement a countywide strategic approach for identifying priority sports and engagement with schools, private providers, community use spaces etc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased use of smaller local facilities for sport/physical activity</li> <li>• New standard 'core' CUA</li> <li>• County strategic agreements on engagement</li> </ul> | <p><u>Category 1</u><br/>Phased annual programme starting 2011/12,</p> <p>December 2011</p> <p>June 2011</p> | <p><b>NCL</b></p> <p><b>NCC/NCL/BVAL/LC/TA/NS</b></p> <p><b>NS/NCL/BVAL</b></p> |

|  |   |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The urban South East should explore the provision of 'sport specific' facilities due to a higher number of facilities being more accessible by the more concentrated population. (e.g. basketball, badminton, gymnastics)</li> <li>Variable quality of facilities in Northumberland</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement localised plans that address the unique issues that exist within rural and urban communities.</li> <li>Research potential for provision of 'sport specific' facilities in the south east of Northumberland through potential partnerships with sport governing bodies and local partners.</li> <li>Take into account opportunities that may present themselves through invest to save, planning contributions and regeneration schemes.</li> <li>Produce a structured maintenance/upgrade/refurbishment plan to record and address quality issues for all sports halls</li> <li>Develop a facility replacement plan for the next 25 years</li> <li>Over time – and as and when resources can be released from the Capital Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Implement the agreed maintenance/upgrade/refurbishment programme</li> <li>b) Implement the facility replacement programme</li> </ul> </li> <li>Work with local public transport authority/providers to improve community transport links to local authority sports hall facilities within rural areas.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of local CUA plans</li> <li>Opportunities for sport specific facilities identified</li> <li>Sports halls, upgrade and refurbishment plan</li> <li>Facility Replacement Strategy</li> <li>Well maintained modern, quality sports halls</li> <li>Modern 'fit for purpose' sports halls.</li> <li>Improved 'regular' public transport schedules linking sports halls to rural communities</li> </ul> | <p>March 2012</p> <p><u>Category 2</u><br/>December 2011</p> <p>March 2012</p> <p>March 2012</p> <p><u>Category 2</u><br/>Phased programme</p> <p><u>Category 2</u><br/>Phased programme</p> <p><u>Category 3</u><br/>(any significant investment needs identified)<br/>March 2012</p> | <p><b>NS/NCL/BVAL</b></p> <p><b>NCC/NS/BVAL/NGBS</b></p> <p><b>NCC/BVAL/NCL/LT/TA</b></p> <p><b>NCC/BVAL/NCL/NS/LT/TA</b></p> <p><b>NCC/BVAL/NCL/LT/TA</b></p> <p><b>NCC/BVAL/NCL/NS/LT/TA</b></p> <p><b>NCC/NCL</b></p> |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|

**Table 3 – Athletics Tracks**

| Current provision  | Issues/gaps  | Actions  | Success Measures  | Category and Timescale  | Responsibility                                     |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Five outdoor athletics tracks in Northumberland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coquet High School, Alnwick (cinder)</li> <li>• Eleventh Avenue Track, Blyth Valley (cinder)</li> <li>• Craik Park, Castle Morpeth (cinder)</li> <li>• Wentworth Leisure Centre, Tynedale (synthetic)</li> <li>• Bedlingtonshire Community School, Wansbeck (cinder)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no athletics facilities in the former authority of Berwick</li> <li>• Eleventh Avenue Track, Blyth, no longer of an appropriate standard for use.</li> <li>• Craik Park, Castle Morpeth, inadequate changing facilities</li> <li>• England Athletics recommends a standard of one outdoor synthetic track per 250,000 people</li> <li>• There is currently only one synthetic track in the county, which has a population of c300,000. However, a large proportion of this population fall outside of the recommended 45 minute drive time catchment</li> <li>• Northumberland's one synthetic track therefore falls well below this standard.</li> <li>• Cinder tracks do not meet England Athletics standards for training or competition.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a new outdoor 6/8 lane synthetic track in Morpeth at the King Edward VI School (as at November 2010, scheme in place subject to Sport England funding sign-off)</li> <li>• Work with the National Governing Body to develop facility improvement/replacement plan. Including potential track or training track development in Berwick.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Athletics Track &amp; maintenance plan</li> <li>• Identified longer term needs/agreed location of future developments</li> </ul> | <p><u>Category 1</u><br/>2011/12</p> <p><u>Category 2</u><br/>December 2011</p> | <p><b>BVAL/NCC</b></p> <p><b>NS/EA/NCL/NCC</b></p> |



|  |   |  |  |           |                              |
|--|---|--|--|-----------|------------------------------|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northumberland requires a further four full size STPs to be in line with the national average</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a 'county' aspired policy to advocate STPs on every High School site</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County standard for all High School sites in Northumberland to have a STP with CUA</li> </ul> | June 2012 | <b>NS/NCC/BVAL/NCL/TA/LC</b> |
|--|---|--|--|-----------|------------------------------|

