



RFU ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCH STRATEGY

BACKGROUND

Artificial pitches are becoming increasingly popular in rugby union. Their durability allows for continued activity throughout the year, at a consistent standard, increasing access and improving the playing experience.

The RFU have developed a national facilities strategy that aims to deliver 100 AGPs to grassroots rugby. We believe delivery of this strategy over a four year period will have a significant positive uplift on participation.

WHY DO WE NEED ARTIFICIAL PITCHES?

The RFU have identified four major factors that are currently threatening the growth of rugby union participation:

1. The state of our natural turf pitches

- Rugby pitches are overused throughout England with no extra capacity
- Based on conservative RFU guidance into natural turf pitch use, we estimate that nearly half of our rugby clubs are overusing their pitches by 74% (*figure.1*)
- Overused natural turf pitches have a detrimental impact on the standard of the game and the enjoyment of the participants

2. The playing experience

- Younger players are becoming accustomed to playing sport on artificial surfaces favouring the results – 66% of the 677 AGPs nationally are on school sites – the same experience will be expected when transitioning to the adult game
- Currently only 10% of all existing AGPs in England are World Rugby compliant for rugby use and only 1% are located on amateur rugby club sites

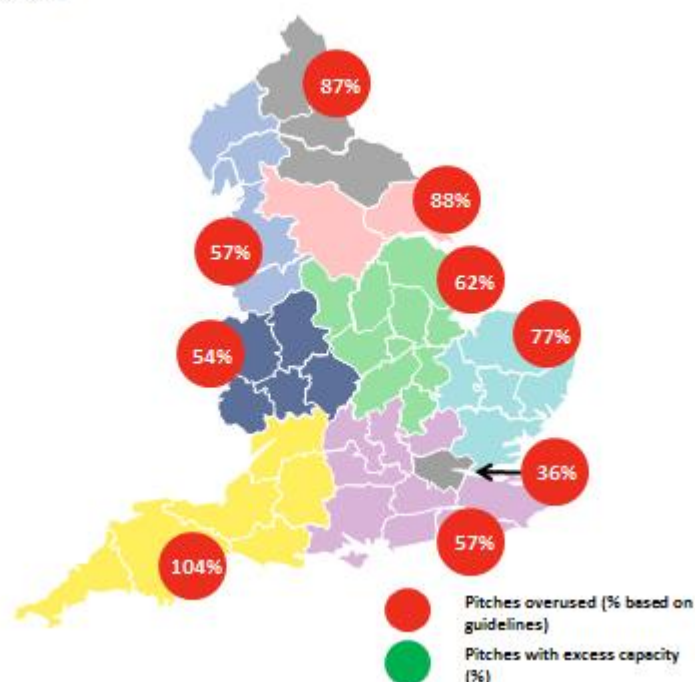
3. The competition

- Other governing bodies (notably the FA) are investing in improving the quality of the playing experience
- Improving the standards of pitches is seen as the biggest contributor to increasing participation in football

4. The weather conditions

- Met statistics confirm that over the past four seasons, the weather is steadily becoming wetter and milder during the British winter, resulting in more games and training sessions cancelled, reducing participation
- 1,766 adult games were lost over two weekends in February 2014 due to bad weather, while over 600 natural turf pitches remained unplayable for three weeks after this period