Table 5 – Health and Fitness

| Current provision   | Issues/gaps  | Actions   | Success Measures   | Category and Timescales                       | Responsibility               |
|---|--|---|--|---|------------------------------|
| <p>52 health and fitness facilities in Northumberland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48% commercial</li> <li>• 27% education</li> <li>• 19% local authorities</li> <li>• others are private/trust facilities</li> </ul> <p>Northumberland has 15% of the region's health and fitness facilities and the highest number of facilities per 1,000 of all North East sub-regions</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are some accessibility issues within rural communities</li> <li>• Ensure the quality of existing fitness facilities is maintained.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devise and implement a plan for replacement of fitness facilities and equipment to reflect market expectations and contemporary developments in health and fitness linked with 25 years pools/halls/leisure centres plan</li> <li>• Significant resources required on 'invest to save' basis.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement/refurbishment Plan produced</li> <li>• Membership &amp; usage of/demand for facilities increases</li> </ul> | <p><u>Category 2</u><br/>Phased programme</p> | <p>NCC/NS/NCL/BVAL/LC/TA</p> |

Table 6 – Indoor Tennis

| Current provision                                       | Issues/gaps   | Actions   | Success Measures  | Category and Timescales   | Responsibility    |
|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| There are no indoor tennis facilities in Northumberland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LTA has identified a number of gaps in provision within the north east and is in the process of identifying a series of 'key sites' for development, one of which is likely to be in Northumberland</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the potential to develop an indoor tennis facility in Northumberland in conjunction with the LTA.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feasibility Report stating options for indoor tennis facility</li> </ul> | <u>Category 3</u><br>June 2012<br>(resources need to be identified) | <b>LTA/NS/NCC</b> |

**Table 7 – Golf**

| Current provision  | Issues/gaps  | Actions  | Success Measures  | Category and Timescales                              | Responsibility            |
|--|--|--|---|--|---------------------------|
| <p>There are 32 18-hole golf courses in Northumberland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 local authority</li> <li>• 16 private</li> <li>• 14 commercial</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northumberland has 35% of the region's golf courses and the highest number of courses per 1,000 population of the four North East sub-regions.</li> <li>• There is a declining membership at many golf clubs possibly linked to the economic recession which presents a risk to their financial viability.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the current provision across the county no actions are recommended.</li> <li>• Work with the English Golf Union and the Golf Foundation to grow the game and in particular junior membership.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased membership at targeted clubs.</li> </ul> | <p><u>Category 1</u><br/>Ongoing programmed work</p> | <p><b>NS/NCL/BVAL</b></p> |

**Table 8 – Indoor Bowls**

| Current provision  | Issues/gaps  | Action  | Success Measures   | Category and Timescales                | Responsibility (lead(s) in bold) |
|--|--|---|--|--|----------------------------------|
| <p>There are three indoor bowls facilities in Northumberland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swan Leisure Centre, North</li> <li>• Ashington Leisure Centre, South East</li> <li>• Concordia Leisure Centre, South East</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities are sometimes underutilised during the summer months when bowlers tend to move outdoors.</li> <li>• There is evidence of low and reducing demand on some sites.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review indoor bowls use and where appropriate, devise and implement alternative use strategies.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for alternative 'out of season' use of indoor areas.</li> <li>• Effective utilisation of space.</li> </ul> | <p><u>Category 1</u><br/>June 2011</p> | <p><b>BVAL/TA</b></p>            |

**Table 9 – Grass Pitches - Note: this section may require review subject to the new playing pitch strategy due late 2010.**