Figure 1. Average natural turf pitch use for club with 1 or 2 pitches

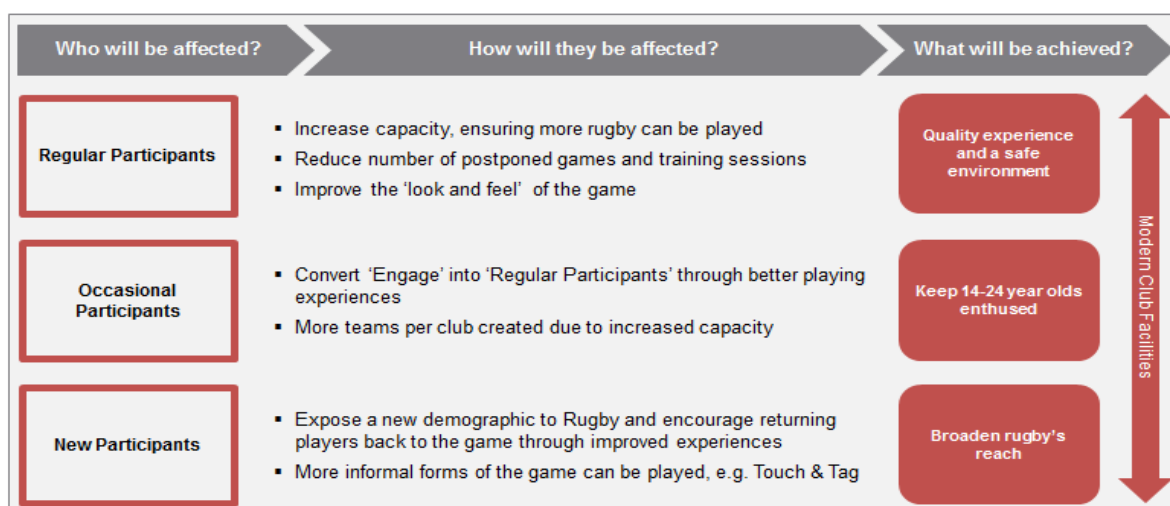


WHO WILL THIS AFFECT AND HOW?

Male, female, adult and youth participants will all have better access and a better playing experience as a result of the AGP Strategy.

Build: we believe that the AGP Strategy really will broaden rugby's reach beyond the traditional participation demographics, bringing rugby to new locations and at new times.

Sustain: the strategy will deliver a modern, engaging experience for regular and occasional participants, allowing them to play more games and trainings at times that suit their needs.



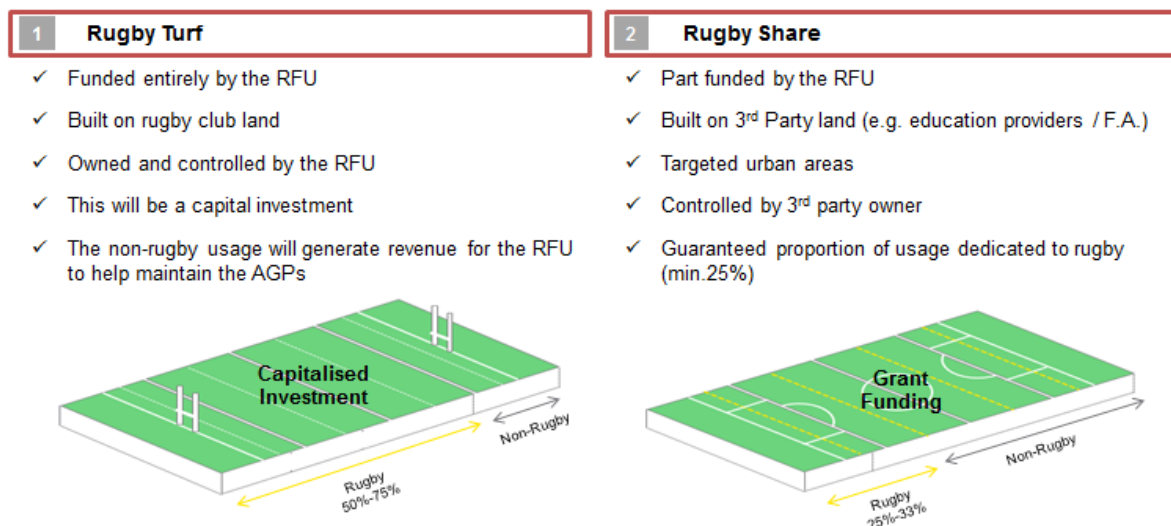
We are forecasting a significant increase in participation as a result of the strategy. To achieve the ambitious numbers, highlighted below, we require all stakeholders organisations connected to the Programme to work with us with the aim of growing rugby at their club, school, college or university.



In addition to increasing participation, we believe the strategy has the potential to have a transformational impact on the game, offering players a consistent opportunity to play an exciting brand of rugby at a time to suit their needs.

HOW WILL THIS WORK?

We are funding two models of AGP, which will be placed strategically to ensure we maximise rugby participation.



We plan to deliver 60 'Rugby Turf' and 40 'Rugby Share' AGPs over a four year period. This will take the overall number of World Rugby compliant pitches up from 10% to over 20% of the AGP market, with circa 10% then based on rugby club sites (up from 1.5%).

At present there is one AGP per 13,000 adult club rugby players, 100 new AGPs will take this number to one per 2,000 adult club players.

Both AGP models will be community assets, with access granted not just to the host club, but to local clubs and schools as well as RFU lead community projects such as the CBRE All Schools programme. We believe this is an exciting opportunity to develop a true partnership within the rugby family that is centred around a state of the art facility.