| Current provision  | Issues/gaps  | Actions  | Success Measures  | Category and Timescales  | Responsibility  |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| <p>Playing Pitch Strategies have been undertaken by each of the former district councils</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Former district Playing Pitch Strategies identified a shortfall in junior football pitches across the county</li> <li>• The former authority areas of Alnwick, Blyth Valley and Castle Morpeth have a shortfall of adult football pitches, whereas Wansbeck has a significant surplus</li> <li>• The number of rugby and cricket pitches within the County seems to be adequate</li> <li>• Several key issues are identified in relation to the quality and accessibility of local authority pitch provision:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– poor quality changing and ancillary facilities</li> <li>– poor drainage which severely affects the quality of the playing surface</li> <li>– lack of dedicated female changing facilities</li> <li>• lack of floodlit facilities for training and competition</li> <li>• Focus on creating multi pitch sites.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide and implement a new county-wide Playing Pitch Strategy as part of the Local Development Framework</li> <li>• Explore options for the development of new and existing grass pitch sites in the county</li> <li>• Explore provision of multi-sport ‘hub’ sites including use of STPs through multi agency partnerships e.g. utilisation of Football Foundation/Rugby Football Union funding</li> <li>• Work with the Football Association and Northumberland Football Association to advocate increased use of 3G STP pitches for league competition</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing Pitch Strategy established.</li> <li>• Maintained list of priority sites for development</li> <li>• Report on ‘multi sport hub sites’ in Northumberland</li> <li>• Increased use of STPs by local leagues</li> </ul> | <p><u>Category 1</u><br/>(Production of strategy)<br/>December 2010</p> <p><u>Category 2</u><br/>(resource requirements)</p> <p><u>Category 3</u><br/>(resource requirements)</p> <p><u>Category 2</u><br/>(ongoing programme of work)</p> | <p><b>NCC</b></p> <p><b>NCC/NCL/BVAL/NGBs</b></p> <p><b>NCC/NS/NCL/BVAL/NGBs</b></p> <p><b>NCC/NS/NFA</b></p> |

Table 10 – Outdoor Sports

| Current provision   | Issues/gaps  | Actions   | Success Measures   | Category and Timescale                 | Responsibility   |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| <p>There are a range of outdoor sports with strong existing club/facility infrastructures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– cycling (mountain biking)</li> <li>– equestrianism</li> <li>– canoeing</li> <li>– sailing</li> <li>– rowing</li> <li>– golf (see table 7)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of outdoor sports within the county are currently operating in isolation from one another</li> <li>• There is an opportunity for Northumberland to use its unique landscape to differentiate itself from its neighbouring sub-regions and provide a high quality destination and centre of excellence for outdoor sports provision.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate a coordinated approach to the development of outdoor sport facilities with a view to providing a regionally/nationally significant county infrastructure of outdoor facilities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County outdoor 'active places' strategy/plan</li> </ul> | <p><u>Category 3</u><br/>June 2012</p> | <p><b>NS/NCC/NCL/</b><br/>Northumberland<br/>Tourism/BVAL/<br/>Kielder Partnership/<br/>Northumberland<br/>National Park</p> |

## Benchmark Capital Costs

| Facility Type          | Facility Details                           | Costs (£)  |
|------------------------|--|------------|
| Sports Hall            | 1 court                                    | £695,000   |
|                        | 4 court                                    | £2,750,000 |
| Pools                  | 25m pool (5 lane)                          | £2,850,000 |
| Changing Rooms         | 4 team changing pavilion                   | £550,000   |
| Indoor Bowls Centre    | 6 lane                                     | £1,550,000 |
|                        | extra lane                                 | £200,000   |
| Indoor Tennis Centre   | 3 court                                    | £1,750,000 |
|                        | Extra court                                | £570,000   |
| Outdoor Tennis Court   | 2 court, macadam, fenced and floodlit      | £130,000   |
| Grandstand             | 500 seats with no undercroft               | £480,000   |
| Skate Park             | 40 x18m fenced and floodlit                | £110,000   |
| Synthetic Turf Pitches | Sand based 100 x 64m fenced and floodlit   | £585,000   |
|                        | Rubber crumb 100 x 64m fenced and floodlit | £725,000   |
|                        | Water based 100 x64m fenced and floodlit   | £900,000   |
| Grass Pitch            | 100 x64m                                   | £80,000    |
| Multi-use Games Areas  | 40 x 18m fenced and floodlit               | £80,000    |
| Athletics Track        | 6 lane floodlit                            | £1,115,000 |

The above are provided by the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) and are based on the costs of providing good quality sports facilities. They are based on the cost of new schemes recently funded through the Lottery and updated to reflect forecast price indices.

It should be noted that they provide an estimated guide only and will be subject to variations depending on prevailing market conditions.

Note that the benchmark capital costs above do not include costs for land acquisition and ancillary facilities. A typical leisure centre for example might include a number of the above elements and other unknown costs.

**Figures quoted are based on the first quarter of 2010. These are normally updated annually to take into account inflation and other factors effecting building costs. Sport England update their website accordingly when new figures become available.**